

Jerome K. Jerome と New Humorist

日本英文学会第 87 回大会

立正大学品川キャンパス 2015 年 5 月 24 日

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I Jerome K. Jerome (1859 – 1927) 主な作品

- 1885 *On the Stage and Off*
- 1886 *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*
- 1889 *Stage Land*
- 1889 *Three Men in a Boat*
- 1890 *Told after Supper*
- 1891 *Diary of a Pilgrimage*
- 1900 *Three Men on the Bummel*
- 1902 *Paul Klever*
- 1926 *My Life and Times*

II

I did not intend to write a funny book, at first. I did not know I was a humorist. I never have been sure about it. In the middle ages, I should probably have gone about preaching and got myself burned or hanged. There was to be “humorous relief”; but the book was to have been “The Story of the Thames,” its scenery and history. Somehow it would not come. I was just back from my honeymoon, and had the feeling that all the world’s troubles were over. About the “humorous relief” I had no difficulty. I decided to write the “humorous relief” first – get it off my chest, so to speak. After which, in sober frame of mind, I could tackle the scenery and history. I never got there. It seemed to be all “humorous relief.” By grim determination I succeeded before the end, in writing a dozen or so slabs of history and working them in, one to each chapter, and F.W.Robinson, who was publishing the book serially, in *Home Chimes*, promptly slung them out, the most of them. From the beginning he had objected to the title and had insisted upon my thinking of another. And half-way through I hit upon “Three Men in a Boat,” because nothing else seemed right.

(*My Life and Times*, Chapter VI)

III

Of course it was damned by the critics. One might have imagined – to read some of them – that the British Empire was in danger. One Church dignitary went about the country denouncing me. *Punch* was especially indignant, scenting an insidious attempt to introduce “new humour” into comic literature. For years, “New Humorist” was shouted after me wherever I wrote. Why in England, of all countries in the world, humour, even in new clothes, should be mistaken for a stranger to be greeted with brickbats, bewildered me.

(*My Life and Times*, Chapter Chapter VI)

IV

I think I may claim to have been, for the first twenty years of my career, the best abused author in England. *Punch* invariably referred to me as “Arry K’Arry,” and would then proceed to solemnly lecture me on the sin of mistaking vulgarity for humour and impertinence for wit. As for *The National Observer*, the Jackdaw of Rheims himself was not more cursed than was I, week in, week out, by W.S.Henley and his superior young men. I ought, of course, to have felt complimented; but at the time I took it all quite seriously, and it hurt. Max Beerbohm was always very angry with me. *The Standard* spoke of me as a menace to English letters; and *The Morning Post* as an example of the sad results to be expected from the over-education of the lower orders.

(*My Life and Times*, Chapter IV)

V

The Baron may be wrong, and the humour of this book, which seems to him to consist in weak imitations of American fun, and in conversations garnished with such phrases as “bally idiot,” “bally tent” “doing a mouch,” “boss the job,” “put a pipe in his mouth, and

spread himself over a chair,” “land him with a frying-pan,” “fat-headed chunk,” “who the thunder” and so forth – a style the Baron believes to have been introduced from Yankee-land, and patented here by the *Sporting Times* and its imitators, -- interspersed with plentiful allusions to whiskey-drinking, may not be, as it is not, to his particular taste; and yet, for all that, it may be marvellously funny. So the Baron requested an admirer of this book to pick out the gems, and read them aloud to him. But even the admirer was compelled to own that the gems did not sparkle so brilliantly as he had at first thought. “Yet,” observed the admirer, “it has had a big sale.” “*Three Men in a Boat* ought to have,” quoth the Baron, cheerily, and then he called aloud, “Bring me *Pickwick!*” (*Punch*, February 1, 1890, p. 57.)

VI

bally

The word is used in the same manner as *blooming* and *bloody*, i.e., as a meaningless intensive expression. *Bloody* is an adj. used on every possible occasion by Eng. Workmen, but without meaning. Schoolboys and grown-up persons of the better classes use *bally*.

