



work to obtain their daily bread were in dire straits. Even those who could rely upon advice and 'chamber work' were suffering badly – the largest law firms who deployed them had all hesitantly enforced much-reduced partnership draws, and unpaid leave for significant parts of their workforce, in an attempt to maintain solvency. The insolvency experts were stymied by the ukase which effectively removed the notion of paying debts 'as and when they fell due' as the key test of a company's bankruptcy.

Already, the changes driven by the new conditions were having a marked impact on 'practice'. Video hearings were all the rage and he noted with wry bemusement that, in the United States, attorneys were pushing the forensic boundary by appearing 'remotely'

in swimming attire, or from the bedroom! It seemed inevitable that all the old folderol about robes, wigs, and spats, would disappear as a matter of course when very little could be observed on a Zoom screen in any event. Telephone mentions, and listing by algorithm, were all the rage. If these developments continued, the scope for advocacy, and the very *raison d'être* of *The Bar* as a separate, organic, profession seemed greatly endangered.

To make matters worse, the Bourse was under daily assault, and superannuation funds weekly depleted as the Market realised that it would be a long time before there could be any semblance of a return to normality.

So, much, much better to risk the travel ban and head north to the shack and splendid social isolation. He began to appreciate

Thoreau's insights into the benefits of eschewing social obligation and convention. Apart from a daily visit to the coffee-shop he filled his time walking in silent meditation on the beach, and reading the Latin masters, and old Equity cases in the afternoon. Volume 85 of the English Reports was a perennial favourite – what a masterpiece were Serjeant William's notes on *Portage v Cole*!

*The Bar* would survive, probably in some novel and attenuated form, and there was no point in repining over past glories. The words attributed to Virgil 2,000 years ago – words to live by each day still – came back to him – *Mors aurem vellens* – 'Vivite' *ait, 'venio'* – "The Virus twitches your ear – 'All of you, live life to the full', the Virus says; 'I am coming'".

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