



Three Men in a Boat: To Say Nothing of the Dog

Jerome K Jerome

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Three Men in a Boat was intended to be a serious travel guide. It failed dismally in this respect but succeeded in becoming an hilarious account of a boating holiday on the Thames between Kingston and Oxford. The three men were based on the author and two of his friends.

The holiday was a typical boating holiday of its time, carried out on what was known as a Thames camping skiff. The dog, Montmorency, however, was entirely fictional, but, as Jerome remarked, 'had much of me in it'. The book was denounced as 'vulgar' by the literary establishment, but it was hugely popular amongst the 'clerking classes' who yearned to be 'free from that fretful haste, that vehement striving that is every day becoming more and more the bane of 19th century life'. It has coined one of the great quotes about the pressures of the modern working life - 'I like work. It fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours'.

Such was the story's success that Jerome reunited his heroes for a cycling tour in Europe, entitled *Three Men on the Bummel*. And perhaps the book's original purpose as a travel guide did not fail entirely; its influence was such that the number of registered Thames boats went up 50 percent in the year following its publication, and it contributed significantly to the Thames becoming the major tourist attraction that it now is.

The journey along the Thames has been re-created many times, most recently for British television in 1975 by Tim Curry, Michael Palin and Stephen Moore and, in 2005, by comedians Griff Rhys Jones, Dara O'Briain, Rory McGrath and a very nervous dog called Loli.

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