

And they are pollarded by cares,
And give themselves religious airs,
And grow not, whilst the forest-king
Strikes high and deep from spring to spring.
So they would have his branches rise
In theoretic symmetries;
They see a twist in yonder limb,
The foliage not precisely trim;
Some gnarled roughness they lament,
Take credit for their discontent,
And count his flaws serenely wise
With moles of pity in their eyes;
As if they could, the prudent fools,
Adjust such live-long growth to rules,
As if so strong a soul could thrive
Fixed in one shape at thirty-five.
Leave him to us, ye good and sage,
Who stiffen in your middle age.
Ye loved him once, but now forbear;
Yield him to those who hope and dare,
And have not yet to forms consigned
A rigid, ossifying mind.

"One's feelings lose poetic flow
Soon after twenty-seven or so;
Professionizing moral men
Thenceforth admire what pleased them then;
The poems bought in youth they read,
And say them over like their creed.
All autumn crops of rhyme seem strange;
Their intellect resents the change.
They cannot follow to the end
Their more susceptible college-friend:
He runs from field to field, and they
Stroll in their paddocks making hay:
He's ever young, and they get old;
Poor things, they deem him over-bold:
What wonder, if they stare and scold?"