

DERRY DOWN DERRY

A narrative reading by LESLEY FROST of
poems by ROBERT FROST

CONTENTS:

1 LP
1 text (8 leaves)

(including selections from "You Come Too")

Published by Henry Holt and Co., N. Y.

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FL 9733



PS
3511
R83
D47
1961
c.1

MUSIC LP

University of Alberta Library



0 1620 0506 5477

SIDE I

Band 1: THE PASTURE
 Band 2: THE COW IN APPLE TIME
 Band 3: THE RUNAWAY
 Band 4: STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING
 Band 5: THE LAST WORD OF A BLUEBIRD
 Band 6: MOWING
 Band 7: THE TUFT OF FLOWERS
 Band 8: ROSE POGONIAS
 Band 9: THE QUEST OF THE PURPLE-FRINGED
 Band 10: AFTER APPLE PICKING
 Band 11: OCTOBER
 Band 12: MENDING WALL
 Band 13: BLUEBERRIES

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

SIDE II

Band 1: BIRCHES
 Band 2: a. EVENING IN A SUGAR ORCHARD
 b. CHOOSE SOMETHING LIKE A STAR
 Band 3: FIREFLIES IN OUR GARDEN
 Band 4: HYLE BROOK
 Band 5: THE BONFIRE
 Band 6: CLEAR AND COLDER
 Band 7: GATHERING LEAVES
 Band 8: GOOD-BY AND KEEP COLD
 Band 9: STORM FEAR
 Band 10: THE ONSET
 Band 11: DUST OF SNOW
 Band 12: NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY
 Band 13: SPRING POOLS
 Band 14: A PRAYER IN SPRING
 Band 15: A RECORD STRIDE

DERRY DOWN DERRY

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. F 03-271

©1968 FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE CORP.
 701 Seventh Ave., New York, City
 Distributed by Folkways/ Scholarly Records
 988 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07032

PS
3511
R83
D47
1961
MUSIC LP

DERRY DOWN DERRY

A NARRATIVE READING BY

Lesley Frost

OF POEMS BY

Robert Frost

(Includes selections from "You Come Too")

SIDE I, Band 1:

As a child I lived on a small farm, a mile or two from a New Hampshire village named Derry. Actually there were three Derrys, (still are, I suppose, unless they've merged): Derry Depot, Derry Village and East Derry. Derry Depot had a station and Proctor's grocery store, where we marketed. In East Derry were the Public Library and the white-steepled Congregational Church, and the Shepard family, grandparents of our first man into space, Alan Shepard, whose home-town is East Derry. My father also knew Wilbur Wright, so it now seems that he has in one lifetime spanned the air-age, Kitty Hawk-East Derry. The two schools I best remember were in Derry Village. One was Pinkerton Academy where my father taught, and where he produced the first drama I so well remember, "Cathleen niHoolihan" and "The Land of Heart's Desire." The other school was the two-room grade school where I entered 6th grade when I was nine. I'd been taught at home, you see. I had one teacher, a very good one, through 6th, 7th and 8th grades. The farm we lived on was small, as I've said, not many acres, but it was quite diversified. That is, we had hay-fields, we had wood-land, we had pasture-land, and we had an orchard of apples, pears and peaches; even Concord grapes. The road we lived on soon ran across the border into Massachusetts - Lawrence, Massachusetts. The nearest farms to us were the Gays on one side, the Websters on the other. But we were all too far apart to see each others' houses. The first poem I remember my father saying to us was about the pasture, where we always had one cow, sometimes with her calf, as the poem will describe. I thought he wrote this poem for us children (there were four of us), but since then my children have thought he wrote it for them and now his great-grandchildren have thought it was especially for them. Some of the words in it are now the title of a book for all children: "You Come Too."

THE PASTURE

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I sha'n't be gone long. - You come too.

SIDE I, Band 2:

As, of course, you all know, life on a farm does include animals, tame and wild. Another poem is called:

THE COW IN APPLE TIME

Something inspires the only cow of late
To make no more of a wall than an open gate,
And think no more of wall-builders than fools.
Her face is flecked with pomace and she drools
A cider syrup. Having tasted fruit,
She scorns a pasture withering to the root.
She runs from tree to tree where lie and sweeten
The windfalls spiked with stubble and worm-eaten.
She leaves them bitten when she has to fly.
She bellows on a knoll against the sky.
Her udder shrivels and the milk goes dry.

