



VIRGINIA CHURCH

Collected Poems

TEACHERS, STUDENTS, WAR, AND THE LATIN QUARTER

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

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VIRGINIA WOODSON FRAME CHURCH

Collected Poems

1879–1956

A CRITICAL READING EDITION

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher, dramatist, traveler, and poet of compressed lives

Virginia Woodson Frame Church moved easily among worlds that literary history has kept apart: Smith College magazines, California classrooms, amateur and professional theater, Paris cafés, wartime schools, and popular religious publishing. Her best-known book, *Teachers Are People*, turns a high-school teacher's working day into a sequence of quick dramatic portraits—funny, impatient, tender, and alert to the lives concealed by grades and discipline. The revised 1945 edition added a darker group about former pupils at war. Her less familiar *Silhouettes of the Latin Quarter* looks outward from café tables toward artists, models, expatriates, and the moral theater of Paris. Before either book she had published accomplished light verse at Smith; later she wrote plays, edited international fiction, toured with marionettes, and addressed young readers in two books of faith. This edition resets the complete revised *Teachers Are People*, four recovered Smith poems and six surviving poems from *Silhouettes*. It follows the original lineation while repairing unmistakable typographical and scanning damage, and it identifies the limits of a corpus whose second poetry book has not yet been found in a complete digital copy.

Family and education

Virginia Woodson Catlett Frame was born on 18 February 1879 in St. Joseph, Missouri. The full form of her name appears in a 1913 Frame family genealogy; later publications usually shortened it to Virginia Woodson Frame, Virginia W. Church, or simply Virginia Church. Contemporary biographical directories identify her parents as prominent members of the Frame and Woodson families. Notices from St. Joseph and Kansas City place her in a socially connected household whose movements and visits were regularly reported in the local press. Her mother died in Los Angeles in 1928.

Frame attended Smith College and belonged to the class of 1899. This date corrects later secondary accounts that give 1898: the *Smith College Monthly* repeatedly attaches “’99” to her name. At Smith she served on the magazine’s editorial board, worked in its “About College” department, became president of Alpha, and published poems and prose. Four poems have been recovered from the 1897–99 volumes: “A Rondeau,” “Mistress Parsons,” “A Triolet,” and “At Sunset.” Her prose contribution “Kentucky Sketches” appeared in the same student periodical. The poems show an assured command of fixed forms, comic courtship verse, and the polished magazine diction expected of a late-nineteenth-century college writer.

Her education continued well beyond Smith. Biographical notices record an illustration course at the University of California in 1901, English study at Columbia University in 1906, and work at the Art Students League. The author’s note in *Curtain!* adds graduate study at Boston University, Columbia, and Queen’s College in England, as well as a year in George Pierce Baker’s celebrated 47 Workshop. At Boston University she completed the 1915 master’s thesis *The Evolution of the Dramatic Prologue*, a historical study ranging from Greek theater to modern stage practice. These overlapping interests in literature, illustration, pedagogy, and performance shaped nearly every phase of her career.

Marriage, family, and California

On 14 October 1908, in Richmond, Virginia, she married John William Church, a United States Army officer. Their daughter, Elizabeth Courtney Church, was born in Richmond on 10 February 1910. The family lived briefly in New York and moved to San Diego in September 1912. John Church died before the 1940 census, leaving Virginia a widow. City directories, newspaper notices, and her own publications trace a later movement from San Diego to Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, though the exact dates of every appointment remain uncertain.

Church’s professional identity was primarily that of an English teacher, but she refused to separate teaching from theater and public performance. By 1932 she had taught English at San Diego Junior College and served as head of English at Franklin High School in Los Angeles. The vivid school culture in *Teachers Are People*—faculty meetings, student conferences, examinations, parent visits, plays, clubs, and the emotional labor of advising

adolescents—draws its authority from this long experience. The fictional teacher Agatha Brown is a mask, but the sequence's accumulated detail makes it an unusually substantial record of a woman educator's daily work in early twentieth-century Southern California.

Books, theater, and marionettes

Church's first book was not a poetry collection but a beautifully designed memory book. *College Girls' Record* (1903), compiled and illustrated under her maiden name, invited women students to preserve four years of courses, friendships, photographs, events, and impressions. Printed by the Tomoyé Press for Paul Elder in San Francisco, it went through revised issues and circulated far beyond Smith. A University of Chicago exhibition has since used an annotated copy to document women's student life in the 1920s.

With Margaret Mayo she wrote *Commencement Days*, first produced as a play in 1908 and novelized in 1910. Other plays attributed to Church include *Fear of Houses*, *Pamela*, *The Other Fellow*, *The Heart Specialist*, *Pierrot-by-the-Light-of-the-Moon*, and *What Men Live By*, her adaptation of Tolstoy's story. Walter H. Baker published the latter in 1924. In 1932 Harper & Brothers issued *Curtain! A Book of Modern Plays*, which Church edited and supplied with practical introductory matter. A contemporary biographical sketch described her traveling with a marionette caravan, presenting her own puppet plays around the country, and lecturing for the Drama League. Her theatrical work belongs beside the poetry: both depend on compressed scenes, revealed character, and a sharply timed final turn.

Her editorial work continued with *International Short Stories* (1934). Earlier, *The Servant Question* (1912), published by Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, had addressed domestic labor and education. These projects show a writer willing to move among gift-book design, social inquiry, teaching manuals, adaptations, anthologies, novels, and plays rather than build a career within a single literary category.

Teachers Are People

D. G. Fischer Corporation published *Teachers Are People: Being the Lyrics of Agatha Brown, Sometime Teacher of English in the Hilldale High School* in 1925. The sixty short free-verse monologues and sketches present a teacher alternately amused, exhausted, embarrassed, politically frustrated, and moved by her pupils. Their method invited comparison with Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*: each poem isolates a voice or incident, while the book gradually builds a community. The difference is decisive. Church's people are young, unfinished, and still capable of surprising the adult who thinks she understands them.

The book attracted wide notice. Rupert Hughes wrote a foreword praising Church's compression, dramatic revelation, humor, and humane attention to children; he compared the fragmentary intensity of her work to both Masters and Sappho. *Time* responded in 1929 with a caustic review that denied the pieces the status of poetry even while reproducing many of their most memorable situations. Such disagreement helps explain the book's durable appeal: its plain speech, anecdotal structures, and classroom idiom can look like diary notes until the recurrence of reversals, refrains, and moral pressure reveals an intentionally constructed sequence.

Wallace Hebbard issued the book in Santa Barbara and published a revised edition in 1945. That edition retained the original sixty poems and added fourteen under the heading "...And Then Came War." Former pupils now write from Guadalcanal, New Guinea, Italy, and the Pacific; the teacher who had advocated brotherhood must reckon with their enlistment, fear, faith, courage, injury, and death. The section sometimes uses the racial language of its wartime moment, which this edition preserves as part of the historical text. The revised book was reprinted in 1973 and continued to circulate among educators; "Antiquated," with its joke about technology replacing teachers, has been repeatedly quoted in later discussions of educational change.

Paris, eyesight, and later religious books

Around 1929 Church traveled abroad while seeking treatment for failing eyesight. The Paris residence produced *Silhouettes of the Latin Quarter* (1931), a forty-nine-page collection published in Atlanta by the Bozart Press and printed by Banner Press for Lawrence W. Neff. A contemporary review emphasized the book's sketches of café life, artists, models, poverty, and expatriate poses. Six poems survived in an earlier project transcription and are restored here: "Myopia," "Home Is So Dead," "The Rich Poor," "Solvent," "Kiki," and "The Model." They form a coherent miniature sequence in which the fashionable cynicism of young Americans is repeatedly tested against labor, love, art, poverty, and the compromised bodies on which art depends. Because no complete scan has yet been located, this edition does not claim completeness for the 1931 book.

