

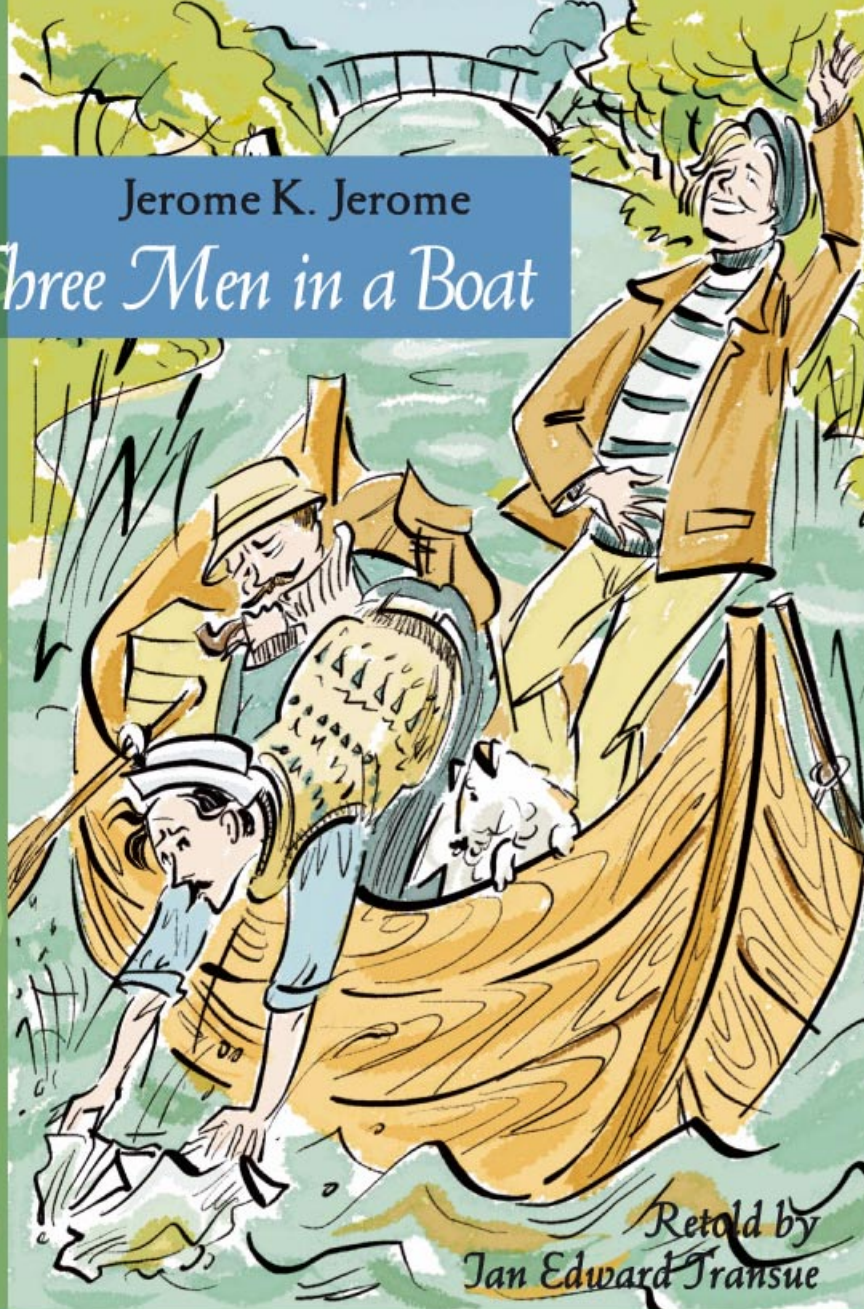
Jerome K. Jerome

Three men in a boat



Retold by Jan Edward Transue

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Mediasat Poland Bis sp. z o.o.
ul. Mikołajska 26
31-027 Kraków

www.czytamy.pl
czytamy@czytamy.pl

Projekt okładki i ilustracje: Małgorzata Flis
Skład: Marek Szwarnóg

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Chapter I

What We Need is Rest!



There were four of us - George, William Samuel Harris, myself and Montmorency. We were sitting in my room and talking about how bad we were - bad from a medical point of view I mean, of course.

We were all feeling terrible, and we were getting quite nervous about it. Harris and George said they hardly knew what they were doing at times. With me, it was my liver that was out of order. I knew it was my liver that was out of order, because I had just been reading an article which described the various symptoms by which a man could tell when his liver was out of order. I had them all.

It is an extraordinary thing, but I never read a medicine article without coming to the conclusion that I have the particular disease written about in the article.

I remember going to the British Museum one day to read about some illness which I had. I got down the book and read all I could. Then I kept reading about other diseases. I forget which was the first disease I read about, but before I had read halfway down the list of symptoms, I was positive that I had got it.

Every disease I came to, I found that I had in some form or another. I read through the whole book, and the only illness I found that I had not got was housemaid's knee.

I had walked into that reading-room a happy,

healthy man. I crawled out a horrible wreck.

I went straight to my doctor and saw him, and he said: „Well, what's the matter with you?"

I said: „I will not take up your time telling you what is the matter with me. Life is short, and you might pass away before I have finished. But I will tell you what is NOT the matter with me. I have not got housemaid's knee. Why I have not got housemaid's knee, I cannot tell you. Everything else, however, I HAVE got."

And I told him how I came to discover it all.

Then he examined me and held my wrist, and then he hit me on the chest when I wasn't expecting it - a cowardly thing to do, I call it. After that, he sat down, wrote out a prescription, folded it up and gave it to me. I put it in my pocket and went out.

I took it to the nearest chemist's and handed it in. The man read it and then handed it back.

He said: „I am a chemist. If I was a store and family hotel combined, I might be able to help you. But I'm only a chemist."

I read the prescription. It said:

„1 pound beefsteak, with

1 pint bitter beer every 6 hours.

1 ten-mile walk every morning.

1 bed at 11 sharp every night.

And don't fill your head with things you don't understand."



Going back to my liver, I had the symptoms, beyond all mistake, the main one being „a general disinterest in work of any kind“.

As a boy, the disease hardly ever left me for a day. They did not know, then, that it was my liver. They used to just call it laziness.

„Why, you little devil, you,“ they would say, „get up and do something for your living, can't you?“ - not knowing, of course, that I was ill.

And they didn't give me pills; they just hit me on the side of the head. And, strange as it seems, those hits on the head often cured me - for a short while, anyway.

We sat there for half-an-hour, describing to each other our illnesses, when Mrs. Poppets knocked at the door to find out if we were ready for supper. We smiled sadly at one another, and said we supposed we had better try to eat a bit.

„What we want is rest,“ said Harris after supper.

„Rest and a complete change,“ said George, „this will make us feel better.“

I agreed with George and suggested that we should look for some quiet spot, far from the crowds.

Harris said he thought it would be boring and suggested a sea trip instead.

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 horrible.

You start on Monday with the idea that you are going to enjoy yourself. On Tuesday, you wish you hadn't come. On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, you wish you were dead. On Saturday, you are able to drink a little tea and to sit up on deck. On Sunday, you begin to walk about again and eat solid food. And on Monday morning, as you are waiting to step ashore, you begin to thoroughly like it.

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 (including what there was of Harris's), and the hard work would give us a good appetite and make us sleep well.

Harris said he didn't think George ought to do anything that would make him sleepier than he always was, as it might be dangerous. He added that if he DID sleep any more, he might just as well be dead.

Harris said, however, that the river would suit him to a „T“. I don't know what a „T“ is, but it seems to suit everybody.

The only one who was not happy with the suggestion was Montmorency. He never did care for the river.

„It's all very well for you fellows,“ he says. „You like it, but I don't. There's nothing for me to do.

If I see a rat, you won't stop, and if I go to sleep, you'll go fooling about with the boat and throw me overboard. If you ask me, I call the whole thing foolish.“

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

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 work till the afternoon (George goes to sleep at a bank from ten to four each day, except Saturdays, when they wake him up and make him leave at two), would meet us there.

Should we „camp out“ or sleep at inns?

George and I were for camping out. We said it would be so wild and free – the golden sun fading as it sets; the pale stars shining at night; and the moon throwing her silver arms around the river as we fall asleep to the sound of the water.

Harris said: „How about if it rains?“

There is no poetry about Harris. Harris never „weeps, he knows not why“. If Harris's eyes fill with tears, you can bet it is because Harris has been eating raw onions.

If you were to stand at night by the sea-shore with Harris, and say: „Hark! do you not hear? Is it but the mermaids singing deep below the waving

waters?" Harris would take you by the arm, and say: „I know what it is; you've got a chill. Now, you come along with me. I know a place round the corner here, where you can get a drop of the finest Scotch whisky you ever tasted - put you right in no time."

Harris always knows a place round the corner where you can get something to drink.

As for to camping out, his practical view of the matter was a good point. Camping out in rainy weather is not pleasant.

It is evening. You are completely wet, and there is a good two inches of water in the boat. You find a place on the banks that is not quite so wet as other places you have seen, and you land and pull out the tent, and two of you begin to put it up.

