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ROBERT FROST

c.3 ISSUE



The New Hampshire
TROUBADOUR

November 1946

NEW HAMPSHIRE
STATE LIBRARY



Robert Frost in Room 216, Baker Library

DAVID PIERCE

The New Hampshire Troubadour

COMES TO YOU EVERY MONTH SINGING THE PRAISES OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, A STATE WHOSE BEAUTY AND OPPORTUNITIES SHOULD TEMPT YOU TO COME AND SHARE THOSE GOOD THINGS THAT MAKE LIFE HERE SO DELIGHTFUL. IT IS SENT TO YOU BY THE STATE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AT CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE. FIFTY CENTS A YEAR.*

THORSTEN V. KALIJARVI, *Editor*

HERBERT F. WEST, *Guest Editor for This Issue*

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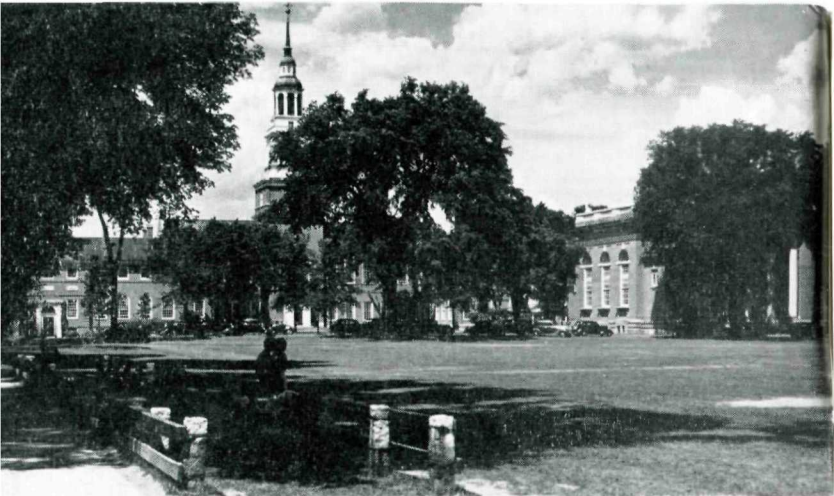
FOREWORD

THE idea for a special number of *The New Hampshire Troubadour* devoted entirely to Robert Frost originated with the Rev. George B. Ehlhardt, Librarian of the Divinity School Library at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. I can only hope that this issue will represent partial fulfillment, at least, of his idea.

There is no need for me, as guest editor, to say anything about Robert Frost. He is too well known for one thing, and for another, his friends have done this in the following pages. Suffice it to say that to me he is one of our wisest citizens, and one of our all-time great poets. That New Hampshire is proud to honor him goes without saying; he brings honor to the state, where he has lived and worked a good part of his life. It is as one of us that we greet him. I am grateful for the opportunity, as a friend and admirer, to help in a small way to pay him homage.

It was in his hillside cabin one night in August in Ripton, Vermont, that he read to me and a common friend the poem, here

* Extra copies of this issue, twenty-five cents each.



A. N. BOUCHARD

Baker Library, Senior Fence; Dartmouth College, Hanover

published for the first time, which he called *Our Getaway*. In it you will find his scorn for the "all-knowing" scientists, his ironic and impish humor (pawky the Scotch would call it), his alertness about contemporary things, and his great gift of phrase. I thank him here for his kindness in giving us this poem which will probably appear in his next published book.

The whole issue, so far as the contributors were concerned, has been entirely a labor of love — strictly amateur. I felt very strongly that there should be no commercial taint in this particular venture. I wish to thank all contributors for their wholehearted and generous coöperation: Professors Sidney Cox, David Lambuth, Stearns Morse, and Donald Bartlett of Dartmouth College, Miss Sylvia Clark, of Derry Village, and Ernest Poole of Franconia, for their essays; David Pierce, Hanover, for the recent

photograph of Robert Frost taken in the Dartmouth College Library; Robert Frost and his publishers Henry Holt and Company for permission to reprint *Desert Places* and a part of *New Hampshire*; and J. J. Lankes of Hilton Village, Virginia, for the striking woodcut, so appropriate as is much of his work, to the spirit of Robert Frost's poetry. To the New Hampshire State Planning and Development Commission, especially to Dr. Thorsten V. Kalijarvi, the editor, and to the Rumford Press, my thanks for the pleasing format and for their willingness to make this tribute to Robert Frost as fine as possible, without deviating, save in the question of length, from the usual make-up of the TROUBADOUR.

Whatever faults there may be are my responsibility alone.

