



The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow

Jerome K. Jerome

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'The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow', published in 1886, established Jerome K. Jerome as an eminent English wit. These are his idle and amusing thoughts on all aspects of life, from love to poverty, vanity to ambition, babies to cats and dogs.

The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow Details

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Praj says

Monday afternoons are most favorable to practice the art of idling. The anxiety of a fresh work week prevails over the dormancy of deadlines and you are back on detoxification diet after a carb loaded Sunday. On one such afternoons amid my momentary sniffing of liquid black ink(the one that fills the belly of a fountain pen), I hear a deafening sound enough to crack the inner chords of my ears. As I look up from my sniffing activity, I observe a recognizable obnoxious face of a dear friend who also acts as my local bookworm.

“Have you heard of Jerome K Jerome “, she says overlooking my disdain.

“Is he your fuck mate?” I ask, trying to outwit with my sarcasm.

You lightheaded bitch!, she shows displeasure. *“He is the one who wrote Three Men in a Boat”*.

Laughter overcomes me as I tell her my awareness of the author stating that he is one of the funniest men in English literature.

As she takes a mouthful of my salad, *“Read this book. It is quite interesting”*, she urges while masticating on the lettuce. *“Jerome writes that although this book might be a good change in between reading “the best 100 books ever”, it wouldn’t even elevate a cow. But, I think it might elevate you”*.

As she squanders away to my relief, I sit at my desk torn between the desire to resume ink inhalation or read a book by one of my favourite author.

Idling can be a joy if it is masked in the aura of procrastination. Lethargy is an entirely different concept as it is accompanied by comatose temporal lobe. So, I concur with my dear friend Jerome, when he states that in the world of slow-coaches and indolent people, a true idler is a rarity. A lazy person can sit on a park bench for hours and would care the least even if his butt falls asleep while staring expressionlessly at the birds. On the other hand, an idler for a gem of a person that he is, counts the pigeons in the park, browses the newspaper and exhibits characteristic facial expressions indicating his choc-a bloc schedule. Jerome infers idleness is as sweet as stolen kisses. Idle thoughts on the other hand, can weave an intriguing web of frivolous words and rational sentences. An imposed idleness can relay a series of thoughts, wondering why isn’t the life-cycle of a mosquito applicable to certain neighbors when they share the same blood-sucking attributes of the insect. Your mind debates the legitimacy of Darwin’s claim of man being evolved from apes, when you can clearly see the physical similarities and behavioral patterns between a walrus and one of you elder uncles at a family reunion. If we could identify with the baby talk, would all the “goo-goo-ga-ga” spell out Stewie Griffin’s verbal diarrhea? As you idle away work responsibilities, flinging pebbles in the nearby pond, the simultaneous ripples in the water brings a plethora of dystopian phrases that you might scribble away. Pigeons are devilish birds and so are seagulls. They secretly hate me like my exes. They stare

at me and then maul me for a bag of cookies. Cats are smarter than dogs. An individual is the most compassionate and cheerful when he is fed. It is funny how a hungry stomach lustfully adores a plate full of gastronomic delicacies. Hunger is a luxury for those well-fed, as myself. Melancholy is like a glob of butter on toasts. It is detrimental to health, but without it life would be as flavorless as a stale oat. Vanity is not an honorary title solely bestowed on Simon Cowell. Everyone is vain. Take pride in it, just like my aunt whose bedroom lifestyle can put a praying mantis to shame (so claims my uncle, marvel at him being still hale and hearty), flutters like a butterfly at a cosmetic counter even though she appears to be a victim of a reversed metamorphosis. Jerome inscribes that memory is a rare ghost-raiser. Like a haunted house, its walls are ever echoing to unseen feet. Through the broken casements we watch the flitting shadows of the dead, and the saddest shadows of them all are the shadows of our own dead selves. Self-imposed amnesia is the best cure. That is what my cousin prescribes to when she runs into one of her ex-husbands while on a shopping spree.

Jerome is not at his sarcastic best. He is sick, you see. But, he does not disappoint at all. With the help of his dearest companion – the pipe, his drugged temporal lobe leisurely grabs every thought that runs through his mind contemplating from animal attitudes to love, furnishing apartments, babies, food and merriment of the time gone by. The text comprising of 14 varied essays, are rich with the humorous undertones on frolicsome anecdotes filtering into a theoretical finesse.

I am alone and the road is very dark. I stumble on, I know not how nor care, for the way seems leading nowhere, and there is no light to guide. But at last the morning comes, and I find that I have grown into myself.

As the alarm once again nearly ruptures my ear drums, it is 4'oclock in the evening and as I erase the defined whorls off my cheek printed by the ink stained thumb, a thought lingers asserting that my friend was precise of this book elevating me. Moo!!!!

Maria says

The book's sarcastic tone is very entertaining and his insights are wonderful.

Shantanoo Desai says

"One or two friends to whom I showed these papers in MS having observed that they were not half bad, and some of my relations having promised to buy the book if it ever came out, I feel I have no right to longer delay its issue. But for this, as one may say, public demand, I perhaps should not have ventured to offer these mere 'idle thoughts' of mine as mental food for the English-speaking peoples of the earth. What readers ask nowadays in a book is that it should improve, instruct and elevate. This book wouldn't elevate a cow. I cannot conscientiously recommend it for any useful purposes whatever. All I can suggest is that when you get tired of reading 'the best hundred books', you may take this up for half an hour. It will be a change."