Church later turned explicitly to devotional prose. Abingdon-Cokesbury published *The Adventure of Finding God* in 1950, a sequence of twelve letters addressed to a young serviceman called Bill. A review in *The Chaplain* commended its direct, practical treatment of faith for young readers. *To Meet the Day* (1953) offered daily devotional readings for youth. These books extend concerns already visible in the classroom poems: respect for questioning adolescents, distrust of secondhand formulas, and belief that spiritual understanding must emerge through lived experience.

A 1954 Smith class note reported that Church had fallen in her yard and broken a hip that was slow to heal. She died on 10 August 1956 in Los Angeles County and was buried at Mountain View Cemetery in Altadena. The surviving record remains dispersed among books, catalogs, reviews, school publications, genealogies, and newspaper clippings. Its dispersal has encouraged errors—most notably the wrong Smith class year and the reduction of her bibliography to one or two titles. Reassembled, the evidence shows a career of more than fifty years in which teaching, theatrical practice, poetry, illustration, editing, and religious writing continually informed one another.

RUPERT HUGHES'S FOREWORD

The original critical introduction to the revised Teachers Are People (1945)

A school teacher is usually a mother or step-mother to the children who make up her day-time family. She has a terrible power to guide or misguide the future citizens and citizenesses of the world before their young skulls have quite hardened. She can all too easily make virtue so odious and knowledge so distasteful that she will send out criminals and ignoramuses. If she is hard-hearted or stupid enough to present morals and learning so harshly as to ruin their appeal, she will be certain to blame the children for not digesting her indigestible cooking. If she is gentle and wise enough to be a good teacher, she will look across her desk and see in the gathering before her a garden of beautiful flowers, each of which needs special care, and the worst of which can be improved and perhaps saved from spiritual death or distortion.

There have been countless novels and stories about teachers and pupils, but it seems to me that the little world of the schoolroom has never been quite so vividly, variously and briefly expressed as in these verses of Virginia Church. The book is very tiny and the poems rarely fill more than half a page; yet they are as full of intense and brilliant revelation as the successive resting-places of a burglar's flashlight in the dark.

She is big-souled enough to have seen through the small masks before her into the aching hearts of lonely little people coming from lonely or unhappy homes to the penitentiary of school. In a few phrases she has told the reader enough to complete the picture for himself. She has neglected hardly a facet of school life, from the stupidity to the flirtatiousness of the children, from the drudgery to the despairs of the teacher's life. She has even made visible the homes from which her pupils emerge and to which they return.

The first thing that strikes the reader is the resemblance of the verse-form to that of *The Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters, but the

resemblance ends there. All of his people were dead and he wrote their obituaries. Virginia Church does not pluck her flowers of verse from a graveyard, where finished wretches are laid away; she takes her posies from a schoolroom, where young lives are just beginning.

The author has a keen sense of the ridiculous, but she has good sport and good sense enough to turn it on herself first and usually last. She loves to show how badly she has been fooled by appearances. She loves to show how human teachers are, using the word 'human' in the sense of fallible and liable to the very faults they are paid to correct. Her soul is so nimble and her art so ingenious that you are incessantly surprised by the whip-lash flick of her last lines. You cringe from an expected pathos and you get a laugh. You prepare for a laugh and you receive a twinge of sympathetic pain.

She knows that there are as many kinds of children as there are grown-ups. She recognizes the young cynic, the half-baked ladykiller and the fledgling flirt—what she calls the 'hall-lizards,' the spooners, the precocious experimenters with rouge and the man-hunters who are already hunting boys.

An extraordinary gift for compressing much into little and throwing gleaming beams of light into dark corners is proclaimed in these poems. It would have taken me thousands of words to tell the story she tells in twenty-eight in 'Muriel Pinskie's Father,' yet with no dearth of atmosphere, nothing important missing, and the result a haunting, pitiful household in complete portraiture.

We have almost as much of Virginia Church in this small book as voracious time has left us of Sappho's verse. She, too, was a school teacher, and so glorious a poetess that the Greeks called her the Tenth Muse. We have only the bright fragments of the poems she wrote, ragged shards of perfect urns, but the greatness of Sappho was in her humanity as well as in her lyric quality. These poems of Virginia Church have thrilled me with a different thrill, yet they are perfect in their way. They are as true to their time as Sappho's verses were to hers.

It is fine to see her turn her spite against the critics of our young instead of venting her spleen upon the children, whom it is so much the fashion to abuse. But that is because her heart is as great as her art. It is somewhat late for me to be wishing that I might have the privilege of going to school to a teacher of English who writes it so well and has such profound wisdom and tenderness. Lacking that privilege, I feel it a privilege to have the book to read. I commend it to parents, teachers, children and all others.

Rupert Hughes

ARCHIVAL IMAGES

College writing, books, and theatrical work

Come on, don't you hear the cannonading ? it is the French,
and they would take the Rhine, come on, come on!" And the
last Hun, goose-herder no longer, but battle-mad Hussar, rushed
down the long road, driving his geese before him, and disap-
peared in a cloud of dust around the bend, beyond Maier Lõ-
ber's barley fields. G. C.

A RONDEAU

When playing golf with bonny May,
'Twould seem I should be blithe and gay,
Instead of that, I must confess
I'm plunged in depths of dire distress,
With no desire but to obey.

My heart, her ball ; thus doth she play,
And Cupid is her caddy. Pray,
How can I hope to have success
When playing golf ?

Her links are in a rugged way ;
Her score I dared once to gainsay,
" 'Tis thirty, love, it can't be less."
She turned a queen of haughtiness,
" We'll use no tennis terms," she'd say,
" When playing golf."

V. W. F.

Yes sar, Marse John was in love wid dat gal from de begin-

"A Rondeau," signed V. W. F., in the Smith College Monthly (1897). The crop excludes unrelated material on the same page.

Teachers are People

being the lyrics of

VIRGINIA CHURCH

with a foreword by

RUPERT HUGHES



REVISED EDITION

PUBLISHED AT SANTA BARBARA BY WALLACE HEBBERD

Title page of the revised Teachers Are People (1945).

College Girls' Record

Compiled and Illustrated
by

Virginia Woodson Frame



THE LIBRARY
OF CONGRESS

Paul Elder and Company
Publishers, San Francisco

Digitized by
INTERNET ARCHIVE

Original from
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Title page of College Girls' Record (1903), compiled and arranged under Church's maiden name.

CURTAIN!

A BOOK OF
MODERN PLAYS

Edited by

VIRGINIA CHURCH

HEAD OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA



Harper & Brothers Publishers

NEW YORK AND LONDON

Title page of Curtain! A Book of Modern Plays (1932), identifying Church as head of English at Benjamin Franklin High School, Los Angeles.

EDITORIAL NOTE AND SOURCES

Corpus, source control, and reading-text policy

The base text for *Teachers Are People* is the project's scan of the 1945 revised edition. The 1925 first edition and the page images were used to resolve scanning errors. The revised edition contains all sixty poems of the original book and fourteen additional wartime poems. Every poem begins on a new page; true stanza divisions are retained, while narrow-page hanging wraps are rejoined.