HERBERT F. WEST

*Professor of Comparative Literature
Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire*



ROBERT FROST

A Brief Biographical Sketch

ROBERT FROST was born on March 26, 1875, in San Francisco. His father, a newspaperman with democratic sympathies, was a native of New Hampshire. His mother was native Scotch. At his father's death in 1885 Frost returned to Lawrence, Massachusetts, where he graduated from high school in 1892. The following college year was spent at Dartmouth. It was in 1894 that he first broke into print and from then on nothing could swerve him from his set purpose of becoming a poet. In 1895 he married Elinor M. White, who died in 1938. After studying two years at Harvard, Robert Frost realized that college was too repressive for him, and he farmed for five years near West Derry, New Hampshire, the country of West

Running Brook. From 1906–1911 he taught English at Pinkerton Academy in Derry, after which for two years he taught in the New Hampshire State Normal School at Plymouth, New Hampshire.

Following a three years' residence in England, during which his first two books were published, *A Boy's Will*, 1913, and *North of Boston*, 1914, he returned and settled on a farm near Franconia. Since that time with *Mountain Interval*, 1916, *New Hampshire*, 1923, *West-Running Brook*, 1928, and *Collected Poems*, 1930, and 1939, and other volumes, he has won innumerable honors, including the Pulitzer Prize for poetry four times. He holds many honorary degrees; he has held various chairs and lectureships in higher institutions of learning.

On October 1, 1943, 51 years after he entered Dartmouth College as a freshman (Class of 1896) Robert Frost became the George Ticknor Fellow in the humanities at Dartmouth, where in his weekly seminars, and in conferences in Room 216, Baker Library, he brings to focus a movement toward increasing the use of the college library as the center of teaching at Dartmouth.

Robert Frost is a poet of universal significance and one of America's great citizens.

H. F. W.

ROBERT FROST AND NEW HAMPSHIRE

by *Stearns Morse*

ROBERT FROST says he's slept in every town in New Hampshire — at least he's *been* in every town and could have slept there if he'd wanted to. You have to do a lot of sleeping in a place to really know it; and there's no doubt that Robert Frost knows New Hampshire — at least rural New Hampshire — as well as any



MOOSILAUKE STUDIO

The Pemigewasset River

one. It's pretty difficult to get a state into a poem (to say nothing of a country). So far as it's possible to do it, I should say he'd done it in *New Hampshire*.

New Hampshire has got into the man, too, as its citizens will testify. People of a region where the sheep *used* to sharpen their noses on the rocks have never been too long on money-making. But their environment has sharpened their wits as well as sheep's noses; not much gets past them; though they are not given to rhetoric, they know a good thing when they see it: that's why his New Hampshire neighbors accepted Robert Frost at once when he came from California by way of Massachusetts, even though he didn't always milk his cow right on the dot as any good farmer should.

Perhaps the distinguishing mark of New Hampshire natives

is their complete readiness to let people alone: this sort of atmosphere is propitious for poetry and a poet. Paradoxically, in spite of their common sense, New Hampshire farmers are idealists. (And so is Robert Frost an idealist, though I suppose that's the worst tag you could give him.) In a real world of more and more government by large organizations (economic and political) they still cling stubbornly to the individualist, or anarchist, or Jeffersonian dream. They still believe that that government is best which governs least; Robert Frost does too and that's why he fits so well in New Hampshire. And though the way to that dream may seem more and more circuitous, both he and they will stick to it like a puppy to a root. They will still think of people as people, not "the masses"; they will still think of a man as a man first and as a poet, professor, farmer, millionaire, governor second. That's why they will always take Robert Frost for granted as one of them.

An old lady approaching the century mark, who spent all but a few months of her life within the radius of a few miles in the North Country, put our feeling for him as well as I've ever heard it put. I took Robert Frost and his wife to call on her several years ago. She had never read a line of his poetry and didn't know he was a poet. After they had gone I was curious to know what impression they'd made. She gave it freely: "They was nice. Some folks have to preen themselves to be nice. They was *intelligent* enough to be nice." I don't think he'd ask to be better spoken of.

Of course what I've said of New Hampshire goes for the other of the "two best states in the Union." That's why we can't complain because in the last twenty years or so RF has persisted in living in Vermont (when he isn't in Massachusetts or Florida). And after all, why not let him live in Vermont? As a cousin of mine, whom I chided for always driving home on the Vermont side of the Connecticut once said: "You get a better view of New Hampshire from there." Perhaps he thinks so too.

OUR GETAWAY

by *Robert Frost*

Published here for the first time

Sarcastic Science she would like to know
In her complacent ministry of fear
How we propose to get away from here
When she has made things so we have
to go

Or be wiped out; and to what better
show

By whose space-rocket we expect to steer
A distance of not less than one light year
Through temperature of absolute zero.

Why wait for Science to supply the how
When any amateur can tell it now?
The way to go away should be the same
As fifty million years ago we came
If anyone remembers how that was.
I have a theory but it hardly does.

