

# The Monologue

By Walter de la Mare

Alas, O Lovely One,  
Imprisoned here,  
I tap; thou answerest not,  
I doubt, and fear.  
Yet transparent as glass these walls,  
If thou lean near.

Last dusk, at those high bars  
There came, scarce-heard,  
Claws, fluttering feathers,  
Of deluded bird—  
With one shrill, scared, faint note  
The silence stirred.

Rests in that corner,  
In puff of dust, a straw—  
Vision of harvest-fields  
I never saw,  
Of strange green streams and hills,  
Forbidden by law.

These things I whisper,  
For I see—in mind—  
Thy caged cheek whiten  
At the wail of wind,  
That thin breast wasting; unto  
Woe resigned.

Take comfort, listen!  
Once we twain were free;  
There was a Country—  
Lost the memory. . .  
Lay thy cold brow on hand,  
And dream with me.

Awaits me torture;  
I have smelt their rack;  
From spectral groaning wheel  
Have turned me back;  
Thumbscrew and boot, and then—  
The yawning sack.

Lean closer, then!  
Lay palm on stony wall.  
Let but thy ghost beneath  
Thine eyelids call:  
'Courage, my brother!' Nought  
Can then appal.

Yet coward, coward am I,  
And drink I must  
When clanks the pannikin  
With the longed-for crust;  
Though heart within is sour  
With disgust.

Long hours there are,  
When mutely tapping—well,  
Is it to Vacancy  
I these tidings tell?  
Knock these numb fingers against  
An empty cell?

Nay, answer not.  
Let still mere longing make  
Thy presence sure to me,  
While in doubt I shake:  
Be but my Faith in thee,  
For sanity's sake.