**Passing On**

David William Paley

Days of childhood are no more

Unknowing of toil or louring shades.

Gone is that innocent hour

Spent by brooks and glades;

Those years should last forever

But golden youth too soon departs.

When I reached the state of man,

I was compelled to set my mark

As, before me, time unfolded

And led me with my weapons shouldered

To bid farewell for unknown parts.

But where to go or how to start?

What hidden lands lie unobserved

Or rosy blush reveals their coasts?

Should I plunge the depths of chance

Perhaps to wade in raging streams

In search of undiscovered gold;

Or first ascend some lofty crag

To view the scene below;

Or tramp along unbeaten paths

Where no sign can tell the way

Nor destination be foretold?

South to where the orange swells,

North to wind and ice;

East to the trackless wastes

Or west to the open skies?

To shake the trees for sustenance

Or to toil in the furnaced night?

To walk the endless byways

Or spend regrets in sighs?

But no seed will grow nor flower bloom

That has no sight of sun.

The bud of early dawn,

Full blossomed in the noon,

Will fade in evening light

And wither in the dark.

Therefore, forth I went

To seek the secrets out

And blow upon the spark

To kindle living flame

That shows the moth as phoenix

Burning into fame.

Apprenticeship has shown the route

From whence I chose the open road

To walk through storm and lightning.

The wind has blown its gales

And I have drawn my cloak the closer;

But the sun has shown its power

And I have opened to its welcome.

Then I faced abundant challenge

As I confronted rattling sabres

But firmly planted opposition

To reap reward from labours.

I left the winding road

To bathe in moonlight beams

Where floods of golden rays,

Flared in tender blaze

To creep through midnight dreams.

Beckoned from the wayside gate,

I took my window seat

To watch the others scurry by

In pursuit of wild ambition

Tantalised by distant goals

Far beyond their vision.

The past recedes as the world revolves

And soon drifts out of sight

As the future flashes by.

I have packed my trunk so full of life

And have not so long to wait

For the seasons’ rapid wheels

To reach my local station.

There, I stand upon a platform

Where I await the sleeper train

As expresses thunder through

And Time my leisure steals.

Those passengers gazing blankly

Fight their daily battles

Before they, too, descend

At their appointed destinations

Where they wait without impatience

To be measured for their shrouds.

The clock arouses no frustration

When it shows the slower service

Has not yet arrived

For, they study the departures

With growing apprehension

At their journey to the clouds.

I also muse at that hereafter

When I am swallowed by the dark.

Shall I gaze at sparkling stars

And dream of all my treasure:

The memory of those flashing eyes;

Or one last glimpse of waving trees?

Now, in these, my silver years,

I must face a new adventure

When active lives decline

And careless joys of long ago

Flow past and rush alone

To join the boundless seas.

I may have left my former self

Marooned upon a desert isle

Or abandoned to the waves;

But, here, I have a remnant still

That has, now, rarer value.

I have ceased to count the seasons

Yet hope to mark their reappearance,

For, though the well of life be deep

And its waters drawn with pain,

Its flow is found to taste so sweet,

That I bid the tears of fond farewell

To pause awhile before they weep.

Thick, tangled woodland is bursting at the eaves

Where sun is held at bay by spreading tops

And dappled light blinks down through verdant leaves

With silence broken only by the bird in song

That thrills us from the branches when it sings.

But this enchanted idyll will not last forever

For, nature brings my sojourn to an early close

When the wisps of white above descend in sorrow

Like the curtain falling when the play is ended

Hiding all the action that passed across the stage

Except from those who stand within the wings.

I compose my thoughts in peace and think of long ago

When I righted wrongs encountered as through the past I wandered

And directed every deed towards a purpose

As I mastered every problem that then with ease was conquered,

Whilst others had their worries over which they anguished.

But day defers to evening and evening meets the night

To glimmer with a sunset tint upon the last horizon

As Time dissolves in shades of sombre gloom

Without my being able to command it to resume;

But I leave in my achievements a bequest to all mankind

And thereby show that death can thus be vanquished.