WHEN FROST WAS HERE

by Ernest Poole

I THINK it was in 1916 that Robert Frost came with his wife and children and bought a white farmhouse close below us on a road looking up to his favorite mountain, Lafayette. In New Hampshire his father had been born and he himself had once taught school. Often he had tramped through these hills and in summers had boarded on farms up here, and so now he made it his home. What farmers face in winter up in these White Mountains Frost learned well in his own life, for at first his house had no furnace for the sub-zero days and nights. Children fell sick, pipes froze and around the farmhouse snow piled high. Yet somehow both Frost and his wife kept a deep quiet through it all. And in that quiet verse was born. When in 1923 he won the Pulitzer Prize with his volume "New Hampshire", written about people up here, our neighbors grew proud of their North Country poet. One village woman told me then:

"He writes the poems. His wife lives 'em."

But she was wrong — for Frost lived deeper in these hills than any man I have yet known. While I was writing of life outside, he wrote of the life right here. His four children went to the village school and he was chosen president of the Parent Teachers' Club. In the village post office and store he hobnobbed about kids and baseball, crops and timber, politics. In Woodrow Wilson's second campaign in the autumn of 1916, he heard the roar of laughter when, listening to election returns, Franconia got the news flash: "Easton goes Democratic, Wilson four, Hughes two." Frost let his imagination ride and wrote his well known lines about how the city of Manchester laughed at Littleton for being small, and Littleton laughed at Franconia and Franconia laughed at Easton and



GEORGE F. SLADE

Mt. Lafayette and Echo Lake

Easton at Bungey up the valley; but poor little Bungey had nobody to laugh at for being smaller than itself!

Well as he knew the village, Frost knew far better the life outside. He had many long talks on lonely farms. Always he kept listening.

“I hear everything I write,” he said.

He hears folks say things in his verse. It is intimately human stuff and much of it is tragic, about bleak lives and dreary deaths. He searched old people’s memories for early fears and superstitions and wrote about witches, home burials, Civil War widows,

deserted farms. He wrote about ox drivers, too, and mill hands, loggers, hired men, about wood piles, apple picking, sugar orchards in March.

In our own orchard, in the years before the hurricane which wrecked them all, I loved the fairy tinkle of sap into pails hung on our maple trees, the bounce and crash of the big tank sled moving slowly up and down slopes to the trough running into our sugar house, and the water-like sap that steamed inside, first to white and then to golden foam. I remember a night when a big full moon poured its radiance through bare branches down upon the clean deep snow, and not a sound but the hoot of an owl and the low roar and crackle of the log fire in our house. In *Evening In a Sugar Orchard*, Rob Frost pictured such a night in such a spot.

He knew the life not only on farms but up in the sky pastures. He liked hillside picnics where he cooked bacon on a stick. He liked trout fishing in the spring and all the budding life in the woods. He took long tramps alone, sometimes to feel and put into verse what he had heard from folks he had known, but more often to watch the life in field and forest and by brooks. He wrote about sunsets, hillside thaws, birds in winter, lonely roads, snowy evenings in the woods, stars upon clear winter nights.

On some of his hikes he took me along. He had no use for my two cattle dogs, because they scared the deer and bear and foxes off the road or trail. He often stopped and sat still on a log, watching, listening, feeling this life. Then he talked of things he'd seen or heard, but again he would tramp with no talk at all. I remember one still day in October when toward dusk we both stopped and listened. Deep, deep stillness all around. He said:

"These folks like this. So do I. People say that I hate New York. I don't. I like it, but I get so worked up down there that I can't sleep nights. I'm made that way. I grew up on a farm and I like it quiet." A cow mooed half a mile away. He smiled. "Even that cow's too much," he said.

Kipling once told us writers to try to paint things as we see them for the God of things as they are. Slow and deep feeling are the people up in these New Hampshire hills. Slow and deep feeling is Rob Frost — and his verse reveals those mountain people as they are.



