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# Three Men in a Boat

By Jerome K. Jerome

**JEROME:**

lies not so much in its style,  
or in the extent and usefulness  
of the information it conveys,  
as in its simple truthfulness.  
It forms a record of events  
that really happened.  
Other works may excel this  
in depth of thought  
and knowledge of human nature,  
but for hopeless and incurable veracity,  
nothing yet discovered can surpass it.

(INDISTINCT CHATTERING)

There were four of us.

George and William Samuel Harris  
and myself and Montmorency.

We were sitting in my room, smoking  
and talking about how bad we were.

Bad from a medical point of view,  
I mean, of course.

With me, it's giddiness.

- It's giddiness with me, too.

- Hmm.

Sometimes I have such extraordinary  
fits of giddiness,

- I hardly know what I'm doing.

- I hardly know what I'm doing, too,  
I have such extraordinary  
fits of giddiness.

With me, it's my liver  
that's out of order.

Oh, how do you know?

Well, I've been reading this patent  
liver-pill circular which sets out  
the various symptoms by which a man  
can tell when his liver is out of order.

I have them all,  
including what it calls "a general  
disinclination to work of any kind".

I've got that, too.

I've been a martyr to it  
since earliest boyhood.

- I was born with it.

- They didn't know it was my liver.

Course, medical science was in  
a far less advanced state than now.  
They used to give me a clump  
on the side of the head.

- Didn't do any good.

- My whole body, you know...

We sat there describing to each other  
our maladies.

I explained to George and Harris  
how I felt when I got up in the morning.  
And Harris told us how he felt  
when he went to bed.

And George stood on the hearth rug  
and gave us a clever and powerful  
piece of acting,  
illustrative of how he felt  
in the night.

George fancies he is ill,  
but there's never anything  
really the matter with him.

(KNOCKING ON DOOR)

Mrs Poppets.

(EXHALING) Supper?

I suppose one should try.

A cousin of mine who  
is usually described on the charge-sheet  
as a medical student once told me  
that something in the stomach  
often keeps disease in check.  
Steak and onions, and rhubarb pie.

Hmm.

What we need is a rest.

Rest and a complete change.

Leave the 19th century behind,  
seek out some quaint, forgotten nook.

Far from the madding crowd,  
half as old as time.

- What we need is a sea trip.

- No, no, no.

- I remember once...

- Not now, old chap.

Why don't we go up the river?

Fresh air, the changing scene

will occupy our minds,  
including what there is of Harris'.  
And the exercise  
will make us sleep well.  
I agree.  
I think it a very sensible idea.  
It just goes to show  
that you should never write off a man  
Just because he's never had  
a sensible idea before.  
- I propose.  
- Second.  
- Aye.  
- Any against?  
(LOW GROWL)  
Carried by three to one.

**JEROME:**

couched in that green and golden valley,  
winding and whispering, singing of  
strange old tales and secrets  
as it flows under the fair canopy of  
England sky through England's history.  
Our little boat, borne along  
on sun-dappled waters,  
through shady woods  
and blazing fields...

**HARRIS:**

**JEROME:**

That's Harris all over.  
When George is hanged, Harris will be  
the least romantic man in the world.  
We had arranged that George,  
who goes to sleep at a bank  
from 10 till four every day  
except Saturday,  
when they wake him up  
and put him outside at two,  
would join us when we got up the river  
to Shepperton.  
Meanwhile, Harris and I  
and the Gladstone

and the small handbag and the  
two hampers and the big roll of rugs  
and some overcoats and mackintoshes  
and a melon by itself in a bag  
and a Japanese umbrella  
and a frying pan which wouldn't  
go in anywhere and Montmorency  
arrived on our way  
to the Kingston train.

**The 11:**

**11:**

Number 2? That's the Windsor Loop.  
You want Number 1, sir.  
Number 1 is the Reigate Stopping,  
so I hear.

**- The 11:**

- Oh, yes, indeed.  
Well, I was just talking to a man  
who said he'd seen it on Number 3.  
He was almost positive about that.  
Otherwise, there's a body of opinion  
which leans toward the eye-level  
platform for the Kingston train.  
Though, in my opinion, sir,  
that is the Southampton Express.  
- They don't know, sir. You follow me.  
- Thank you.  
Monty, come along.  
I'm sorry to trouble you.  
But are you the 11...  
(STEAM HISSING LOUDLY)

**...the 11:**

Couldn't rightly say.  
I might be and then again  
I might not be.  
If I'm not, I'm the 9:32  
for Virginia Water,  
or the Guilford local.  
Could you please be

**the 11:**

Well, some train's  
got to go to Kingston, innit?  
Thank you very kindly, sir.

**11:**

Thank you very much.  
This is the Exeter mail, apparently.  
Well, it might be.  
Then again, it might not.  
(TRAIN WHISTLE BLOWING)  
And so the railway system  
which has made England the envy  
of the world brought us to Kingston.  
And at 12... 00, with our luggage stowed  
and Montmorency unhappy  
and deeply suspicious in the prow,  
out we rode onto the waters  
which were to be our home.  
We hoped up as far as Oxford,  
though the possibilities for digression  
along the Thames are infinite.  
We had barely started  
when Harris was minded to enquire  
whether I'd ever been  
to Hampton Court Maze.  
- Ever been to Hampton Court Maze, J?  
- No.  
Harris said he went in once  
to show a country cousin the way.  
Harris said he went in once  
to show a country cousin the way.  
He had studied it up on a map.