SIDE I, Band 3:

As well as a cow we always had a horse with a Democrat wagon that was big enough for the whole family to go blueberrying and picnicking with; and a buggy, and a gig, and a sleigh with sleigh-bells. A little poem about a horse, a Morgan horse that really wasn't ours, but might well have been because I was often sent off down the road to stop a runaway, is called:

THE RUNAWAY

Once when the snow of the year was beginning to fall,
We stopped by a mountain pasture to say, "Whose colt?"
A little Morgan had one forefoot on the wall,
The other curled at his breast. He dipped his head
And snorted at us. And then he had to bolt.
We heard the miniature thunder where he fled,
And we saw him, or thought we saw him, dim and gray,
Like a shadow against the curtain of falling flakes.
"I think the little fellow's afraid of the snow.
He isn't winter-broken. It isn't play
With the little fellow at all. He's running away.
I doubt if even his mother could tell him, 'Sakes,
It's only weather.' He'd think she didn't know!
Where is his mother? He can't be out alone."
And now he comes again with clatter of stone,
And mounts the wall again with whited eyes
And all his tail that isn't hair up straight.
He shudders his coat as if to throw off flies.
"Whoever it is that leaves him out so late,
When other creatures have gone to stall and bin,
Ought to be told to come and bring him in."

SIDE I, Band 4:

Then of course there was the little colt that has

been made so famous by the poem:

STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

SIDE I, Band 5:

Little wild animals were all around us, too. Rabbits, squirrels, woodchucks, eating up our vegetables; deer always crossing the lower meadow; foxes barking at evening at the edge of the woods; birds, too. And it was a poem about a bluebird that my father did actually write for me. It's called:

THE LAST WORD OF A BLUEBIRD (As Told to a Child)

As I went out a Crow
In a low voice said, "Oh,
I was looking for you.
How do you do?
I just came to tell you
To tell Lesley (will you?)
That her little Bluebird
Wanted me to bring word
That the north wind last night
That made the stars bright
And made ice on the trough
Almost made him cough
His tail feathers off.
He just had to fly!
But he sent her Good-by,
And said to be good,
And wear her red hood,
And look for skunk tracks
In the snow with an ax -
And do everything!
And perhaps in the spring
He would come back and sing."

SIDE I, Band 6:

Now since, as I have said, we had a cow and a horse, and sometimes a calf and a colt, it was necessary to have food for these animals. This made haying a very important matter. Many of my father's poems are about haying-time, as in 'The Death of the Hired Man,' 'The Code,' 'Mowing,' and 'A Tuft of Flowers.'

MOWING

There was never a sound beside the wood but one,
And that was my long scythe whispering to the ground.
What was it it whispered? I knew not well myself;
Perhaps it was something about the heat of the sun,
Something, perhaps, about the lack of sound -
And that was why it whispered and did not speak.
It was no dream of the gift of idle hours,
Or easy gold at the hand of fay or elf:
Anything more than the truth would have seemed too
weak

To the earnest love that laid the swale in rows,
Not without feeble-pointed spikes of flowers
(Pale orchises), and scared a bright green snake.
The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows.
My long scythe whispered and left the hay to make.

SIDE I, Band 7:

And another one about mowing:

THE TUFT OF FLOWERS

I went to turn the grass once after one
Who mowed it in the dew before the sun.

The dew was gone that made his blade so keen
Before I came to view the leveled scene.

I looked for him behind an isle of trees;
I listened for his whetstone on the breeze.

But he had gone his way, the grass all mown,
And I must be, as he had been, - alone,

"As all must be," I said within my heart,
"Whether they work together or apart."

But as I said it, swift there passed me by
On noiseless wing a bewildered butterfly,

Seeking with memories grown dim o'er night
Some resting flower of yesterday's delight.

And once I marked his flight go round and round,
As where some flower lay withering on the ground.