ROBERT FROST

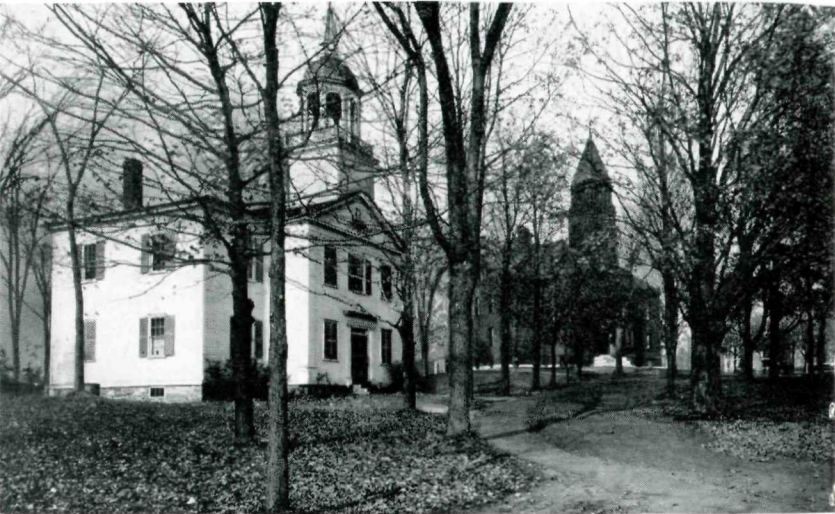
THE DERRY YEARS

by *Sylvia Clark*

THE Derry to which Robert Frost came with his little family in 1900 is a town rich in historic interest and literary associations. Settled by the Scotch Irish in 1719 and called Londonderry for many years, the town was soon known far and wide as the home of people of energy, perseverance and a great love of learning. This was manifested by the early establishment of schools and also by the large number who became college men, many of whom were known as clergymen and physicians.

Although the town did not have many people of wealth among its early citizens, it possessed a true aristocracy marked by good birth and the finest breeding. Pinkerton Academy was founded in 1814 by the Pinkertons, "old-time merchants of Londonderry," and it has been known throughout the years for the distinguished men and women numbered among its teachers and pupils. There could not have been a more congenial home for a man of literary tastes than this old town, steeped in the traditions and legends of the past.

The first settlers built their cabins beside West Running Brook and it was in this neighborhood that Robert Frost made his Derry



C. F. ALLEN

Old and New Pinkerton Academy, Derry

home. In the wooded hills and pleasant fields he found the inspiration for many of his New Hampshire poems and it is with a thrill of pride and fellow ownership that many of us can trace the scenes familiar to us from childhood.

The first time that Mr. Frost became known in his special field to the people of Derry was when he read several of his poems at a meeting of the Derry Village Men's Club. Little did we think then that the modest young man who read to us in such a pleasing manner would be heralded as one of the country's greatest poets before many years had elapsed! Soon after this he became one of the teaching staff at Pinkerton Academy and it was then that I came to know him well. His original method of presenting the subject of English was most interesting to his pupils, so far was it

from the usual manner in which the subject was quite universally taught. His manner in the class room was most informal and foretold the seminars which have made his college work so unique.

One late afternoon I saw a most wonderful sunset as I looked from the chapel window at school. Anxious to have some one share the beauty before me, I called Mr. Frost and our librarian to enjoy the gorgeous display. I thought that my fellow workers did not show the proper amount of enthusiasm and I told them so quite emphatically. The next morning, as I sat at my desk, Mr. Frost dropped before me the following lines written in pencil upon a sheet of yellow school paper.

An A No. 1 Sundown

(Written by request.)

Miss Clark gave a sunset party
At a western window in Chapel,
And because our delight wasn't hearty,
Or we couldn't find words to grapple
With the ravishing skyscape before us,
Miss Clark got as mad as a taurus.
She appealed to the innate calf in us
If the gold wasn't here diaphanous,
There hard and metallic and glittering.
Then maddened still more by tittering
At her words diaphanous, metallic,
She called us dolichocephalic
And everything awful but feminine;
Said she wouldn't have nobody run down,
Or in any way squeeze a lemon in,
Her beautiful A One Sundown.

R. F.

Mr. Frost was a welcome visitor in my home and we shared his

love for the beauties of nature around us. My brother-in-law took him to a secluded spot in the nearby woods to show him some rare and exquisite orchids. What was our delight to find in "A Boy's Will" the lovely lines on the Rose Pogonia which recalled the walk of years before!

It was a great loss to the school when Mr. Frost left Derry in 1911 to go to Plymouth, although he was in a sense still connected with Pinkerton Academy, since the head of the Normal School at Plymouth was an alumnus and a former principal of the Academy. Our association with Mr. Frost and his charming wife will always have a special place in our happy memories of the years they spent near West Running Brook.

NK

From **NEW HAMPSHIRE**

by Robert Frost

She's one of the two best states in the Union.
Vermont's the other. And the two have been
Yoke-fellows in the sap-yoke from of old
In many Marches. And they lie like wedges,
Thick end to thin end and thin end to thick end,
And are a figure of the way the strong
Of mind and strong of arm should fit together,
One thick where one is thin and vice versa.
New Hampshire raises the Connecticut
In a trout hatchery near Canada,
But soon divides the river with Vermont.
Both are delightful states for their absurdly

Small towns — Lost Nation, Bungey, Muddy Boo,
Poplin, Still Corners (so called not because
The place is silent all day long, nor yet
Because it boasts a whiskey still — because
It set out once to be a city and still
Is only corners, cross-roads in a wood).
And I remember one whose name appeared
Between the pictures on a movie screen
Election night once in Franconia,
When everything had gone Republican
And Democrats were sore in need of comfort:
Easton goes Democratic, Wilson 4
Hughes 2. And everybody to the saddest
Laughed the loud laugh, the big laugh at the little.
New York (five million) laughs at Manchester,
Manchester (sixty or seventy thousand) laughs
At Littleton (four thousand), Littleton
Laughs at Franconia (seven hundred), and
Franconia laughs, I fear, — did laugh that night —
At Easton. What has Easton left to laugh at,
And like the actress exclaim, 'Oh my God' at?
There's Bungey; and for Bungey there are towns,
Whole townships named but without population.

