



ROBERT PERKINS POST

1928

"No tiny ripple stirs the pond to-night;  
The sky is quiet; and the old pine trees  
Are quiet, too, black 'gainst the after-glow.  
Still is the evening. The notes seem almost still  
That downward sift from out the chapel-tower.  
As the clear sunset, brilliant, color-wild,  
Died in the West, so dies our near-run youth;  
As the clear after-glow lights up the Western sky,  
So may our age light up a darkening world."

Poet before he was a journalist, but not long before, Post filled the *Horae* with verses. Those just quoted are the opening of his Last Night poem, written at the end of his Sixth Form year. Before that, he had sung of many things: of

"— the wet, wild whipping  
Of a wild, grey sea,  
And the white sides streaming  
As the scuppers bang free."

of old cities:

"Petra, Bokhara and Samarkand, Lhasa and far Cathay."

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of Spring evenings at the School:

"Above the hills the evening sky  
Is quiet, and its colors die;  
Above the fading, tinted bar  
Of clouds pales out the evening star,  
A half-drawn, whispered, quiet sigh.

"Faint sounds the whip-poor-will's harsh cry;  
Day floats away and night is nigh;  
Its dusky doors stand half ajar  
Above the hills."

and, still a Fifth Former, he had written,

"Dream, my youth, oh, dream:  
Dream now of the half-seen truth;  
For minds grow tired out by fights,  
And tired minds sleep sound o' nights,  
Nor catch the gleam of the beckoning lights  
That ever call to youth.

"Love, my youth, oh, love:  
Hard is the life to come;  
E'en now sounds out the clarion fife  
That calls you to the bitter strife;  
Love now, and live, and grasp at life:  
E'en now rolls long the drum."

Before he left St. Paul's, Post had decided to be a journalist: a few weeks after he graduated, he got a job on the *New York Evening World*, and his apprenticeship continued during college vacations. Not long after graduating from Harvard, he joined the *New York Times*. He was married in 1935 to Margaret Lapsley.

Post rose rapidly. Having in four years covered virtually every department of the *Times*' Washington Bureau, he was transferred in 1938 to the London Bureau, of which he was acting head before he was thirty. As the world continued to darken, he reported the spread of Nazi power: the Ethiopian crisis, the war in Spain, the events of 1939 and 1940,—he was in London all through the "blitz,"—and the first great air attacks on Germany. He was appointed *Times* correspondent with the Eighth Air Force, and given a course of training preparatory to accompanying missions as an observer.

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On his first mission, February 26, 1943, the B-24 in which he was flying was shot down by German fighter planes and flak over Oldenburg, on the way to the target, Wilhelmshaven. Two members of the crew survived. Bob Post and the eight others were killed.

He was thirty-one years old. Less than fifteen years had passed since, at seventeen, he had written in his Last Night poem:

"It matters not if beauty passes swift,  
So it be beauty. If our lives but gleam  
In beauty, let them die, as dies the soft,  
Sweet touch of light along the chapel stalls.

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"The night is here by now. Black. Youth must end,  
As life must end. Why grieve that youth is gone?  
Here we have seen across the moonlit pond  
The pines move wildly 'gainst the cloud-crossed sky  
And caught the surging, glad, soul-smiting thrill  
That comes when man first feels the loveliness  
Of the whole world. We may have seen  
One of us face injustice and go down  
Before it, whining not, but laughing in its face.  
Such things as these are given—a heritage:  
And they can never pass. Deep in our hearts  
They lie forever ours. . . ."