And then he flew as far as eye could see,
And then on tremulous wing came back to me.

I thought of questions that have no reply,
And would have turned to toss the grass to dry;

But he turned first; and led my eye to look
At a tall tuft of flowers beside a brook,
A leaping tongue of bloom the scythe had spared
Beside a reedy brook the scythe had bared.

I left my place to know them by their name
Finding them butterfly weed when I came.

The mower in the dew had loved them thus,
By leaving them to flourish, not for us,

Nor yet to draw one thought of ours to him,
But from sheer morning gladness at the brim.

The butterfly and I had lit upon,
Nevertheless, a message from the dawn,

That made me hear the wakening birds around;
And hear his long scythe whispering to the ground,

And feel a spirit kindred to my own;
So that henceforth I worked no more alone;

But glad with him, I worked as with his aid,
And weary, sought at noon with him the shade;

And dreaming, as it were, held brotherly speech
With one whose thought I had not hoped to reach.

"Men work together," I told him from the heart,
"Whether they work together or apart."

SIDE I, Band 8:

You can understand how flowers are an exciting part of the life of the country. Flowers and stars. We learned the names of both. We used to go looking for flowers at the right time; jack-in-the-pulpits, yellow ladies' slippers, rose pogonias, the purple-fringed orchid. And the little meadow where the rose pogonias grew is memorialized in the poem called:

ROSE POGONIAS

A saturated meadow,
Sun-shaped and jewel-small,
A circle scarcely wider
Than the trees around were tall;
Where winds were quite excluded,
And the air was stifling sweet
With the breath of many flowers, -
A temple of the heat.

There we bowed us in the burning,
As the sun's right worship is,
To pick where none could miss them
A thousand orchises;
For though the grass was scattered,
Yet every second spear
Seemed tipped with wings of color,
That tinged the atmosphere.

We raised a simple prayer
Before we left the spot,
That in the general moving
That place might be forgot;
Of if not all so favored,
Obtain such grace of hours,
That none should mow the grass there
While so confused with flowers.

SIDE I, Band 9:

And we also went looking for the purple-fringed orchid,
which in a way is very like the rose pogonia, but far
more rare, and far more difficult to find. This poem
is called:

THE QUEST OF THE PURPLE-FRINGED

I felt the chill of the meadow underfoot,
But the sun overhead;
And snatches of verse and song of scenes like this
I sung or said.

I skirted the margin alders for miles and miles
In a sweeping line.
The day was the day by every flower that blooms,
But I saw no sign.

Yet further I went to be before the scythe,
For the grass was high;
Till I saw the path where the slender fox had come
And gone panting by.

Then at last and following him I found -
In the very hour
When the color flushed to the petals it must have been -
The far-sought flower.

There stood the purple spires with no breath of air
Nor headlong bee
To disturb their perfect poise the livelong day
'Neath the alder tree.

I only knelt and putting the boughs aside
Looked, or at most
Counted them all to the buds in the corpse's depth
That were pale as a ghost.

Then I arose and silently wandered home,
And I for one
Said that the fall might come and whirl of leaves,
For summer was done.

SIDE I, Band 10:

There were many things that we did on the farm which
brought us in fruits and flowers, both wild and tame.
And one, of course, was the gathering of the apples.
And the poem, "After Apple Picking" describes how we
felt after a long day of apple-picking and bringing
them into the cellar where we kept them all winter:

AFTER APPLE-PICKING

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.
But I was well

Upon my way to sleep before it fell,
And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin
The rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.
There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
For all
That struck the earth,
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,
Went surely to the cider-apple heap
As of no worth.
One can see what will trouble
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is,
Were he not gone,
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,
Or just some human sleep.