It is completely wet, and it flops about and falls down on you and makes you mad. At last, somehow or other, it does get up, and you get the things out of the boat.

Rainwater is the main part of supper. The bread is two thirds rainwater, the beefsteak-pie is full of it, and the jam, butter, salt and coffee have all become soup.

After supper, you find your tobacco is wet, and you cannot smoke. Luckily you have a bottle of the stuff that cheers you up, if taken in proper quantity, and this helps you to go to bed.



We therefore decided that we would sleep out on fine nights and sleep in hotels, inns or pubs when it was wet, or when we wanted a change.

Montmorency approved. He does not like the quiet. Give him something noisy, and he is happy. To look at Montmorency you would imagine that he was an angel sent to earth in the shape of a small fox-terrier.

When first he came to live with me, I used to look at him and think: „Oh, that dog will never live.“

But, when I had paid for about a dozen chickens that he had killed, and had pulled him, growling and kicking, out of a hundred and fourteen street fights, and had had a dead cat brought round for my inspection by an angry female, who called me a murderer, then I began to think that maybe he'd live a bit longer.

The following evening, we again got together to discuss and arrange our plans. Harris said:

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

That's Harris - so ready to take the responsibility of everything himself, and put it on the backs of other people.

He always reminds me of my poor Uncle

Podger. You never saw such a commotion in all your life as when my Uncle Podger did a job round the house. A picture would need to be put up, and Uncle Podger would say:

„Oh, you leave that to ME. Don't you worry about that. I'LL do all that.“

And then he would take off his coat and begin. After an hour or more of cutting himself, breaking the glass in the frame, dropping the hammer and nails, smashing his thumb, and shouting at everyone around him, the picture would finally be put up.

Harris will be just that sort of man when he grows up.

The first list we made out had to be thrown away. It was clear that the Thames wasn't large enough for a boat as big as we would need.

George said: „We must not think of the things we could do with, but only of the things that we can't do without.“

George comes out really quite sensible at times. You'd be surprised.

„We won't take a tent,“ suggested George. „We will have a boat with a cover. It is ever so much simpler and more comfortable.“

It seemed a good thought. I do not know whether you have ever seen the thing I mean. You fix iron hoops up over the boat, and throw a huge

canvas over them, and tie it down all round, and it converts the boat into a sort of little house.

George said that we must take a rug each, a lamp, some soap, a brush and comb (between us), a toothbrush (each), a basin, some toothpaste, some shaving tackle (sounds like a French exercise, doesn't it?), and a couple of big-towels for bathing. I notice that people always make gigantic arrangements for bathing when they are going anywhere near the water, but that they don't bathe much when they are there.

Harris said there was nothing like a swim before breakfast to give you an appetite. He said it always gave him an appetite. George said that if it was going to make Harris eat more than Harris ordinarily ate, then Harris shouldn't have a bath at all.

He said there would be quite enough hard work in towing enough food for Harris up stream as it was.

I told George, however, how much better it would be to have Harris clean and fresh about the boat, even if we did have to take a few more hundredweight of food.

Chapter II

Departure (Eventually)



Then we discussed the food question. George said: „Begin with breakfast.“ (George is so practical.) „Now for breakfast we shall want a frying-pan“ - (Harris said we couldn't eat it, but we told him not to be an idiot) - „a tea-pot, a kettle and a small stove.“

For other breakfast things, George suggested eggs and bacon, cold meat, tea, bread and butter and jam. For lunch we could have biscuits, cold meat, bread and butter and jam - but NO CHEESE. Cheese gets everywhere and gives a cheesy flavour to everything else there. You can't tell whether you are eating apple-pie, German sausage or strawberries and cream. It all seems cheese. There is too much odour about cheese.

I remember a friend of mine buying a couple of cheeses at Liverpool that you could smell for three miles and would knock a man over at two hundred yards. I was in Liverpool at the time, and my friend asked if I would take them back with me to London, as he had to stay for a day or two longer.

I got the cheeses and went to the train station. The train was crowded, and I had to get into a carriage where there were already seven other people. I got in, and, putting my cheeses upon the rack, sat down with a pleasant smile and said it was a warm day.

A few moments passed, and then an old gentleman began to move about. He and another man both began sniffing, and, without another word, they got up and went out. Then a large lady got up and gathered up her bags and went. The remaining four passengers sat on for a while until a man in the corner said it smelled like a dead baby. Then they all tried to get out of the door at the same time and hurt themselves.

From Crewe I had the compartment to myself, though the train was crowded. As we reached the different stations, the people, seeing my empty carriage, would rush for it. Then one would open the door and fall back into the arms of the man behind him. They would all come and have a sniff and then get into other carriages.

From Euston, I took the cheeses down to my friend's house and left them with his wife.

My friend was kept in Liverpool longer than he expected. Three days later, he still hadn't returned home, and his wife called on me.

„You think Tom would be upset,“ she asked, „if I gave a man some money to take the cheeses away and bury them?“

I answered that I thought he would never smile again.

„Very well, then,“ said my friend's wife, „I shall take the children and go to a hotel until those

cheeses are eaten. I can't live any longer in the same house with them."

"We'll have a good meal at seven," said George. He suggested meat and fruit pies, tomatoes, fruit and green stuff. For drink, we took some lemonade, plenty of tea and a bottle of whisky, in case, as George said, we got upset.

The next day we got everything together and met in the evening to pack. We got big bags for the clothes and a couple of baskets for the food and the cooking equipment.

I said I'd pack.

Packing is one of those many things that I feel I know more about than any other person living. (It surprises me sometimes how many of these subjects there are.) George and Harris said they liked the suggestion very much. Then George lit a pipe and sat in the easy-chair, while Harris put his legs on the table and lit a cigar.

This was hardly what I intended. What I had meant, of course, was that I should boss the job, and that Harris and George should work under my directions. Nothing irritates me more than seeing other people sitting about doing nothing when I'm working.

However, I did not say anything, but started the packing. It seemed a longer job than I had

thought it was going to be, but I got the bag finished at last.

"Aren't you going to put the boots in?" said Harris.

And I looked round and found I had forgotten them. That's just like Harris. He couldn't have said a word until I'd got the bag shut, of course.

I opened the bag and packed the boots in. Then, just as I was going to close it, a horrible idea occurred to me. Had I packed my toothbrush?

I had to take everything out now, and, of course, I could not find it. Then I found it inside a boot, and I repacked once more. After I had closed the bag, I found that I had packed my tobacco in it and had to re-open it. It got shut up finally at 10.50 pm, and then there remained the baskets to do. Harris said that he and George had better do the rest. I agreed and sat down.

They began happily, evidently trying to show me how to do it. I made no comment; I only waited. I looked at the piles of plates and cups, kettles, bottles and jars, pies, stoves, cakes and tomatoes, and I felt that the thing would soon become exciting.

It did. They started with breaking a cup, then Harris packed the strawberry jam on top of a tomato and squashed it, and they had to pick out the tomato with a teaspoon. Soon after, George stepped on the butter.



Montmorency was in it all, of course. Montmorency's ambition in life is to get in the way and be yelled at. He came and sat down on things just when they were to be packed. And he strongly believed that, whenever Harris or George reached out their hand for anything, it was his cold, wet nose that they wanted. Then he pretended that the lemons were rats and got into the basket and killed three of them before Harris could hit him with the frying-pan.

The packing was done at 12.50, and Harris sat on the big basket and said he hoped nothing would be found broken. George said that if anything was broken, it was broken.

We had planned to wake at 6.30, but, thanks to George, who was supposed to have woken us, we overslept until nearly nine o'clock.

After breakfast, George left for work, and Harris and I carried out our luggage, which their seemed to be a lot of when we put it all together, onto the doorstep and waited for a cab.

We got to Waterloo at eleven and asked where the eleven-five started from. Of course nobody knew. The porter who took our things thought it would go from platform number two, while another porter had heard that it would go from number one. The station-master, on the other hand, was sure it would start from the high-level platform. So we went to the high-level platform and saw the engine-driver and asked him if he was going to Kingston. He said he couldn't say for certain of course, but that he thought he was. We placed half-a-crown into his hand and begged him to be the eleven-five for Kingston.

When we arrived at Kingston, our boat was waiting for us, and we stored our luggage and stepped into it.

With Harris at the oars and I at the tiller-lines and Montmorency, unhappy and very suspicious,

in the prow, out we went onto the waters which, for a fortnight, were to be our home.

It was a glorious morning, and the quiet back streets of Kingston near the water's edge looked quite picturesque in the sunlight.

I began thinking about Kingston. Great Caesar crossed the river there, and the Roman legions camped upon its banks. Caesar, like Queen Elizabeth, seems to have stopped everywhere around England: only he was more respectable than good Queen Elizabeth; he didn't stay at the public-houses.

She was crazy about public-houses. There's hardly a pub within ten miles of London that she does not seem to have stopped at or slept at some time or other. I wonder if Harris ever became a great and good man, and got to be Prime Minister, and died, if they would put up signs over the public-houses that he had visited: „Harris had a glass of bitter in this house“; „Harris had two glasses of Scotch here in the summer of `88“; „Harris was thrown out of here in December, 1886“.