The four Smith poems are transcribed from the original periodical page images and ordered by publication. Six poems from *Silhouettes of the Latin Quarter* survive in the project's earlier reader. They are included because the transcription is coherent and identifiable, but their notes disclose that the 1931 source images remain unavailable for renewed comparison. The edition therefore presents recovered poems, not a falsely complete reconstruction of that book.

Obvious OCR corruption, scan artifacts, broken words, and unmistakable typographical damage are silently corrected against the best available witness. Historical diction is retained, including a racial slur at the end of "On Furlough"; preservation does not imply endorsement. The attribution error in the 2013 *Lost Poets Review* is corrected here: "Adaptable Euterpe" and "The Provider" are by Julia Boynton Green, not Church. Church's four poems in the 1930 *Anthology of Southern California Verse* are reprints from *Teachers Are People* and are not duplicated.

The four-line "Aspiration" is attributed to Church by Poetry Explorer, a modern third-party poetry aggregation website. No original print witness or dependable bibliographical record has been found. It is therefore retained in the research folder only as an attribution lead and is not presented as an authenticated poem in this edition.

Church's plays, fiction, social prose, and devotional books are documented in the biography and bibliography but are outside the poetry corpus. No complete author portrait with a verified source was recovered; the archival section therefore uses documentary pages rather than an unattributed image.

SMITH COLLEGE POEMS

Four early poems, 1897–1898

A Rondeau

When playing golf with bonny May,
’Twould seem I should be blithe and gay,
Instead of that, I must confess
I’m plunged in depths of dire distress,
With no desire but to obey.

My heart, her ball; thus doth she play,
And Cupid is her caddy. Pray,
How can I hope to have success
When playing golf?

Her links are in a rugged way;
Her score I dared once to gainsay,
’Tis thirty, love, it can’t be less.’
She turned a queen of haughtiness,
‘We’ll use no tennis terms,’ she’d say,
When playing golf.

Publication. *Smith College Monthly* 5 (November 1897), 77; signed “V. W. F.”

Mistress Parsons

Dainty Comfort Parsons in her dress of blue,
Oh! she was a pretty miss for a man to woo!
Hers the cherry lips, and hers the roguish eye,
Hers the wicked flirting, causing me a sigh;
But lo! at my scolding, penitent she'd grow,
'I'll be all yours soon, dear,' said she soft and low,
'Take comfort.'

Dainty Comfort Parsons with her flying curls,
Who would not forgive her, sweetest, best of girls?
Standing there so tearful, 'very sorry,' too,
Looking like an angel in that dress of blue.
Conquered then I soothe her, banish all alarms,
And to show good feeling, swiftly in my arms
Take Comfort.

Publication. *Smith College Monthly* 5 (January 1898), 179; signed "V. W. F."

A Triolet

She pressed a rose-bud to her cheek,
I'm sure I wished I were the rose,
She looked so witching and so meek,
She pressed a rose-bud to her cheek.
'Were I the rose,' her eyes I seek,
'Would we be friends?' I ask, 'or foes?'
She pressed a rose-bud to her cheek,
I'm sure I wished I were the rose.

Publication. *Smith College Monthly* 5 (January 1898), 179; signed "V. W. F."

At Sunset

You weep because Today is lost
And with the Yesterdays has gone,
'Tis true Today was fine and fair
And bright was seen a lovely dawn.
But look! The west has brilliant grown
With promise of diviner Morrow;
Then let this shining future hope
Send far away Today's dark sorrow.

Publication. *Smith College Monthly* 6 (November 1898), 79; signed "Virginia Woodson Frame."

TEACHERS ARE PEOPLE

The complete sixty-poem sequence, revised edition, 1945

Compliments

Once Bob Carter said I had nice hair;
"Chuck" Weill wondered how anyone could know so much;
Many pupils have brought me flowers,
Also boxes of candy;
But what pleased me most
Was when Mike exclaimed:
"Gee, Miss Brown, you're not a bit like a teacher,
You're so human."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 3

The Teacher's Pay

The thrill of seeing the procession go by,
The privilege of being one with youth;
Sensing their problems,
Sharing their sorrows,
Seeing their joy,-
Could any labor
Be more richly requited?

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 4

Meeting the Need

They say we are not thorough.
In their day
Pupils knew the three R's perfectly.
This is a complex age
With multifarious interests.
Our school is a stone
Of many facets,
Each throwing light on some new phase of life,
Or meeting new needs.
Are we wrong, I wonder,
Offering Art Appreciation
And Woodshop
Along with Arithmetic?

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 5

A Vocation

I began teaching because it was a lady-like profession,
I continued because I was not fitted for anything else.
For two years I taught commas, meter,
And the history of literature
With true normal-school zeal, arrogant and condescending.
Suddenly I began to teach children.
Each new term I strive to make plain
To the eager young minds
What it all means.
My evening prayers always contain a plea
That the crumbs I am privileged to scatter
May be worthy.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 6

Individuality

On the first day of school
They pour into their seats,
Little nonentities,
All frowsy,
All the same,
Like so much batter in cake-rings.
Then they begin to rise,
Each reveals a separate sweetness and a worth
All his own.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 7

Times Do Change

My mother's school master
Used a long ferule
To preserve order.
My instructors I regarded
With adoration
Or with awe.
Flossie sticks her head in my door
Crying,
"Come on, old dear,
Don't keep the gang waiting,-
You'll have to sit on my lap."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 8

Progress

Four years ago the teachers were lecturing about short dresses,
Last year it was bobbed hair and colored slippers.
Every term there seems to be something to harp on,-
Something
That a few years later
We shall be doing ourselves.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 9

Democracy

Intensive training, they say,
Produced leaders.
Is it better to have five men
That are mental experts,
Or fifty thousand
That have had a glimpse
Of what life may mean?

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 10

Intercepted

Jimmy sits in the front row;
Across the aisle is Flossie.
Today as I turned from the board
I intercepted a look,
Holy as altar fires,
That flamed from youth to youth.
I caught my breath.
All afternoon I've felt old and lonesome.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 11

Coddling in Education

I follow them around the halls for late papers;
I beg them to take the best and let the dross go;
I worry over their grades while they shoot chalk.
Yesterday
I had a letter from Ned Thompson
Thanking me for persuading him to go to Yale.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 12

Vicarious Praise

Before the School Bond elections
Teachers receive many pamphlets
From the School Board,
Bidding them pass the Good Word
To parents of their flock;
Asking the teacher's co-operation,
Also their after-school hours;
Praising their intelligence.
There are pageants,
Which the teachers write,
And costume,
And train,
And put through.
When the Bonds carry,
The School Board publicly thanks-
The children.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 13

Misplaced Sympathy

"Poor old school-teacher,"
Croons the sentimentalist.
Perhaps,
As to the possessions of the world;
Yet how rich
In the vicarious extension of life
Through the youth
With whom
We come in contact.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 14

Common Ground

I waxed enthusiastic over the gerundive;
I grew eloquent in consideration of mood and voice
When I started in zealously on subjective complements,
I saw Mike's eyes feasting hungrily on, the hills
Whose pine-crested tops he could see through the windows.
I closed the grammar
And read to the class Keats's Ode on a Grecian Urn.
Mike's eyes traveled back from the hilltops
And smiled into mine.
We had both visioned the vale of Tempe.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 15

Gifts

Before I came to high school,
I taught in the grades.
Each morning Ikey Stein brought me roses
Which he had gathered in the cemetery.
Patsy O'Reilly presented me with three battered toothbrushes:
His father was a garbage collector.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 16

Among Other Problems

Tom shambled into my conference-room
And lounged in a chair;
The pool of his clear honest eyes was troubled.
He liked the Girl, he said, awfully,
But he wished
She'd not "paw" him,
They weren't engaged or anything.
Last evening he'd told her so;
In fact had gone into it
At some length.
When he'd finished
She'd said;
"Oh, Tom, I just love to hear you talk like that!
Kiss me, sweetie."
And she'd sat on his lap.
What was he to do?