**HARRIS:**

you've been, but it's very simple.  
Absurd to call it a maze, really.  
Uh, we'll walk around for 10 minutes  
and then go get some lunch, all right?  
(CLEARING THROAT) Well...  
They met some people  
soon after they got inside  
who'd been in there  
for three-quarters of an hour.

- Morning.

- Morning.

Want to get it over with?

You can follow me if you like.

- I'm going in and coming out again.

- That's very kind of you, sir.

Everybody's welcome.

Just keep turning to the left.

Thank God you've come, sir.

- We'd just about given up hope, sir.

- This way.

And bit by bit, they picked up  
all the people who were in the maze,  
including a woman with a baby  
who'd been in there all morning  
and insisted on taking Harris' arm  
for fear of losing him.

Turn left, round here.

(ALL CHATTERING)

This way.

Harris kept turning to the left.

This way!

(BABY CRYING)

I suppose it's a very big maze.  
Yes, yes, one of the largest in Europe.  
Yes, it must be. Because we've walked  
a good two miles already.

Mmm.

This way!

(BABY WAILING)

This way!

Harris began to think it rather strange  
himself, but he held on until...

Here, we passed that biscuit  
10 minutes ago.

Impossible.

Yes, we did. It's Albert's.

I saw him drop it down.

Well, according to the map...

I wish I'd never met you.

All right!

We'll go back to the entrance  
and start again from there.

Keep turning... right.

**WOMAN:**

And so after turning right a good deal,  
- he found himself...  
- And here we are...  
...in the middle.  
...in the middle.  
Oh, just as I... Just as I'd...  
Harris thought at first of pretending  
that that was what he'd been aiming at,  
but the crowd looked dangerous.  
And he decided to treat it  
as an accident,  
and set off once more  
towards the perimeter.  
All right, keep going, keep going.  
Keep to the right.  
Come on, there, keep to the right.  
Keep going right!  
Finally, right again. And here we are.  
(BABY CRYING)  
Albert and I will stay here. You go on.  
Madam, I advise you to follow me.  
We're all right. You can pick us up  
on your next time through.  
You silly old baggage!  
Here, who do you think  
you're talking to?  
All right. Anyone who wants to stay here  
for the rest of the day is welcome.  
I'm going home now.  
The optimists of the party  
kept dwindling faith with Harris.  
The pessimists remained in the middle,  
and were swiftly vindicated.  
(ALL EXCLAIMING)  
Harris got his map out again,  
but the sight of it  
seemed to infuriate the mob.  
They told him to...  
Go and curl your hair with it!  
- And to...  
- Go and stuff it!  
...away somewhere.



(ALL SHOUTING)

Evidently, it happens all the time.

- It really is an awfully good maze.

- Mmm.

We must try and get George into it  
on the way back.

Good idea.

- Incidentally...

- Mmm?

I'm quite willing to let you  
scull for a bit if you want to.

Don't want to be selfish about it.

(JEROME CHUCKLING)

- **HARRIS:**

- Here? Why?

It's Hampton Church,

I want to see Mrs Thomas' tomb.

Who's Mrs Thomas?

How should I know? She's just a lady  
who has a funny tomb.

I know it's supposed to be  
the proper thing to do  
every time you see a church,  
to rush off and enjoy the graves.

I don't hold with it  
as a form of recreation.

Anyway, we haven't got time.

**HARRIS:**

to seeing Mrs Thomas' tomb  
since the moment this trip was proposed.  
In fact, I wouldn't have come but for  
the thought of seeing Mrs Thomas' tomb.

**JEROME:**

morbid extravagance. I'm sorry.

Well, what about the scold's bridle  
at Walton Church?

I must see the scold's bridle.

**JEROME:**

Shepperton by teatime to meet George.

Oh, hang George!

Why couldn't he get the day off?

What use is a bank anyway?

They take all your money

and when you want to write a cheque

it's referred to drawer.

Damn nerve!

I'm going to withdraw my account.

I'm going to get out and have a drink.

- There's some lemonade in the hamper.

- I said a drink!

Not your Sunday school slops,

lemonade, raspberry syrup...

- That poison! Dandelion and burdock...

- Pull on your line.

...ginger beer. If you ask me,

they ruin body and soul

and are responsible

for half the crime in England.

- Pull on your line!

- I'm pulling.

(MONTMORENCY BARKING)

The other one.

I say, though.

This is the life, isn't it?

Rather.

- Sorry if I was a bit touchy back there.

- Touchy? When?

Wasn't I a bit touchy

about George and Mrs Thomas?

Were you? I didn't notice.

Very kind of you

to concern yourself, though.

Not at all. Good egg.

(INHALES DEEPLY)

Who's this?

Do you know you gents are trespassing?

What does he say?

He wants to know

if we know we're trespassing.

I'm not sure I've given the matter

sufficient consideration.

