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How To Do It.

A Little Study In Style.

If the late Lord Macaulay were to rewrite his celebrated "Armada," familiar to us in our schooldays, he would doubtless interpolate or substitute round about his reference to "The richest spoils of Mexico, the stoutest hearts in Spain," a line or so concerning "The richest tripe of Grub Street, the treacliest brains of Fleet Street for it is these, according to their own account, that are "saving" England, God help us all from Atheism, Materialism, realism, jazz-bands, night-clubs, cocktails, and, as crown, climax and centrepiece, "lack of faith."

We are driven to these profound, if bitter, conclusions by a more or less intensive study of an—we should perhaps say *the*—article in the *Sunday Express* of a recent date, entitled "A word of Comfort for the Afflicted." If it *were* a word, it wouldn't matter so much; but it is—alas!—about fifteen hundred words. And such words. They must be read to be believed; and even then we remain doubtful; for they are by our old friend the very, very nearly Reverend James Douglas at his very best and pawkiest. Is it? Does it. Can it. But no! We must really relieve our variegated emotions by quoting from the sermon itself. We start right away, in the true-blue-traditional parsonic method, with "Mystery." Dear old Mystery, friend of our errant youth, our wild maturity, our somnolent age. Oh, my dear friends, Life is a Mystery! Death is a Mystery! Birth is a Mystery! God is a Mystery! (This is true, anyhow.) Apple Dumplings are a Mystery! Thank God, All is a Mystery! Every blinking thing. Thank God, thank God, what should we do without that blessed word, "Mystery"? "Mesopotamia" is a fool to it. Give us "Mystery" every time, even though it means mystagogues.

But lo! dear Friends! The hour ripens; and it is meet that we turn to the very words—the *ipsissima verba*—of the Master himself. He wires-in rightaway, as might be expected, on "Mystery," thus:—

There are two vast mysteries in the life of man—the mystery of misery and the mystery of evil.

One could say as much, and more impressively. At that, in less space; thus: "Misery and evil are the great mysteries of life." This effects a saving in words of over fifty per cent. But bless you! That is not popular journalism. A pulpit style naturally demands excessive wordiness to cover extreme tenuity of thought. Brevity may be the soul of wit; but modern journalism is mainly soulless; and so the proverb does not apply.

After the introduction of these "Mysteries," which are no "mysteries" whatever, save to those who—against all the available evidence—insist upon it that the universe is "run" as a sort of wholesale emotional business-concern by a Company of Spooks chairmanned by a chap named "God," we get a series of "Whys?" "Why did He ["He" is our old friend, "God"] let woe and wickedness ["Woe and wickedness! There's richness for you] into our mortal [mortal!] life? . . . Why are we not sinless and painless machines?" Why, indeed? Why is grass green? Why is time long? Why do fish swim? Why do flowers grow? We could go on like this all day; but, as Mr. Douglas might say, Why should we? So, all told, we won't but we will—we insist upon it—return to our almost reverend Friend. After why?-ing through a pair of paragraphs, of course fruitlessly—for the sly scribe takes jolly good care to ask questions that are by their very nature unanswerable—to our sad amusement, if not our mental edification, he draws us up sharply on a simple "Why?" all by its lonely, lonesome, single, sole self. (How's that for paper-style?) After that, as anti-climax, we get a caption, in large type, that relieves us so much that we almost explode into tears. This is the caption: "How Childish We Are!" Well; some of us *are*; there's no denying that; and it is well for the Editor of the *Sunday Express* that such is the case, or the circulation of that organ of religion and realism would descend with a bang. Well may "religious" journalists thank "God" for running a human wing-factory that must be working overtime in "heaven" seven days and nights at least, every week.

Like all religious scribes (although no two sects agree on the point), James knows all about "God," mystery or no mystery. Here is the Master's definition: —

But God is not a kind of super-inventor in a super-laboratory. He is far more mysterious, far more wonderful, far more sublime. He is the truth and grace and

beauty and love that we know in ourselves. He is the spiritual energy in us and in all things. If we yield to His magic He is the centre "of our life.

Now we can see all over London. London? Pooh! All over the universe; or rather we *should* be able to see all over the universe if Mr. Douglas's inspired words had any known meaning. But, alas, they haven't. Like all the other theologians, when we fancy that we're getting "warm," this friend of "God" carefully, and almost, it seems, of malice aforethought, lets us down. Mr. Douglas's words refer not to facts, but to fancies; consequently, they have no message for anyone who is capable of doing his own thinking. The fact is that this holy man's readers are hypnotised by such words as "mystery," "God," "pain," "evil"; and they would believe quite blindly if he told them, blandly, that "God" was a synthetic rainbow or an apotheosised chameleon. Any mystagogue finds defenders and supporters, because his appeal is to the passions and the emotions; never to the intellect.