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 17

Gwen

I sent for Gwendolyn Hall's mother,
She must be made to understand
That silken hose and spangled gowns
Were not for school.
Other girls could not afford them;
Besides, the lack of taste.
She came,
A shawl over her faded cotton dress.
"I'm a washerwoman,
I never had nothin' pretty.
I mean Gwen shall have the best
If it means rubbing the skin from my knuckles."
Tears came into the old eyes.
I, too, pledged myself that Gwen should have the best-
Though it might mean discarding spangles.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 18

Jennie

I seem singularly fortunate in having
Some little wren-like person always ready
To take me under her wing.
This term it has been Jennie McGregor.
It is Jennie that arranges the flowers
That Flossie brings;
It is Jennie that takes the roll
And hangs up my slips;
It is Jennie that reminds me of faculty-meeting.
Jennie disapproves of the football boy's freedom
In my sanctum;
I can see that my levity in class
Frequently pains her,
As does my predilection
For such unclassical writers
As Christopher Morley and Ogden Nash.
She is genuinely concerned over my welfare
After her graduation.
This morning she ventured to suggest
That maybe I might still get married-
If I tried hard enough.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 19

Marjorie

Suggesting red flannel under the shabby frock,
Wearing cotton stockings and high shoes
While other girls wore silk and pumps,
Marjorie sat among her smarter sisters
With a dreamy abstraction that set her apart.
It was with frank curiosity
That I drove her home
The day she sprained her ankle.
Her dwelling was a tent
Pitched on the canyon-side;
Her mother, a consumptive, fading gently
Into the shadows;
Her father,
Belonging to the earlier days of the pioneers,
Restless and discontent,
Seeking frontiers that have vanished;
Without embarrassment Marjorie spoke,
I'm glad it was you brought me home.
I've always wanted you to see my view:
That's the blue of the ocean over there;
See how the hill is purpled with lupin
And gilded with poppies.
Isn't it good to be alive?'

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 20

Mame

All she thought of was dress;
Or powdering her nose.
Helene Arnold, whose parents read with her
And were sending her to Vassar,
Was getting high grades.
Professor Emmet's son had marked intelligence.
Why couldn't Mame appreciate Milton
After a whole week on his sonnets?
I called her into my conference-room.
She told me her father and mother were both blind
I found they were the two beggars I had often pitied
On the corner of Spring Street.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 21

Doris

One is apt to get burned fingers
If one dabbles in divine fire,
Yet so fatal the consuming flames to young lives
My hand cannot resist
Reaching out to draw them back.
Yet a little while
From its scorching.
Two babes had just announced their engagement;
The same day we learned that
Mary-Eloise had been married for a month.
Doris glowed as from a candle
Lit at some inner shrine;
Yet the pallor of her cheek was not good,
I entreated her confidence.
The mention of Martin's name,
Like a sesame to the altar,
Drew the curtain of her lids
And there shone in her eyes that beautiful look
That is neither of land nor of sea.
"Yes," she said simply,
"I love him very much
But we can never marry.
There's something all wrong with his lungs,
You know."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 22

The Heavenly Seriousness of Youth

An article from the *Atlantic Monthly*
On the Boy's Religion
Had turned the channel of talk
Into serious ports:
Into considering youth's hesitancy
In revealing the deeper need,
Of his hunger for the best,
Of the solution of world problems,
The inevitable drift toward brotherhood.
Fearing lest they thought I preached
I broke the spell with
"My, but we're getting serious!"
Russell's clear blue eyes darkened.
"Why shouldn't we," he queried,
"When we've such a short time here?"
I made a mental apology.
How often we adulterate their food
When they hunger for spiritual fare!

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 23

Standardized Tests

Frances came to consult me
About being a teacher.
She said she was tremendously interested
In mental tests
And I. Q.'s.
She planned four years at Normal
To get the latest methods;
She considered Education a tremendous thing.
What did I think of her possibilities?
I'd seen the child with her baby sister;
I'd heard what the old lady
Across the street had said of her:
In my classes
I'd watched her eyes flame
With the beauty
At the heart of things.
So I knew the other couldn't spoil her.
I told her
To go ahead.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 24

Unanimous

It distressed me to learn
That one of our boys
Had spoken disrespectfully
Of his Math teacher,
Had called her a fool.
Meeting him in the hall
I asked for a conference,
Perhaps I could make him see.
After a well-chosen prelude
I queried,
He was genuinely startled
And protested.
"Exactly what was it you called her?" I asked.
"An old hen," he confessed.
I had corralled the wrong boy.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 25

Almost Human

The other day
. Our lady Vice-Principal
Got onto the street car.
She was wearing a brand-new dress.
I heard a woman in the seat back of me
Remark to her friend:
"Ain't it awful the way these women dress?
You can't tell school teachers from ladies now-a-days."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 26

Compensations

I labored to keep their attention,
I'd so much that was fine to give them
From the feast of the poet's table.
Mamie was gazing Narcissus-like into her mirror,
Dot's chewing gum occupied her.
Deedie shrieked at the grasshopper
Jimmie had thrown on her desk.
What was the use?
The bell rang.
At the door
Kate, soft-voiced and shy, hesitated:
"You know what you said
About not waiting till people died to tell 'em things.
I want to say how much this course has meant to me;
It's changed my whole life."
My heart did calisthenics in my breast;
I tripped up to my office, humming happily.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 27

Primitive

At the game
I'd been yelling with the lustiest.
My voice was hoarse,
The championship was within Hilldale's reach.
Then Chuck lay stretched out on the field;
There was a call for the doctor;
The bleachers were cheering for him;
The lines-men were running with bucket and sponge.
A horrid stillness came over me,
I closed my eyes:
"O why do we risk their precious lives
For such animal sport!"
Mike put his strong hand on my arm;
"It's all right, Miss Brown,
Chuck is up,
He was only faking for wind."
My eyes snapped open;
I began cheering again
With the other wild animals.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 28

In the Day's Work

I refused the invitation to the mountains;
I corrected two hundred papers over the week-end,
Themes, grammar tests, and spelling.
When I returned them to the morning class,
"Brick" chucked his into the waste-basket
With a "Gee, somebody spilled the red ink!"
How to make them care!

