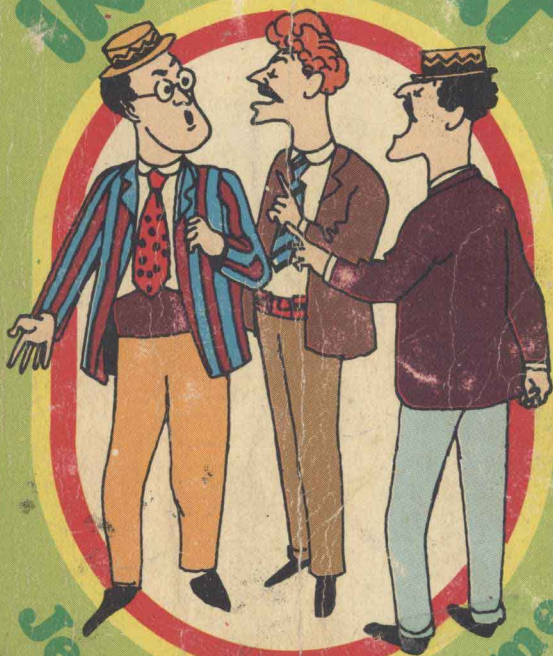


# THREE MEN IN A BOAT



Jerome K. Jerome

# THREE MEN IN A BOAT

*(To say Nothing of the Dog)*

BY  
JEROME K. JEROME

SIMPLIFIED BY  
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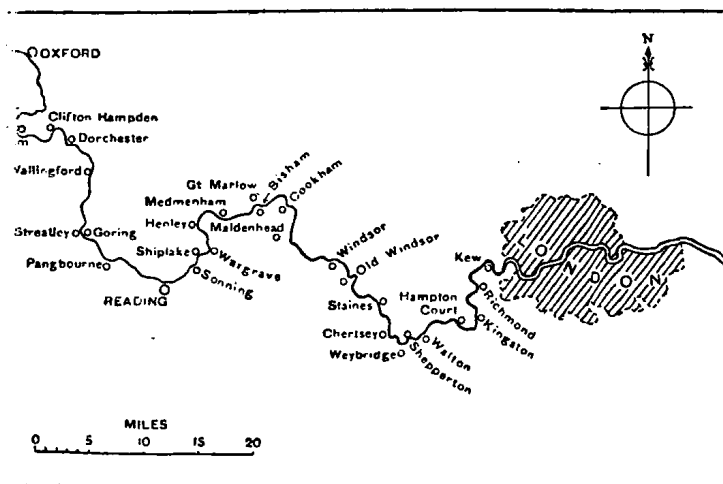
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*the River Thames from London to Oxford, showing the chief towns and villages mentioned in the story*

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<sup>1</sup>The 2,000 root words of the *General Service List of English Words* of the *Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection*.

## CHAPTER I

### WE PLAN A HOLIDAY (I)

THERE were four of us—George, and William Samuel Harris, and myself, and Montmorency, the dog. 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.

We were all feeling unwell, and we were getting quite nervous about it. We sat there for half-an-hour, describing to each other our illnesses. I explained to George and William Harris how I felt when I got up in the morning, and William Harris told us how he felt when he went to bed; and George stood on the hearth-rug, and gave us a clever piece of acting, as an example of how he felt in the night.

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

At this moment, Mrs. Poppets knocked at the door to know if we were ready for supper. We smiled sadly at one another, and said we supposed we had better try to swallow a bit. Harris said a little food often helped to check the disease; and Mrs. Poppets brought the tray in, and we sat down at the table, and tried to eat a little meat and onions. I must have been very weak at the time; because I know, after the first half-hour or so, I seemed to take no interest at all in my food—an unusual thing for me—and I didn't want any cheese.

This duty done, we lit our pipes and began again the discussion about our state of health. What it was that was actually the matter with us, we none of us

could be sure; but the general opinion was that it had been brought on by overwork.

"What we want is rest," said Harris..

"Rest and a complete change," said George. "Change of scene, and absence of the necessity for thought, will restore the mental balance."

I agreed with George, and suggested that we should ~~seek out~~ some quiet and old-world place, far from the holiday crowds, and dream away a sunny week among its peaceful lanes—some half-forgotten corner, out of reach of the noisy world.

Harris said he thought it would be awful. He said he knew the kind of place I meant; where everybody went to bed at eight o'clock and you couldn't get a newspaper, and had to walk ten miles for your tobacco.