* * *

Anything I can say about New Hampshire
Will serve almost as well about Vermont,
Excepting that they differ in their mountains.
The Vermont mountains stretch extended straight;
New Hampshire mountains curl up in a coil.

* * *

For all her mountains fall a little short,
Her people not quite short enough for Art,
She's still New Hampshire, a most restful state.

ROBERT FROST AT PLYMOUTH

by Sidney Cox

IN NOVEMBER of 1945 Robert Frost gave a public talk and reading at Plymouth in the hall of the Normal School where he taught in 1911-12. He had not "changed from him they knew." America's most artful, profoundest, most composed poet, honored in and beyond the English-speaking world, was still teasing, still just one of us Yankees, still casual, still wondering, still too sensitive and richly passionate to be easily swept by any one emotion. He made young and old in the audience share a little of his serenity, scepticism and amusement, set them to realizing and relating homely things and fundamental things, and put them a little more in possession of themselves and their own resources.

He recited one of the poems he had written at Plymouth about "A Winter Walk" up Ward's Hill after lights had gone out in people's houses, while he was living with his wife and four young children in the small white house across the street with Principal Silver, who that evening sat with him on the platform. And he told of how one day in the building where he spoke he had told the class that since the principal was away he was going to read them a story. He sent someone down to the library to get Mark Twain's "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." He would show them that it was a parable about education. He always felt that stuffing, either high or low grade stuffing, was a curse in education because it deprived us of our jump.

At Plymouth thirty-four years ago Robert Frost was known by State Superintendent Morrison as about the best man teaching in the state, and he was much liked and valued by his students. Otherwise he was an inconspicuous teacher without degrees. He went to the Congregational church once, and heard a discourse



PAUL E. FARNUM

Front Entrance Dormitory, Mary Lyon Hall, Plymouth Teachers College

on the evil of staying away from church. For the rest he lived quietly with his wife and children, read, wrote, played tennis and took long walks.

One of the "intervals" he had in mind, besides an interval in time, when he took "Mountain Interval" for the title of his third book of poems was the one south of Plymouth on the way to Bridgewater. Often we walked across that interval. And I remember in particular a sunny winter day when we entered woods somewhere off the road to Wentworth and found an aisle through snow-laden spruces, beautiful and silent, that led us round about to the highway back to Plymouth along the interval. Another time we started down that road, and as we were leaving town we read a sign, "Go slow." He called attention to the fact that both "slow" and "slowly" were good adverbs. Always he was gently showing that life as well as language kept breaking loose from our attempts to organize and unify.

One day as we legged it along a Plymouth road something led to his remarking that there are three grades of task. The most servile and the one that demands least from the worker is the assigned task done under supervision. Freer and more exacting is the task assigned by another but left to be carried out at the discretion and according to the judgment of the worker. The one that takes most character of all is the self-assigned task carried out only at the instant urgency of the worker's own desire.

— where love and need are one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes.

Even in 1945 Robert Frost was claiming to be "lazy," as he was in 1912 at Plymouth. But he is still accepting the sternest kind of discipline from his great desires.

Often on our walks we crossed the covered bridge over the Pemigewasset to Holderness while autumn leaves were falling or flowers commencing to appear, and took a road along the flanks of Mount Prospect. Or we went out past the Draper-Maynard factory and the small mill where pegs were made and over another covered bridge across the Baker river. He was always the peripatetic philosopher poet on those walks, taking off from something present to our sight or recent in experience: baseball or a story of a pitcher, a cosset lamb that didn't blink when he waved his hand close before its eyes, the rumor of a recent suicide or that morning's ignorant chapel reading by a nervous old-maid teacher. She unctuously pronounced lasciviousness "las'kivousness." Once he said of a tense and jumpy fellow teacher I described that what she needed was "an emotional education." He thought that poetry could flex and free our feelings and give us experience in correlating them. He'd rather, he said, have children learn about sex from Shakespeare, including his bawdy passages, than from the new scientific explainers who made it neither play nor mystery.

The near at hand and too easily taken for granted was always

being naturally associated with general ideas — usually with a resulting modification of my general ideas — and with poetry and the funniness and seriousness of life.