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 29

Chicken-pecked

George was distinctly uncomfortable
In the presence of girls;
But
Because he was big,
And good-looking,
And owned a Chevrolet coupe,
They pestered him,
And flicked dust off his coat,
And left love notes under the coupe's door.
That's why he's checking in his text books
And going to a military school
Where there is no
Co-education.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 30

Vindictive

Miss Skelton teaches chemistry;
She is a faithful worker for the Y.W.C.A.
Mr. Mince tips his hat to her every morning;
I've seen her flush at his audacity.
Sometime I'm going to lock them in the Study Hall
And compromise them.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 31

Eeny, Meeny, Miney, Moe

The Principal has a hard job,
He must serve three masters:
He must obey the voice of Public Opinion,
The School Board sees to that;
He must take care of the "Dere Children,"
The Community sees to that;
He must consider the teacher,
Nobody sees to that.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 32

Getting Together

I was sorry when Lou Keeler
Signed up in my class.
I felt that she'd spoil that cherished atmosphere
I strove so hard to create.
Other teachers spoke of her as aggressive,
The boys called her fresh.
Then one afternoon I found her in my office,
A tear-soaked mass of discouragement.
She told me how her father had misused her mother,
That she was the only being who knew
What had killed her.
Now he was threatening her,
She lived in terror
The week after the Juvenile Officer had found her a home,
I gave her a front seat
So that I could see her smile
And could be sure she understood-
Conjugations.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 33

Throes

I banged down the top of my desk;
I should correct no more deadening papers that day.
The tap at my door proved to be Kate.
She'd something, she said,
She'd like to show me.
Of course they weren't any good,
(How her shining eyes belied the words!)
But if I'd just read them through. . . .
I knew what it was to long to create.
I took the bulky package home.
There were five hundred sheets
Entitled "Soul Thoughts."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 34

Ada

"If I'd only finished school!"
I begged Ada not to marry
Till after graduation,
There were only three months more.
Knowing the disrupted home,
I feared it was a question
Of getting away from things,
As much as of love.
A year later she came back,
Showed me her bruised arms,
He had beaten her,
Was a drunken brute.
Would I help her get away?

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 35

Girl Shy

Roger told me
He was not like most boys,
He didn't go in for Janes;
Only knew
About two girls in school.
"But," I protested, I've seen you
Holding hands with six
At least."
He answered:
"Oh, you don't have to know 'em
For that."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 36

A Question of Phraseology

I'm continually after the hall-lizards,
Girls that help the boys
Support the walls.
I called two offenders
Into my office.
I spoke eloquently
On the dignity of our institution of learning,
Of the inappropriateness
Of their conduct.
"How," I made inquiry, "would a visitor
Designate such an entrance
As that our school presents?"
"Dunno," said Ardis,
"We kids call it a 'spoon-holder.'"

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 37

Waste

Edward Bok is right
When he says that
Waste
Is an American crime.
Grandmother used thumb papers
To keep her books clean.
Chuck's grammar is a portrait gallery,
Mary Butler puts arms and legs on all her o's.
The Self-Governing Board
Is trying to aid us
In teaching respect
For other men's property.
It's a long road.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 38

Rosalie

Rosalie Myers was graduated
With the respectful admiration of her classmates
And a chorus of praise
From her instructors.
Could this Freshman,
Loud and hand-painted,
Be her sister?
Her grades were so low, I ventured:
"What would Rosalie think of you?"
She turned in a passion:
"It's Rosalie that's responsible.
She was always perfect—and a bore.
No one asked her
To parties.
At Christmas she gave me a compact
With Pumkin Rouge
And told me
To go to it."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 39

Salvage

For discipline
Billy was seated in the Principal's office.
He saw them bring in
To the Lost and Found
The salvage of the day,-
Wrist-watches,
Silver pencils,
Vanity cases, and the rest.
After a thoughtful pause, he asked,
"What do they pay you?"
"O a dollar a day," parried the chief.
"That ain't much," said the boy,
Whose father was a plumber,
"But,"
With a wink toward the closet,
"You get what they find."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 40

In the Usual Way

Anna had gone to Stanford;
It was two years
Before she came back
To look us over.
She'd been a girl noted for brilliancy
And originality.
So we held our breath for her comment.
"Gracious," she exclaimed,
"Is that little thing in high school?
Why, the pupils get younger
Every year."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 41

Malpractice

We teach democracy in all our classes;
The constitution and freedom of speech
Have become tremendously popular.
Yet should a teacher intimate
That she has a right
To a voice in the school board election;
That she suspects that the anti-labor newspaper
Is backing the wrong candidate;
That because a man holds a public office
He is not necessarily endowed
With divine intelligence;
That the local politicians
Are not all they should be;-
She is not called liberal-minded,
She is fired.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 42

Not Mellin Food

In Study Hall today
I took a lurid-back novel
Away from Clarice Ritter
It was called *The Purple Passion*.
I warned her
Not to waste her God-given intellect on such trash,
To spend the remainder of the period
On Pope's *Essay on Man*.
I was about to consign the Passion
To the waste basket.
When a phrase intrigued me;
I took it home and finished it in bed.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 43

Looking into the Future

I was asked to speak
At the P.T.A.
My subject was
Books.
I mentioned that in books
One found
Wings,
And gold for the minting,
And food on the shelves.
After I had ended,
An eager-eyed matron
Made her way through the cohort of tea-cups
And the platoon of assembled sandwiches
To ask me to suggest
A reading list
For her son:
He was eighteen months old.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 44

Automobiles Are Displacing Firesides

The Deserted Village led the class
To consider the parson in fiction.
I spoke of the Bishop in *Les Misérables*.
Not a spark of intelligence
Flicked under the eyelids.
"Who is Victor Hugo?" I made inquiry more sternly.
A fly buzzing on the window-pane was the only sound.
After class Chuck said
He thought it was a new make of automobile.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 45

Trifles

Uriel Pinskie's father
Wrote an excuse for his son's absence.
"Dere teacher," it said,
"Excuse Uriel,
His mother ran away with another man.
My God! It is annoying!"

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 46

Dutch Cleanser

The dear Women
Of the Federated Clubs
And of the P.T.A.
Have started a crusade
Against illiteracy.
They've pledged themselves
That by 1960
Every child in America shall be able to read.
What club, I wonder,
Shall interest itself
In what is read
And the morality of the instruction?

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 47

Subterfuge

Four bells sounded for faculty-meeting.
The Principal was absent.
The Vice-Principal orated passionately
On her favorite hobby.
We lifted interested, intelligent faces
Toward her.
All the time we were thinking,
"When shall we get home?"

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 48

The Rogue's Way

Bob smiled at me impishly,
I might have guessed.
"I spent eight hours over my English last night,"
He boasted.
I bit;
My heart thumped with joy,
One more sheep to the fold.
"Yes," he chortled, "the book lay under my bed all night!"

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 49

Gerhardt

Gerhardt had exhausted my patience;
He was older than the average—
Old enough to appreciate the value of the classics.
"You must spend more time on outside reading,"
I stormed.
Then I learned that the lad was back in school
After three years in the iron shops.
He'd had to support an invalid mother
And three younger brothers.
The boys were in school now,
And the mother was anxious that he have
An education.
So that by working from midnight till five-thirty
He could come to school
And study Shakespeare.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 50

Passing the Torch

The mother of one of my problems
Has just left.
Like wee sky-craft
Lingering on the mountain clefts
After the cloud fleet has drifted on,
So her wistfulness
Hovers yet in my room.
Just as her mother's position
Was an advance over the grandmother's,
So must she pass on her child
A little better than herself.
What richer fruit of progress
Could there be?

