

The Veteran

May 1916

Margaret Postgate Cole

We came upon him sitting in the sun,

Blinded by war, and left. And past the fence

There came young soldiers from the Hand and Flower,

Asking advice of his experience.

And he said this, and that, and told them tales,

And all the nightmares of each empty head

Blew into air, then, hearing us beside,

“Poor chaps, how’d they know what it’s like?” he said.

And we stood there, and watched him as he sat,

Turning his sockets where they went away,

Until it came to one of us to ask

“And you’re . . . how old?”

“Nineteen, the third of May.”