

When Does The End Come?

What marks the end
When it is not a rapier thrust?
En route north from Florida
I watched the palms grow scrawny
dwindling to ferns.
Somewhere in the Carolinas
they petered out, but who
could draw a line and say:
north of this line are no more palms?
The aging violinist's spider hand
darts on the strings to great acclaim.
When does it lose its touch?
Will he play less well tomorrow?
Or the next day?
Or the next?
When does the end come?
Can the Kreislers, Tildens or Di Maggios
lead you back along the slow incline
and, pointing, say:
here — here is the very spot!
Or must they from the valley
turn vague eyes toward the summit
wondering: where was it on that slope
I lost myself?
Sometimes the rapier is more kind.

Blueprint For Advancement

Don't talk too much:
Your weakness lurks behind your tongue.
Speak knowingly, obliquely down,
And shun detail that might be your undoing.
Don't risk your own ideas
But shrewdly summarize the best of others.
Be managerial:
Touch glibly on new budget plans,
Sales policy,
And how to make best use of hands-and-feet.
Be critical of things the little people do;
Pounce on undotted i's and uncrossed t's;
Hew strictly to the party line:
These signs of virtue will not go unnoticed.