SIDE I, Band 11:

Those were the days when we picked Northern Spies and
Baldwins, both of which lasted all winter in the cool
cellar. We had no 'frigidaire or deep freezes in those
days. Then came the Concord grapes in the fall.
"October":

OCTOBER

O hushed October morning mild,
Thy leaves have ripened to the fall;
Tomorrow's wind, if it be wild,
Should waste them all.
The crows above the forest call;
Tomorrow they may form and go.
O hushed October morning mild,
Begin the hours of this day slow.
Make the day seem to us less brief.
Hearts not averse to being beguiled,
Beguile us in the way you know.
Release one leaf at break of day;
At noon release another leaf;
One from our trees, one far away.
Retard the sun with gentle mist;
Enchant the land with amethyst.
Slow, slow!
For the grapes' sake, if they were all,
Whose leaves already are burnt with frost,
Whose clustered fruit must else be lost -
For the grapes' sake along the wall.

SIDE I, Band 12:

And speaking of walls, there was a wall between our
farm and the Gay's farm that always seemed to be
needing mending. It is the wall referred to in the
poem:

MENDING WALL

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.

And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
 We have to use a spell to make them balance:
 "Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
 We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
 Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,
 One on a side. It comes to little more:
 There where it is we do not need the wall:
 He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
 My apple trees will never get across
 And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
 He only says, "Good fences make good neighbors."
 Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
 If I could put a notion in his head:
 "Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
 Where there are cows? But here there are, no cows.
 Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
 What I was walling in or walling out,
 And to whom I was like to give offense.
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
 That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,
 But it's not Elves exactly, and I'd rather
 He said it for himself. I see him there
 Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
 In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
 He moves in the darkness as it seem to me,
 Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
 He will not go behind his father's saying,
 And he likes having thought of it so well
 He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

SIDE I, Band 13:

Our day was divided into different kinds of times:
 there was milking-time, when we watched the cow being
 milked, until I learned to do it myself; there was
 chore-time, (very few children have chore-time any
 more,) when we brought in the chopped wood from
 the wood-shed and put it in the wood-box behind
 the kitchen stove; and swept the porch with an old
 broom, and swept the kitchen with a new broom, and
 brought in two pails of water from the pump in the
 yard, one for drinking and the other for washing
 dishes; then there was play-time; and picnic-time;
 and apple-picking time; and blueberrying time; and
 hay-raking time; and snow-shoveling time. By the
 time we got through dividing up the time of day, and
 even the time of year, there was very little time
 left to worry about what to do with. One of the
 poems is about blueberrying-time. We had a few blue-
 berries on our own place, but most of them were on
 the hills where everyone was allowed to pick. So
 we would climb into the Democrat wagon and go for
 an all-day picnic a mile or two away from home. And
 the poem "Blueberries" is about such an expedition:

BLUEBERRIES

'You ought to have seen what I saw on my way
 To the village, through Patterson's pasture today:
 Blueberries as big as the end of your thumb,
 Real sky-blue, and heavy, and ready to drum
 In the cavernous pail of the first one to come!
 And all ripe together, not some of them green
 And some of them ripe! You ought to have seen!'

'I don't know what part of the pasture you mean.'

'You know where they cut off the woods-let me see-
 It was two years ago-orno!-can it be
 No longer than that? - and the following fall
 The fire ran and burned it all up but the wall.'

'Why, there hasn't been time for the bushes to grow.
 That's always the way with the blueberries, though:
 There may not have been the ghost of a sign
 Of them anywhere under the shade of the pine,
 But get the pine out of the way, you may burn
 The pasture all over until not a fern
 Or grass-blade is left, not to mention a stick,
 And presto, they're up all around you as thick
 And hard to explain as a conjuror's trick.'

'It must be a charcoal they fatten their fruit.
 I taste in them sometimes the flavor of soot.
 And after all really they're ebony skinned:
 The blue's but a mist from the breath of the wind,
 A tarnish that goes at a touch of the hand,
 And less than the tan with which pickers are tanned.'

'Does Patterson know what he has, do you think?'

'He may and not care and so leave the chewink
 To gather them for him - you know what he is.
 He won't make the fact that they're rightfully his
 An excuse for keeping us other folk out.'

'I wonder you didn't see Loren about.'

'The best of it was that I did. Do you know,
 I was just getting through what the field had to show
 And over the wall and into the road,
 When who should come by, with a democrat-load
 Of all the young chattering Lorens alive,
 But Loren, the fatherly, out for a drive.'

'He saw you, then? What did he do? Did he frown?'