It's not every day that one comes across satire of such quality or honesty. The essays cover a wide range of topics; from pets to babies to blues and clothing. I deliberately restricted myself to reading just an essay a day and most of the time I couldn't read this book in public because every other sentence is ridiculously funny and I'd break into peals of laughter at regular intervals drawing weird looks from the strangers around me. I thoroughly enjoyed these idle thoughts and Jerome K. Jerome just became one of my favourite authors of all time. It's amazing how most of his insights and observations are relevant even after more than a century of the first publication of the book. I guess great humour is classic.

Rating: 4.5/5

Alex Sarll says

For someone thought of as terribly bluff and British, it's strange how Jerome's almost stand-up thoughts on everyday life always tend to veer towards mystical, melancholy and lyrical conclusions on the bittersweet pleasures of a world where all things must pass.

Sabareesh says

"This book wouldn't elevate a cow," reads the author's preface. I cannot presume to agree with or raise issue against it, but whatever be the case, elevation aside, I loved the book.

The lovely satire and humorous insight (looks like I *am* using 5 adjectives per noun!) made it a great read. It is rather surprising how the societal aspects of one's individuality and the individual natures of the cross-cultural constants of society one encounters have not changed one bit in the 130+ years it has been since the book was written.

Mohamed Osman says

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Corvinus Maximilus says

Oh my! How I have loved this book...an absolutely brilliant witty well written book. I wish everyone would read just to feel the words move you, with you, in you and all around you. Bravo Bravo Mr. Jerome, you are masterful. Thank you!

This book, I will read it again and again.

Pavlina Radoslavova says

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Lubinka Dimitrova says

“What readers ask nowadays in a book is that it should improve, instruct and elevate. This book wouldn't

elevate a cow. I cannot conscientiously recommend it for any useful purposes whatever. All I can suggest is that when you get tired of reading "the best hundred books," you may take this for half an hour. It will be a change."

Catherine Morland says

Jerome K. Jerome always makes me laugh. But among the funny, rambling stories, there's also some unexpected insight and depth. While *Three Men in a Boat* was much better, *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* was still entertaining and I enjoyed reading it. It was filled with random thoughts about life and all of its troubles and pleasures. I found some of his comments about women mildly offensive, but many books written in that time period were sexist (you can't expect old books to have modern views!). I was able to overlook it.

If you're looking for a fun, easy read, give *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* a try!

I'll just leave you with a few favorite quotes from the book.

"Love is like the measles; we all have to go through it."

"But we are so blind to our own shortcomings, so wide awake to those of others."

(on pets) "And when we bury our face in our hands and wish we had never been born, they don't sit up very straight and observe that we have brought it all upon ourselves. They don't even hope it will be a warning to us. But they come up softly and shove their heads against us. If it is a cat, she stands on your shoulder, ruffles your hair, and says, "I am sorry for you, old man," as plain as words can speak; and if it is a dog, he looks up at you with his big, true eyes and says with them, "Well, you've always got me, you know. We'll go through the world together and always stand by each other, won't we?"

"It is so pleasant to come across people more stupid than ourselves. We love them at once for being so."

Maurizio Mancò says

"La verità è che ciascuno di noi ha l'innata convinzione che il mondo intiero, con tutti e tutto ciò che contiene, sia stato creato per lui, come una sorta di appendice necessaria. I nostri simili, uomini e donne, sono stati messi al mondo per ammirarci e per provvedere alle nostre varie necessità. Sia tu che io, caro lettore, siamo il centro dell'universo, nelle nostre rispettive opinioni. Tu, dal mio punto di vista, sei stato fabbricato da un'avveduta Provvidenza, allo scopo di leggere e pagarmi per ciò che scrivo; mentre io, a tuo modo di vedere, sono un aggeggio spedito nel mondo per scrivere qualcosa che tu possa leggere." (*La vanità*, p. 32)

LemontreeLime says

This is hard to find, but available on Project Gutenberg if you absolutely cant get it anywhere else. Oh how I adore Mr. Jerome!! I came across this book first of all of his by complete accident and how very grateful I am to have discovered him! A turn of the last century humorist with a light heart and wry smile, he is an excellent choice when you want something completely different!

Vimal Thiagarajan says

Safest bet on the planet, as far as reading an essay collection goes. Just enough humour to keep you engaged, just enough philosophy to make you ponder and nod, and just enough imagery to thoroughly transport you into the charming realms of slow-paced old world existence - Jerome K Jerome is surely in a league of his own.

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Tosh says

Ah the roots of Tom Hodgkinson! This is a British writer I know too little about - and that should change. Jerome K. Jerome wrote this work sometime in the early 20th Century -and in ways it reminds me of British Mark Twain, but also it is obvious that he's the spiritual father to Hodgkinson's thoughts on the life of an idle man. His essay on dogs and cats is hysterical.

Jamie Collins says

"I like idling when I ought not to be idling; not when it is the only thing I have to do."

I enjoyed this collection of essays on a variety of topics such as Being Hard Up, Being In Love, Being Shy, Dogs and Cats, and The Weather. Jerome's prose meanders; he's lyrical, sentimental and melancholy; but he is sometimes poignant and frequently hilarious.

One must either forgive the sexism of a man born in 1859 or suspect that he's joking when he assumes that the reader is male, or sympathizes with women who needn't go to political meetings, or claims that it is the duty of women to dress prettily.