We haven't given the matter

sufficient consideration.

But if you give us your assurance

that we are indeed trespassing,  
we would without hesitation believe it.  
Well, I tell you, you are trespassing.

- He says we are.

- Ah.

- Thank you.

- Thank you very much.

I'm supposed to throw you off!

What does he say?

He says it's his duty to throw us off.

Oh, well, if it's his duty,  
he ought to do it.

Does he say

how he intends to go about it?

No. He's taciturn on the subject.

I shall tell the master.

Then come back and throw you both  
in the river!

He only wanted a shilling.

He must make quite an income  
blackmailing weak-minded noodles.

Walton is quite a large place  
for a riverside town,  
but only the tiniest corner  
comes down to the water.

Caesar, of course

had a little place at Walton.

An entrenchment or a camp  
or something of that sort.

He was a great upriver man, was Caesar.

And Queen Elizabeth was there, too.

And Cromwell.

They made a very odd trio.

People used to comment  
when they went on picnics.

The first thing we saw at Shepperton  
was George's blazer  
on one of the lock gates.

Hello, Harris!

- Hello!

- Hey!

**GEORGE:**

And closer inspection showed

that George was inside it.

- **HARRIS:**

- No.

They're all the rage up the river  
this season. Everyone's got one.  
It's a banjo.

**BOTH:**

Well, not exactly, no.

But it's very easy, they tell me.  
And I've got the instruction book.

- Good.

- (LAUGHING) Banjo.

(SINGING INAUDIBLE)

Suits you.

Goes awfully well with your outfit.

Do you like the blazer?

As an object to hang above a fruit bed  
to frighten away the birds,  
I should respect it.

As an article of dress  
for any other human being  
apart from a Margate Minstrel,  
it makes me ill.

I've always found envy distasteful.

I noticed you and J were envious  
the moment you saw it.

I can easily dispose of that idea.

Your blazer wouldn't suit me at all.

I always like a darker red in my things.  
Red and black.

You see, my hair's a sort of  
rather golden brown colour.

Rather pretty shade, I've been told.

And I find that dark red  
really picks it up beautifully.

I always stick to yellows and browns.

My eyes have

an unusual kind of hazel glint.

Rather mysterious, it's been remarked.

I find yellows and browns pick it up.

Yes. You don't think your complexion  
too ruddy for yellow?

No. Yellow doesn't suit you at all,  
there can be no doubt about that.  
You really ought to take some blue and  
white with a little cream touched in.  
You really wouldn't look half bad  
in blues and creams  
if you kept your hat on.  
Now, George, on the other hand...  
Why is George  
looking like a martyred goose?  
It must be some girl.  
Everybody in the lock seemed  
to have been suddenly struck wooden.  
All the girls were smiling sweetly.  
And all the fellows were frowning  
and looking stern and noble.  
And then at last,  
the truth flashed across me.  
(CHUCKLES)  
I leant with careless grace  
upon the hitcher,  
in an attitude suggestive  
of agility and strength.  
And threw an air of tender wistfulness  
into my expression  
mingled with a touch of cynicism,  
which I'm told suits me.  
Oi, look at your nose!  
Look at your nose!  
George, I think there's something wrong  
with your nose.  
You three with the dog! Watch your nose!  
Oh, it's our nose. It's our nose!  
(ALL EXCLAIMING)  
It was J's fault.  
That's Harris all over, too.  
You know, it always reminds me of...  
(BOTH) Not now, J.  
There we are.  
We found a very pleasant nook  
under a tree,  
a little below Magna Carta Island.  
And with hardly any difficulty,  
prepared the boat for the night.

Slowly the golden memory  
of the dead sun faded.  
The birds ceased their song.  
And only the plaintive cry and harsh  
croak of the moorhen and the corncrake  
stirred the awed hush  
around the couch of waters  
where dying day breathed out her last.  
Night upon her sombre throne  
folds her black wings  
above the darkening world,  
and from her phantom palace  
holds sway in stillness.

# Two lovely black eyes

# (OFF KEY) Oh

# Oh, what a surprise

# Surprise

# Oh, what a surprise

# Two lovely

# Two lovely black eyes #

(BIRDS CHIRPING)

(BUGLE BLOWING)

King John had slept at Duncroft Hall.

And all the day before,  
the little town of Staines has echoed  
to the clang of armed men  
and the clatter of horses  
on its rough stones.

Since dawn, in the lower  
of the two islands just above us,  
there has been great clamour,  
and the sound of many workmen.

(SAWING)

In the great pavilion  
brought there yester eve,  
carpenters are busy nailing  
tiers of seats,  
and up the slope of Cooper's Hill  
are gathered the wondering rustics  
and curious townsfolk.