No, there would be too many of them! It would be the pubs that he had never entered that would become famous. The people would come to see what could have been wrong with it.

At this point Harris threw away the oars, got up and left his seat and sat on his back with his legs in the air. Montmorency howled and turned

a somersault, and the top basket jumped up, and all the things came out.

I will not repeat the things Harris said. It seems I was thinking of other things and forgot that I was steering. Because of this, we had run into the bank of the river, but that is no excuse for the language Harris used.

Once everything was back to normal, Harris said he had done enough for a bit and proposed that I should take a turn. As we were at the bank, I got out and took the tow-line and pulled the boat on past Hampton Court.

Harris asked me if I'd ever been in the maze at Hampton Court. He said he went in once to show somebody else the way. He had studied it in a map, and it was so simple that it seemed foolish. It was a cousin that Harris took into the maze.

They met some people soon after they had got inside who said they had been there for three-quarters of an hour. Harris told them they could follow him if they liked. They said it was very kind of him and began following him.

They picked up many other people as they went along, until they had gathered everyone in the maze. People who had given up all hopes of ever getting out cheered up at the sight of Harris and his party. Harris said he thought there must have been twenty people following him.

Harris kept on turning to the right, but it seemed a long way.

At last they passed a piece of bread on the ground that Harris's cousin was sure he had noticed there seven minutes ago. A woman with a baby said she herself had taken it from the child and had thrown it down there just before she met Harris. She also added that she wished she never had met Harris.

Harris took out the map, but he didn't know exactly where they were on it and suggested that the best thing to do would be to go back to the entrance and begin again. About ten minutes more passed, and then they found themselves in the centre.

They all got crazy at last and sang out for the keeper, and the man came and climbed up the ladder outside and shouted out directions to them. But everyone became confused, and so the man told them to stop where they were, and he would come to them.

He was a young keeper and new to the business, and when he got in, he couldn't find them, and he wandered about trying to get to them, and then HE got lost.

They had to wait till one of the old keepers came back from his dinner before they got out.

Harris said he thought it was a very fine maze, so far as he was a judge, and we agreed that we would try to get George to go into it on our way back.

Chapter III

Tombstones, Trespassing & Tow-Lines



It took us some time to pass through Moulsey Lock, which is, I suppose, the busiest lock on the river.

I have stood and watched it, sometimes, when you could not see any water at all, but only a brilliant mass of bright jackets, caps, hats and ribbons. When looking down into the lock, you might think it was a huge box full of colourful flowers.

The river gives everyone a good opportunity to dress up. Once in a while, we men are able to show our taste in colours. I always like a little red in my things and Harris always keeps to shades or mixtures of orange or yellow. George has bought some new things for this trip, and I'm rather disturbed about them. He brought a jacket home and showed it to us on Thursday evening. We asked him what colour he called it, and he said he didn't think there was a name for the colour. George put it on and asked us what we thought of it. Harris said that as an object to hang over a flower-bed to frighten the birds away, it was good, but as clothing for a human being, it made him ill. George got quite upset, but, as Harris said, if he didn't want our opinion, why did he ask for it?

Harris wanted to get out at Hampton Church to go and see Mrs. Thomas's tomb. He did not seem to really know who she was, but had heard that she has got a funny tomb, and he wanted to get out and see it.

I objected. I never did seem to enjoy tombstones myself. I know that the proper thing to do when you get to a village or town is to go to the churchyard and enjoy the graves, but it is something that I don't care for.

One morning I was leaning against the low stone wall around a little village church, and I smoked and enjoyed the peaceful scenery. I was thinking wonderful, peaceful thoughts, when I heard a voice crying out: „All right, sir, I'm coming, I'm coming.”

I looked up and saw an old bald-headed man walking across the churchyard towards me, carrying a huge bunch of keys in his hand.

„I'm coming, sir, I'm coming. I ain't as young as I used to be. This way, sir.”

„Go away, you miserable old man,” I said. „Leave me before I jump over the wall and kill you.”

He seemed surprised.

„Don't you want to see the tombs?” he asked.

„No,” I answered, „I don't. I want to stand here against this old wall. Go away and don't disturb me. I am full of beautiful thoughts. Don't you come fooling about, making me mad with this silly tombstone nonsense of yours. Go away and get somebody to bury you cheap, and I'll pay half the expense.”

He rubbed his eyes and looked hard at me.

„You're a stranger in these parts? You don't live here?"

„No," I said, „I don't. YOU wouldn't if I did."

„Well then," he said, „you want to see the tombs!"

„I do not want to see the tombs," I replied.

„Why should I?"

Then he came near and whispered quietly: „I've got a couple of skulls down in the crypt," he said.

„Come and see those. Oh, do come and see the skulls!"

Then I turned and ran, and as I ran I heard him calling to me: „Oh, come and see the skulls! Come back and see the skulls!"

Harris, however, likes tombs and the thought of not seeing Mrs. Thomas's grave made him crazy. He said he had looked forward to seeing Mrs. Thomas's grave from the first moment that the trip was proposed.

I reminded him of George, and how we had to get the boat up to Shepperton by five o'clock to meet him. Then he got angry with George.

„I never see him doing any work there," Harris said. „He sits behind a bit of glass all day, trying to look as if he was doing something. I have to work for my living. Why can't he work? If he was here, we could go and see that tomb. I don't believe he's at the bank at all. He's sitting about

somewhere, leaving us to do all the work. I'm going to get out and have a drink."

I told him that we were miles away from a pub, and I reminded him that there was lemonade in the basket if he wanted something cool and refreshing to drink.

Then he got upset about the lemonade.

He said he must drink something, however, and climbed upon the seat and leant over to get the bottle. It was right at the bottom of the basket and seemed difficult to find, and he had to lean over further and further, and, while trying to steer at the same time, he pulled the wrong line and sent the boat into the bank. He fell down right into the basket and stood there on his head with his legs sticking up into the air. He had to stay there till I could get hold of his legs and pull him out, and that made him madder than ever.

We stopped by Kempton Park and had lunch. It is a pretty little spot, and we had just started on the bread and jam when a gentleman came along and wanted to know if we knew that we were trespassing. We said we hadn't really thought about it, but that, if he told us that we WERE trespassing, we would believe it.

He told us that we were, and we thanked him, but he still hung about and seemed to be dissatisfied, so we asked him if there was anything more that

we could do for him. He then said that it was his duty to make us leave the property.

Harris said that if it was a duty, it ought to be done, and asked the man what was his idea about the best way to do it. The man looked at him and said he would go and speak with his master and then come back and throw us both into the river.

Of course, we never saw him any more, and, of course, all he really wanted was a shilling. There are a certain number of people who make quite an income by blackmailing weak-minded people in this way.

We reached Sunbury Lock at half-past three, rowed up to Walton afterwards, then on past Halliford and Shepperton, which are both pretty little spots where they touch the river.

At Weybridge, the Wey, the Bourne, and the Basingstoke Canal all enter the Thames together. The lock is just opposite the town, and the first thing that we saw when we came in view of it was George wearing his new jacket.

Montmorency started barking, and Harris and I shouted. George waved his hat and yelled back. The lock-keeper rushed out thinking that somebody had fallen into the lock and then appeared annoyed at finding that no one had.

George had rather a curious parcel in his hand. It was round and flat at one end, with a long straight handle sticking out of it.

„What's that?" said Harris, „a frying-pan?"

„No," said George, with a strange, wild look in his eyes, „it's a banjo."

„I never knew you played the banjo!" cried Harris and I together.

„Not exactly," replied George, „but it's very easy they tell me, and I've got the instruction book!"

We made George work, now we had got him. He did not want to work, of course. He had had a hard time in the City, so he explained, but Harris said: „Ah! and now you are going to have a hard time on the river for a change!"

We handed him the tow-line, and he took it and stepped out.

There is something very strange about a tow-line. You roll it up with as much patience and care as possible, and five minutes afterwards, when you pick it up, it is one horrible tangle.

I firmly believe that if you took an average tow-line, and stretched it out straight across the middle of a field, and then turned your back on it for thirty seconds, that, when you looked round again, you would find that it had got itself altogether in a pile in the middle of the field.

This tow-line I had taken in myself just before we had got to the lock. I had rolled it up and laid it down gently at the bottom of the boat. Harris had lifted it up carefully and put it into George's

hand. A second later it was all in tangles.

It is always the same. The man on the bank, who is trying to disentangle it, thinks all the fault lies with the man who rolled it up. On the other hand, the man who wound it up thinks it's the fault of the man on the bank. They feel so angry with one another that they would like to hang each other with the thing.

Ten minutes go by, and the first man gives a yell and goes mad as the line gets into a tighter tangle than ever. Then the second man climbs out of the boat and comes to help him, and they get in each other's way. In the end, they do get it untangled, and then turn round and find that the boat has drifted off.

