

Dictionary of Literary Biography

Volume 35:

**Victorian Poets
After 1850**

Dictionary of Literary Biography • Volume Thirty-five

Victorian Poets After 1850

Edited by

William E. Fredeman

University of British Columbia

and

Ira B. Nadel

University of British Columbia

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Plan of the Series

. . . *Almost the most prodigious asset of a country, and perhaps its most precious possession, is its native literary product—when that product is fine and noble and enduring.*

Mark Twain*

The advisory board, the editors, and the publisher of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* are joined in endorsing Mark Twain's declaration. The literature of a nation provides an inexhaustible resource of permanent worth. It is our expectation that this endeavor will make literature and its creators better understood and more accessible to students and the literate public, while satisfying the standards of teachers and scholars.

To meet these requirements, *literary biography* has been construed in terms of the author's achievement. The most important thing about a writer is his writing. Accordingly, the entries in *DLB* are career biographies, tracing the development of the author's canon and the evolution of his reputation.

The publication plan for *DLB* resulted from two years of preparation. The project was proposed to Bruccoli Clark by Frederick G. Ruffner, president of the Gale Research Company, in November 1975. After specimen entries were prepared and typeset, an advisory board was formed to refine the entry format and develop the series rationale. In meetings held during 1976, the publisher, series editors, and advisory board approved the scheme for a comprehensive biographical dictionary of persons who contributed to North American literature. Editorial work on the first volume began in January 1977, and it was published in 1978.

In order to make *DLB* more than a reference tool and to compile volumes that individually have claim to status as literary history, it was decided to organize volumes by topic or period or genre. Each of these freestanding volumes provides a biographical-bibliographical guide and overview for a particular area of literature. We are convinced that this organization—as opposed to a single alphabet method—constitutes a valuable innovation in the presentation of reference material. The volume plan necessarily requires many decisions for the placement and treatment of authors who might

properly be included in two or three volumes. In some instances a major figure will be included in separate volumes, but with different entries emphasizing the aspect of his career appropriate to each volume. Ernest Hemingway, for example, is represented in *American Writers in Paris, 1920-1939* by an entry focusing on his expatriate apprenticeship; he is also in *American Novelists, 1910-1945* with an entry surveying his entire career. Each volume includes a cumulative index of subject authors. The final *DLB* volume will be a comprehensive index to the entire series.

With volume ten in 1982 it was decided to enlarge the scope of *DLB* beyond the literature of the United States. By the end of 1983 twelve volumes treating British literature had been published, and volumes for Commonwealth and Modern European literature were in progress. The series has been further augmented by the *DLB Yearbooks* (since 1981) which update published entries and add new entries to keep the *DLB* current with contemporary activity. There have also been occasional *DLB Documentary Series* volumes which provide biographical and critical background source materials for figures whose work is judged to have particular interest for students. One of these companion volumes is entirely devoted to Tennessee Williams.

The purpose of *DLB* is not only to provide reliable information in a convenient format but also to place the figures in the larger perspective of literary history and to offer appraisals of their accomplishments by qualified scholars.

We define literature as the *intellectual commerce of a nation*: not merely as belles lettres, but as that ample and complex process by which ideas are generated, shaped, and transmitted. *DLB* entries are not limited to "creative writers" but extend to other figures who in this time and in this way influenced the mind of a people. Thus the series encompasses historians, journalists, publishers, and screenwriters. By this means readers of *DLB* may be aided to perceive literature not as cult scripture in the keeping of cultural high priests, but as at the center of a nation's life.

DLB includes the major writers appropriate to each volume and those standing in the ranks immediately behind them. Scholarly and critical counsel has been sought in deciding which minor figures to include and how full their entries should be.

*From an unpublished section of Mark Twain's autobiography, copyright © by the Mark Twain Company.

Wherever possible, useful references will be made to figures who do not warrant separate entries.