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 51

The Common Denominator

Dear transparent motherhood,
Bosoms for tired heads,
Cushions for lame feet,
Wind-breaks for young adventurers,
Sweet-toned phonographs voicing the same tune.
In nine cases out of ten
The song runs thus:
"Willie is a good boy
If you just know how to handle him.
He can't be driven
But he'll do anything
If you praise him."
The tenth parent
Knows this is true,
But leaves you
To find it out.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 52

Harvest

Spires rise to attest the architect's labor;
Canvases reveal the painter's successes;
Also his failures.
Doctors bury theirs . . .
A school teacher digs and plants,
Always with the fond hope
That sometime, somewhere, there may be
A garnering.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 53

Meting Out Punishment

Our Math teacher is big and burly;
He has a way of terrorizing my girls.
Today with one of them weeping hysterically
In my office,
I sent for him
And made him watch her cry.
He was frantic,
Ready to make reparation
With anything from an ice-cream cone
To an "A" in Algebra.
I dismissed him
Before he was quite unmanned.
Someday he'll have a daughter of his own.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 54

Geography

The school teacher's week
Is a goodly state;
It is bounded on the north
By Blue Monday,
On the south
By Good Friday.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 55

Alumni Day

They've filled the halls all day,
Squealed at the sight of familiar faces,
Bridged time and space in vigorous embrace,
Visited classes,
Buzzed like bees over sweet confidences in my office,
Exhibited husbands, or babies,
Or both.
Such fine, upstanding, youth,
My heart is singing paeans of praise.
Home-coming day at high school
Always reassures me
That in the hands of these stalwart young people
The world is, indeed,
Safe for democracy.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 56

Don

Upon Don the school had bestowed
Its choicest honors;
Student-body president,
Class chairman,
Valedictorian.
He had won honors in oratory,
In dramatics,
And as football captain;
Yet was he unspoiled.
As he stood on the platform
At Commencement,
Uttering serious youthful words of admonition
As to the nation's conduct,
My heart yearned over his future.
We give you, o World,
This youth,
Strong of body, clean of mind, big of heart;
Live up to his expectations of you;
Let not disillusionment cloud his day.
Show him only your worth
And the pure gold of his youth
Shall become the dearest
Of his country's treasures.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 57

Education

Each day I learn more
Than I teach;
I learn that half knowledge of another's life
Leads to false judgment;
I learn that there is a surprising kinship
In human nature;
I learn that it's a wise father who knows his own son;
I learn that what we expect we get;
I learn that there's more good than evil in this world;
That age is a question of spirit;
That youth is the best of life
No matter how numerous its years;
I learn how much there is to learn.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 58

To the Critics

It is a strenuous world
That has been wished on the present-day youth.
Problems,
Industrial, political, moral,
Surge in the air.
Moving picture, radio, and automobile
Have helped to create an environment
That, like a mighty rushing torrent,
Is sweeping the world.
The younger generation
Knee-deep in its waters
Is trying valiantly
To utilize the energy of the current,
While we stand on the shore,
Wringing our hands,
And criticize their bathing-suits.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 59

Mothers-in-heart

They have such need,
These arrogant young ones.
They put on paint and flippancy to hide it
But I sense the hurt underneath:
The quarrels in the homes,
The hunger for what others have,
Sometimes for bread.
I cut my heart into a thousand pieces
That there may be a bit for each,
There is so much mothering to be done.
Perhaps that's why God hasn't blessed more teachers
With children of their own.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 60

Antiquated

Mr. Edison says
That the radio will supplant the teacher.
Already one may learn languages by means of Victrola records.
The moving picture will visualize
What the radio fails to get across.
Teachers will be relegated to the backwoods,
With fire horses,
And long-haired women;
Or, perhaps, shown in museums.
Education will become a matter
Of pressing the button.
Perhaps I can get a position at the switch-board.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 61

Votes for the Eight-hour Day

My watch says it's twelve o'clock.
I'd best call it
A day's work.
There was that conference before school
With the boy who had to go to work after the eighth;
One class on the heels of the next
Till noon.
We carried our lunches to room 140
For an English conference.
My free hour was given to the rehearsal of the play.
Tests for absentees
Were wedged in with class-room committees;
I don't remember
When I wrote the verses for the Press Club,
Or the letter of recommendation for Helen,
Or filled out the questionnaire,
Or the college application for Ruth,
And telephoned Russell's mother.
I know David dropped in
To tell me of his comp. class at U.C.
And was aggrieved
That I could talk
Only as I hurried to a meeting.
The afternoon classes were followed by the debate,
I had promised to be a judge.
Faculty meeting came at four,-
While the Book Club I was to chaperon
Waited impatiently to toast weenies in the park.
Home,
Bed invited a tired body
But the stack of papers prevailed.
My watch says it's twelve o'clock.
No cold cream tonight
Well,
"It's a great life if you don't weaken!"

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 62

...AND THEN CAME WAR

Fourteen wartime poems added in 1945

Unanswerable

And now it is war that is taking my boys.
Each day new ones come to tell me good-by.
There is pride, and excitement, in their voices,
Eagerness in their eyes,
Yet there is also fear.
Those that are left stir restlessly in their seats,-
Their turn next.
Is it any wonder they are confused?
We who have so ardently talked Brotherhood and Peace,
Now prate of Patriotism and Loyalty.
Are they mature enough to know
The difference between the brutality of slaughter
And the killing that is to end all cruelty-
The fight for Right?
Do we know?
Yet they go, the fine steel of courage
In their young veins;
To meet gallantly whatever shall them betide.
I'm left trying to piece together
This jig-saw puzzle of Life.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 67

From a Fox-hole

"Dear Pin-up Girl," writes Bill, my Imp of Imps,
"At last the censor lets us tell our whereabouts.
I'm at Guadalcanal;
Was one of the first Marines to land on the beachhead.
I'm writing you from fox-hole,
A grenade for a pillow.
Hellzapoppin', but not on Broadway.
It's funny how the little things Back There
Come into one's mind:
Our class in 208;
The desks I used to carve;
The chalk I threw;
The girl with the gold tooth who sat across the aisle.
But most of all I remember
Our talks after school
About religion and life.
The fellow who said,
'There can be no atheists in fox-holes,'
Was dead right.
The miracles I've seen happen out here—
Through prayer
Are beyond belief.
I'm praying tonight
That God keep you safe till I come home."
Bill in a fox-hole
Praying for me!

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 68

Keith

My poet-boy has joined the Air-Corps.
Nothing less than silver wings would content
This "scorner of the ground."
Since Pearl Harbor he had sat,
Lessons unheeded,
Hearing only the beat of pinions in his ears.
Keats he loved; found a kinship in Shelley;
The Hound of Heaven fired his admiration,
Though his youthful agnosticism
Flaunted his refusal of its message.
From far-flung camps he sends me letters
In the form of sonnets; he writes:
"I've not met your Hound face to face
But I have heard His footsteps on my trail."
And again:
"I can't believe—
And yet when high above the pigmy world
Against the many-splendored ceiling of the sky,
I've felt His Presence."
Someday, this winged child of Heaven,
Caught in the tangle of the stars,
Will crack his disbelief against the dome of sky,
And meet the Master Poet eye to eye.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 69

Bad Girl

Lottie's mother came to school
To confirm the opinion that Lottie was
A bad girl.
She had climbed out windows at night
And gone dancing.
She wouldn't do dishes nor go to church.
She was so crazy about babies
She'd probably have one without a marriage.
She was bad—everybody told her so—
Every day.
She sat on the front row;
I saw the hurt under the mascaraed lashes,
The quiver back of the painted lips.
Pretty, generous, painted Lottie,
The first to sign up for Over-seas nursing.
Her picture's in the *Highland Park News* today.
"First nurse to receive the Congressional Medal
For bravery under fire."
Bad girl.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 70

Missing in Action

"We regret to inform you ..."
Such a short time ago
Danny sat in my classroom,
Restless, annoying,
Grinning, lovable...
When he cut class, I missed that grin.
The Office said he was "no good";
No one would ever class him as a hero,
Yet his citation reads:
"The courage, coolness and skill displayed
by this enlisted man upon his bomber contact missions reflect credit upon himself
and upon the Armed Forces of the United
States."
"We regret to inform you ..."
How inadequate are words!