'He just kept nodding his head up and down.
 You know how politely he always goes by.
 But he thought a big thought - I could tell by his eye -
 Which being expressed, might be this in effect:
 "I have left those there berries, I shrewdly suspect,
 To ripen too long. I am greatly to blame."'

'He's a thriftier person than some I could name.'

'He seems to be thrifty; and hasn't he need,
 With the mouths of all those young Lorens to feed?
 He has brought them all up on wild berries, they say,
 Like birds. They store a great many away.
 They eat them the year round, and those they don't eat
 They sell in the store and buy shoes for their feet.'

'Who cares what they say? It's a nice way to live,
 Just taking what Nature is willing to give,
 Not forcing her hand with harrow and plow.'

'I wish you had seen his perpetual bow -
 And the air of the youngsters! No one of them turned,
 And they looked so solemn-absurdly concerned.'

'I wish I knew half what the flock of them know
 Of where all the berries and other things grow,
 Cranberries in bogs and raspberries on top
 Of the boulder-strewn mountain, and when they will
 crop.'

I met them one day and each had a flower
 Stuck into his berries as fresh as a shower;
 Some strange kind - they told me it hadn't a name.

'I've told you how once not long after we came,
 I almost provoked poor Loren to mirth
 By going to him of all people on earth
 To ask if he knew any fruit to be had
 For the picking. The rascal, he said he'd be glad
 To tell if he knew. But the year had been bad.
 There had been some berries - but those were all gone.
 He didn't say where they had been. He went on:
 "I'm sure - I'm sure" - as polite as could be.
 He spoke to his wife in the door, "Let me see,
 Mame, we don't know any good berrying place?"
 It was all he could do to keep a straight face.'

'If he thinks all the fruit that grows wild is for him,
 He'll find he's mistaken. See here, for a whim,
 We'll pick in the Pattersons' pasture this year.
 We'll go in the morning, that is, if it's clear,
 And the sun shines out warm: the vines must be wet.
 It's so long since I picked I almost forget
 How we used to pick berries: we took one look round -
 Then sank out of sight like trolls underground,
 And saw nothing more of each other, or heard,
 Unless when you said I was keeping a bird
 Away from its nest, and I said it was you.
 "Well, one of us is." For complaining it flew
 Around and around us. And then for a while
 We picked, till I feared you had wandered a mile,
 And I thought I had lost you. I lifted a shout
 Too loud for the distance you were, it turned out,
 For when you made answer, your voice was as low
 As talking - you stood up beside me, you know.'

'We sha'n't have the place to ourselves to enjoy -
 Not likely, when all the young Lorens deploy.
 They'll be there tomorrow, or even tonight.
 They won't be too friendly - they may be polite -
 To people they look on as having no right
 To pick where they're picking: But we won't complain.
 You ought to have seen how it looked in the rain,

The fruit mixed with water in layers of leaves,
Like two kinds of jewels, a vision for thieves.'

SIDE II, Band 1:

Play-time on our farm included swinging the young
birches that stood all over Cline's Hill. Cline's
Hill belonged to the Gay family but both the Gay
children and the Frost children played on Cline's
Hill, particularly swinging birches:

BIRCHES

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay
As ice-storms do. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust -
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are
bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows -
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate willfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

SIDE II, Band 2:

Animals, flowers and stars too. One of my earliest
memories is of being awakened in the midnight and
brought to a window to see Haley's Comet streaking
across the sky. It left an indelible impression on
me, partly because I realize now I was fortunate to
be seeing Haley's Comet at all--once in a lifetime.
The next time it comes in sight will be in 1986. We
always talked about stars, picked out and named the
constellations when we were out in the evening for a
late walk up the Berry-Road, or at maple-sugar time,
as in the next poem:

EVENING IN A SUGAR ORCHARD

From where I lingered in a lull in March
Outside the sugar-house one night for choice,
I called the fireman with a careful voice
And bade him leave the pan and stoke the arch:
'O fireman, give the fire another stoke,
And send more sparks up chimney with the smoke.'
I thought a few might tangle, as they did,
Among bare maple boughs, and in the rare
Hill atmosphere not cease to glow,
And so be added to the moon up there.
The moon, though slight, was moon enough to show
On every tree a bucket with a lid,
And on black ground a bear-skin rug of snow.
The sparks made no attempt to be the moon.
They were content to figure in the trees
As Leo, Orion, and the Pleiades.
And that was what the boughs were full of soon.