Each *DLB* volume has a volume editor responsible for planning the volume, selecting the figures for inclusion, and assigning the entries. Volume editors are also responsible for preparing, where appropriate, appendices surveying the major periodicals and literary and intellectual movements for their volumes, as well as lists of further readings. Work on the series as a whole is coordinated at the Brucoli Clark editorial center in Columbia, South Carolina, where the editorial staff is responsible for the accuracy of the published volumes.

One feature that distinguishes *DLB* is the illustration policy—its concern with the iconography of literature. Just as an author is influenced by his surroundings, so is the reader's understanding of the author enhanced by a knowledge of his environment. Therefore *DLB* volumes include not only drawings, paintings, and photographs of authors, often depicting them at various stages in their careers, but also illustrations of their families and places where they lived. Title pages are regularly reproduced in facsimile along with dust jackets for modern authors. The dust jackets are a special fea-

ture of *DLB* because they often document better than anything else the way in which an author's work was launched in its own time. Specimens of the writers' manuscripts are included when feasible.

A supplement to *DLB*—tentatively titled *A Guide, Chronology, and Glossary for American Literature*—will outline the history of literature in North America and trace the influences that shaped it. This volume will provide a framework for the study of American literature by means of chronological tables, literary affiliation charts, glossarial entries, and concise surveys of the major movements. It has been planned to stand on its own as a vade mecum, providing a ready-reference guide to the study of American literature as well as a companion to the *DLB* volumes for American literature.

Samuel Johnson rightly decreed that "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors." The purpose of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* is to compile literary history in the surest way available to us—by accurate and comprehensive treatment of the lives and work of those who contributed to it.

The *DLB* Advisory Board

Foreword

Victorian Poets After 1850, the sequel to *Victorian Poets Before 1850* (DLB 32), contains forty-one entries beginning with William Allingham and ending with Thomas Woolner. Eight of the figures are of major importance and receive extended treatment: Gerard Manley Hopkins, George Meredith, William Morris, Coventry Patmore, Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, A. C. Swinburne, and James Thomson (B. V.).

The volume also includes two appendices that deal with topics related to the poetry of the late Victorian era. Appendix I contains five essays by poets and critics of the period on late Victorian aesthetic concerns. In Appendix II readers will find a series of documents that outline the issues and reactions to what generally became known as the Pre-Raphaelite controversy, which arose during the 1870s when the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood came under violent attack for threatening the conventions and conservatism of Victorian poetry. This material complements the individual biographical entries found in the volume on such figures as Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, A. C. Swinburne, and William Morris.

The rationale for the division of 1850 recognizes the viability of what Carl Dawson terms the Victorian noon, in his book of the same name, as a transition between early and late Victorian poetry. While any date would inevitably be arbitrary, a genuine case can be made for 1850 on several different grounds: the death of the Romantic poet laureate, Wordsworth, and the publication of his *Prelude*; the appointment of Tennyson as the Victorian poet laureate and the publication of his *In Memoriam*. The year 1850 has always been regarded as Tennyson's annus mirabilis, but because it forces immediate comparisons between the two poets and their two major works, it is perhaps of even greater importance to the history of Victorian poetry. The year, however, hardly marks the end or even the beginning of an era—Wordsworth had long been a living anachronism, a fact to which in some ways *The Prelude* is a literary testament; and Tennyson's personal triumphs in 1850 only climaxed the new career he had launched after the "Ten Years' Silence" with the publication of *Poems* in 1842.

The two laureates' works are striking examples of Romantic and Victorian poetic sensibilities. Notwithstanding the obvious similarities in *The Prelude* and *In Memoriam* as poetic autobiographies—Rossetti's term *autopsychologies* might be more apt—

the works are inherently different. Not only do they proceed from different world views but their respective personae speak for two generations that have little in common, intellectually or spiritually. *The Prelude* is essentially a personal and highly subjective document, archetypically romantic in its treatment of the "growth of a poet's mind." In some ways equally subjective, anchored as it is in personal grief and loss, *In Memoriam* manages to transcend the personality of the narrator and to generalize the experience of the poet into a universal grief, tempered by hope. The narrational "I" in *The Prelude* is always Wordsworth; in *In Memoriam*, Tennyson said, "I is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking through him." In this elementary distinction lies one of the major contrasts between the poetry of the Romantics and the Victorians.