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 71

Surprise

"Dear Teach," Clifford writes me from New Guinea,
"I'm going to have a baby.
It's all I can think of
Even when the bombs are whizzing overhead.
I'm writing you the news first
Because someday I believe you'll be glad.
Remember Mary Wells who sat across from me
In American Lit.?
Maybe you didn't hear that we were married
Before I went to Boot Camp.
Wish you'd see her some time.
So long, guess there's a war on;
I'll have to stop."
I must see Mary soon
And tell her Cliff's going to have a baby!

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 72

A Question of Age

To the Teens
Anything over twenty-five is old.
Over forty is positively senile!
Henry Esmond about to marry—incredible;
Hamlet at thirty in love—almost nauseating;
Romeo and Juliet, that's the stuff—
Juliet, a satisfactory fourteen.
On the Other Side of the desk
They seem such babes—these high school kids—
Yet over-seas, some of them
Are seeing death in bright blazing cities,
Some crouched in fox-holes
Are sick with the nostalgia for home.
And here, Louise, a sweet sixteen,
Has brought her new baby
To flaunt before my eyes.
Toni, her husband, is among the invaders
In newly-won Holland.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 73

Pearls May Keep Their Lustre

It isn't good for the soul
To cease expecting silk purses from sow's ears.
Richard, with a superior smile,
Intimates that when I give fellows like Kelly,
Poets like Robinson, Frost, or Benet,
I'm casting pearls before swine.
Kelly is a truck driver
Soon to go over with the Sea-Bees.
He liked Jack London,
And the *Saturday Evening Post*
"Because of its ads."
But at Commencement he stopped me,
His face radiant,
His uncle had given him the complete works
Of Vachel Lindsay;
He meant to take them Over with him.
"And, I suppose," I gloated to Richard,
"You were given a silk tie."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 74

Red Paint for the Dog House

Tom was kicked out of three classes,
But we found a common denomination in dogs.
When the class wrote treatises on Chaucer,
I let Tom write on Caring for Pups;
When the group were busy on How-to-make outlines,
Tom's topic was Building a Dog Kennel.
His outside reading was Terhune and *Mongrel Mettle*;
He's going to vote for Roosevelt
Because of Fala.
The Army drafted him in April.
When he came to tell me good-by, he said,
"Don't feel bad.
With the hundred dollars I made at the grocery store
I've bought a lot at Puente.
When I come back, I'll raise collies.
You see, that gives me something
To come back to."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 75

Recollections at Bomb Time

Robert is quite apologetic in his letters:
"English Lit. was some good, after all.
I was with the Squad that went into Rome
And that fellow Byron was right about the Coliseum.
'What matters where we fall to fill the maws
Of worms-on battle plains or listed spot?
Both are but theatres where the chief actors rot.'
The 'Roll on, thou dark and deep blue Ocean-roll .. '
Wasn't so hot.
I was seasick on the cruiser.
I looked up the Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows*
When we took Florence—
That guy Browning had something on the ball.
But, Teach, my favorite poem is still
Wordsworth's
Imitations of Immorality."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 76

On Furlough

They stream back to my room
After months Over There,
Resplendent in oak leaf clusters, stars and medals.
There are Lieutenants, Sergeants, and Corporals,
And just plain privates like Phil Leonard.
Phil was one of our lubberly football stars;
In class he sat. Period.
Now he was grinning at me over his Congressional Medal.
I had read the citation which stated:
"He, with utter disregard of his own safety, above and
beyond the call of duty, threw his body upon the grenade
which severely wounded him, but saved the lives of many
comrades."
"I didn't do a thing," Phil protested.
"Someone yelled, 'Grenade!' and there was the durn thing
Rolling on the ground, its fuse gettin' shorter and shorter
So—well, I just sat on it."
He grinned as he sauntered toward the door.
"So long," he said, "guess I'll be gettin' back
To sit on a few Japs."

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 77

Raison d'Etre

"Dear Friend o' Mine," writes James
From 'Somewhere in the Pacific,'
"I think often of you and the Gang.
Like most of the fellows my age, I was
Rarin' to go. And here I am.
We fellows go into the war for various
And sundry reasons:
A general restlessness;
Desire for Adventure--with a capital A-;
Boredom with school;
A wish to be a part of the fracas;
To be with our buddies,
And
For patriotism.
Yes, there's some of that despite the rumors.
We don't like being pushed around.
We believe in right and decency
And we've got the guts to prove it.
I'm proud to be a part of this fight;
Despite the brutality and the horror,
I've seen so much of courage
And of self-sacrifice.
It's given me a new respect for mankind.
My prayer each night is that God,
Who sees the need better than I,
Bring a new peace and strength
To this crazy world.
Thank you for sowing seeds of understanding.
May you someday be proud
Of the fruit they bear." Jim.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 78

Goodbye and Good Luck!

Charles came to tell me he was going Over-seas.
There was so much I might have said,
But I only said, "Good-bye, good luck!"
The silence was heavy between us,
Weighted with pain and unspoken fears.
I might have said, "Keep your chin up;
You'll come back."
I might have let my hopes speak out.
I might have said, "You are Youth.
You are the hope for America,
The symbol we hold most dear;
Clean-minded, clear-eyed, strong of body,
You are the wind blowing against the evil clouds of war;
You are the young hunter stalking the beast that would prey
on Freedom;
You are the seed that shall flourish into righteousness;
You are the star-spangled banner seen above the smoke of
battle
At dawn's early light.
I might have said,
"Across the arid space of the duration
I see you in the new world
Made possible by your belief put into action—
A world of decent living, laughter-lighted hearths,
Books and radios, cats curled in sleek contentment,
Dogs no longer jumpy with the noise of bombs,
Flowers red with earth's nourishment
Not the scarlet blot of blood."
I might have said, "I love you and shall pray
That God stretch His hand above you,
A shield against adversity,
So that you shall come back to a better world
That you are shaping—and to me."
I might have said all these things and more.

I only said, "Good-bye, good luck."
Perhaps he heard the unspoken words
Sagging in the net of silence that hung between us;
Perhaps he knew.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 80

Retirement

When I get Up There,
I hope God will give me some cherubim to teach.
Not just the goody good ones,
But boys that slip away to play
At marbles with the stars;
A wistful child, perhaps,
Who's just a little frightened with the There.
Maybe He might even allow
One young devil to slip in
So I could bring him up to a front seat
And feel at home.

Publication. *Teachers Are People*, revised edition (Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945), 82

SILHOUETTES OF THE LATIN QUARTER

Six recovered poems from the 1931 collection

Myopia

Blasé boys in black berets
Sit at café tables, affecting sophistication
With wide yawns;
Appraise the ogling girls and the runners;
Quote Mencken and Hemingway;
Drink first to the noisy, dirty-joke stage,
Then to blinking stupefaction.
Occasionally attempt irony:
“The world’s gone to pot—No faith—No God—
No hell—No love—
Nothing to do—Nothing to see—”
In the back room of the Café au Bon Père,
There is a Brittany wedding.
A red-faced father is uncomfortable in store-clothes;
A placid mother smiles in content at the mating.
The fiddles sing; a viol sounds;
The bride enters in peasant frock, starched lace cap, and wooden shoes;
The groom with clean smock and clear eyes comes;
Their hands clasp; their glances meet;
Their hearts are singing with the fiddles,
“Love, love, love!”

Blind boys in black berets
Sit at the Dôme and order pernod.

Publication. *Silhouettes of the Latin Quarter* (Atlanta: Bozart Press, 1931); recovered from the project’s earlier transcription. The original page image has not yet been relocated.