And some say that much good  
to all the people  
will come from this day's work.  
Then far down the road

in the morning sun  
a cloud of dust has arisen,  
and there comes a brilliant cavalcade  
of gay-dressed lords and knights.  
And front and rear,  
there ride the yeomen of the barons,  
and in their midst, King John.  
The barge is waiting.  
King John dismounts and takes his seat.  
And slowly the heavy,  
bright-decked barge leaves the shore  
and works ponderously  
against the current  
till it grates against the bank  
of the little island  
that from this day will bear the name  
Magna Carta Island.  
We wait in breathless silence  
till a great shout cleaves the air...  
(PEOPLE SHOUTING)  
...and the great cornerstone  
in England's temple of liberty has,  
now we know, been firmly laid.  
(PEOPLE REJOICING)  
What is the matter? Where am I?  
Runnymede.  
I'll be down in a minute. I think  
I'll wear my black lace-up boots.  
(GRUNTS)  
We had made gigantic arrangements  
for bathing.  
I notice people always do that when  
they are going anywhere near water.  
We had packed three bath towels,  
so as not to keep each other waiting.  
Well, who's going in first?  
I mean, I don't think I ought to go in  
because of my kidneys.  
- And because of your liver.  
- Liver. Yeah, yeah.  
Yes. Well, I don't think I ought to  
go in because of my liver, too.  
(HUMMING)  
Oh, I think that'll do for today.

(EXCLAIMING)

Hello! Old J's in.

He's got more pluck than I thought.

(LAUGHING)

- Say, is it all right?

- It's lovely. Lovely.

Wouldn't have missed it for worlds.

All it wants is a little determination.

Oh, that's better.

Oh, damn it. My shirt's gone in.

(LAUGHING) Oh, dear. Oh, dear.

Well, I don't see

what's so very funny about it.

His shirt's gone in!

- Oh, dear. Oh, dear.

- Oh, do shut up.

Oh, dear. Oh, dear. Oh, dear.

- Aren't you going to get it out?

- No.

- It's not my shirt.

- It's not his shirt.

It's yours.

You silly cuckoo!

Can't you be more careful?

You're not fit to be in a boat.

George is very dense

at seeing a joke sometimes.

He says I did it on purpose,

which of course I did not.

- Yes, you did.

- No, I didn't.

We'll have a light lunch

and eat properly tonight.

- There's some hard-boiled eggs.

- Jolly good. And the cold beef.

We can start with the potted shrimps

or the dressed crab.

- Or little of each.

- Or little of each

- and bread and butter.

- And some tomatoes.

- And finish off the ham.

- Followed by a bit of cheese.

- Or the tinned pineapple.



- Or the tinned pineapple.  
Followed by a bit of cheese.  
You're all at sixes and sevens.  
When I say dip, dip. Dip!

(BOTH EXCLAIMING)

- Good God!

- Monty.

The thought of lunch  
soon set the world to rights,  
but it was not to last.  
There occurred a most depressing  
and tragic setback to our equanimity.

It was Harris  
who first realised the situation.

- We forgot mustard.

- What?

No mustard.

Cold beef without mustard?  
You hardly ever have mustard.  
Well, that's why it's such a blow.  
You have mustard habitually  
and thoughtlessly.  
You hardly know you're having it at all.  
But when I want mustard, I want mustard!  
This is what comes of  
filling the boat up  
with lemonade and bath towels  
and all that useless clutter.  
I knew it was a mistake to have come.  
We didn't forget  
the tinned pineapple, did we?

What?

Oh, pineapple.

Pineapple, first rate.

Let's have it open.

Right, that's a bit better.

Nothing quite like tinned pineapple.

Puts fresh pineapple in the shade.

It's the juice.

It's more of a syrup, really.

It's not exactly sweet,  
it's not exactly bitter.

It's the way it's not exactly crunchy  
and yet it's firm and clean-tasting.

Where's the opener?

Well, I'm...

I'm almost sure we've got one.

We must have.

You were supposed to bring it.

It was supposed to be in here  
with all this lot.

It's not...

It's not in the banjo, is it?

- Really.

- It's just a question of...

(EXCLAIMING IN PAIN)

(GROANING)

Damn!

Ahhh!

Ahhh!

Ahh!

- Just be careful.

- Ah!

(GROANING)

Let me, let me, let me!

Let me!

(GRUNTING)

(SOBBING)

Ahhh!

And we got into our boat  
and rode away from that spot  
and never paused  
till we reached Maidenhead.

Maidenhead is a town of showy hotels,  
a snobbish place for the river swell  
and his overdressed female companion,  
patronised chiefly  
by dudes and ballet girls.

The London Journal duke always has  
his little place at Maidenhead.

And the heroine of the  
three-volume novel always dines there  
when she goes out on the spree  
with somebody else's husband.

Maidenhead, too, is the witch's kitchen  
which harbours that deceptively charming  
demon of the river,  
the steam launch.

But all that is left behind at Boulters.  
Between Boulters and Cookham locks  
is perhaps the sweetest stretch  
of all the river.  
Cliveden Woods still wore  
their dainty dress of spring,  
and rose up from the water's edge  
in one long harmony  
of blended shades of fairy green.  
It always makes me feel...  
I don't know...  
It makes me feel...  
...like a drink.  
- It makes me feel like a drink, too.  
Yes.  
It's the exercise, the fresh air.  
- It's the rowing. Yes.  
- The breathing.

