

The mountain may have shifted since I saw it  
In eighty-five."

"As long ago as that?"

"If I remember rightly, it had sprung  
A leak and emptied then. And forty years  
Can do a good deal to bad masonry.  
You won't see any Mormon swimming in it.  
But you have said it, and we're off to find it.  
Old as I am, I'm going to let myself  
Be dragged by you all over everywhere —"  
"I thought you were a guide."

"I am a guide,  
And that's why I can't decently refuse you."

We made a day of it out of the world,  
Ascending to descend to reascend.  
The old man seriously took his bearings,  
And spoke his doubts in every open place.

We came out on a look-off where we faced  
A cliff, and on the cliff a bottle painted,  
Or stained by vegetation from above,  
A likeness to surprise the thrilly tourist.

"Well, if I haven't brought you to the fountain,  
At least I've brought you to the famous Bottle."

"I won't accept the substitute. It's empty."

"So's everything."

"I want my fountain."

"I guess you'd find the fountain just as empty.  
And anyway this tells me where I am."

"Hadn't you long suspected where you were?"