SIDE II, Band 3:

Fireflies are always a childhood memory. Fireflies
pretending to be stars. We had them in multitude:

FIREFLIES IN THE GARDEN

Here come real stars to fill the upper skies,
And here on earth come emulating flies,
That though they never equal stars in size,
(And they were never really stars at heart)
Achieve at times a very star-like start.
Only, of course, they can't sustain the part.

SIDE II, Band 4:

We also had spring peepers, the tiniest of frogs pre-
tending to be sleigh-bells in our meadow swamp:

HYLA BROOK

By June our brook's run out of song and speed.
Sought for much after that, it will be found
Either to have gone groping underground
(And taken with it all the Hyla breed
That shouted in the mist a month ago,
Like ghost of sleigh-bells in a ghost of snow)
Or flourished and come up in jewel-weed,
Weak foliage that is blown upon and bent
Even against the way its waters went.
Its bed is left a faded paper sheet
Of dead leaves stuck together by the heat -
A brook to none but who remember long.
This as it will be seen is other far
Than with brooks taken otherwise in song.
We love the things we love for what they are.

SIDE II, Band 5:

We built great bonfires too, when we burned the heaps
of brush we had dragged from the alder clumps along
Hyla Brook, or from the pine grove in the pasture, or
from the hard-wood lot--maple, oak and birch beyond
the hayfields. And often I think of the times the
fire escaped us, or almost got away, and threatened the
neighbors' woods. But even when it didn't get out of
hand, a bonfire is a wonderfully scary thing:

THE BONFIRE

'Oh, let's go up the hill and scare ourselves,
As reckless as the best of them tonight,
By setting fire to all the brush we piled
With pitchy hands to wait for rain or snow.
Oh, let's not wait for rain to make it safe.
The pile is ours: we dragged it bough on bough
Down dark converging paths between the pines.
Let's not care what we do with it tonight.
Divide it? No! But burn it as one pile
The way we piled it. And let's be the talk
Of people brought to windows by a light
Thrown from somewhere against their wall-paper.
Rouse them all, both the free and not so free
With saying what they'd like to do to us

For what they'd better wait till we have done.
Let's all but bring to life this old volcano,
If that is what the mountain ever was -
And scare ourselves. Let wild fire loose we will ..."

'And scare you too?' the children said together.

'Why wouldn't it scare me to have a fire
Begin in smudge with ropy smoke and know
That still, if I repent, I may recall it,
But in a moment not: a little spurt
Of burning fatness, and then nothing but
The fire itself can put it out, and that
By burning out, and before it burns out
It will have roared first and mixed sparks with stars,
And sweeping round it with a flaming sword,
Made the dim trees stand back in wider circle -
Done so much and I know not how much more
I mean it shall not do if I can bind it.
Well if it doesn't with its draft bring on
A wind to blow in earnest from some quarter,
As once it did with me upon an April.
The breezes were so spent with winter blowing
They seemed to fail the bluebirds under them
Short of the perch their languid flight was toward
And my flame made a pinnacle to heaven
As I walked once around it in possession.
But the wind out of doors - you know the saying.
There came a gust. You used to think the trees
Made wind by fanning since you never knew
It blow but that you saw the trees in motion.
Something or someone watching made that gust.
It put the flame tip-down and dabbed the grass
Of over-winter with the least tip-touch
Your tongue gives salt or sugar in your hand.
The place it reached to blackened instantly.
The black was almost all there was by daylight,
That and the merest curl of cigarette smoke -
And a flame slender as the hepaticas,
Blood-root, and violets so soon to be now.
But the black spread like black death on the ground,
And I think the sky darkened with a cloud
Like winter and evening coming on together.
There were enough things to be thought of then.
Where the field stretches toward the north
And setting sun to Hyla brook, I gave it
To flames without twice thinking, where it verges
Upon the road, to flames too, though in fear
They might find fuel there, in withered brake,
Grass its full length, old silver goldenrod,
And alder and grape vine entanglement,
To leap the dusty deadline. For my own
I took what front there was beside. I knelt
And thrust hands in and held my face away.
Fight such a fire by rubbing not by beating.
A board is the best weapon if you have it.
I had my coat. And oh, I knew, I knew,
And said out loud, I couldn't bide the smother
And heat so close in; but the thought of all
The woods and town on fire by me, and all
The town turned out to fight for me - that held me.
I trusted the brook barrier, but feared
The road would fail; and on that side the fire
Died not without a noise of crackling wood -
Of something more than tinder-grass and weed -
That brought me to my feet to hold it back
By leaning back myself, as if the reins
Were round my neck and I was at the plow.
I won! But I'm sure no one ever spread
Another color over a tenth the space
That I spread coal-black over in the time
It took me. Neighbors coming home from town
Couldn't believe that so much black had come there
While they had backs turned, that it hadn't been there
When they had passed an hour or so before
Going the other way and they not seen it.
They looked about for someone to have done it.
But there was no one. I was somewhere wondering
Where all my weariness had gone and why
I walked so light on air in heavy shoes
In spite of a scorched Fourth-of-July feeling.
Why wouldn't I be scared remembering that?'