When we returned from those walks he would take me to the drugstore for a glass of white grapejuice. (It might have been then that he told me that in the years of eagerness and frustration he had tried heavy drinking to see if it would help with the poetry and found that it did not.) Other times he took me home with him for a dinner of leg of lamb. When the kids had gone to bed he would read from thin, attractive volumes of poetry. A Mosher book it might be, and he would tell me what a literary pirate Mosher was, smile, and praise his loving book-making. Once he recited Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven," his uniquely vibrating voice a flexible instrument for the speech music of many emotions. Tones, he said, pauses and rushes and intensities of sound are more revealing than the definition value of the words. "Lycidas," he said, sympathetically read aloud would be stirring and charming if heard through a wall that muffled all the words. He had once recited "Lycidas," he said, all of it, alone on the summit of Mount Lafayette.

His teaching to the boys at Holderness School that November day, as to me, ignorant, raw college graduate in 1911, was always with a light touch, always broken off by incidentals. It was here a little, there a little.

Things must come in front of us
A many times — I don't say just how many —
That varies with the things — before we see them.

— — —

Our very life depends on everything's
Recurring till we answer from within.

His teaching was as free from didacticism as his poetry.

One evening he read from Mr. Dooley with great gusto. But

even better was his Irish in "The Playboy of the Western World," though he mocked — as he did concerning many things — about Synge's getting turns of speech with a notebook, ear to a knothole in the floor of his hired room on the Arran isle.

Those were great days, but no better than the day of deepening snow in 1945 when, on our return from Plymouth, Robert Frost rejoiced in the dark mountain almost vertical in front of us as we slowed a little along the white spread of the frozen lake before we made the turn toward Hanover. He was still sure but not quite sure, and life was still funny. It was better to look than to lecture, but he still couldn't leave teaching alone.

NK

A FRIEND'S VIEW OF ROBERT FROST

by Donald Bartlett

A YOUNG English poet, John Buxton, has recently said that a poet "is at his best, a man like other men, sharing the joys and griefs, the hopes and doubts and certainties of their lives, and different from them only in the gift of words. . . . The poet concerns himself with those things which men share in common . . ." If that is so, it gives the layman a right to have his say about a poet, especially about one like Robert Frost, whom so many have found to be lively company.

I think that the thing that impressed me when as a high school boy I first met him, was that he seemed to be interested in the same things that I was. This impression was heightened some years later when I was spending the summer in Franconia with a boy who knew Mr. Frost, and found common interest with him in the deeds and the heroes of the professional baseball leagues. We were both acquainted with farming, and both of us liked hill climbing



Mt. Liberty from the Flume, Franconia

C. T. BODWELL

and camping out. Here again we found that Mr. Frost had either been there before, or that he asked the right questions about the spring on Mt. Liberty, or the blackberries and bear sign in the wilderness, or the tough Kinsman Ridge trail, cross-ploughed by glacial action. Whatever lack of interest the rest of the people around us might show in the facts of life, we knew that Mr. Frost was with us. But in being with us he added more than the mere recognition of our own experiences. He enlivened them with pertinent information, north country lore, and companionable figures of speech about the coldness of the spring on Guiot Mountain. He drew a life from the details of his environment which was catching.

Frost knew more about flowers than either of us ever would. But when someone who knows what haying is reads *The Tuft of Flowers*, he is caught by the hay fork, so to speak, and introduced to Frost's flowers along with several other things that one might not have realized were connected. The poet surprises him in showing that they really can be.

He must have been a winning teacher at Pinkerton and at Plymouth. But the best teaching is implied, and the best company is not merely teaching. The history of the world since that early world war has gone in strange directions and ploughed strange areas of the minds of men and of devils. Blithe the new doctrines of economics, psychology, and geopolitics have made their mark, even blither theories of education, new and warmed over, have offered their salvation, and short cuts to the government of men have flashed and short circuited. A man wonders what it is all for, where it leads to; when did the Ten Commandments get amended out, and who shall boil down all that is written into sense?

No one can say that Robert Frost has all the answers, much less dare I say that all he utters and writes is wise. Some of his verse makes no sense to me, probably because there is nothing within me for him to get hold of me by with a given poem. Some things

I disagree with, and he can even hurt my feelings. But when I read *The White Tailed Hornet* or *The Ant on the Table Cloth*, and when later I read *The Gift Outright*, I have found good company of the kind that refreshes my mind with reality. It is as welcome to the moment as if one met an old acquaintance over a glass of beer in a strange land. The questions he now asks still please with their understanding, and what he says is not good because he is teaching, but because he tells his tale so well, the way he says it, and the way he leaves it unsaid, as for an old and understanding friend. I am grateful for a slant or two of his perspective, and I intend to try them when we return to our own ships. One idea especially is about *Building Soil*.

I was in the Philippines when I last read *Two Tramps in Mud Time*, but I knew how it was with an April day in New Hampshire quite as vividly there as I felt what he meant about a man's job.

