

ROBERT FROST

The Need of Being Versed in Country Things

Harper's, December 1920

New Hampshire: A Poem with Notes and Grace Notes, 1923



THE house had gone to bring again
 To the midnight sky a sunset glow.
 Now the chimney was all of the house that stood,
 Like a pistil after the petals go.

The barn opposed across the way,
 That would have joined the house in flame
 Had it been the will of the wind, was left
 To bear forsaken the place's name.

No more it opened with all one end
 For teams that came by the stony road
 To drum on the floor with scurrying hoofs
 And brush the mow with the summer load.

The birds that came to it through the air
 At broken windows flew out and in,
 Their murmur more like the sigh we sigh
 From too much dwelling on what has been.

Yet for them the lilac renewed its leaf,
 And the aged elm, though touched with fire;
 And the dry pump flung up an awkward arm;
 And the fence post carried a strand of wire.

For them there was really nothing sad.
 But though they rejoiced in the nest they kept,
 One had to be versed in country things
 Not to believe the phoebes wept.