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Henri Temianka Correspondence; (wprimrose)

William Primrose

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WILLIAM PRIMROSE C.B.E.

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July 31 1977

Dear Henri,

I was made to feel very happy and grateful when I received your sensitive and affectionate letter. This is a strangely interesting experience I am going through. I feel quite impersonal about the whole thing, and if anyone had told me a month or so ago that I would feel this way I might have been constrained to advise them to have their head examined. But, I assure you, that has been my reaction since the verdict was handed down in Provo where I was visiting the Daltons on my way to Banff. My first wife and ~~her~~ ^{HER} mother both died of cancer, and when Dorothy called me from our apartment in Switzerland (I was in London) to tell me of her plight I had exactly the same nerve wrenching experience that came my way when in my foolish schoolboy days I disported myself in the boxing ring and once received a shrewd buffet to the solar plexus. That, and a total feeling of disbelief....It just cannot be so. My first response in Provo was that we are all under sentence of death from the moment we are born, and if it is not one thing it is another. I think that the reason most of us react so fearfully to the verdict of cancer is that we associate it with something sinister, grim, implacable and incurable. But, then, everything that dooms us is incurable and as we assume that we are the only living creatures who are aware of that doom we must, as human beings, make a reconciliation with the fact. And I do believe I am reconciled while at the same time feeling the whole matter to be quite incredible! I feel perfectly well, have no pain or discomfort but am prepared for the time it arrives in the faith that He whom I understand to be God will afford me the fortitude to bear it. For the moment I just cannot give more than an occasional passing thought to it. Sufficient unto the day...and so forth. I am deeply happy at home with my quite wonderful family; enjoying an incredibly good Australian Winter with day after day of benign sunshine; the expansive view of the Pacific from our hillside home; practicing diligently in view of my master classes in Berlin, Vienna and other engaging places during October and November, and preparing my programs for my beloved Japan in December. I have to go to hospital in a day or two for some quite hilarious surgery prior to chemo-therapy treatment not to effect a cure, to be sure, but to ease my condition and prolong my days. Also, I am busy revising my autobiography which has finally been accepted for publication by Brigham Young University Press. It was turned down over the years by a distinguished host of publishers most of whom confessed they enjoyed reading it (one actually used the phrase: I was rivetted!) but none dared to publish it. All of this is not whistling in the graveyard, I assure you. These are not times for insincerity. So, I hope you will feel happy on my account, and come to see it all as I do.

My very best love to you and your wonderful family.

As ever,

William (or, Bill, if you will!)

In case 'hilarious surgery' sounds too much like the vaporings of a madman I am persuaded that I should confess all, and probably afford you a laugh into the bargain. BUT FOR YOUR EAR ONLY! Apparently my type of cancer nourishes itself on the male hormone. So, how to discourage it and starve it? Castration! What my dear little Dr Rosen FRCS alludes to as minor surgery with no unpleasant side effects. Tie that one, if you can. In the course of our consultation he enquired of me if I would wish artificial replacements as merely a cosmetic addition. I told him it was up to him, but I failed stupidly to stipulate size or color!

(Handwritten signature)