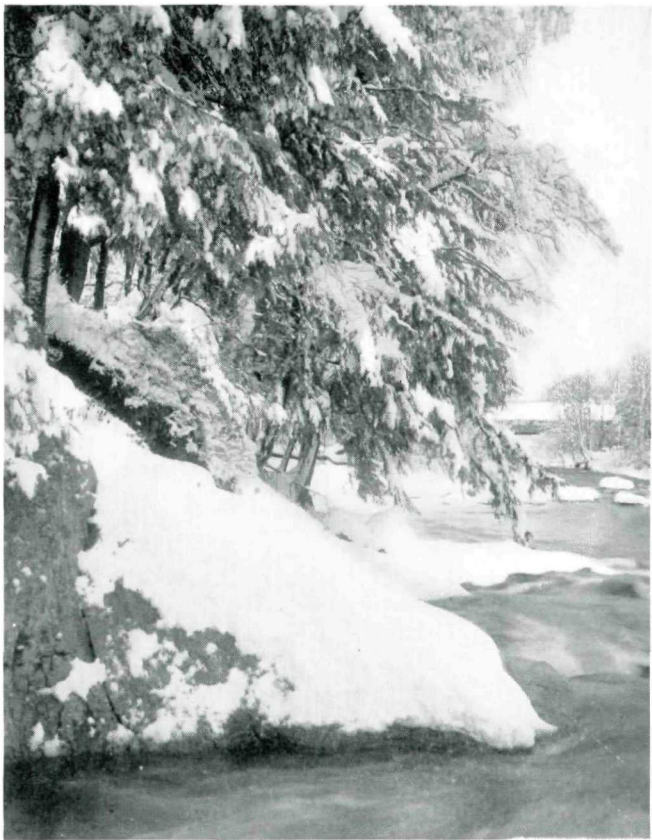
Good poets make good company just as much as Good Fences Make Good Neighbors. It is the more so if they are, like Frost, shrewd and solitary masters of their craft who have the humor to know what they are about, and when they mow, do not whack the timothy down, but take time to whet their blade on a hard stone, and then cut it.

NX

THE UNFORGETTABLE ROBERT FROST

by *David Lambuth*

THERE is a story that a Japanese critic-poet, wanting to gather the greatest poems of a golden age, left the city and all his books and betook himself to his little country house on the mountainside. There, sitting quietly on his heels in the Japanese fashion, he contemplated the country that lay before him and all the life he knew, and, as poem after poem rose up in memory to crystallize for him



MOOSILAKE STUDIO

Beginning of Winter, North Woodstock, White Mountains

some aspect of beauty or truth, he seized his writing brush and in a few swift strokes wrote each seventeen syllable *hokku* on one of the little paper window-panes of the sliding *shoji* that half surrounded the room. When he had written a hundred he knew he had the hundred best poems. For each poem which came unbidden into his mind to express an emotion waked by the experience of nature, of life, or of death, must be the truest poetry because it was the most unforgettable. Such poetry lived with a man and moulded his inner life while it expressed it.

The specific quality and the unique virtue of poetry is that the rhythmic form in which the words are fixed — as in a matrix — makes it possible — say rather inevitable — that *those exact words* with all their beauty and implication should flash into the mind in moments of contemplation, moments of stress, moments of insight. When phrases or lines return to us in such a way we know — in the words of Robert Frost — that “we have taken an immortal wound.”

So, I have been playing a game with myself — and with Robert Frost. How many lines or phrases of his come back to me unbidden, in the ordinary course of living, because he has said in an unforgettable way the thing I have been thinking and wanting to say? For days I have put these haunting phrases down as they came — always without reference to any book. At present I have just seventy-eight of them — not whole poems, but sudden illuminating, inevitable ways of saying things about life and living. I offer you a few, without titles or context. Find them for yourselves if you do not know them already. They are worth the rediscovery.

“I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.” “There must be something wrong in wanting to silence any song.” “Earth’s the right place for love: I don’t know where it’s likely to go better.” “I sha’n’t be gone long. You come too.” “You, of course, are a rose — but were always a rose.” “Nature’s first green is gold,” but “Nothing gold can stay.” “Now up my knee

to keep on top of another year of snow." "But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep." The "highway where the slow wheel pours the sand." "The slow smokeless burning of decay." "What to make of a diminished thing." "A young beech clinging to its last year's leaves." "Moisture and color and odor thicken here. The hours of daylight gather atmosphere." "As if the earth in one unlooked for favor had made them certain earth returned their love."

"Something there is that doesn't love a wall." "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches." "One had to be versed in country things not to believe the phoebes wept." "Has given my heart a change of mood and saved some part of a day I had rued." "My long scythe whispered and left the hay to make." "We love the things we love for what they are." "But all the fun's in how you say a thing."

Whether Robert Frost speaks of birds or trees or people he speaks always to the heart of life. A poem, he says, "begins in delight and ends in wisdom." "They would not find me changed from him they knew — only more sure of all I thought was true."

"Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." "The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows." "Never you say a thing like that to a man, not if he values what he is." "Like one who takes everything said as personal to himself." "Except as a fellow handled an ax, they had no way of knowing a fool." "Your head so much concerned with outer, Mine with inner weather." "Tall slim trees too much alike to mark or name a place by so as to say for certain I was there — or somewhere else." "Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back." "And *try* if we cannot feel forsaken."

One is haunted too by those more frightening lines of the poet, instinct with fears that come sometimes to all of us. "I have been one acquainted with the night. I have walked out in rain — and back in rain." "Word I was in the house alone somehow must have



C. H. BROWN

The Connecticut River

gotten abroad, Word I was in my life alone, Word I had no one left but God." "I have it in me so much nearer home to scare myself with my own desert places." "Now let the night be dark for all of me. Let the night be too dark for me to see into the future. Let what will be, be!"

There are many more to remember. But he says himself: "May something go always unharvested." As it must when one starts to garner from Robert Frost.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

DONALD BARTLETT, A.M., Dartmouth 1924, is Professor of Biography at Dartmouth. He has recently returned from service in the Pacific where he held the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Mr. Bartlett first met Frost in Rhode Island in 1915 shortly after Robert Frost had returned from England. This friendship grew when he spent three summers in Franconia, a neighbor of Frost's, and he has been a devoted friend ever since.



SYLVIA CLARK was born in Derry Village, New Hampshire, on March 4, 1871, and still lives in the same house. Her father, Dr. David Small Clark, was a surgeon in the Civil War, and a practicing doctor in Derry for more than forty years. Her mother was a lineal descendant of John Winslow, brother of the Plymouth Colony Governor, Edward Winslow. In 1890 for an essay on *The House of Seven Gables* she won the Boston Herald Prize Scholarship and went to Wellesley. From 1905 to 1932 she was a teacher at Pinkerton Academy in

Derry Village, where she knew Robert Frost.



SIDNEY COX, A.M., Professor of English at Dartmouth College, inspiring teacher in creative writing, knew Robert Frost when the poet was teaching psychology at the New Hampshire State Normal School in Plymouth, New Hampshire. They have been close friends ever since. He is the author of *Robert Frost, Original "Ordinary Man,"* published by Henry Holt in 1929.



DAVID LAMBUTH, A.M., Professor of English at Dartmouth for many years, distinguished as a teacher and discriminating in his literary tastes, has long been a friend and admirer of Robert Frost. He is the author of the Foreword to Clymer and Green's *Robert Frost: A Bibliography*, published by the Jones Library at Amherst in 1937.



J. J. LANKES lives in Hilton Village, Virginia. He is a well known

artist who specializes in woodcuts. He has illustrated some of Robert Frost's poems and the spirit of his work is akin to that of Mr. Frost's poetry. He has exhibited all over this country and abroad.



STEARNS MORSE, A.M., a native of Bath, New Hampshire, Professor of English at Dartmouth College, and recently named Dean of Freshmen, is an old friend of Robert Frost's, and has written of the poet in several published articles.

ERNEST POOLE is the distin-

guished American author of *The Harbor*, 1915, *His Family*, 1917, which won the Pulitzer Prize, and many other books, the most recent of which is *The Great White Hills of New Hampshire*, 1946. Born in Chicago, part-time New Yorker, he spends most of his time in the White Mountains where he has lived for the past thirty-five years. His house faces the Franconia Range, with Moosilauke twelve miles to the south and Washington twenty to the east. He has known Robert Frost for many years.

H. F. W.

FRONT COVER: Frost's Derry farm. Color Photograph by Douglas Armsden.

INSIDE FRONT COVER: Robert Frost. Courtesy of David Pierce.

BACK COVER: Woodcut courtesy of J. J. Lankes.



HERBERT FAULKNER WEST, chairman of the Department of Comparative Literature, Dartmouth College, graduated from Dartmouth in 1922, and has taught Comparative Literature there since 1925. For the past decade his "Hanover Browsing" in the *Dart-*

mouth Alumni Magazine has been well received. So too have his *Modern Book Collecting for the Impetuous Amateur*, *The Nature Writer*, and other books and brochures. As secretary of the Friends of the Dartmouth Library, Professor West has secured rare works for that institution. Professor West has known Mr. Frost since 1935 and has a splendid Frost collection. He has written a chapter on Robert Frost for a forthcoming book on reading and book collecting.

We are most grateful for his assistance as guest editor.

T. V. K.



DESERT PLACES

by Robert Frost

Snow falling and night falling fast oh fast
Into a field I looked into going past,
And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,
But a few weeds and stubble showing last.

The woods around it have it — it is theirs.
All animals are smothered in their lairs.
I am too absent-spirited to count;
The loneliness includes me unawares.

And lonely as it is that loneliness
Will be more lonely ere it will be less —
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow
With no expression, nothing to express.

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars — on stars where no human race is.
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.