Home Is So Dead

Young boy in black beret
Sat at the Dôme and wrote letters
To his mother:
“Dear Mother, So there’s a new baby;
Thought there were enough.
Too bad grandma died but she was old.
Guess Dad’s busy as ever on the Hoover job.
No, I can’t come home,
Everything’s so dead there.
You and Dad are mighty fine—
And all that—
But you don’t understand the Younger Generation.
I’ve got to see Life.”

Young boy in black beret
Sat at his table at the Dôme
Seeing Life.
Saw a buxom girl selling Montparnasse;
Saw the candy-man with candied fruit
on little sticks;
Saw big men with little portfolios,
And little men with big portfolios;
Saw men smoke and drink
And drink and smoke some more;
Heard them tell dirty stories—
Understood some of them;
Heard of their way with women—
Wondered if the girls at home knew what he knew;
Saw men laugh fatly and women craftily;
Saw Kiki with her blue-penciled eyes;
Saw the man with the Panther.

After twelve o’clock
Young boy in black beret
Went to the Jungle to see
More Life.

Publication. *Silhouettes of the Latin Quarter* (Atlanta: Bozart Press, 1931); recovered from the project’s earlier transcription. The original page image has not yet been relocated.

The Rich Poor

He saw the cigarette
 Roll from the gold-embossed case.
 He managed to kick it under the table;
 Then, when no one was looking,
 To pick it up.
 That bloke would never miss it,
 One of the lucky rich—lawyer, perhaps.
 That's what he might have been, if—
 Might have had a mansion on the Hudson
 Instead of an attic in Paris;
 A Cadillac instead of Job's shanks.
 He might have had these things and more
 If—
 He'd chosen dollars instead of dreams,
 Alice instead of Art.
 He had sold himself for paint—
 Paint to mix the sunset's challenge to night,
 Paint to catch the steel of the mountain,
 the mauve of the valley;
 Paint to snare the scarlet of a girl's lips,
 the midnight of a woman's hair;
 Paint to trap the untrappable:
 the song of the bird as it fled the cage,
 the other-worldness of fading eyes,
 the tragedy of birth,
 the exultation of death.
 Sorry that he had renounced the soil for the cloud?
 Not by a damn sight!
 Someday he meant to sing on canvas
 A paeon to Paint.
 In the meantime,
 That fellow smoked darn good tobacco.

Publication. *Silhouettes of the Latin Quarter* (Atlanta: Bozart Press, 1931); recovered from the project's earlier transcription. The original page image has not yet been relocated.

Solvent

At times the mockery of it all, the futility and the grime,
The lust and the debauchery,
Sweep over him till he has to struggle
To keep his footing.
At such times, it is well,
On some still star-dusky evening
To climb up the tower of Notre Dame
And get a new perspective of Paris.
There are gargoyles on the tower;
One that the boy in the black beret calls
“Nero, ge-nawing his nephew,”
And there is the arch-cynic, he of the ironic smile.
Perhaps if he can figure out
Why there are gargoyles amid the majesty of cathedral spires,
He may be able to understand
Why there are cankers in the heart of the rose,
And brothels in Paris.

Night’s quiet like a cool hand laid on his fevered brow
Calms him.
He feels the unvoiced answer.
That it is the gargoyle reveals the majesty of the spire,
That the rose has something within that the canker cannot touch,
That it is not the stench of stale wine,
Nor the shame of painted women,
Nor the nausea of brothels
That is Paris;
But over and above this transient blight,
Beauty,
An essence made up of all loveliness
Of towers and spires,
Of chapels and gardens,
Of the mist on the Seine,
The haze above the Luxembourg,

Of twilight from Montmartre,
Of dawn in the silence of the Madeleine,
This is Paris incarnate,
Incorruptible, immortal.

Publication. *Silhouettes of the Latin Quarter* (Atlanta: Bozart Press, 1931); recovered from the project's earlier transcription. The original page image has not yet been relocated.

Kiki

Kiki, the eighth wonder of the world;
Kiki, that might have been a woman
But is only a marvel;
Kiki, picked up in Les Halles as a child
Because of the sly grace of her,
The eerie face of her;
Kiki, become the gamin of the Quarter,
The model of the far-famed,
The plaything of the dilettanti;
Kiki, every man's love,
Many men's mistress;
Kiki, hard, insolent, braggadocio,
The Queen of the Quarter;
Kiki, with pale blue shadows painted on her lids,
With crescent eyebrows penciled on her forehead,
With scarlet daubings plastered on her lips;
Kiki, with the hard eyes and jeweled hands
Behind that inscrutable mask,
The painted face of the mime,
What does the real you think of the world of men?

And what is the real you?

Publication. *Silhouettes of the Latin Quarter* (Atlanta: Bozart Press, 1931); recovered from the project's earlier transcription. The original page image has not yet been relocated.

The Model

Rene posed for a sculptor
In the Rue Bardinet.
She kept house for him
And cooked his meals;
She swathed the lumps of clay in damp cloths;
She swept up the chips of marble.
She gave the whiteness of her body
For his art,
And, because he was her first lover,
She gave him adoration
And kisses.
When he had finished his Madonna,
He dismissed her.
He was to do Jezebel
And Jezebel must be large and bold.

Rene became model for other artists.
She learned to take
And not to give.
She was in demand
On account of her beauty
But they fashioned her as Magdalene,
Never again as Mary.

Publication. *Silhouettes of the Latin Quarter* (Atlanta: Bozart Press, 1931); recovered from the project's earlier transcription. The original page image has not yet been relocated.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Reviews, records, and paths for further research

Hughes, Rupert. Foreword to Virginia Church, *Teachers Are People*. Revised ed. Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1945, vii–ix.

“Education: Schoolhouse Fauna.” *Time*, 16 December 1929.

Marquis, Neeta. Review of *Curtain!* *Los Angeles Times*, 31 July 1932, 42.

Review of *Silhouettes of the Latin Quarter*. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 26 April 1931, 55.

Review of *The Adventure of Finding God*. *The Chaplain* 7, no. 4 (1950).

Smith College. *Smith Alumnae Quarterly*, Winter 1954, class notes for 1899.

Stefans, Brian Kim. *Lost Poets Review*. 2013, 137. The Church entry contains useful leads but misassigns two poems by Julia Boynton Green and gives an incorrect birth year and publication history.

Internet Archive: *Teachers Are People* (1925)

Google Books: *Teachers Are People*

Smith College Libraries: College Publications

Open Library search for Virginia Church

The project folder also contains the Boston University thesis, Hampton pamphlet, three volumes of the *Smith College Monthly*, newspaper clippings, copyright-renewal search files, and scans of the major books available to the editor.

Poetry Explorer is a modern third-party poetry aggregation website. Its page attributing “Aspiration” to Church is archived as a research lead, but the poem is excluded here until a primary print witness is found.

RIGHTS AND SOURCE NOTE

Research record and remaining uncertainties

Publications through 1930 are public domain in the United States. Searches of the relevant Copyright Office renewal catalogs found no renewal for the 1931 *Silhouettes of the Latin Quarter* or the 1945 revised *Teachers Are People*. Search files and OCR are retained in the research folder. This is an editorial research determination, not legal advice.

The authenticated corpus contains eighty-four poems: four Smith poems, seventy-four poems from the revised *Teachers Are People*, and six recovered *Silhouettes* poems. A future supplement should be considered if a complete 1931 scan, an original witness for “Aspiration,” or additional verified periodical poems becomes available.

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