**HARRIS:**

and exercise...  
It makes me feel as though I've got...  
Yes, it makes me feel  
as though I've got...  
...a bit of wind.  
- That's it.  
I've got it, too. I've been a martyr  
to it from earliest boyhood.  
I was born with it.  
- No, no, no, Harris. A breeze.  
- Hmm?  
Oh, good heavens!  
Shh! Don't say anything.  
By Jove! I think it's in our favour.  
- Quiet, man, they'll hear you.  
- Act casual.  
But we had spoken too soon,  
or too loudly.  
Or perhaps they had spotted  
George's blazer.  
For they were having sport with us,  
as flies to wanton boys.  
- Luff, luff to leeward!  
- Idiot.

- Why are you taking the sail down?

- Tack.

Watch that tree.

Luff, luff!

Where's the wind?

And so we went on to Marlow

and put up near the church.

(BARKING)

- Monty!

- Monty!

- Monty!

- Monty!

Marlow is one of the pleasantest  
river centres I know of,  
with many quaint nooks and corners.

William the Conqueror seized it  
to give to Queen Matilda,  
ere it passed to the Earls of Warwick.

Percy Bysshe Shelley lived a year  
in Marlow in 1817,  
and here wrote The Revolt of Islam,  
with its touching dedication  
to his wife.

- Monty!

- Monty!

"So my summer task is ended, Mary

"And I return to thee,  
my own heart's home

"The toil which stole thee  
so many an hour is ended

"And the fruit is at thy feet. "

(EXCLAIMING)

(MONTY CONTINUES BARKING)

Sorry.

There are lovely walks round Marlow.

Hard by is grand old Bisham Abbey.

There is a secret room  
high up in the thick walls.

And a ghost.

That of Lady Hoby,  
who beat her little boy to death  
for not doing his homework properly.

And in Bisham Church, she kneels piously  
among her other children

who did do their homework properly.  
Except for one,  
who did not live to walk to school.  
This is the best.  
I mean, this is the finest tomb.  
In many years of viewing memorials,  
in my entire experience  
of collecting tombs...  
Can we go out now?  
We spent the morning revittling.  
Our departure from Marlow I regard as  
one of our greater successes.  
It was dignified and impressive  
without being ostentatious.  
By the time we had finished,  
we had as fine a collection  
of boys with baskets  
as the heart could desire.  
And our embarkation must have been  
as imposing a spectacle  
as Marlow had seen for many a long day.  
There, there's the bread.  
Just put the bread just alongside the...  
Harris, where do you want these?  
Drinks here. Drinks up the front there.  
We'll put the drinks in first,  
then we can put things on top of them,  
I think.  
Where are the pies?  
Let me see, sir.  
Was yours the steam launch  
or the houseboat?  
No, it was the double sculling skiff.  
Steam launch indeed!  
I hate steam launches.  
I suppose every rowing man does.  
I never see a steam launch  
but I want to lure it  
to some lonely part of the river  
and there strangle it.  
(BELL TOLLING)  
"No longer were the woods  
to frame a bower  
"With interlaced branches mix and meet

"Or where with sound  
like many voices sweet  
"Waterfalls leap  
among wild islands green  
"Which framed for my lone boat  
a low retreat  
"Of moss-grown trees and weeds,  
shall I be seen  
"But beside thee,  
where my heart has ever been. "

(HORN BLOWING)

Steam launch coming.

- Get out of the way.

- Get out of the way!

Move on. Oi! Mind out, you fellows.

- Get out of the way!

- Get out of the way, you chaps!

I thought we might

have a drink at Hurley.

- Oh, good. I'll show you Danes' Field.

- Is that a pub?

- No, it's a field.

- Oh.

Invading Danes camped there.

Not recently.

You know,

I keep thinking I can hear voices.

Then I thought

we could have a drink at Shiplake.

Lovely church at Shiplake.

You know who got married there? Guess.

- Julius Caesar?

- Queen Elizabeth.

Lord Tennyson.

Bless my soul, George,

if it isn't a steamboat.

- You know, I thought I heard something.

- Any chance of a tow?

(ALL LAUGHING)

Medmenham Abbey once sheltered

the notorious Hell-Fire Club.

It stands on the site of a Cistercian

monastery of the 13th century.

The monks wore rough tunics,

ate no fish, meat or eggs,  
rose at midnight for mass,  
and passed the day in total silence.  
A mode of life which might,  
if not overdone,  
be a benefit to some of us,  
especially Harris,  
who not only eats fish, meat and eggs  
at every opportunity,  
but often talks at the same time.

Why isn't the kettle on, George?

- Could you spare us a little water?

- Certainly.

Thank you so much.

- Where? I mean, where do you keep it?

- It's always in the same place.

I... I don't see it.

Has it gone, then?

It's still there.

We can't drink the river, you know,  
it's dangerous.

I'm sorry to hear that.

I've been drinking it meself  
for the last 15 years.

It's all right if you boil the water.

- Are you sure?

- Oh, yes.

The germs are killed by the boiling.

The little crawly things  
called bacillis.

Bacillis?

Yes. Can't stand the boiling.

Drives them wild.

Man said he'd drunk it for 15 years.

- How did he look?

- Not well. But he didn't boil it.

I need this.

- What's that?

- What's what?

Floating in the river.

**JEROME:**

I don't want any tea.

No, nor me.