This really happened once up by Boveney one morning. We were rowing down stream and noticed a couple of men on the bank. They were looking at each other with miserable expressions on their face, and they held a long tow-line between them. It was clear that something had happened, so we asked them what was the matter.

„Why, our boat's gone off!“ they replied. „We just got out to disentangle the tow-line, and when we looked round, it was gone!“

We found the boat for them half a mile further down, but I shall never forget the picture of those two men walking up and down the bank with a tow-line, looking for their boat.



One sees a good many funny things up the river in connection with towing. One of the most common is the sight of a couple of towers, walking along, deep in discussion, while the man in the boat, a hundred yards behind them, is screaming to them to stop.

He calls to them to stop, quite gently and politely at first.

„Hi! stop a minute, will you?“ he shouts cheerily. „I’ve dropped my hat over-board.“

Then: „Hi! Tom - Dick! can’t you hear?“ not quite so gently this time.

Then: „Hi! Confound YOU, you idiots! Hi! stop! Oh you - !“

After that he jumps up, and dances about, and swears. And the small boys on the bank stop and look at him and throw stones at him as he is pulled along past them.

George got the line right after a while and towed us on to Penton Hook. There we discussed the important question of camping. We had decided to sleep on board that night. It seemed too early to think about stopping right then, so we decided to keep going to Runnymede, three and a half miles further. We all wished afterward that we had stopped at Penton Hook. Three or four miles up stream isn’t much early in the morning, but it is a long way at the end of a long day. Every half-mile seems like two. When you have walked along for what seems like at least ten miles, and still the lock is not in sight, you begin to seriously think that somebody must have run off with it.

Chapter IV

Canvas & Cold



It was half-past seven when we were through Bell Weir Lock, and we all got in and rowed up close to the left bank, looking out for a spot to stay.

We had originally intended to go on to Magna Charta Island, a very pretty part of the river, and to camp there. But, somehow, we did not feel that we wanted the prettiness nearly so much now as we had earlier in the day. We did not want scenery. We wanted to have our supper and go to bed.

Then we thought we were going to have supper, but George said that we had better get the canvas up first before it got quite dark, and while we could see what we were doing.

That canvas wanted more putting up than I think any of us had imagined. It looked so simple at first. You took five iron hoops and fitted them up over the boat and then pulled the canvas over them and tied it down. It would take ten minutes, we thought.

That was an under-estimate.

We took up the hoops and began to drop them into the sockets placed for them. You would not imagine this to be dangerous work, but, looking back now, it is a wonder to me that any of us are alive. They were not hoops, they were demons. First they would not fit into their sockets at all, and we had to jump on them and kick them and hammer at them. Then when they were in, it

turned out that they were the wrong hoops for those particular sockets, and they had to come out again.

But they would not come out until two of us had gone and struggled with them for five minutes, when they would jump up suddenly and try and throw us into the water and drown us. And while we were struggling with one side of the hoop, the other side would come behind us and hit us over the head.

We got them fixed at last, and then all that was to be done was to arrange the covering over them. George unrolled it and tied one end over the nose of the boat. Harris stood in the middle to take it from George and roll it on to me.

How he managed it I do not know, and he could not explain himself, but somehow Harris succeeded in getting himself completely rolled up in it. He was so firmly wrapped round that he could not get out. He struggled for freedom, and, in doing so, knocked over George. Then George, swearing at Harris, began to struggle too and got himself entangled and rolled up.

I knew nothing about all this at the time. I had been told to stand where I was and wait till the canvas came to me, so Montmorency and I stood there and waited. We could see the canvas being violently pulled and thrown about, but we

supposed this was part of the method and did not interfere.

We waited some time, and finally George's head came out over the side of the boat and spoke up.

„Give us a hand here, you cuckoo!”

It took us half an hour before it was properly up, and then we got out supper. We put the kettle on to boil, up in the nose of the boat, and went down to the stern and pretended to take no notice of it.

That is the only way to get a kettle to boil up the river. If it sees that you are waiting for it, it will never boil. You have to go away and begin your meal as if you were not going to have any tea at all. Then you will soon hear it bubbling away, ready to be made into tea.

By the time everything else was ready, the tea was waiting. Then we lit the lantern and sat down to supper.

For thirty-five minutes not a sound was heard in that boat, except the noise of cutlery and dishes. At the end of thirty-five minutes we all sat back and relaxed.

How good one feels when one is full! One feels so forgiving and generous after a good meal - so kind-hearted.

Before our supper, Harris and George and I were arguing. After our supper, we loved each other and everybody.

We lit our pipes and sat, looking out on the quiet night, and talked.

George began talking of a very funny thing that happened to his father once. He said his father was travelling with another fellow through Wales, and, one night, they stopped at a little inn and spent the evening there.

They were to sleep in the same room, but in different beds. They took the candle and went up, but the candle went out when they got into the room, and they had to undress and get into bed in the dark. But instead of getting into separate beds, as they thought they were doing, they both climbed into the same one without knowing it - one getting in with his head at the top, and the other getting in from the opposite side and lying with his feet on the pillow.

There was silence for a moment, and then George's father said: „Joe!”

„What's the matter, Tom?” replied Joe's voice from the other end of the bed.

„Why, there's a man in my bed,” said George's father. „Here's his feet on my pillow.”

„Well, it's an extraordinary thing, Tom,” answered the other, „but there's a man in my bed, too!”

„What are you going to do?” asked George's father.

„Well, I'm going to throw him out,” replied Joe.

„So am I,“ said George’s father.

There was a brief struggle, followed by two heavy bumps on the floor, and then a rather sad voice said: „I say, Tom!“

„Yes!“

„How have you got on?“

„Well, to tell you the truth, my man’s thrown me out.“

„So’s mine! I say, I don’t think much of this inn, do you?“

I awoke at six the next morning and found George awake too. We both turned round and tried to go to sleep again, but we could not. If there had been a reason for us to wake up, we would have fallen back to sleep while we were looking at our watches and slept till ten. As there was no reason for our getting up for another two hours at the very least, we both felt that lying down for five minutes more would be death to us.

We had been sitting for a few minutes talking when I decided to wake up Harris, but he just turned over on the other side and said he would be down in a minute. We soon let him know where he was, however, with the help of the boat hook, and he sat up suddenly, sending Montmorency, who had been sleeping right on the middle of his chest, flying across the boat.

Then we pulled up the canvas, and all four of

us looked down at the water and shivered. The idea had been that we should get up early in the morning, throw back the canvas, jump into the river with a joyous shout and enjoy a long swim. Somehow the idea seemed less tempting. The water looked cold.

„Well, who’s going to be first in?“ said Harris at last.

George settled the matter so far as he was concerned by pulling on his socks. Montmorency gave a howl, as if even thinking of the thing had frightened him, and Harris said it would be so difficult to get into the boat again and went back and put on his trousers.

I did not altogether like to give in, so I decided to go down to the edge and just throw the water over myself. I took a towel and went out on the bank and sat on the branch of a tree that dipped down into the water.

It was bitterly cold. I thought I would not throw the water over myself after all. I would go back into the boat and dress. I turned to do so, and, as I turned, the silly branch broke, and I and the towel went in together with a tremendous splash, and I was out mid-stream with a gallon of Thames water inside me before I knew what had happened.

Rather an amusing thing happened while dressing that morning. I was very cold when I got



back into the boat, and, in my hurry to get my shirt on, I accidentally dropped it into the water. It made me awfully angry, especially as George burst out laughing. I could not see anything to laugh at, and I told George so, and he only laughed the more. I never saw a man laugh so much. And then, just as I was getting the shirt out of the water, I noticed that it was not my shirt at all, but George's, which I had mistaken for mine. Then the humour of the thing struck me for the first time, and I began to laugh. And the more I looked from George's wet shirt to George, the more I was amused, and I laughed so much that I had to let the shirt fall back into the water again.

„Aren't you - you - going to get it out?" said George, laughing.

I could not answer him at all for a while, as I was laughing so hard, but, at last, I managed to say: „It isn't my shirt - it's YOURS!"

I never saw a man's face change so suddenly in all my life before.

„What!" he yelled, jumping up. „You silly cuckoo! Why can't you be more careful what you're doing?"

I tried to make him see the humour of the thing, but he could not.

Harris proposed that we should have scrambled eggs for breakfast. He said he would cook them.

It seemed, from his account, that he was very good at doing scrambled eggs. He was quite famous for them.

It made our mouths water to hear him talk about the things, and we handed him the stove and the frying-pan and all the eggs that had not smashed and begged him to begin.

He had some trouble in breaking the eggs - or rather not so much trouble in breaking them exactly as in getting them into the frying-pan when broken. Eventually he got some half-a-dozen into the pan at last.

It seemed like a lot of work. Whenever he went near the pan, he burned himself, and then he would drop everything and dance round the stove swearing.

We did not know what scrambled eggs were, and we fancied that it must be some Red Indian sort of dish that required dances and incantations for its proper cooking. Montmorency went and put his nose over it once, and the fat splashed up and burnt him, and then he began dancing and swearing. Altogether it was one of the most interesting and exciting operations I have ever seen.

