

## Poems of Walter de la Mare

### I can't abear

I can't abear a butcher,  
I can't abide his meat,  
The ugliest shop of all is his,  
The ugliest in the street;

Bakers' are warm, cobblers' dark  
Chemists' burn watery lights;  
But oh, the sawdust butchers shop  
That ugliest of sights.

### Wanderers

Wide are the meadows of night,  
And daisies are shining there,  
Tossing their lovely dews,  
Lustrous and fair;

And through these sweet fields go,  
Wanderers amid the stars --  
Venus, Mercury, Uranus, Neptune,  
Saturn, Jupiter, Mars.

'Tired in their silver, they move,  
And circling, whisper and say,  
Fair are the blossoming meads of delight  
Through which we stray.

### Unstooping

Low on his fours the Lion  
Treads with the surly Bear;  
But Men straight upward from the dust  
Walk with their heads in the air;

The free sweet winds of heaven,  
The sunlight from on high  
Beat on their clear bright cheeks and browns  
As they go striding by;

The doors of all their houses  
They arch so they may go,  
Uplifted o'er the four-foot beasts,  
Unstooping, to and fro.

### **The Horseman**

I heard a horseman  
Ride over the hill;  
The moon shone clear,  
The night was still;

His helm was silver,  
And pale was he;  
And the horse he rode  
Was of ivory.

### **The Cupboard**

I know a little cupboard,  
With a teeny tiny key,  
And there's a jar of Lollypops  
For me, me, me.

It has a little shelf, my dear,  
As dark as dark can be,  
And there's a dish of Banbury Cakes  
For me, me, me.

I have a small fat grandmamma,  
With a very slippery knee,  
And she's the Keeper of the Cupboard  
With the key, key, key.

And I'm very good, my dear,  
As good as good can be,  
There's Branbury Cakes, and Lollypops  
For me, me, me.

### **Mrs. Earth**

Mrs. Earth makes silver black,  
Mrs. Earth makes iron red  
But Mrs. Earth can not stain gold,  
Nor ruby red.

Mrs. earth the slenderest bone  
Whitens in her bosom cold,  
But Mrs. Earth can change my dreams  
No more than ruby or gold.

Mrs. Earth and Mr. Sun  
Can tan my skin, and tire my toes,  
But all that I'm thinking of, ever shall think,  
Why, either knows.

### **Earth Folk**

The cat she walks on padded claws,  
The wolf on the hills lays stealthy paws,  
Feathered birds in the rain-sweet sky  
At their ease in the air, flit low, flit high.

The oak's blind, tender roots pierce deep,  
His green crest towers, dimmed in sleep,  
Under the stars whose thrones are set  
Where never prince hath journeyed yet.

### **Hide And Seek**

Hide and seek, says the Wind,  
In the shade of the woods;  
Hide and seek, says the Moon,

To the hazel buds;  
Hide and seek, says the Cloud,  
Star on to star;  
Hide and seek, says the Wave,

At the harbour bar;  
Hide and seek, say I,  
To myself, and step  
Out of the dream of Wake  
Into the dream of Sleep.

### **Trees**

Of all the trees in England,  
Her sweet three corners in,  
Only the Ash, the bonnie Ash  
Burns fierce while it is green.

Of all the trees in England,  
From sea to sea again,  
The Willow loveliest stoops her boughs  
Beneath the driving rain.

Of all the trees in England,  
Past frankincense and myrrh,  
There's none for smell, of bloom and smoke,  
Like Lime and Juniper.

Of all the trees in England,  
Oak, Elder, Elm and Thorn,  
The Yew alone burns lamps of peace  
For them that lie forlorn.

## **Silver**

Slowly, silently, now the moon  
Walks the night in her silver shoon:  
This way, and that, she peers and sees  
Silver fruit upon silver trees;  
One by one the casements catch  
Her beams beneath the silvery thatch;  
Couched in his kennel, like a log,  
With paws of silver sleeps the dog  
From their shadowy cote the white breasts peep  
Of doves in a silver-feathered sleep;  
A harvest mouse goes scampering by,  
With silver claws and silver eye;  
And moveless fish in the water gleam  
By silver reeds in a silver stream.

## **King David**

King David was a sorrowful man:  
No cause for his sorrow had he;  
And he called for the music of a hundred harps,  
To ease his melancholy.

They played till they all fell silent:  
Played-and play sweet did they;  
But the sorrow that haunted the heart of King David  
They could not charm away.

He rose; and in his garden  
Walked by the moon alone,  
A nightingale hidden in a cypress-tree  
Jargoned on and on.

King David lifted his sad eyes  
Into the dark-boughed tree-  
"Tell me, thou little bird that singest,  
Who taught my grief to thee?"

But the bird in no wise heeded  
And the king in the cool of the moon  
Hearkened to the nightingale's sorrowfulness,  
Till all his own was gone.

### **The Song Of The Soldiers**

As I sat musing by the frozen dyke,  
There was a man marching with a bright steel pike,  
Marching in the dayshine like a ghost came he,  
And behind me was the moaning and the murmur of the sea.

As I sat musing, 'twas not one but ten ---  
Rank on rank of ghostly soldiers marching o'er the fen,  
Marching in the misty air they showed in dreams to me,  
And behind me was the shouting and the shattering of the sea.

As I sat musing, 'twas a host in dark array,  
With their horses and their cannon wheeling onward to the fray,  
Moving like a shadow to the fate the brave must dree,  
And behind me roared the drums, rang the trumpets of the sea.

### **The Ruin**

When the last colours of the day  
Have from their burning ebbed away,  
About that ruin, cold and lone,  
The cricket shrills from stone to stone;  
And scattering o'er its darkened green,  
Bands of the fairies may be seen,  
Chattering like grasshoppers, their feet  
Dancing a thistledown dance round it:  
While the great gold of the mild moon  
Tinges their tiny acorn shoon.

### **Alone [A very old woman]**

A very old woman  
Lives in yon house.  
The squeak of the cricket,  
The stir of the mouse,  
Are all she knows  
Of the earth and us.

Once she was young,  
Would dance and play,  
Like many another  
Young popinjay;  
And run to her mother  
At dusk of day.

And colours bright  
She delighted in;  
The fiddle to hear,  
And to lift her chin,  
And sing as small  
As a twittering wren.

But age apace  
Comes at last to all;  
And a lone house filled  
With the cricket's call;  
And the scampering mouse  
In the hollow wall.