Just a habit, really.  
Not really thirsty.  
I've already had some.  
Do you think I'll get typhoid?  
Well, you'll know in a week or two.  
I should look up the symptoms  
when you get back to London.  
Oh, no, I daren't do that.  
That would be fatal.  
I remember once  
looking at a medical dictionary  
to read up the treatment for hay fever.

**HARRIS:**

And I began to study diseases generally.  
I'd turned to some devastating scourge  
or other,  
and before I had glanced half down  
the list of premonitory symptoms,  
it was borne in upon me that...  
I've got it.  
In despair, I turned over the pages,  
came upon cholera, and discovered...  
Cholera!  
...that I'd got that, too.  
I must have had it for months  
without knowing.  
Beginning to get interested in my case,  
I decided to go at it systematically.  
I started at ague,  
which I was relieved to find  
I had only in a modified form  
and might live for years.  
Bursitis, gout, impetigo and mumps  
I had evidently had since boyhood.  
And by the time  
I had plodded through to xymosis,  
the only malady I could conclude  
I had not got  
was housemaid's knee.  
(RINGING BELL)  
Well, old chap,  
what's the matter with you?  
I will not take up your time by



telling you what is the matter with me.

Life is brief.

So I will tell you

what is not the matter with me.

I do not have housemaid's knee.

Everything else, however, I have.

And I told him

how I came to discover it all.

Then he opened me and looked down me,

and hit me on the chest

when I wasn't expecting it.

And butted me with the side of his head.

And then sat down

and wrote out a prescription.

I took it to the chemist.

I don't keep it.

- You are a chemist?

- I am a chemist.

If I were a co-operative stores

and a family hotel combined,

I might be able to oblige you.

Being only a chemist

puts me at a disadvantage.

Well, what... What does it say?

One pound of beefsteak

with a pint of bitter every six hours,

one 10-mile walk every morning,

one bed at 11 every night,

and don't fill your head up

with things you don't understand.

- I was telling George.

- I always like hearing that one.

Have you ever done an Irish stew?

Well, not exactly, you know.

But it's very easy.

You just put in anything you want.

It's a grand way of using up

all the odds and ends.

A bit of bacon, vegetables, eggs.

Tinned salmon.

In fact, anything that comes to hand.

(STEW BUBBLING)

Something seemed to disagree

with Harris that evening.

Perhaps it was being on an island  
or not being used to the high living  
which upset him.

For myself...

Well.

I don't know when

I've ever enjoyed a meal more.

Jolly good, a bit rich.

It's given me a bit of a tippy jummy.

Who's for a drink and a stroll?

How about you, Harris?

Harris said he'd row us over

and stay behind on the island

to settle his stomach, as he put it,

with a toddy or two.

Might have a little drink

to settle my stomach.

You won't fall asleep, will you?

And so, George and I

went for a mooch around.

Must tell Harris we saw a church.

And a pub.

- Very nice pub.

- It was the best.

The finest.

I mean,

in all my years of visiting pubs...

In my entire experience

of bending the elbow...

(BOTH CHUCKLING)

**GEORGE:**

**JEROME:**

It had been arranged

that we were to shout when we returned,

and Harris would come over

from the island to fetch us.

Harris!

Do you remember which island it was?

They all look the same, don't they?

How many are there? I mean, do you know?

There are only about four.

We'll be all right if he's awake.

(JEROME EXCLAIMING IN PAIN)

Harris!

Harris!

- Harris!

- Harris!

Harris!

Harris!

You'd think the dog would hear.

- Harris!

- Harris!

**JEROME:**

**GEORGE:**

That's it! I'm going to stay  
exactly like this until the morning.

I don't know where we are,  
I don't know where Harris is,  
I'm going to die anyway,  
I'm not going to move any more.

(BARKING IN DISTANCE)

Hang on, what was that?

(BARKING GETS LOUDER)

- Harris? Harris?

- Harris?

- Harris!

- Harris!

What's the matter?

He's asleep.

What happened to you?

Swans.

Swans?

I had to fight them off.  
There were eight of them all around me.

- How many?

- Terrible battle,  
fighting 14 swans.

- How many?

- Eighteen.

Fought them for three hours  
with the oar. Can you imagine it?

Fighting 32 swans?

You said 18 just now.

No, I didn't. I said 12.

Think I can't count?

**JEROME:**

What shall we have for breakfast?

Something plain. Very, very, very plain.

What was all that last night  
about swans?

What swans?

(CHUCKLING) Never mind.

It's my turn to steer.

You two take the sculls,  
it's about time you and J  
did a bit of work for a change.

Ha! Fancy George talking about work.

- Have you ever seen him work?

- Certainly not on this trip.

I don't see how you'd know,  
you're asleep half the time.

Have you ever seen Harris fully awake  
except at mealtimes?

Honesty compels me to say no.

- Well, I've done more work than you.

- You could hardly have done less.

Oh, J thinks he's the passenger.

So, that's your gratitude to me  
for bringing you and your wretched boat  
all the way up from Kingston?

And supervising everything?

And slaving away over you?

Well, it's not more than I expected.

- Supervising? Oh, that's very nice.

- I've done the share of the work.

Thank you, headmaster, very much,  
for coming on the trip.

