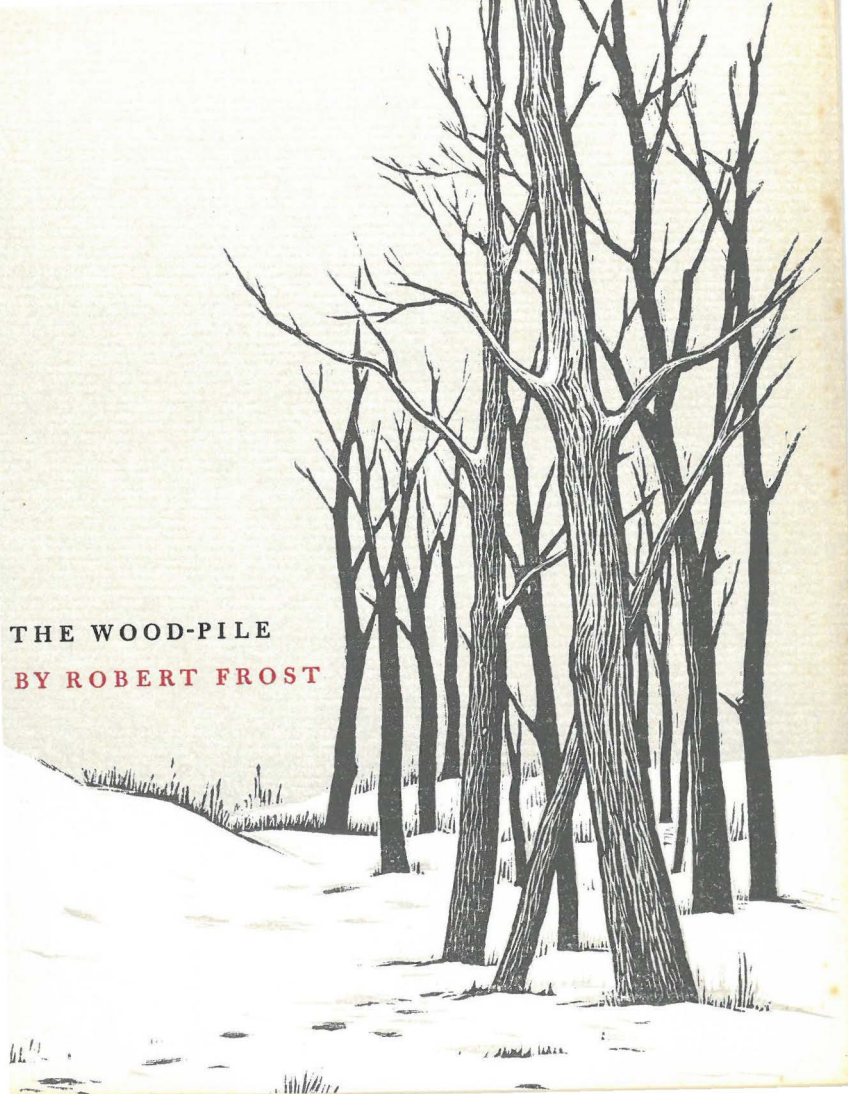


THE WOOD-PILE  
BY ROBERT FROST





GREETINGS AT

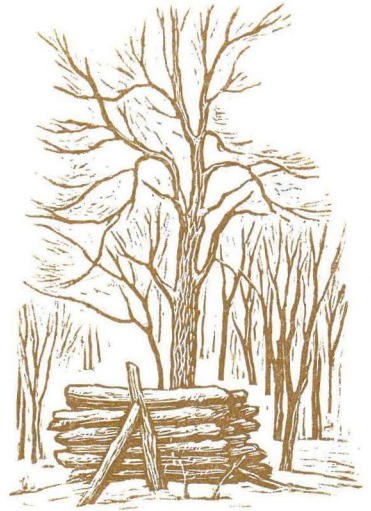
CHRISTMAS 1961

AND BEST WISHES FOR THE

COMING YEAR FROM

ROBERT FROST

THE  
WOOD-  
PILE



BY ROBERT FROST

This poem has been reprinted from  
COMPLETE POEMS OF ROBERT FROST  
copyright 1930, 1939 by Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.



Out walking in the frozen swamp one gray day,  
I paused and said, "I will turn back from here.  
No, I will go on farther—and we shall see."  
The hard snow held me, save where now and then  
One foot went through. The view was all in lines  
Straight up and down of tall slim trees  
Too much alike to mark or name a place by  
So as to say for certain I was here

Or somewhere else: I was just far from home.  
A small bird flew before me. He was careful  
To put a tree between us when he lighted,  
And say no word to tell me who he was  
Who was so foolish as to think what *he* thought.  
He thought that I was after him for a feather –  
The white one in his tail; like one who takes  
Everything said as personal to himself.  
One flight out sideways would have undeceived him.  
And then there was a pile of wood for which  
I forgot him and let his little fear  
Carry him off the way I might have gone,  
Without so much as wishing him good-night.  
He went behind it to make his last stand.  
It was a cord of maple, cut and split  
And piled – and measured, four by four by eight.

And not another like it could I see.  
No runner tracks in this year's snow looped near it.  
And it was older sure than this year's cutting,  
Or even last year's or the year's before.  
The wood was gray and the bark warping off it  
And the pile somewhat sunken. Clematis  
Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle.  
What held it though on one side was a tree  
Still growing, and on one a stake and prop,  
These latter about to fall. I thought that only  
Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks  
Could so forget his handiwork on which  
He spent himself, the labor of his ax,  
And leave it there far from a useful fireplace  
To warm the frozen swamp as best it could  
With the slow smokeless burning of decay.

Wood engravings by Thomas W. Nason



Printed at The Spiral Press, New York