

Editorial

Dum Spiro, Spero

It is my sad editorial duty to acknowledge that Professor David Hadden, previous editor of this Journal died earlier this year. As a previous editor he has his obituary published here and I thank Professor Patrick Bell for rising to this sad task so diligently. David bore his final illness with great dignity, clearly determined that while he was alive, he would *live* (*dum vivimus, vivamus*).

The journey to the undiscovered country, was for him, I think, a long -planned walk, stopping only briefly to part the veil, and walk on through. I can see him now, peering through those distinctive glasses and continuing a line of searching Socratic and indeed Jesuitical questioning with some minor celestial official. Looking intently at his subject, finger tips apposed and saying, “Yes, young man, *perhaps*. Think it through though, think it through.” I was involved peripherally in his care and in due course, I received a letter from him. I took it as a letter of absolution. I am sure like all us of when we look after friends and colleagues as patients, there is always a moment of dread when unfortunate news has to be delivered. His letter of thanks concluded: ‘*Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow will take thought for the things of itself.*’ (Matthew 6: 34)

As one of the Journal board members reminded me recently, “He was a truly benevolent person. I will always remember his absolute concern on my first day that there was no one cooking either breakfast or dinner for the house officers in Musgrave and Clarke House. I didn’t have the heart to tell him that the shoe-shining service had long stopped. (Dr Gerry Hanna: personal communication). David, for me, imbued the, possibly now unfashionable philosophy of William Osler, who said, “You are in this profession as a calling, not a business; as a calling which exacts from you at every turn self-sacrifice, devotion, love and tenderness to your fellow men. Once you get down to a purely business level, your influence is gone and the true light of your life is dimmed. You must work in the missionary spirit, with a breadth of charity that raises you far above the petty jealousies of life.”¹

I went to visit David last May, as I needed some pressing editorial advice. I had written my forthcoming editorial, which was entitled *Benediction*². I told him that I was troubled by it, more than somewhat, as Damon Runyon might have put it. “Why?” he asked. I outlined what I had written, effectively a 15th century canter through the Benedictine monasteries of Europe and an 8th century poem about a cat. Certainly this wasn’t mainstream for a medical journal editorial, but even that didn’t completely trouble me as I assumed that the readership had become accustomed to my eccentric and quixotic view of the world. No my concern was

that it was all a little too, well, *Catholic* for the kirk. David, paused, sipped his coffee and regarded me keenly. “Barry,” he said, “Have the courage of your convictions!” He raised his fist and continued, “Hadden says, publish!” Publish I did. Thank you, David.

Grace under fire, all too often is unrecognised: a pity since it often reveals the finest version of ourselves. Joaquin Rodrigo contracted diphtheria when he was three years old. As a consequence he lost his sight. However, despite this devastating complication, he would become a renowned composer: his triumph over adversity. Of interest, he never actually mastered the guitar, writing music in braille and having it transposed subsequently. His *Concierto d’Aranjuez* is probably the most recognised classical guitar piece ever written. Aside from its inherent musical beauty, Rodrigo concealed within it a personal agony, possibly of interest to you cardiac types. The second movement focuses on a weak and increasingly faltering heartbeat. The heartbeat belonged to his wife, Elizabeth, and reflects a devastated Rodrigo’s musical interpretation of her precarious physical state immediately after losing their first child. You can hear and see the piece here: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekznnxaGzNU>). At the end, it’s almost an agonal rhythm. Thankfully though, she did survive.

Antonio Lucio Vivaldi’s Four Seasons is another instantly recognisable piece of classical music. However, the Summer movement isn’t a hazy bucolic scene. It’s frenetic and jarring in places. Vivaldi suffered from debilitating and chronic respiratory problems, probably asthma. Now imagine that you have bronchospasm: fighting for each breath. Can you hear that in the frenzy? So its hectic panicky pace is about breathing, and hoping. Listen.(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Es9RgQGw3Gk>).Genius.

Briefly now, to housekeeping matters. I am delighted to announce the inclusion of another new section: the Pictorial Review. My thanks to Dr Gormley and his coauthors for producing the first of these on malignant melanoma. I hope that the readership will find this section illuminating.

So Vivaldi and Rodrigo produced works of acclaimed beauty, each also containing a coded message about illness, often lost in translation, that speaks of courage, the pernicious nature of fear, adversity, and defeating that last enemy, which is of course, death. So as they, and David Hadden might have said, “ Dum spiro, spero; sed dum vivimus, *vivamus*.”(While I breathe I hope, but while we are alive, let us *live!*)

Have a wonderful summer, and please, as Professor Hadden always signed off, do keep sending me your good papers.

Barry Kelly
Honorary Editor

REFERENCES

1. Osler W. The Reserves of Life. *St. Mary’s Hosp Gaz.* 1907;13:95-8
2. Kelly BE. Benediction.*Ulster Med J.* 2013;82(2):1-1