(ALL ARGUING)

- Get out of the way...

- It's about time I...

I'm putting the banjo  
in its proper place.

(ALL CLAMOURING)

It was finally agreed that Harris  
and George would scull up past Reading,  
and I would take the boat from there.

We were evidently

becoming old river hands.

**MAN:**

Why, only last season Jim Biffles,  
Jack and myself  
pulled all the way from Marlow  
to Goring in one afternoon.  
Never stopped once.  
Do you remember that, Jack?  
You can always tell an old river hand  
by the way he likes to  
give others a chance.

**MAN:**

**HARRIS:**

the way the river's abused  
by young pups and doddering old fools,  
with not the faintest conception  
of boatmanship.

**JEROME:**

without sensitivity  
to the moods and dignity of the river.  
(JAUNTY MUSIC PLAYING)

**GEORGE:**

spooning nincompoops  
who think the place is  
some kind of floating tea dance.  
- What are you doing?  
- Don't shake it!  
(CLAMOURING)  
(SCREAMING)  
There are grounds, in my opinion,  
for banning girls from the river  
altogether unless properly dressed.  
Boating costume is very fetching  
on a pretty girl, though.

**JEROME:**

I've got nothing against girls as such.

**HARRIS:**

time a drop of water goes near them.

- They're awfully useful on picnics.

- No, they're not.

Ask them to wash a plate,

and it's as though they've been asked

to pick rags on a corporation tip.

No, you have to be firm with them.

Get them to hitch up their skirts.

What do you think you're doing?

God save us from London landlubbers.

You shouldn't be allowed in the river.

Once a year,

and I've never heard of such a thing.

Get out of the way.

(ALL CLAMOURING)

Oh, I mean, it's really ridiculous.

You don't know what you're...

- Thank you very much.

- Thank you.

I was ready to take over the sculls

at Reading, as we had agreed.

(HORN BLOWING)

All right! All right!

They think they own the river

with their money and their trollops.

London landlubbers!

- J!

- Well, Max!

(ALL LAUGHING)

There we are.

I say, this makes a nice change.

I prefer it myself to rowing.

From Mapledurham to Streatly,

the river is glorious.

You pass Hardwick House,

where Charles I used to stay

and play bowls.

And when Cromwell's sails were sighted

downstream, he calmly continued...

Oh, no, wait a minute,

I think I've got that wrong.

Sorry. He did play bowls, though.

Now, you just put your hands...

That's it. A little there...

Perfect.

Now, this is to play it...

And this one's to strum...

Do you see that church?

The mortal remains of Jethro Tull

lie buried in that ground.

- Remember him?

- Not altogether.

Really? I'm surprised.

Very great man in

the world of agricultural mechanisation.

It's not the world

with which I'm most familiar.

George, the inventor of the sea drill

lies yonder.

Good heavens. That's it.

Oh, hello. This is my... banjo.

It's quite simple, really.

Now, here's a thing.

Gate Hampton railway bridge.

One of Brunel's three brick bridges

across the Thames.

- George?

- Yes.

Brick railway bridge.

J doesn't want you to miss it.

**JEROME:**

Very interesting.

Many years ago, the Chilterns

and the Berkshire Downs formed

a continuous ridge across here.

- Which is the interesting part?

- About Goring,

there was a huge lake with a river

flowing in the opposite direction.

I suppose it was old Brunel who had it

all changed for his railway, was it?

No, no, no, you fool.

I mean millions of years ago.

I think I'll go and talk to George.

**MAN:**

**MAN:**

bloody idiots!

Get out!

It's really most annoying  
the way these wretched little boats  
get in one's way.

Something ought to be done about it.

Get out of it!

Can't you see we're trying to get past?

(WHISTLE BLOWING)

My friend's launch  
cast us off at Abingdon.

Harris claimed  
he wanted to stretch his legs.

Which church?

- St Helen's.

- Which memorial?

Mr Lee.

Did he invent agricultural implements  
or did he murder his family?

He's very rare. He had 197 children.

Well, you'll find

very much better at Oxford

- if you put your back into it.

- What?

We are sick to death  
of walking around obscure tombs  
- of uninteresting people.

- You're sick to death? What do I...

And although it had been agreed that  
I would take the boat up past Reading,  
and here we were at Abingdon...

...for this stop.

I want to see something else.

After a short discussion  
with Harris and George,  
I took up the sculls for a while.

And then they pulled us up  
the last stretch to Oxford.

Which is, on the whole,  
more attractive than Cambridge  
to the ordinary visitor.

And the traveller is therefore  
recommended to visit Cambridge first



or omit it altogether  
if he cannot visit both.

(LAUGHING)

The Baedeker guide is quite right.

I am an Oxford man, too.

I mean, in spirit.

But for circumstance, I...

Now, the architecture of Oxford...

Another thing about Oxford

is that it offers

a judicious proportion of congeniality,  
cultural tradition

and cloistered contemplation,

which sustains many people at Oxford

for as much as three years

and prepares them for the harsh

realities of the outside world.

(SPEAKING IN FRENCH)

- Voltaire was quite right.

- Hmm?

Voltaire. What he said

about the perfect Englishman.