The year 1850 marked not only the appearance of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*: the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood began their short-lived periodical the *Germ*, while Dickens started *Household Words*; Leigh Hunt published his *Autobiography*; Rossetti published "The Blessed Damozel"; Sir Robert Peel died and Prince Albert planned the Great Exhibition, which opened in May of the following year. It was unquestionably a time of change, but the innovations in form, departures in theme, and originality of subject matter expressed by Victorian poetry after 1850 marked not so much a break with its antecedents as it did an extension of the form, quality, and imagination that the preceding generation of Victorian poets initiated.

Thus, 1850 does provide a convenient transition between early and late Victorian poetry. The editors have imposed broad guidelines to assist in assigning individual poets to one volume or the other, and these have had the fortunate result of roughly equalizing the contents of the two volumes, both in terms of the number of poets and the major poets of the period, though the three giants—Browning, Tennyson, and Arnold—all appear in the first volume. Obviously, the poetic careers of many poets, including Browning, Tennyson, and Arnold, extend well beyond 1850; but the division into two volumes at 1850 does provide some insight into the scope and the chronological development of Victorian poetry.

—William E. Fredeman
Ira B. Nadel

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Dictionary of Literary Biography • Volume Thirty-five

Victorian Poets After 1850

Dictionary of Literary Biography

William Allingham

(19 March 1824-18 November 1889)

Bernard R. Kogan

University of Illinois at Chicago

SELECTED BOOKS: *Poems* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1850; enlarged, Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1861);

Day and Night Songs (London: Routledge, 1854); revised and enlarged as *The Music-Master, a Love Story. And Two Series of Day and Night Songs* (London & New York: Routledge, 1855); rearranged and enlarged again as *Day and Night Songs* (London: Philip, 1884);

Peace and War (London: Routledge, 1854);

Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland. A Modern Poem (London & Cambridge: Macmillan, 1864); republished with preface added as *Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland; or, The New Landlord* (London: Macmillan, 1869); republished as *Laurence Bloomfield; or, Rich and Poor in Ireland* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1890);

Fifty Modern Poems (London: Bell & Daldy, 1865);

Rambles, as Patricius Walker (London: Longmans, Green, 1873);

Songs, Ballads and Stories (London: Bell, 1877);

Evil May-Day, Etc. (London: Stott, 1882);

Ashby Manor: A Play in Two Acts (London: Stott, 1883);

Blackberries Picked Off Many Bushes (London: Philip, 1884); revised as *Blackberries* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1890);

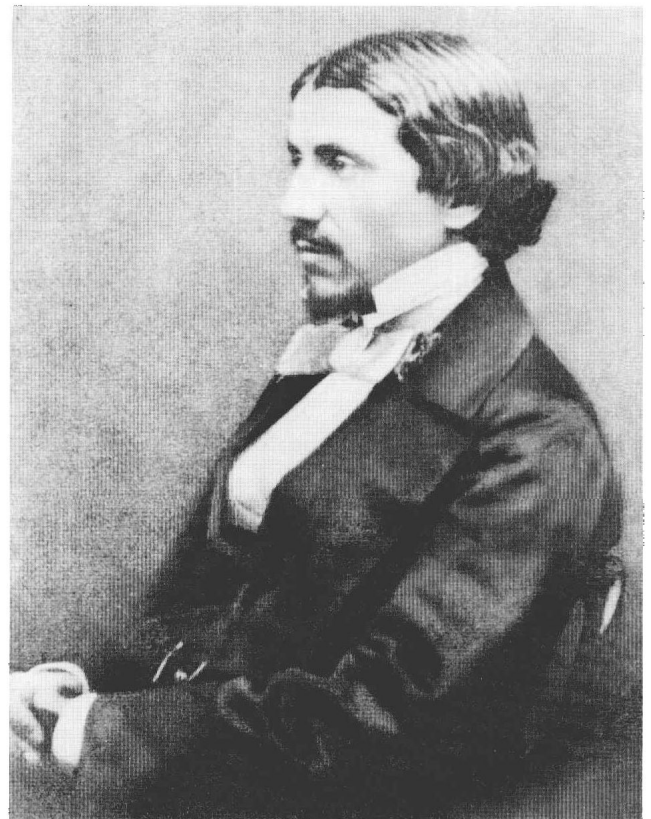
Irish Songs and Poems (London: Reeves & Turner, 1887);