"No," said Harris, "if you want rest and change, you can't beat a sea-trip."

I objected to the sea-trip strongly. A sea-trip does you good when you are going to have a couple of months of it, but, for a week, it is useless.

You start on Monday with the idea that you are going to enjoy yourself. You wave a proud good-bye to your friends on shore, light your biggest pipe, and walk about the deck as if you were Captain Cook, Sir Francis Drake, and Christopher Columbus all rolled into one. On Tuesday, you wish you hadn't come. On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, you wish you were dead. On Saturday, you are able to swallow a little beef tea, and to sit up on deck, and answer with a sickly smile when kind-hearted people ask you how you feel. On Sunday, you begin to walk about again, and take solid food. And on Monday morning, as, with your bag and umbrella in your hand, you stand waiting to step ashore, you begin to like it.

I remember my brother-in-law going for a short sea-trip once for the benefit of his health. He took a return ticket from London to Liverpool; and when he got to Liverpool, the only thing he was anxious about was to sell that return ticket.

Another man I knew went for a week's voyage round the coast, and, before they started, the steward came to him to ask whether he would pay for each meal as he had it, or arrange beforehand for the whole number.

The steward recommended the latter, as it would be so much cheaper. He said meals for the whole week would cost two-pounds-five. He said for breakfast there would be fish, followed by a grill. Lunch was at one, and consisted of four courses. Dinner at six—soup, fish, meat, poultry, salad, sweets, cheese, and fruit. And a light meat supper at ten. My friend agreed to pay the two-pounds-five, as he is a hearty eater.

Lunch came just as they were near Sheerness. He didn't feel so hungry as he thought he should, and so ~~contented~~ himself with a bit of boiled beef, and some strawberries and cream. He thought carefully about things during the afternoon, and at one time it seemed to him that he had been eating nothing but boiled beef for weeks, and at other times it seemed that he must have been living on strawberries and cream for years. Neither the beef nor the strawberries and cream seemed happy.

At six, they came and told him dinner was ready. The announcement aroused no enthusiasm within him, but he thought of the two-pounds-five he had paid, and held on to ropes and things and went down to the dining-room. A pleasant smell of onions and hot ham, mixed with fried fish and vegetables,



greeted him at the bottom of the stairs; and then the steward came up and said :

"What can I get you, sir?"

"Get me out of this," was the feeble reply.

And they ran him up the stairs, propped him up, and left him.

For the next four days he lived a simple life on thin biscuits and soda-water; but towards Saturday, he felt better, and began to eat dry toast and drink tea, and on Monday he was able to have a little chicken. He left the ship on Tuesday, and as it steamed away from the landing-stage he gazed after it sorrowfully.

"There she goes," he said, "there she goes, with two pounds' worth of food on board that belongs to me, and that I haven't had."

So I refused to agree to the sea-trip. Not, as I explained, for my own sake. I was never sea-sick. But I was afraid George might be. George said he would be all right, and would like it, but he advised Harris and me not to think of it, as he felt sure we should both be ill. Harris said that, to himself, it was always a mystery how people managed to get sick at sea; he said he had often wished to be, but had never been able. Then he told us stories of how he had gone across the Channel when the sea was so rough that the passengers had to be tied in their berths, and he and the captain were the only two living souls on board who were not ill. Sometimes it was he and the second officer who were not ill; but it was generally he and one other man. If not he and another man, then it was he by himself.

It is a curious fact, but nobody ever is sea-sick on land. At sea, you come across plenty of people very ill indeed; but I never met a man yet, on land, who had ever been sick. Where the thousands and

thousands of bad sailors that fill every ship hide themselves when they are on land is a mystery.

George said :

"Let's go up the river."

He said we should have fresh air, exercise and quiet; the constant change of scene would occupy our minds, and the hard work would give us a good appetite, and make us sleep well.

Harris said that he didn't think George ought to do anything that would make him sleepier than he always was, as it might be dangerous. He said he didn't understand how George was going to sleep any more than he did now, when there were only twenty-four hours in each day, summer and winter alike; but thought that if he *did* sleep any more, he might just as well be dead, and so save his board and lodging.

Harris said, however, that the river would suit him perfectly. It suited me too, and Harris and I both said it was a good idea of George's; and we said it in a tone that seemed to suggest that we were surprised that George should have thought of anything so sensible. The only one who did not like the idea was Montmorency, the dog. He never cared for the river.