Aimlessly voyaging.

And of course...

"Ignotis errare locis. "

No, no, Voltaire was a froggy.

That's Latin.

Ovid. "The delight of wandering  
in unknown places."

Good day.

Tu quoque.

(CLEARING THROAT)

(THUNDER ROLLING)

What did I tell you?

(SPEAKING IN LATIN)

What did he say?

I said, "Jove cannot please everyone

"either by making it rain

or stopping it."

(THUNDER CLAPPING)

And Matthew Arnold's

sweet city with her dreaming spires

became decidedly wet.

More like streaming spires.

Matthew Arnold is dead.

It was in the paper.

I never read him.

- But we got to Oxford.

- Absolutely.

- Why did we?

- Can we go now?

- Downhill all the way now.

- I don't mind a bit of rain.

I like to see the river

under all its different aspects.

Can't expect sunshine

all the time, you know.

Nature is beautiful even in her tears,  
eh, George?

(LAUGHING)

Sandford lock is the deepest  
on the river.

Here's one for you, Harris.

Sandford lock.

Two men drowned this year.

Without leaving their boat.

The veal pie's a bit wet.

The veal pie's a bit wet?

Here you are, Montmorency.

Oh, you see? Even a dog knows  
when he's had enough.

(CHUCKLING)

When I get back to London,  
I'm going to have some whitebait,  
a cutlet, a piece of Stilton...

No, no, no. I'm going to have some pate.

No, no, no. No, I'll have  
some sole with white sauce...

I'll row!

(THUNDER CLAPPING)

One thing we all agreed upon  
from the beginning  
was that we would  
go through with the job.

It's not a job, it's a holiday.

And we agreed that  
we would go through with it.

No, I'll start again.

First smoked trout.

- Followed by mutton with capers...

- Shut up!

I knew a man

who came upriver two years ago,

slept out in a damp boat

on just such a day as this,

and it gave him rheumatic fever.

Ten days later he died in agony!

Yes. I had a friend once

who'd been in the Volunteers.

He spent a wet night under canvas

down at Aldershot.

When he woke up in the morning

he was a cripple for life.

(LAUGHING)

Pull over.

There's something in the water.

It was the dead body of a woman.

It lay lightly on the water.

And the face was sweet and calm.

Of course, it was the old, old,

vulgar tragedy.

She had loved and been deceived.

Or deceived herself.

She had wandered about the woods

by the river's bank

and finally stretched out her arms

to the silent stream

that had known her sorrow and her joy.

And the old river had taken her

into its gentle arms

and had laid her weary head

upon its bosom,

and had hushed away the pain.

God help her

and all other sinners,

if any more there be.

(BANJO PLAYING)

# Only for telling

# A man he was wrong

# Two lovely black

# Eyes #

The second day

was exactly as cheerful as the first.  
You know, it's almost a pity  
we've made up our minds  
to contract our certain deaths  
in this floating coffin.  
Well, there are only two days more,  
and we're young and strong.  
We may get over it all right.  
You know, there's a train that leaves  
Pangbourne Station every hour,  
which would get us home comfortably  
in time for a chop.  
And then on to  
the Alhambra, Leicester Square.  
Well, J?  
Well, that reminds me of a very funny  
story that happened to a friend of mine.  
- Right, George.  
- I'll get the bag out.  
Just a moment.  
- Did he say the Alhambra?  
- We did.  
Preceded by a little  
French dinner somewhere?

**HARRIS:**

With a, perhaps a bottle or two  
of Burgundy?  
Undoubtedly.  
Well, why didn't you say so?  
Now, George, I'll do the packing...  
You sort out when we can leave.  
And so I brought our expedition  
safely home.  
Or near enough.  
We deceived the boatman at Pangbourne.  
We left the boat and what it contained  
in his charge  
with instructions that it was to be  
ready for us at nine in the morning.  
Lf, um... If anything unforeseen  
should happen to prevent our return,  
we will write to the hotel  
with instructions.

Thank you very much.

Come, Monty.

Why, it's turned out nice, after all.

- I said we should stick it out.

- Should we go back, then?

Keep going, George.

Goodbye, Thames.

Yes, it's not a bad old river.

Come on, Montmorency.

Three Men in a Boat

(To Say Nothing of the Dog)

First appeared as a serial in the magazine Home Chimes in 1889.

I intended there to be some humorous relief, but the book was to be the story of the Thames, with its scenery and history. I decided to write the humorous relief first, but it seemed to be all humorous relief.

And most of the serious stuff which I had managed to get done was promptly thrown out by the editor.

I did not have to imagine or invent.

Boating up and down the Thames had been my favourite sport ever since I could afford it.

I just put down the things that happened.

Harris was Carl Hentschel.

I met him first outside a theatre, at the door to the pit.

We thought he was going to end up as Lord Mayor, but the great war brought him low.

He was accused of being a German.

In fact, he was a Pole.

George was George Wingrave, who subsequently became a bank manager.

I met him when lodging in Newman Street.

And afterwards we shared in Tavistock Place, handy for the British Museum

Reading Room.

I wrote the book at Chelsea Gardens.

I was just back from my honeymoon

and had the feeling

that all the world's troubles were over.