The result was not the success that Harris had wanted. There seemed so little to show for the business. Six eggs had gone into the frying-pan, and all that came out was a teaspoonful of burnt looking mess.

Chapter V

How To Deal With A Steam-Launch



From Picnic Point to Old Windsor Lock is a delightful part of the river, but after you pass Old Windsor, the river is rather uninteresting and does not become itself again until you are nearing Boveney.

George and I towed up past the Home Park, and we kept going on to a little below Monkey Island, where we ate the cold beef for lunch, and then we found that we had forgotten to bring any mustard. I don't think I have ever felt that I wanted mustard as badly as I wanted it then. I don't care for mustard usually, but I would have given worlds for it then.

I don't know how many worlds there may be in the universe, but anyone who had brought me a spoonful of mustard at that moment could have had them all.

It made everything depressing, there being no mustard. We ate our beef in silence, but we brightened up a bit when George pulled out a tin of pineapple from the bottom of the basket.

We are very fond of pineapple, all three of us. We looked at the picture on the tin and thought of the juice. We smiled at one another, and Harris got a spoon ready.

Then we looked for something to open the tin with. We looked everywhere, but there was no tin-opener to be found.



Harris tried to open the tin with a pocket-knife and broke the knife and cut himself badly. George tried with a pair of scissors, and the scissors flew up and nearly put his eye out. Then I tried to make a hole in the thing with the boat hook, and the hook slipped and threw me out of the boat into two feet of muddy water.

After that, we took the tin and beat it into every form known to geometry - but we could not make a hole in it. It made us furious! Finally Harris picked it up and threw it far into the middle of the river. As it sank, we got into the boat and rowed quickly away from the spot.

We got up early on the Monday morning at Marlow, after staying at the „Crown“ for the night, and went for a bathe before breakfast. While coming back, though, Montmorency made an awful idiot of himself. Montmorency and I have a serious difference of opinion about cats. I like cats; Montmorency does not.

When I meet a cat, I stop and tickle the side of its head, and the cat sticks up its tail and rubs its nose up against my trousers. When Montmorency meets a cat, the whole street knows about it.

I do not blame the dog, for such is the nature of fox-terriers. But Montmorency wished he had not been this way that morning.

We were, as I have said, returning from a swim, and half-way up the High Street a cat came out from one of the houses in front of us and began to walk across the road. Montmorency gave a cry of joy and ran after the cat.

His victim was a large black Tom. I never saw such a cat before. It had lost half its tail, one of

its ears and a large part of its nose. It was a long, tough-looking animal.

Montmorency went for that poor cat at the rate of twenty miles an hour, but the cat did not hurry up. It walked quietly on until its would-be killer was within a yard of it, and then it turned round and sat down in the middle of the road and looked at Montmorency.

Montmorency isn't a coward, but there was something about the look of that cat. He stopped suddenly and looked back at Tom.



Neither spoke, but you could imagine the conversation:

THE CAT: „Can I do anything for you?“

MONTMORENCY: „No - no, thanks.“

THE CAT: „If you really want something, please say so.“

MONTMORENCY (BACKING DOWN THE STREET): „Oh, no - not at all - certainly - don't you trouble yourself. I - I am afraid I've made a mistake. I thought I knew you. Sorry I disturbed you.“

THE CAT: „Not at all - quite a pleasure. Sure you don't want anything, now?“

MONTMORENCY (STILL BACKING): „Not at all, thanks - not at all - very kind of you. Good morning.“

THE CAT: „Good-morning.“

Then the cat rose and continued his walk. Montmorency, putting his tail between his legs, came back to us.

To this day, if you say the word „Cats!“ to Montmorency, he will visibly shrink and look up at you, as if to say: „Please don't.“

We did our shopping after breakfast and brought enough food back the boat for three days. We had so many things that when we got down to the landing-stage, the boatman said:

„Let me see, sir, was yours a steam-launch or a house-boat?“

When we told him it was a smaller boat, he seemed surprised.

We had a good deal of trouble with steam-launches that morning. They were going up the river in large numbers - some by themselves, some towing houseboats. I do hate steam-launches. I suppose every rowing man does.

There is something about a steam-launch that brings out every evil instinct in my nature, and I long for the good old days when you could go about and tell people what you thought of them with a hatchet and a bow and arrows.

I think I can honestly say that our one small boat, during that week, caused more annoyance and delay and aggravation to the steam-launches that we came across than all the other boats on the river put together.

„Steam-launch, coming!“ one of us would cry out, noticing the enemy in the distance. I would take the lines, and Harris and George would sit down beside me, all of us with our backs to the launch, and the boat would drift out quietly into mid-stream.

On would come the launch, whistling, and on we would go, drifting. At about a hundred yards off, she would start whistling like mad, and the people would come and lean over the side and yell at us, but we never heard them! Harris would be telling

us a story about his mother, and George and I would not have missed a word of it for worlds.

Then that launch would give a whistle that would nearly burst the boiler, and she would eventually reverse her engines. Everyone on board it would yell at us, and the people on the bank would stand and shout to us, and all the other passing boats would stop and join in. Then Harris would stop in the most interesting part of his story and look up with mild surprise and say to George: „Why, George, it's a steam-launch!”

And George would answer: „Well, you know, I THOUGHT I heard something!”

We found ourselves out of water at Hambledon Lock, so we took our jar and went up to the lock-keeper's house to ask for some.

George smiled and said: „Please, could we have a little water?”

„Certainly,” replied the old gentleman. „Take as much as you want and leave the rest.”

„Thank you so much,” said George, looking about him. „Where do you keep it?”

„It's always in the same place my boy,” was the reply as he pointed up and down the stream, „just behind you.”

„Oh!” exclaimed George, „but we can't drink the river, you know!”

„No, but you can drink SOME of it,” replied

the old fellow. „It's what I've drunk for the last fifteen years.”

After a careful look at the old fellow, George told him that he would prefer it out of a pump.

We got some from a cottage a little higher up. I'm sure THAT was only river water, if we had known. But we did not know, so it was all right.

We tried river water once, but it was not a success. We were coming down stream and had decided to have tea near Windsor. Our jar was empty, and it was a case of going without our tea or taking water from the river. Harris was for giving it a try. He said it must be all right if we boiled the water. So we filled our kettle with Thames water and boiled it.

We had made the tea and were just settling down comfortably to drink it, when George, with his cup half-way to his lips, paused and shouted: „What's that?”

Harris and I looked and saw, coming down towards us in the river, a dog. It was one of the quietest dogs I have ever seen. It was floating on its back with its four legs stuck up straight into the air. On he came, calmly, until he reached the bank, and there, among the grass, he stopped and settled down for the evening.

George said he didn't want any tea, and emptied his cup into the river. Harris did not feel thirsty,

either, and did the same. I had drunk half mine, but I wished I had not.

We went half-way up to Wargrave and got out for lunch, and it was during this lunch that George and I received a shock.

Harris received a shock, too, but I do not think Harris's shock could have been as bad as the shock that George and I had.

We were sitting in a field, about ten yards from the water's edge, and we had just sat down comfortably to eat. Harris had the beefsteak pie between his knees and was cutting into it, and George and I were waiting with our plates ready.

„Have you got a spoon there?“ says Harris.

The basket was close behind us, and George and I both turned round to get one out. We were not five seconds getting it, but when we looked round again, Harris and the pie were gone!

It was a wide, open field. There was not a tree or a bush for hundreds of yards. He could not have fallen into the river, because we were on the water side of him, and he would have had to climb over us to do it.

George and I looked all about. Then we looked at each other.

„Has he been taken up to heaven?“ I asked.

„They wouldn't have taken the pie too,“ said George.



„I suppose that there has been an earthquake,“ suggested George.

And then he added, with sadness in his voice: „I wish he hadn't been cutting that pie.“

We turned our eyes once more towards the spot where Harris and the pie had last been seen on earth, and there, as our blood froze and our hair stood up on end, we saw Harris's head - and nothing but his head - sticking up from the tall grass, the face very red with an expression of great anger!

George was the first to recover.

„Speak!“ he cried, „and tell us whether you are alive or dead - and where is the rest of you?“

„Oh, don't be a stupid idiot!“ said Harris's head. „I believe you did it on purpose.“

„Did what?“ exclaimed George and I.

„Why, you made me sit here - darn silly trick! Here, catch hold of the pie.“

And out of the middle of the earth, as it seemed to us, rose the pie - very much mixed up and damaged - and, after it came Harris - dirty and wet.

He had been sitting, without knowing it, on the very edge of a small gully, the long grass hiding it from view, and when leaning a little back, he had fallen into it, pie and all.

Harris believes to this day that George and I planned it all beforehand.

Chapter VI

The Swan Battle



We decided to stay at one of the Shiplake islands for the night, and as it was still early when we got settled, George said that it would be a great occasion to try a good, huge supper. He suggested that, with the vegetables and the remains of the cold beef and general odds and ends, we should make an Irish stew.