(Olof E. Bosson, *Slang and Cant in Jerome K. Jerome's Works: A Study*, Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons., 1911. p. 39.)

VII

Twopence I gave for my sunshade,

 A penny I gave for my fan,

Threepence I paid for my straw, —forrin made—

 I'm a Japan-aesthetic young man!

(‘The Cheap Aesthetic Swell’, *Punch*, July 30, 1881)

VIII

I can't say as I was partikler pleased the way as they upset my box, as was the Custom 'Ouse, and all thro' me not a-rememberin' as clay meant key, and

thought it was somethink as they thought I were a-smugglin’

So I says, “Bless the man, I ain’t got no clay,” and kep’ a-shakin’ my ‘ead, a-sayin’, “Nong!” till Brown come back, and says,

“This all comes of you’re a-blowin’ about your French, and ‘ere you are floored over a key.”

(Arthur Sketchley, *Mrs. Brown at the Paris Exhibition*, 1878)

IX

Jerome was consciously wooing a new readership: the perky clerks and shop assistants, the Mr Pollys and Lupin Pooters, whose stripy blazers and half-starved features still gaze triumphantly from a thousand sepia photos. The genteel highbrows of the next generation – Forster, Virginia Woolf, Eliot – were to sneer at this whole breed.

(John Carey, ‘A Victorian Clerk’s Tale’, *Original Copy*, p. 138.)

X

Marlow is one of the pleasantest river centres I know of. It is a bustling, lively little town; not very picturesque on the whole, it is true, but there are many quaint nooks and corners to be found in it, nevertheless – standing arches in the shattered bridge of Time, over which our fancy travels back to the days when Marlow Manor owned Saxon Algar for its lord, ere conquering William seized it to give to Queen Matilda, ere it passed to the Earls of Warwick or to worldly-wise Lord Paget, the councilor of four successive sovereigns.

(*Three Men in a Boat*, Chapter XIII)

XI

It must have been much like this when that foolish boy Henry VIII was courting his little Anne. People in Buckinghamshire would have come upon them unexpectedly when they were mooning round Windsor and Wraybury, and have exclaimed, ‘Oh! You here!’ and Henry would have blushed and said, ‘Yes; he’d just come over to see a man;’ and Anne would have said, ‘Oh, I’m so glad to see you! Isn’t it funny? I’ve just met Mr Henry VIII in the lane, and

he's going the same way I am.'

Then those people would have gone away and said to themselves: 'Oh! we'd better get out of here while this billing and cooing is on. We'll go down to Kent.'

And they would go to Kent, and the first thing they would see in Kent, when they got there, would be Henry and Anne fooling round Hever Castle.

'Oh, drat this!' they would have said. 'Here, let's go away. I can't stand any more of it. Let's go to St Albans – nice quiet place, St Albans.'

And when they reached St Albans, there would be that wretched couple, kissing under the Abbey walls. Then these folks would go and be pirates until the marriage was over.

(*Three Men in a Boat*, Chapter XII)

XII

I started with the idea of giving you a rapid but glowing and eloquent word-picture of the valley of the Rhine from Cologne to Mayence. For background, I thought I would sketch in the historical and legendary events connected with the district, and against this, for a foreground, I would draw, in vivid colours, the modern aspect of the scene, with remarks and observations thereon.

Here are my rough notes, made for the purpose:--

Mems. for Chapter on Rhine: "Constantine the Great used to come here – so did Agrippa. (N.B. – Try and find out something about Agrippa.)

Caesar had a good deal to do with the Rhine – also Nero's mother.