Rhymes for the Young Folk (London & New York: Cassell, 1887); republished as *Robin Redbreast, and Other Verses* (New York: Macmillan, 1930);

Flower Pieces and Other Poems (London: Reeves & Turner, 1888);

Life and Phantasy (London: Reeves & Turner, 1889);

Thought and Word and Ashby Manor, A Play in Two Acts



William Allingham

(London: Reeves & Turner, 1890);

Varieties in Prose, 3 volumes (London & New York: Longmans, Green, 1893);

William Allingham: A Diary, edited by Helen Allingham and D. Radford (London: Macmillan, 1907);

By the Way: Verses, Fragments, and Notes, edited by Helen Allingham (London & New York: Longmans, Green, 1912).

OTHER: *The Poetical Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, introduction by Allingham (London: Low, 1858);

Nightingale Valley, a collection, including a great number of the choicest lyrics and short poems in the English language, edited by Allingham as Giraldu (London: Bell & Daldy, 1860);

The Ballad Book. A Selection of the Choicest British Ballads, edited with a preface by Allingham (London & Cambridge: Macmillan, 1864);

The Poetical Works of Thomas Campbell, edited by the Rev. W. A. Hill, introduction by Allingham (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1875).

William Allingham is best known today for a few poems in anthologies, of which "The Maids of Elfin-Mere," "The Fairies," and "The Winding Banks of Erne" are the three most frequently republished. Among students of English literature, however, he is remembered as the author of a significant body of short lyrics, especially those evocative of his native Ireland; a confidant and memorialist of Victorian literary greats—Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning, and D. G. Rossetti, among many others; and a major influence on Yeats and other twentieth-century Irish poets.

Allingham was descended from Protestant Englishmen who had immigrated to Ireland from Hampshire in Elizabethan times. He was born in the town of Ballyshannon, by the river Erne, in county Donegal, on 19 March 1824, the eldest son of William and Elizabeth Crawford Allingham. His formal education ended by the time he was fourteen, and for the next eight years he worked in the Ballyshannon bank, of which his father was manager. On his own after working hours, he spent time reading widely in the classics and in English literature, mastering French and German, and writing poetry. In 1846, he left the bank and entered the national excise service, working for the next twenty-four years as a customs officer in various cities in Ireland and England. He made his first trip to England in 1843 and afterward visited at least once a year until 1863, when he settled there permanently.

Allingham's first literary association was with Leigh Hunt, poet, critic, editor, and friend of Shelley, Keats, and Byron. After an extended correspondence with Hunt, the young poet met him in London in 1847. Through Hunt and, a few years

later, Coventry Patmore, Allingham was introduced to Tennyson and other prominent writers and launched on a literary career. As a mark of his admiration for Allingham's first published volume, *Poems* (1850), Tennyson invited him to his home in 1851 and read aloud a few of the works that he had found particularly impressive. The friendship, which on Allingham's part amounted almost to idolatry, grew stronger with time, enduring until Allingham's death, thirty-eight years later.

Poems contains a selection of the poet's favorite themes and forms. Most of the 114 poems are relatively short and either entirely lyric or a fusion of lyric and narrative. Some, such as "The Goblin Child of Ballyshannon" and "The Maidens of the Mere" (the original title of "The Maids of Elfin-Mere"), derive from Irish folkloristic fantasy. Six brief lyrics are identified by a common rubric, "Aeolian Harp." One, "The Fairies" (subtitled "A Nursery Song"), has been republished many times and set to music more than once. In many ways, "The Fairies" represents that phase of Allingham's poetry which has found widest acceptance, and its opening lines—in the poem as revised by Allingham for *Irish Songs and Poems* (1887)—are familiar:

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting
For fear of little men;
Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!