It seemed a fascinating idea. George gathered wood and made a fire, and Harris and I started to peel the potatoes. I should never have thought that peeling potatoes was such work. The job turned out to be the biggest thing of its kind that I had ever been in. We began cheerfully, but our light-heartedness was gone by the time the first potato was finished. The more we peeled, the more peel there seemed to be left on. By the time we had got all the peel off, there was no potato left - at least none worth speaking of. George came and had a look at it - it was about the size of a peanut. He said: „Oh, that won't do! You're wasting them. You must scrape them."

So we scraped them, and that was harder work than peeling. We worked for twenty-five minutes and did four potatoes.

George said you couldn't have only four potatoes in an Irish stew, so we washed half-a-dozen or so more and put them in without peeling. We also put in a cabbage and some

peas. George stirred it all up, and then he said that there seemed to be a lot of room left, so we emptied both the baskets and picked out all the odds and ends and added them to the stew.

I forget the other ingredients, but I know nothing was wasted. I remember that, towards the end, Montmorency, who was greatly interested, came up with a dead water-rat in his mouth, which he clearly wished to add to the dinner.

We had a discussion as to whether the rat should go in or not. Harris said that he thought it would be all right, but George said he had never heard of water-rats in Irish stew, and he would rather not try experiments.

It was a great success, that Irish stew. I don't think I ever enjoyed a meal more. There was something so fresh about it. Here was a dish with a new flavour, with a taste like nothing else on earth.

We finished up with tea and cherry tart, and while making tea, Montmorency had a fight with the kettle - and lost.

Throughout the trip, he was very curious about the kettle. He would sit and watch it as it boiled and then growl at it. When it began to steam, he would want to fight it, but at that moment, some one would always take it away before he could get at it.

Today he determined he would be quicker. At the first sound the kettle made, he got up, growling, and moved towards it in a threatening manner. Then he rushed at that poor little kettle and grabbed it with his teeth.

Then, across the evening stillness, there was a blood-curdling howl, and Montmorency left the boat and ran three times round the island at the rate of thirty-five miles an hour, stopping every now and then to bury his nose in a bit of cool mud.

From that day onward, whenever Montmorency saw the kettle, he would growl and back away from it, then climb out of the boat and sit on the bank till the whole tea business was over.

George got out his banjo after supper and wanted to play it, but Harris said he had got a headache and did not feel strong enough to stand it. George thought the music might do him good, and he played two or three notes, just to show Harris what it was like.

Harris said he would rather have the headache.

George has never learned to play the banjo to this day. He tried on two or three evenings while we were up the river to get a little practice, but it was never a success. Harris never did like it, and Montmorency would sit and howl right through the performance. It was not giving the man a fair chance.

„What's he want to howl like that for when I'm playing?" George would shout, while taking aim at him with a boot.

„What do you want to play like that for when he is howling?" Harris would reply, catching the boot. „You let him alone. He can't help howling. He's got a musical ear, and your playing MAKES him howl."

Harris was irritable after supper - I think it must have been the stew that had upset him - so George and I left him in the boat and decided to go for a walk round Henley. He said he would have a glass of whisky and a pipe and fix things up for the night. We were to shout when we returned, and he would row over from the island and get us.

Henley was quite busy that evening. We met a good number of men we knew about the town, and it was nearly eleven o'clock before we set off on our four-mile walk back to the boat.

It was a cold night with a light rain falling, and as we walked through the dark, silent fields, talking to each other, we thought of the warm, dry boat and of Harris, Montmorency and the whisky, and we wished that we were there.

We reached the tow-path at last, and that made us happy because we had not been sure whether we were walking towards the river or away from

it. We passed Shiplake at a quarter to twelve, and then George said:

„You don't happen to remember which of the islands it was, do you?"

„No," I replied, „I don't. How many are there?"

„Only four," answered George. „It will be all right, if he's awake."

We shouted when we came opposite the first island, but there was no answer, so we went to the second and tried there, but with the same result.

„Oh! I remember now," said George, „it was the third one."

And we ran on hopefully to the third one and shouted.

No answer!

It was now past midnight. The hotels at Shiplake and Henley would be full, and we could not go round, knocking on cottage doors in the middle of the night! George suggested walking back to Henley and attacking a policeman so we could get a night's sleep in the police station. But then there was the thought, „Suppose he only hits us back and refuses to lock us up!"

We could not pass the whole night fighting policemen. Besides, we did not want to overdo it and get locked up for six months.

We tried the fourth island, but had no better success. The rain was coming down fast now,

and we were wet to the skin and cold and miserable.

Just when we had given up all hope - yes, I know that is always the time that things do happen in novels and tales, but I can't help it. It WAS just when we had given up all hope, and I must therefore say so. Just when we had given up all hope, then, I suddenly saw a strange sort of light among the trees on the opposite bank. For an instant I thought of ghosts, but in the next moment I thought it was our boat, and I yelled across the water.

We waited for a minute, and then we heard the answering bark of Montmorency. We shouted back loud enough to wake the dead, and, after what seemed an hour, but what was really, I suppose, about five minutes, we saw the lighted boat moving slowly over the blackness, and heard Harris's sleepy voice asking where we were.

There was a strangeness about Harris. It was something more than just tiredness. He had a sad expression on his face, and he gave you the idea of a man who had been through trouble. We asked him if anything had happened, and he said:

„Swans!"

It seemed we had landed close to a swan's nest, and, soon after George and I had gone, two swans came back and tried to argue about it. Harris said

he had had quite a fight with these two swans, but in the end he won.

Half-an-hour afterwards they returned with eighteen other swans! It must have been a terrible battle, according to Harris's version of it. The swans had tried to drag him and Montmorency out of the boat and drown them, and he had defended himself like a hero for four hours and had killed the lot, and they had all swum away to die.

„How many swans did you say there were?“ asked George.

„Thirty-two,“ replied Harris, sleepily.

„You said eighteen just now,“ said George.

„No, I didn't,“ said Harris. „I said twelve. Think I can't count?“

What the real facts were about these swans we never found out. We questioned Harris on the subject in the morning, and he said, „What swans?“ and seemed to think that George and I had been dreaming.

When we were back in the boat, we ate a large supper, George and I, and we would have had some whisky after it, but we could not find it. We asked Harris what he had done with it, but he did not seem to know what we meant by „whisky“ or what we were talking about at all. Montmorency looked as if he knew something, but he said nothing.



The next morning we set out at about ten on what we had determined should be a good day's journey.

We agreed that we would row this morning, as a change from towing, and Harris thought the best arrangement would be that George and I should row while he steered. I did not like this idea at all. I said I thought Harris and George should work and let me rest a bit. It seemed to me that I was doing more than my fair share of the work on this trip.

It always does seem to me that I am doing more work than I should do. It is not that I object to the work, mind you. I like work. It fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours.

You cannot give me too much work. To collect work has almost become a passion with me. My study is so full of it now that there is hardly an inch of room for any more.

And I am careful of my work, too. Some of the work that I have by me now has been in my possession for years and years, and there isn't a finger-mark on it. I take a great pride in my work. No man keeps his work in better condition than I do.

In a boat, I have always noticed that each member of the crew thinks that he is doing everything. Harris believed that it was he alone who had been working, and that both George and I should do something for a change. George,

on the other hand, had the opinion that it was he - George himself - who had done everything worth speaking of.

„Fancy old George talking about work!“ Harris laughed. „Why, about half-an-hour of it would kill him. Have you ever seen George work?“ he said to me.

I agreed with Harris that I never had - certainly not since we had started on this trip.

„Well, I don't see how YOU can know much about it,“ George replied to Harris, „for I'm sure you've been asleep half the time.“

I had to support George. Harris had been very little good in the boat, so far as helping was concerned, from the beginning.

„Well, I've done more than old J., anyhow,“ said Harris.

„Well, you couldn't have done less,“ added George.

„I suppose J. thinks he is the passenger,“ continued Harris.

And that was their thanks to me for having brought them and their horrible old boat all the way up from Kingston, and for having managed everything for them and taken care of them. It is the way of the world.

We settled the present difficulty by arranging that Harris and George should row up past Reading,

and that I should tow the boat on from there.

We came in sight of Reading about eleven. The river is dirty and ugly here, but at Reading lock we met up with a steam-launch belonging to some friends of mine, and they towed us up to within about a mile of Streatley. It is very delightful being towed up by a launch. I prefer it myself to rowing. The run would have been more delightful if it had not been for a lot of small boats that were continually getting in the way of our launch. It is really most annoying the way these rowing boats get in the way of one's launch up the river. Something ought to be done to stop it.

You can whistle till you nearly burst your boiler before they will trouble themselves to hurry. I would have one or two of them run down now and then, if I had my way, just to teach them all a lesson.

My friends' launch took us just below the grotto, and then Harris tried to tell me that it was my turn to row. This seemed to me most unreasonable. It had been arranged in the morning that I should bring the boat up to three miles above Reading. Well, here we were, ten miles above Reading! Surely it was now their turn again.

I could not get either George or Harris to agree, though. So, to save argument, I took the oars and rowed us up to Streatley.