"It's all very well for you fellows," he seemed to say; "you like it, but I don't. There's nothing for me to do. I am not interested in scenery, and I don't smoke. If I see a rat, you won't stop; and if I go to sleep, you begin fooling about with the boat, and throw me overboard. If you ask me, I call the whole thing completely foolish."

We were three against one, however, and the motion was carried.

## CHAPTER 2

### WE PLAN A HOLIDAY (II)

WE pulled out the maps, and discussed plans.

We arranged to start on the following Saturday from Kingston. Harris and I would go down in the morning, and take the boat up to Chertsey, and George, who would not be able to get away from the City till the afternoon (George goes to sleep at a bank from ten to four each day, except Saturdays, when they wake him up and put him outside at two), would meet us there.

Should we "camp out" or sleep at inns?

George and I wanted to camp out. We said it would be so wild and free.

Slowly the golden memory of the dead sun fades from the hearts of the cold, sad clouds. Silent, like sorrowing children, the birds have ceased their song. From the dim woods on either bank, Night's ghostly army, the grey shadows, creep out noiselessly, and pass, with unseen feet, above the waving river grass; and Night, upon her gloomy throne, folds her black wings above the darkening world, and, from her ghostly palace, lit by the pale stars, reigns in stillness.

Then we run our little boat into some quiet spot, the tent is pitched, and supper cooked and eaten. Then our pipes are filled and lighted, and we talk pleasantly together; while, in the pauses of our talk, the river, playing round the boat, murmurs strange old tales and secrets, or sings low the song that it has sung for so many thousands of years.

We sit there, while the moon stoops down to kiss the river with a sister's kiss, and throws her silver arms around it; and we watch it as it flows, ever singing, ever whispering, out to meet its king, the sea—till our voices die away in silence, and the pipes go out—till we, ordinary young men as we are, feel strangely full of thoughts, half sad, half sweet, and do not care or want to speak—till we laugh, and, rising, knock the ashes from our burnt-out pipes and say "Good night." Then we fall asleep beneath the great, still stars, and dream that the world is young again.

Harris said:

"What shall we do when it rains?"

You can never rouse Harris. There is no poetry about Harris. If his eyes fill with tears, you can be sure it is because he has been eating raw onions.

On this occasion, however, his practical view of the matter came as a timely warning. Camping out in rainy weather is not pleasant.

It is evening. You are wet through, and there is two inches of water in the boat, and all the things are damp. You find a place on the bank that is not quite so muddy as other places you have seen, and you land and pull out the tent, and two of you begin to fix it.

It is soaked and heavy, and it falls heavily about you, clings round your head, and makes you mad. The rain is pouring steadily down all the time. It is difficult enough to fix a tent in dry weather: in wet, the task becomes almost impossible for a human being. Instead of helping you, it seems to you that the other man is simply playing the fool. Just as you get your side beautifully fixed, he gives it a pull from his end, and spoils it all.

"Here! What are you doing?" you call out.

"What are you doing?" he replies; "let go, can't you?"

"Don't pull it; you've got it all wrong, you stupid ass!" you shout.

"No, I haven't," he yells back; "let go your side!"

"I tell you you've got it all wrong!" you roar, wishing that you could get at him; and you give your ropes a pull that brings all his pegs out.

"Ah, the donkey!" you hear him mutter to himself; and then comes another savage pull which unfastens all your side. You start to go round to tell him what you think of the whole business, and, at the same time, he starts round in the same direction to come and explain his views to you. And you follow each other round and round, getting angrier and angrier, until the tent falls down in a heap, and leaves you looking at each other across its ruins.

At last, somehow or other, it does get up and you land the things. It is hopeless attempting to make a wood fire, so you light the stove, and crowd around that.

Supper consists mainly of rainwater. The bread is two-thirds rainwater, the beefsteak-pie is rich in it, and the jam, and the butter, and the salt, and the coffee have all mixed with it to make soup. After supper, you find your tobacco is damp, and you cannot smoke.

When finally you go to bed and to sleep, you dream that an elephant has suddenly sat down on your chest, and that a volcano has exploded and thrown you down to the bottom of the sea—the elephant still sleeping peacefully on your bosom. You wake up feeling that something terrible has happened. Your first impression is that the end of the world has come; and then you think that this cannot be, and that it is

thieves and murderers, or else fire. No help comes, however, and all you know is that thousands of people are kicking you, and you are being smothered.

