

## Problem Child

What is there in the boy  
That foils his parents' or his teachers' breath?  
Politely listening, he turns aside  
Their scoldings' blunted edge.

He moves like air or water round their wills,  
That seems to yield but closes up behind.  
They lecture him: his face is like his mind,  
Wears on its surface a close-buttoned smile.

Ambiguously, they do not know themselves  
Why they must batter down his last retreat.  
They hope they want to help him, but are baffled  
By his dumb, cunning wit.

Their duty tries to cage him, but they see  
Their own youth caged in him, and wish him free.