(*Diary of a Pilgrimage*, End of Saturday, 24th and Beginning of Sunday, 25th
-- continued)

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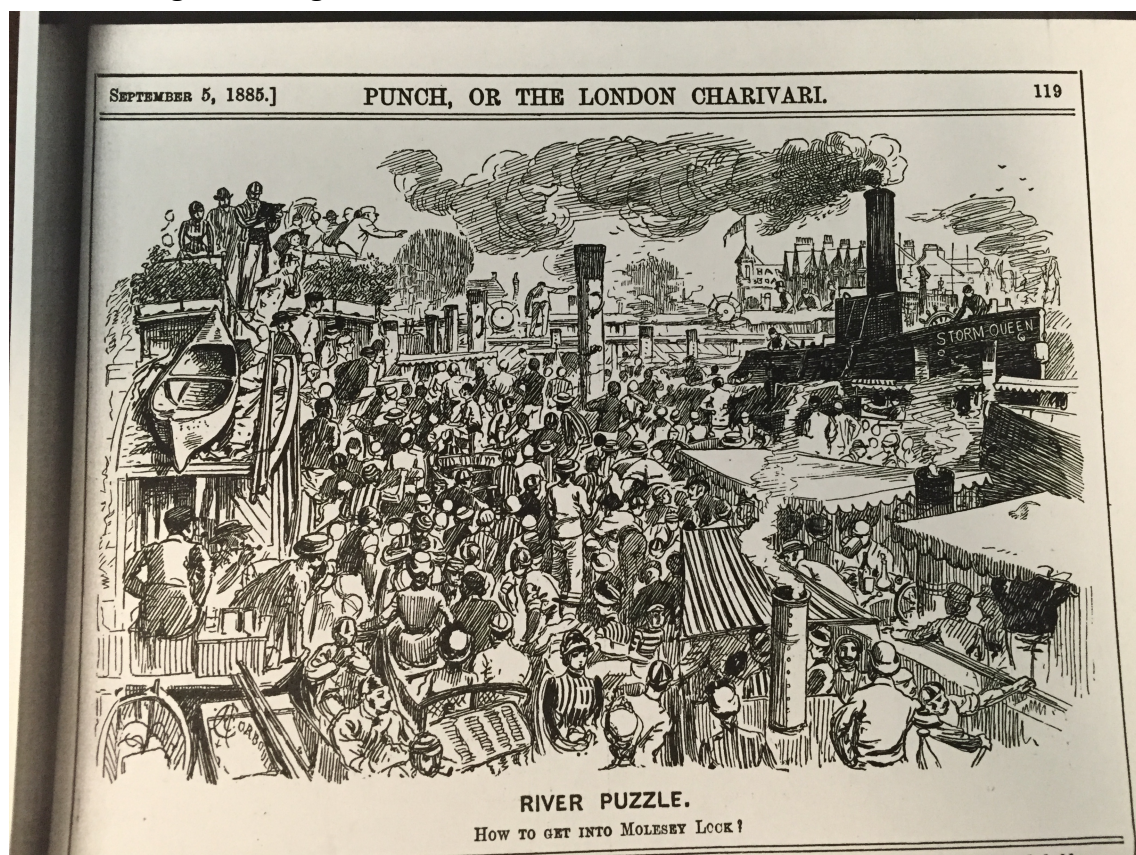
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NOT SO WIDE.

She.—"Charlie, tell me all about that **New Humour** they were speaking of at dinner."

He.—"Oh—er—y'know, what's new about it isn't humour, and what's humour, y'know, isn't new, y'know."

Fun, December 7, 1892



THE NEW HUMOUR.

"AND I HEAR YOUR DEAR LITTLE BOY IS SO AMUSING!"
"WELL,—YES, CONSIDERING HE'S ONLY FOUR! DID I TELL YOU HIS JOKE WITH THE OLD ADMIRAL THE OTHER DAY? HE HANDED HIM THE SALT INSTEAD OF THE SUGAR; AND THE ADMIRAL (WHO'S BLIND, YOU KNOW) ACTUALLY PUT IT INTO HIS TEA!"
"OH, THAT'S TOO DROLL! YOU MUST SEND THAT TO PUNCH!"

[Does so.]

Punch, March 10, 1894