"How childish" we may be; but we are not all so childish as to accept the oracles of this pious and prosperous newspaper-editor. Some few of us are so unreasonable as to demand a definite meaning for words. And it is just here, on the threshold, as it were, of wisdom, that Mr. Douglas lets us down.

A large photograph of the Master (not Jesus; James) usually accompanies his sermon; his massive head overweighted with its high and heavy thoughts, rests on his hand; he is all-complete with silver pencil—symbol of immortality—and wrist-watch—signifying time—evolving those pure and delightful thoughts that are to captivate the fine long ears and the good thick brains of the readers of the Great Sunday Sermon-Grinder.

"It is hard," writes our theological expositor, "to justify the ways of God to men." Here at least, he is right; where the late John Milton notoriously failed, we don't fancy, somehow, that there is much more than a sporting chance for our all-but-revered editor, style and all thrown-in. In the opinion of our honoured Christian, "it is harder to justify the ways of men to God." And here we have the honour of agreeing with him; indeed, we would go even further than he does; for we can find no justification whatever for the way in which Mr. Douglas treats "God," who, this time at least, has our sincere sympathy.

"There is no evil in life" we gather, "without its Joyous and joyful antidote. God always gives more than He takes away."

We must ask here where "He" takes it, and what "He" does with it when "He" has it? Perhaps Mr. Douglas, next time the theological frenzy seizes him, will be so kind as to enlighten us. We are also curious as to how "He" gives it; "it" being whatever it is that he *does* give; sometimes "it" is damnably unpleasant, and, from a merely human and common-sense point of view, "He" might very well save "Himself" the trouble and expense of the gift, to the advantage of everyone concerned in the transaction. By the way, how does "He" "give" it? Is it handed-over, or sent by post or angels? But it is clearly useless to speculate upon a theme that, by its very nature, is insoluble. We are a little sceptical about Mr. Douglas's divine Friend; if only because "He" bears so close a resemblance to Mr. Douglas himself. Beneath all the luxuriant verbiage and inflated Phrases, the features of the old Bogey-Man are only too obvious. Every man's "God" is himself magnified and decorated into "Himself," for the confounding and muddlement of the world's mugs. In the case under observation, behold the truth of the thesis: James is a casuist; so is James's God; James is a sophist, so is James's God; James is a leg-puller, so is James's God. Blasphemy? Maybe: but scarcely ours. We will try to prove our point. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. So, when he really *loves* anyone, he "sends," to prove his love, blindness, cancer, insanity, bankruptcy, toothache, paralysis, and other blessings in disguise, as Christian cant calls them. All these slight evils, according to our "joyous and joyful" journalist, are actually so many separate and special proofs of the "divine love!" Well may mankind, exclaim, "Save US from our Gods!" This is how Mr. Joyous and Joyful Douglas brings "comfort" to the "unhappy."

The logical outcome of the Douglasian teachings that evil and pain and poverty are "blessings" in disguise; and therefore the more of them "God" sends us the better. "The alchemy of suffering is one of the glories of God." The devil it is! What are the other "glories of God," Mr. Douglas? May we have a catalogue, please? You seem to know all about it. As our friend the publicist is always saying to us, can you beat it? We can't!

After Mr. Douglas's beautiful words about what he is pleased to call "the alchemy of suffering," we venture to ask him if he would care to be inoculated with typhoid-germs? We are doubtful as to the depth of his touching faith in that fine old chemical "God" of his. We wonder, too, if he would care to give-up his well-paid job in Fleet Street and run a wheel-stall in the New Cut. If he be honest, he should jump at the chance;

for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." We fancy that, despite this revived Jacobite theology, Mr. Douglas would fight-shy of such blessings in disguise as these, such obvious proofs of "God's" love.

If—as we hold—Mr. Douglas would decline these "blessings," all his beautiful words are really nothing but pious humbug. He cannot have it both ways. Either "God" does not "love" him, or he is deliberately scribbling cant at so much a line, professional treacle to smear the brains of the poor creatures who still maintain a pathetic faith in the Royal Family in the skies.

According to the Douglasian cosmogony there are "these four afflictions," wherein "nearly all the misery of life may be found." They are:—

1. Invalidism.
2. Poverty.
3. Friendlessness.
4. Childlessness.

We will venture to add a fifth; its name is cant.

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