Somebody else seems to be in trouble too. You can hear his faint cries coming from underneath your bed. Determining, at all events,<sup>1</sup> to sell your life



*We had talked enough for one night*

dearly, you struggle madly, hitting out right and left with arms and legs, and yelling loudly all the time. At last, something gives way, and you find your head in the fresh air. Near you, you dimly observe a half-dressed ruffian, waiting to kill you, and you are preparing for a life-and-death struggle with him when you begin to realize that it is Jim.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he says, recognizing you at the same moment.

<sup>1</sup> At all events: Whatever may happen or whatever happens or in spite of what may happen.

"Yes," you answer, rubbing your eyes; "what's happened?"

"The tent has blown down, I think," he says. "Where's Bill?"

Then you both raise your voices and shout for Bill, and the ground beneath you shakes, and the voice that you heard before replies from out of the ruin:

"Get off my head, can't you?"

Then Bill struggles out, a muddy wreck, believing that the whole thing has been planned.

In the morning you are all three speechless, owing to having caught severe colds in the night; you also feel very quarrelsome, and you speak angrily to each other in hoarse whispers during the whole of breakfast time.

We therefore decided that we would sleep out on fine nights, and go to an inn when it was wet, or when we felt we needed a change.

Montmorency welcomed this decision with much approval. He does not like being quiet and alone; give him something noisy. To look at Montmorency you would imagine that he was an angel sent upon the earth in the shape of a small dog. There is an innocent expression in his eyes that has been known to bring tears into the eyes of pious old ladies and gentlemen. But I had not had him long before I knew how wrong I was. I had to pay for about a dozen chickens that he had killed; I had to drag him, growling and kicking, by his neck, out of a hundred street fights; I had a dead cat brought for me to examine by an angry female, who called me a murderer; I was taken to court by the man next door for allowing to go free a savage dog that had kept him imprisoned in his own tool-shed, afraid to put his nose out of the door, for more than two hours on a cold night. After

all these things had happened, I began to think that perhaps Montmorency was not such an angel as I had thought.

Having thus agreed about our sleeping arrangements, the only thing left to discuss was what we should take with us. We had begun to argue about this, when Harris said that we had talked enough for one night, and that our other problems could be postponed until the following night.

### CHAPTER 3

#### WE DECIDE WHAT WE NEED TO TAKE

ON the following evening we again met to discuss and arrange our plans. Harris said :

"Now the first thing to settle is what to take with us. You get a bit of paper and write down, J., and you get the grocery catalogue, George, and somebody give me a pencil, and then I'll make out a list."

That is just like Harris—so ready to take the burden of everything himself, and put it on the backs of other people.

He always reminds me of my Uncle Podger. When my Uncle Podger agreed to do anything, there was always a great disturbance. A picture had come home from the frame-maker's, and was standing in the dining-room, waiting to be put up. Aunt Podger asked what was to be done with it, and Uncle Podger said :

"Oh, you leave that to *me*. Don't worry about that. I'll do all that."



Then he took off his coat and began. He sent the girl out for some nails, and then one of the boys after her to tell her what size to get; and, after that, he gradually started the whole house doing things.

"Now you get me my hammer, Will," he shouted; "and you bring me the ruler, Tom; and I shall want the step-ladder, and I had better have a kitchen chair, too; and Jim, you run round to Mr. Goggles, and ask him to lend me his spirit-level. Don't you go, Maria, because I shall want somebody to hold the light; and when the girl comes back she must go out again for a piece of picture-cord; and Tom—where's Tom?—Tom, you come here; I shall want you to hand me up the picture."

Then he lifted up the picture, and dropped it, and it came out of the frame, and he tried to save the glass, and cut himself; and then he jumped round the room, looking for his handkerchief. He could not find his handkerchief, because it was in the pocket of the coat he had taken off, and he did not know where he had put the coat, and all the house had to stop looking for his tools, and start looking for his coat; while he danced round and hindered them.

"Doesn't anybody in the whole house know where my coat is? I never saw such people in my life. Six of you!—and you can't find a coat that I put down not five minutes ago! Well, of all the——"

Then he got up, and found that he had been sitting on it, and called out:

"Oh, you can stop looking. I've found it myself now. I might as well ask the cat to find anything as expect you people to find it."

When he had spent half an hour in tying up his finger, and when a new glass had been got, and the tools, and the ladder, and the chair, and the candle