Chapter VII

A Toast To The End

We stayed two days at Streatley and got our clothes washed. We had tried washing them ourselves in the river, and it had been a failure. We were worse off after we had washed our clothes than we were before. Before we had washed them, they had been very, very dirty, but they were wearable. AFTER we had washed them - well, the river between Reading and Henley was much cleaner than it was before. All the dirt contained in the river between Reading and Henley, we collected into our clothes during that wash.

The neighbourhood of Streatley and Goring is a great fishing centre. There is some excellent fishing to be done here. Some people sit and fish all day, but they never catch anything. I never knew anybody to catch anything up the Thames, except dead cats, but that has nothing to do with fishing! The local fisherman's guide doesn't say a word about catching anything. All it says is the place is „a good place for fishing“.

George and I and the dog went for a walk to Wallingford on the second evening, and on the way back, we stopped at a little river-side inn. There was an old fellow there smoking a pipe, and we naturally began talking.

He told us that it had been a fine day today, and we told him that it had been a fine day yesterday,

and then we all told each other that we thought it would be a fine day tomorrow.

Then there was a pause in the conversation, during which which time we looked round the room. Then we saw a dusty old glass-case above the chimney containing a trout. It amazed me, that trout; it was such a monstrous fish.

„Ah!“ said the old gentleman, „fine fellow that, ain't he? Eighteen pounds six ounces he weighed,“ said our friend as he got up. „Yes,“ he continued, „it was sixteen years ago that I caught him. You don't see many fish that size about here now. Goodnight, gentlemen.“

And out he went and left us alone.

We could not take our eyes off the fish after that. We were still looking at it when another man, who had just stopped at the inn, came to the door of the room and also looked at the fish.

„Good-sized trout, that,“ said George, turning round to him.

„Ah!“ replied the man. „Maybe you weren't here, sir, when that fish was caught?“

„No,“ we told him. We were strangers in the neighbourhood.

„It was nearly five years ago that I caught that trout“ he said. „I caught him just below the lock one Friday afternoon. He weighed twenty-six pound. Goodnight, gentlemen, goodnight.“



Five minutes afterwards, a third man came in and described how he had caught it early one morning. When he left, another middle-aged man came in and sat down over by the window.

After a few minutes George turned to the man and said: „I beg your pardon, but my friend here and I would like to know how you caught that trout up there.”

„Why, who told you I caught that trout!” he said.

We said that nobody had told us so, but somehow or other we thought that it was he who had done it.

„Well, it’s a most incredible thing,” answered the stranger, laughing, „because, as a matter of fact, you are quite right. I did catch it.”

And then he went on and told us how it had taken him half an hour to catch it, and how it had broken his fishing-rod. He said he had weighed it carefully when he got home, and it weighed thirty-four pounds.

When he was gone, the landlord came in to us. We told him the various stories we had heard about his trout, and he was very amused, and we all laughed loudly.

„I can’t believe they all told you that they had caught it. Ha! ha! ha! Well, that is good,” said the honest old fellow.

And then he told us the real history of the fish. It seemed that HE had caught it himself, years ago, when he was quite young.

He was called out of the room a minute later, and George and I again looked at the fish.

It excited George so much that he climbed up on the back of a chair to get a better view of it.

And then the chair slipped. George grabbed wildly at the trout-case to save himself, and down it came with a crash.

„You haven't injured the fish, have you?" I cried in alarm.

„I hope not," said George, looking about.

But he had. That trout lay broken into a thousand pieces.

We thought it strange that a stuffed trout should break up into little pieces like that.

And so it would have been strange, if it had been a stuffed trout, but it was not.

That trout was made of plaster.

We were up early the next morning, as we wanted to be in Oxford by the afternoon, and we were through Clifton Lock by half-past eight.

We passed through Iffley Lock at about half-past twelve, and then, having cleaned up the boat and made everything ready for landing, we set to work on our last mile.

Between Iffley and Oxford is the most difficult

bit of the river I know. I have been over it a few times, but I have never been able to get the hang of it. First the river pushes you on to the right bank and then on to the left, then it takes you out into the middle, turns you round three times, and carries you up stream again.

Of course, because of this, we get in the way of many other boats and they get in our way. And of course a good deal of bad language is said.

I don't know why it is, but everybody is always so irritable on the river. When another boat gets in my way, I feel I want to take an oar and kill all the people in it.

The calmest people, when on land, become violent and bloodthirsty when in a boat.

We spent two very pleasant days at Oxford. There are plenty of dogs in the town of Oxford. Montmorency had eleven fights on the first day and fourteen on the second.

The weather changed on the third day, and we started from Oxford upon our journey home in the rain.

The river, when there is sunlight flashing on the water, is a beautiful stream. But the river, when it is cold and rain-drops are falling, is an evil place.

We rowed all day through the rain, and we pretended, at first, that we enjoyed it. Indeed, Harris and I were quite enthusiastic about the

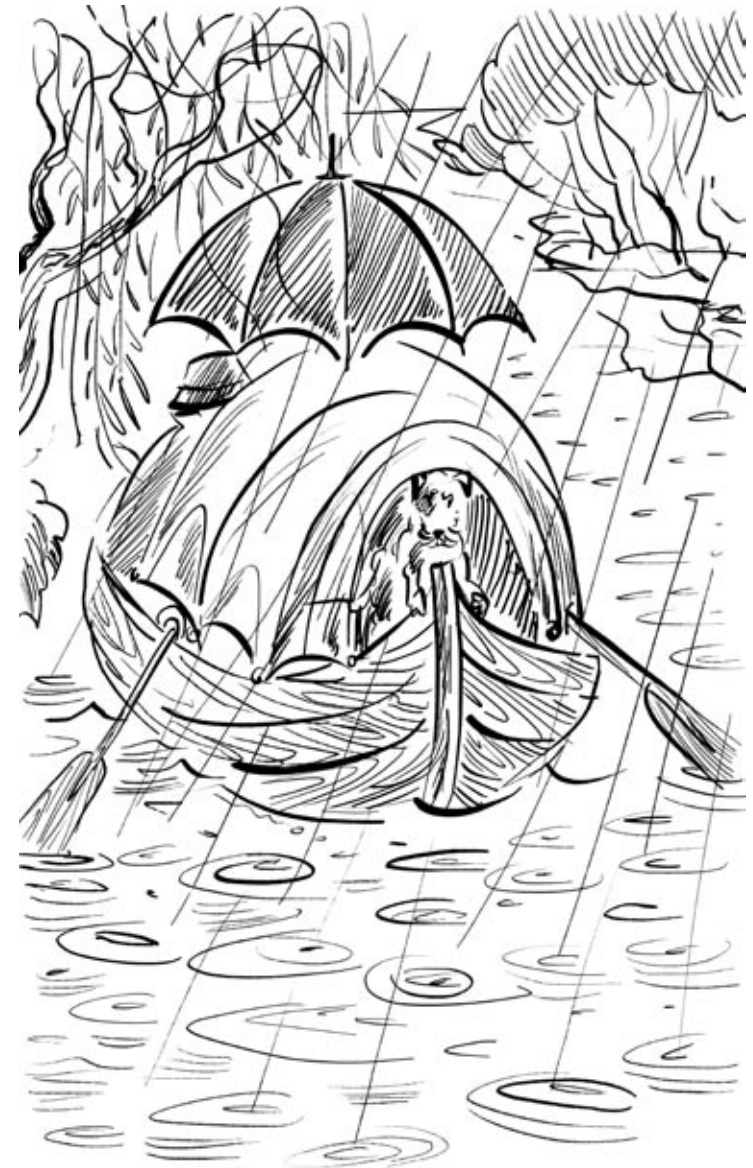
business and tried singing songs - for the first few hours. George was more serious and stayed underneath the umbrella.

We put up the cover before we had lunch and kept it up all afternoon, just leaving a little space in the bow, from which one of us could keep a look-out. In this way we made nine miles, and pulled up for the night a little below Day's Lock.

I cannot honestly say that we had a merry evening. The rain poured down constantly. Everything in the boat was wet and cold, and supper was not a success. Cold veal pie, when you don't feel hungry, is not very good, so Harris passed the rest of his pie to Montmorency, who refused it, and, apparently insulted by the offer, went and sat over at the other end of the boat by himself.

After that, we poured ourselves some whisky and sat round and talked. George told us about a man he had known, who had come up the river two years ago, and who had slept out in a wet boat on just such a night as this was, and it had given him a fever, and nothing was able to save him, and he had died in great pain ten days afterwards.

That reminded Harris of a friend of his who had slept out under canvas one wet night down at Aldershot, „on just such a night as this,” said Harris. The man had woke up in the morning a cripple for life.



The second day was exactly like the first. The rain continued to pour down, and we sat, wrapped up in our coats, underneath the canvas, and drifted slowly down.

At one point we all agreed that we would go through with this job to the very end. We had come out for a fortnight on the river, and a fortnight on the river we meant to have. Even if it killed us! Well, that would be a sad thing for our friends and relations, but it could not be helped.

At about four o'clock we began to discuss our arrangements for the evening. We were a little past Goring at that point, and we decided to go on to Pangbourne and stay there for the night.

