**Another Country**

David William Paley

In that other country

Where they trod upon the stage

Until the play was ended,

The curtain fell amid the cheers

Resounding to the huge applause

And fond remembrance through the years.

That production closed

And others tread the boards

To portray more modern roles

As all the actors go their ways

To face the last revue, elsewhere,

And nought but memory stays.

Where are those we held in awe

Who stamped their mark with grace

Upon the roll of honour?

Have they gone beyond recall

Blown away by changing times

As if they were to wind in thrall?

The past consigned to waste,

The future not revealed!

Can we not reach back

To those who strode the earth

And learn their practised arts

To be, at least, of equal worth?

Those souls are lost to present eyes

That lack the former knowledge

And regret the passing of the wise

Who could have taught in wisdom’s college

But pass no more through life’s long days

That all the skills should have imparted;

For, when conducted through the maze,

We were as babes when they departed.

Can we step inside their shoes

And be the equal of their prowess;

Or master all that now accrues

When overawed by greatness;

Or command the world in speech

In which they had been feted;

Or wear the robes of their authority

When rags make our nobility?

Despite how great they were,

The old retire; the young inherit.

Brash new youth succeeds them

Regardless of their merit.

But we, poor shipwrecked souls, rejoice,

Adrift upon the flooding seas,

That we escape the siren voice

And turn to tasks that we must seize.

The land where we are cast ashore

May not be one where no one sings

Or be too rugged to explore

If, to our aid, the sunshine springs;

But, severed by the great divide,

We tread a lonely path to fame

Seeking fortunes far and wide

Beyond the craft that we can claim;

We proudly strut the barest patch

With which to be enchanted

Aware that that must be our feast

If that is all that we are granted.

We shall explore its pristine state

That drives us on to great extremes

Though we, perhaps, have left too late

The transformation of our dreams.

So, let the future fly in our direction

If, with the break of dawn, it brings

The long expected invitation

To ride upon its outspread wings.

We shall clamber on its back

To seize the reins of swiftest steed

And stay the course until the end

Regardless of its breakneck speed.

That race who had their devotees,

But now reside upon a star,

Have passed their art to legatees

Who learn, at last, to make or mar.

Alone and naked in our aspiration,

To them, alas, we are not equal

Compelled to search for inspiration

When summoned late to act the sequel.

We set aside our masquerades

And race upon the gallops

Until our scrap of time then fades

As darkness us envelops.

No longer fleet of foot,

We gaze at an abyss, instead,

To peer through dark as black as soot

As all contenders fly ahead.

We lie beneath the turf in peace

No more from there again to rise

Accepting that our lives must cease

And moulder on through long demise

To join the ranks of those retired

From dark theatres of the past

For our allotment has expired

Worn out by clocks that strike their last.

Those twinkling stars delight

To hear from us the news

From days now lost to sight

That saw their last reviews.

They wish to hear the change

That we have wrought below

Before we yielded up our lease

When tide and seasons ceased to flow.

We have learnt that our existence

Is not to whirl above the crowd

Nor to keep them at a distance

And speak no gentle hint aloud.

They hope to fill our sudden silence

And strive to build upon our gain,

Neither gracious in acceptance

Nor dismissive in disdain.

But have we carved our names with pride

Or written them in water?

Will our achievements serve as guide

Or find no hold in any quarter?

We leave the judgement to our heirs

Who take the legacy bequeathed

To scorn our view of world affairs

Or seek for light in words we breathed.

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