'If it scares you, what will it do to us?'

'Scare you. But if you shrink from being scared,
What would you say to war if it should come?
That's what for reasons I should like to know -
If you can comfort me by any answer.'

'Oh, but war's not for children - it's for men.'

'Now we are digging almost down to China.
My dears, my dears, you thought that - we all thought
it.

So your mistake was ours. Haven't you heard, though,
About the ships where war has found them out
At sea, about the towns where war has come
Through opening clouds at night with droning speed
Further o'erhead than all but stars and angels, -
And children in the ships and in the towns?
Haven't you heard what we have lived to learn?
Nothing so new - something we had forgotten:
War is for everyone, for children too.
I wasn't going to tell you and I mustn't.
The best way is to come up hill with me
And have our fire and laugh and be afraid.'

SIDE II, Band 6:

On a farm, the passing of the seasons is most impor-
tant and exciting. Weather is a joy, even when the
elements are at their worst, and threaten to blow you
down, or bury you in snow, or drown you in spring
freshets. In the country the seasons change slowly
and miraculously from summer into fall; slow, slow,
for the grapes' sake if they were all, for the grapes'
sake along the wall." However, in New England, the
fall can come on with a rush of color and wind as we
hear in the poem:

CLEAR AND COLDER

Wind the season-climate mixer
In my Witches' Weather Primer
Says to make this Fall Elixir
First you let the summer simmer,
Using neither spoon nor skimmer,

Till about the right consistence.
(This like fate by stars is reckoned.
None remaining in existence
Under magnitude the second);

Then take some left-over winter
Far to north of the St. Lawrence.
Leaves to strip and branches splinter,
Bring on wind. Bring rain on torrents -
Colder than the season warrants.

Dash it with some snow for powder.
If this seems like witchcraft rather,
If this seems a witches' chowder
(All my eye and Cotton Mather!),

Wait and watch the liquor settle.
I could stand whole dayfuls of it.
Wind she brews a heady kettle.
Human being love it - love it.
Gods above are not above it.

SIDE II, Band 7:

And another Autumn poem is "Gathering Leaves," some-
thing we children did by the day-full, only to have
great heaps to dive into, good as snow-drifts for
fun:

GATHERING LEAVES

Spades take up leaves
No better than spoons,
And bags full of leaves
Are light as balloons.

I make a great noise
Of rustling all day
Like rabbit and deer
Running away.

But the mountains I raise
Elude my embrace,
Flowing over my arms
And into my face.

I may load and unload
Again and again
Till I fill the whole shed,
And what have I then?

Next to nothing for weight,
And since they grew duller
From contact with earth,
Next to nothing for color.

Next to nothing for use.
But a crop is a crop,
And who's to say where
The harvest shall stop?

