

I stopped to watch a man strike at the trunk
Of a tree grown strong through many centuries.
His quick axe, sharp and glittering , struck deep,
And yellow chips went spinning in the air –
And I remember how I liked the sight
Of poise and rhythm as the bright axe swung.
A man who fells a tree makes people watch,
A swinging axe has always drawn a crowd.

I know the answer to the chanced reproach:
How old the tree was, and how dangerous,
How it might fall, how timber in a stack
Had more good in it than a growing tree –
But I saw death cut down a thousand men
In that tall lovely legacy of wood.