

A Tribute to Richard Jameson



As a tribute to Richard Jameson, who died in February 2008, we are publishing some extracts from his articles that regularly appeared over the years in Magna.

Each month Richard would phone me to say he had ready for collection another article for Magna. On my arrival he would often pluck, from an overfull arch-lever foolscap file (one of several), a page or two of his typed notes. With a twinkle in his eye, his distinctive, theatrically trained voice would boom, “I do so hope that’s suitable for the Parish Magazine, if not, just cut out what you like!” For his writing he used a notebook and pen, edited by hand then kept on file the typed final versions – decades of his thoughts and ideas meticulously stored. So he was able to draw from items on file and was also able to quickly respond, in his unique style of writing, to news events most memorably the 7 July London bomb attacks.

LBC radio, as a tribute to Richard of Greenford, their most popular phone-in personality, have reissued his 44 minute podcast. Richard, a star contributor, will be sadly missed.

David Clarke

WRITING - A CHALLENGE FOR ALL, BY RICHARD JAMESON

If you can write a good letter, you can write. If you can write compellingly and often, you are a writer. If you can get published and sway minds all over the world, you are a great writer. Self expression is basic to everyone and we find it more or less well developed. If you have any ambition, it must be to express yourself better. Your very character depends on it – and your success in many spheres of life. The gift of the gab as they call it has earned people a fortune. Self expression liberates the soul, giving you freedom and flexibility.

So what to write about? There is a publication devoted to every activity known to man. Find their address and telephone number and you’re away. Write two A4 pages in your most vivid style and get photo/stat copies (you need the original for further copies) and cross your fingers. Few amateur writers get this stage, but nothing ventured, nothing gained. It pays to write your first script on a notepad for perfectly free correction and then type it out.

I have been published by everyone from the News of the World to the British Medical Journal and every subject from business management to life in the army. I do make a little pin money out of the whole enterprise, but the thrill of seeing your words in print and getting your ideas across to a wide audience is unbeatable. If you want to share that thrill, just pick up your pen. I can honestly say that you will feel healthier too as you sort out your ideas on any subject. I find writing very relaxing. It doesn’t require a great barrage of noise or even stimulating company – just you and your thoughts.

A very good idea is to join a writer’s group. I run one and have great fun. Meet people and share your talents.

Instant modesty (“Oh I couldn’t possibly do that !”) is the wrong attitude. Imagine you’re as good as Shakespeare and you may be even better. If you can’t scribble on a notepad, sunk in your favourite armchair, go straight to the typewriter and compose. This cuts out a middle stage and is far less sweat. John Keats said “I am convinced more and more day by day that fine writing is next to fine doing, the top thing in the world.”

FROM RICHARD'S NOTEBOOK

EASTER HYMN

He broke the gates of Hell and Heaven,
Broke the portals open wide,
Liberated dead and sinners.
Glory be – It's Easter Tide!

Got together his disciples
On the shores of Galilee,
Showed his wounded side to Thomas
Showed he was alive and free.

Leapt upon the rock, ascended,
Now the tomb is open wide.
Christ our Lord has come among us.
Glory be – It's Easter Tide!

* * *

Write as if life depended on it ... and you will write to please.

Read more – to restock your larder and restoke your fire.

Before matter was mind, God had all the ideas before the Big Bang.

Remember the old saw: you can't expect to stir a cup of tea without getting the spoon wet!

Whether or not I believe in Jesus, I'm quite sure he believes in me.

A favourable critic is always right and divinely inspired.

People without talent still have time.

Only plays and chartered accountants have well ordered lives.

The best spur for action? Be ignored.

Squeeze the grape of life! You'll never squeeze it dry.

If I was a film, I would't allow any child of mine to go and see it.

Even the Archbishop of Canterbury is 65% water!

When all that's left of man is mind, then heaven begins.

Intense worry is infinitely preferable to flat depression and apathy.

God, give me the power to do, but also the patience not to do.

Enthusiasm will find a way where ignorance may not be able to.

The orderliness of time reflects the general truth that Order is heaven's first law.

He who sees no magic in the world is something of a marvel himself!

It would be a sorry old world if we relied on bread and butter and simple equations.

The greatest tragedy – and the greatest blessing – is forgetting.

Pleasure is a desert flower. It blooms brightest in an oasis.

In the writing and the reading, over and over again, each time is different.

Reality nearly always improves on imagination.

I'm sure Homer himself must have gazed at his script and muttered: "Ye Gods! What comes next?"
I'm in good company.

There is true art and there is mockery art. Mockery art tries to prove that anything goes, but true art is always there with its rules and principles to show that excellence is possible for time-hallowed reasons. However satire still makes it very difficult to be serious and in fact makes the serious pompous.

Don't repeat yourself. That is one basic rule of thumb which I try to obey. Be as honest about what you are trying to say as possible: hypocrisy will find you out. Try to entertain, not to put to sleep. Use all your instinctive mastery of composition to gladden the heart and lead forward from sentence to sentence. Any artificiality in your narrative will break the tread and undo your work.

SHOW WILLING. That is half the battle. The other half is getting on with the job which is fun.

Joy can only be felt by a soul/spirit. True happiness responds to something or someone in the world and is recognised for what it is – an amalgam of outside and inside. We realise it with our feelings and (our souls) are exalted. What is happiness if not spiritual?

Oh gentle joy that works within our hearts
And spreads the sunshine sweet through all our parts,
Unction divine and spiritual food,
The surest sign we have that God is good!

Work to a standard and you drive a clean, wholesome feeling which is worth several dollars a minute. Christianity sets a standard from the start – a standard which we may and do fail to reach, but which we should always be trying to reach.

Joy is one thing and very nice too. But there is also content and satisfaction, peace and calm, pleasure and goodness – less frantic than ecstasy but none the less rewarding.

To be totally reconciled to one's work is a very good thing indeed. It only requires an attitude of mind, but if it is the right attitude the work gets done much more speedily and effectively and you feel so much better for it.

Life goes on – thank God! and with it renewals of energy, fresh opportunities and time to grasp them by the throat.

Indecision is the worst curse. Creativity demands a certain amount of hawing, thinking around a subject, but success in life depends on sure strides forward.

Pleasure is a desert flower. It blooms brightest in an oasis.

I shouldn't be too perfectionist about your personal view of yourself. Be conscientious but rightly expect people to take you as they find you. And you find yourself NOT perfect.

Ambition tugs you out of the mud and sets you among the stars.

"There is nothing new under the sun" – except every fresh moment! Can God make a stone so heavy that He cannot lift it?

Destiny Death: "But the pleasure of spiritual soaring, as can be imagined, is supreme. You simply have to raise your spiritual standards to the heavens NOT TO CONCENTRATE ON THE CATERPILLAR HUSK, TO CRY LOUDLY 'GOD I COME TO THEE' and then take off. What a glorious destiny!"

Richard Jameson