SIDE II, Band 8:

As winter came, we said good-bye to the outer edges
of the farm and turned to a cozy indoors. We said
"Good-bye and Keep Cold," to the orchard:

GOOD-BY AND KEEP COLD

This saying good-by on the edge of the dark
And the cold to an orchard so young in the bark
Reminds me of all that can happen to harm
An orchard away at the end of the farm
All winter, cut off by a hill from the house.
I don't want it girdled by rabbit and mouse,
I don't want it dreamily nibbled for browse
By deer, and I don't want it budded by grouse.
(If certain it wouldn't be idle to call
I'd summon grouse, rabbit, and deer to the wall
And warn them away with a stick for a gun.)
I don't want it stirred by the heat of the sun.
(We made it secure against being, I hope,
By setting it out on a northerly slope.)
No orchard's the worse for the wintriest storm;
But one thing about it, it mustn't get warm.
"How often already you've had to be told,
Keep cold, young orchard. Good-by and keep cold.
Dread fifty above more than fifty below."
I have to be gone for a season or so.
My business awhile is with different trees,
Less carefully nurtured, less fruitful than these,
And such as is done to their wood with an ax -
Maples and birches and tamaracks.
I wish I could promise to lie in the night
And think of an orchard's aboreal plight
When slowly (and nobody comes with a light)
Its heart sinks lower under the sod.
But something has to be left to God.

SIDE II, Band 9:

There were winter storms, great blizzards that cut us
off from everything except the barn, which fortunately,
on our farm, was connected with the house by some
sheds--the wood-shed and the grain-shed, so that we
did not need to go outside to reach the cow and the
horse. But still we often felt a little frightened as
the snow piled up against us all day long, all night
long, and the white silence became too silent for
comfort:

STORM FEAR

When the wind works against us in the dark,
And pelts with snow
The lower chamber window on the east,
And whispers with a sort of stifled bark,
The beast,
'Come out! Come out!' -
It costs no inward struggle not to go,
Ah, no!
I count our strength,
Two and a child,
Those of us not asleep subdued to mark
How the cold creeps as the fire dies at Length,
How drifts are piled,
Dooryard and road ungraded,
Till even the comforting barn grows far away,
And my heart owns a doubt
Whether 'tis in us to arise with day
And save ourselves unaided.

SIDE II, Band 10:

But this kind of fear was answered right back by a
poem called:

THE ONSET

Always the same, when on a fated night
At last the gathered snow lets down as white
As may be in dark woods, and with a song
It shall not make again all winter long
Of hissing on the yet uncovered ground,
I almost stumble looking up and round,
As one who overtaken by the end
Gives up his errand, and lets death descend
Upon him where he is, with nothing done
To evil, no important triumph won,
More than if life had never been begun.

Yet all the precedent is on my side:
I know that winter death has never tried
The earth but it has failed: the snow may heap
In long storms an undrifted four feet deep
As measured against maple, birch, and oak,
It cannot check the peeper's silver croak;
And I shall see the snow all go down hill
In water of a slender April rill
That flashes tail through last year's withered brake
And dead weeds, like a disappearing snake.
Nothing will be left white but here a birch,
And there a clump of houses with a church.

SIDE II, Band 11:

While the little poem "Dust of Snow" puts snow right
where it belongs:

DUST OF SNOW

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

SIDE II, Band 12:

After winter, the spring, perhaps the most perfect
time of all. The willows along our little brook,
Hyla Brook, showed the first signs, turning a green-
yellow. Then the poplars and birches raised a
pale golden shimmer against the pale blue spring
sky. "Nature's First Green is Gold:"

NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

SIDE II, Band 13:

And too soon our woods began to be shade trees once
more - the maples, the chestnut trees, the elms and
oaks - even though we warned them:

SPRING POOLS

These pools that, though in forests, still reflect
The total sky almost without defect,
And like the flowers beside them, chill and shiver,
Will like the flowers beside them soon be gone,
And yet not out by any brook or river,
But up by roots to bring dark foliage on.

The trees that have it in their pent-up buds
To darken nature and be summer woods -
Let them think twice before they use their powers
To blot out and drink up and sweep away
These flowery waters and these watery flowers
From snow that melted only yesterday.