„Another merry evening!“ murmured George.

We sat and thought about it. We should be in at Pangbourne by five. We should finish dinner at, say, half-past six. After that we could walk about the village in the pouring rain until bed-time.

„Why, the Alhambra would be more lively,“ said Harris, looking up at the sky.

„With a little supper at the - * to follow,“ I added.

[* A wonderful little restaurant, where you can get one of the best-cooked and cheapest little French dinners or suppers that I know of, with an excellent bottle of wine, and which I am not going to be idiot enough to advertise.]

„Yes, it's almost a pity we've made up our minds to stay in this boat,“ answered Harris.

„If we HADN'T made up our minds to die in this old coffin,“ said George, looking over the boat with hatred, „it might be worth while to mention that there's a train that leaves Pangbourne soon after five, which would put us in town in time to get dinner and then go on to the place you mentioned afterwards.“

Nobody spoke.

Twenty minutes later, three figures, followed by a dog, might have been seen walking quietly from the boat-house at the „Swan“ towards the railway station, dressed in the following clothes:

Black leather shoes - dirty; suit of clothes - very dirty; coat - very wet; umbrella.

We reached Paddington at seven and drove directly to the restaurant I have described before, where we ate a light meal, left Montmorency, together with suggestions for a supper to be ready at half-past ten, and then continued our way to Leicester Square.

We attracted a good deal of attention at the Alhambra. When we got to the paybox, we were informed that we were half-an-hour behind our time.

We convinced the man, with some difficulty, that we were NOT „the famous acrobats from the

Himalaya Mountains", and he took our money and let us in.

Inside we were a still greater success. Our fine clothes were admired by everyone.

It was a proud moment for us all.

We left soon after the first ballet and made our way back to the restaurant, where supper was waiting for us.

I must confess to enjoying that supper. For about ten days we seemed to have been living, more or less, on nothing but cold meat, cake and bread and jam. There had been nothing exciting about it. The smell of Burgundy, and the smell of French sauces, and the sight of clean napkins was a wonderful experience. After a while, we felt good, and thoughtful, and forgiving.

Then Harris, who was sitting next the window, looked out upon the wet street.

"Well," he said, reaching his hand out for his glass, "we have had a pleasant trip, but I think we did well to quit when we did. Here's to Three Men well out of a Boat!"

And Montmorency, standing on his back legs looking out the window, gave a short bark of approval with the toast.

The End

Glossary

aggravation – irytacja
to amuse – rozbawić
to arrange – ustalać, planować
arrow – strzała
to assault – napadać
to assemble – zgromadzić się, zebrać się
bald-headed – łysy
banjo – bandžo
bank – brzeg
basket – kosz
beef – wołowina
beforehand – wcześniej, uprzednio
to blackmail – szantażować
blood-curdling – mrozący krew w żyłach
bloodthirsty – żądny krwi
to boss – komenderować, zarządzać
bow (and arrows) – łuk
bow (of a boat) – dziób
to brighten up – poweseleć
bump – uderzenie, grzmotnięcie
bunch – pęk (kluczy)
burden – ciężar
to bury – zakopać
cab – dorożka
to call on somebody – wstąpić, wpaść do kogoś
to camp out – biwakować
canvas – płótno
carriage – wagon
chest – klatka piersiowa
churchyard – cmentarz
coffin – trumna
commotion – zamieszanie
confound you! – a niech cię / was!
to convert – przekształcać, zamieniać

cowardly – tchórzliwy
to crawl out – wyczołgać się
cripple – kaleka
crown – jednokoronówka (5 szylingów)
crypt – krypta
to cure – leczyć
curious – dziwny
cutlery – sztucce
deck – pokład
disease – choroba
to disentangle – rozplątać
disinterest – brak zainteresowania
dozen – tuzin
to drag – ciągnąć, wlec
to dress up – stroić się
to drift – dryfować
dusty – zakurzony
easy-chair – wyściełany fotel
to entangle – zaplątać
evidently – najwyraźniej
to excite – ekscytować
expense – wydatek
extraordinary – niezwykły, nadzwyczajny
to fade – znikać
failure – niepowodzenie, porażka
fault – wina
fever – gorączka
finest – najlepszy
finger-mark – odcisk palca
to fit – dopasować
flavour – smak
to flop – spaść, klapnąć
flower-bed – klomb, rabatka
to fold up – złożyć, zwinąć
fortnight – dwa tygodnie
frying-pan – patelnia
gallon – galon (3,78 litra)
glass-case – gablotka

to grab – chwycić
grave – grób
grocery – artykuły spożywcze
grotto – grotta
to growl – warczeć
gully – parów
handle – rączka, rękojeść
to hang about – kręcić się
hang, to get the ~ of something – połapać się w czymś
hardly – ledwie, prawie nie, wcale
hark! – słuchaj (zwrot literacki)
hatchet – toporek
hop – obręcz
housemaid's knee – zapalenie rzepki kolanowej
to howl – wyć
house-boat – barka mieszkalna
hundredweight – cetnar (50,8 kg)
incantation – zaklęcie
income – dochód
inn – gospoda
to intend – zamierzać
irritable – drażliwy
to irritate – irytować
joyous – radosny
keeper – stróż, dozorca
kettle – czajnik
to kick – kopać
to knock over – przewrócić
landing-stage – pomost cumowniczy
landlord – właściciel
lantern – latarnia, lampion
laziness – lenistwo
light-heartedness – beztroska
liver – wątroba
lock – śluza
maze – labirynt
mermaid – syrena
miserable – nieszczęśliwy, żałosny

monstrous – monstualny
motion – wniosek
mud – błoto
mustard – musztarda
neighbourhood – okolice
nose (of a boat) – dziób łodzi
oar – wiosło
to object – sprzeciwić się
to occupy – zajmować
onion – cebula
out of order – nie w porządku
overboard – za burtą
to overdo – przesadzić
to oversleep – zaspać
pale – blady
parcel – paczka
particular – konkretny
to pass away – odejść (umrzeć)
path – ścieżka
peanut – orzeszek ziemny
to peel – obierać
picturesque – malowniczy
pie – ciasto, placek, zapiekanka
pile – stos
pill – tabletki
pipe – fajka
plaster – gips
pocket-knife – scyzoryk
point of view – punkt widzenia
porter – bagażowy, tragarz
positive – pewny, przekonany
pound – funt
prescription – recepta
proper – właściwy, odpowiedni
prow – dziób (łodzi)
public-house – pub
to pull out – wyciągać
pump – pompa

to put up – stawiać, rozkładać
quantity – ilość
rack – półka
rat – szczur
raw – surowy
remarkable – nadzwyczajny
reverse – wrzucać bieg wsteczny
rod – wędkę
to row – wiosłować
to rub – potrzeć
rug – koc, pled
to run into something – wjechać, wpaść na coś
to rush – pędzić, spieszyć
scenery – sceneria
scissors – nożyczki
scrambled eggs – jajecznica
to scrape – skrobać
to set – zachodzić (słońce)
shilling – szyling
to sing out – głośno wołać
skull – czaszka
to slave – harować
to slip – pośliznąć się
solid – stały
somersault – fikołek
to sniff – pociągać nosem
splash – plusk
spot – miejsce
station master – naczelnik stacji
steam-launch – łódź parowa
to steer – sterować
to stir – mieszać
swan – łabędź
to swear – przeklinać
stern – rufa
stove – piecyk, kuchenka
stuffed – wypchany
suspicious – podejrzliwy

Contents

symptom – symptom, objaw
tackle – sprzęt
tail – ogon
tangle – plątania
tea-pot – dzbanek do herbaty, imbryczek
tempting – kuszący
tent – namiot
terrible – okropnie, strasznie
therefore – dlatego
to tickle – łaskotać
tiller – rumpel
tin – puszka
tin-opener – otwieracz do puszek
to throw out – wyrzucić
tobacco – tytoń
tomb – grobowiec, nagrobek
to tow – holować
tow-line – lina holownicza
tremendous – ogromny
to trespass – wkraczać nielegalnie na czyjś teren
trip – wycieczka, podróż
trout – pstrąg
to tumble down – spadać
underestimate – niedoszacowanie
upset – zmartwiony
veal – cielęcina
to wave – machać
wearable – nadający się do ubrania
to weep – płakać, szlochać
to weigh – ważyć
to whisper – szeptać
wildly – na ślepo
to wipe – pocierać
to wrap – owijać, otulić
wreck – wrak
wrist – nadgarstek
yard – jard (ok. 0,9 m)
to yell – wrzeszczeć

Chapter 1 – <i>What We Need Is Rest!</i>	3
Chapter 2 – <i>Departure (Eventually)</i>	15
Chapter 3 – <i>Tombstones, Trespassing & Tow-Lines</i>	25
Chapter 4 – <i>Canvas & Cold</i>	35
Chapter 5 – <i>How To Deal With A Steam-Launch</i>	45
Chapter 6 – <i>The Swan Battle</i>	57
Chapter 7 – <i>A Toast To The End</i>	69
<i>Glossary</i>	81

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