

symptomatically, thereby avoiding invaliding. It worked, not only for the rest of the war but for many years afterwards until the evening of 26 August 1971 when I suddenly developed acute and total bronchospasm while having dinner. I rapidly became completely unable to breathe and only my wife's presence of mind and the invaluable help of John and Ruth Fleminger in getting me on to oxygen and into an ambulance and thence to Kings College Hospital Casualty within minutes of my ceasing to breathe spontaneously, and seconds before I should have undergone cardiac arrest, saved my life.

Kings looked after me wonderfully, but inevitably Dr Hugh Jones told me that I would have to take early retirement and live, at least for a time, in a benevolent sub tropical climate preferably among mountains. Yet so excellent were the results of his and his colleagues' treatment that I managed to wind up my contribution to Guy's over another three years, finally retiring to live in Cyprus on the day after my 58th birthday on 18 March 1974. Two years later, in 1976, the College was to bestow upon me its crowning honour: Honorary Fellowship. My wife and I survived the Cyprus War and, after emerging temporarily from retirement to serve as Consultant to HM Forces and UNFICYP (United National Forces in Cyprus) in the Middle East, and experiencing the satisfaction of seeing both my invited contribution to the 15th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and my first novel in print, we eventually returned to England in 1982. My health, subject to regular medication, remains pretty good.

Now, in my 72nd year, have I achieved perspective? I think so. Was it all worth it? Most certainly it was. And yet, so close to the end of this reasonably concise resumé, I've almost forgotten to mention some of the glorious fun things: but as usual my wife's memory is not only better, but more balanced than my own. For my last three years at Guy's I

was paid the supreme tribute of being elected President of the Rugby Club; thus completing a happy Tripos among my students: President of the Theatre Club and of the Debating Society being the other two. During that three years Guy's won the Hospitals Cup, plus the Junior Cup twice, and as invited participants reached the quarter finals of the Middlesex Sevens, beating (among others) London Scottish, the previous years winners, by some 30 points. After the opening game of the season with Cambridge University which they won by just two points, I was made an honorary member of the CURUFC. Their engraved tankard stands on my desk as I write. During the final season, my wife and I went to every match, home and away, travelling all over the country.

Much later, travelling at leisure with my wife all over the world in my retirement, learning what my erstwhile junior colleagues, many now eminent doctors, are doing, from Newfoundland to New Zealand, leaves me in no doubt. I tried: they are succeeding.

My wife has long treasured eight lines of verse whose origin she had forgotten and couldn't find. I have periodically searched for them in vain, but finally I found them. They seem to me to convey with exquisite precision the essence of that exploration of the human predicament which must underly the whole of medicine and is at the very heart of good psychiatry. They were written by John Masefield in 1914.

*'Man with his burning soul
Has but an hour of breath
To build a ship of truth
In which his soul may sail—
Sail on the sea of death,
For death takes toll
Of beauty, courage, youth,
Of all but truth . . .'*

Correction

Due to printers' error a photograph of Dr David Stafford-Clark appeared instead of one of Dr Jim Birley on page 210 of the June issue of the *Bulletin*. We apologise to Dr Birley and Dr Stafford-Clark and reproduce the correct picture opposite.



Dr Jim Birley