Poems such as "The Crucible" and "In Highgate Cemetery" sound an elegiac note that persists in later volumes. In "Justice for Ireland," a polemic, Allingham speaks out against the traditional view of the Irishman as "blundering or roguish." He urges less provincialism in Ireland, fewer "oddities and rags" and "party-words and flags," and in their place "more of human-nature" and marching "under something greater." He beseeches priests, "both Protestant and Roman," to "anger no man," reminding them that "All love is of celestial birth,/ All hatred, of infernal." He berates "empty agitators" and, anticipating the book-length *Lawrence Bloomfield*, he urges Irish landlords to treat their tenants with understanding and respect.

In the longest poem of the book, "The Music-Master," a work that would be republished in extensively revised versions, Allingham tells the sad tale of Claude (whose name was later changed to



Dante Gabriel Rossetti's illustration for "The Maids of Elfin-Mere" in Allingham's *The Music-Master, a Love Story*. And Two Series of Day and Night Songs (1855)

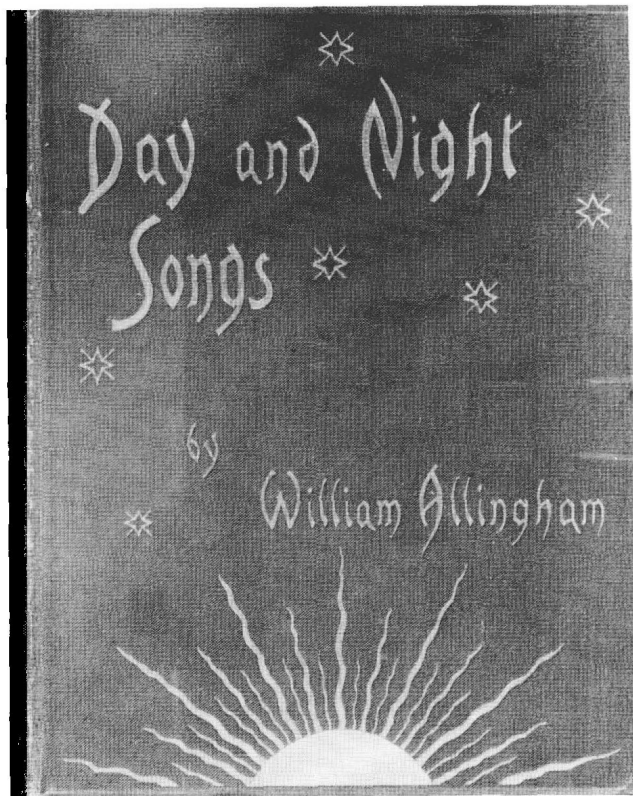
Gerald White), who falls in love with his young pupil, Milly. Forced to leave her for a five-year spell, he returns to find her dead and buried. After learning of Milly's last days and of her love for him, Claude departs for America, bereft, to live out his life in mournful seclusion.

In 1854, Allingham published a volume of *Day and Night Songs*, short, somewhat melancholy lyrics. In later editions, these poems appeared with "The Music-Master" and other previously published works—"Robin Redbreast," "Four Ducks on a Pond," and "The Lover and Birds" are three memorable ones—and in definitive form in the 1888 *Flower Pieces and Other Poems*.

Allingham's longest single poem, the one that he undoubtedly considered his major production,

appeared originally in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1862 and 1863. In its final published form, as *Laurence Bloomfield; or, Rich and Poor in Ireland* (1890), this novel in pentameter couplets fills a 152-page book, with notes, an index, chapter summaries, a preface detailing the history of the poem and its background, and a dedication to the Irish poet Samuel Ferguson, Allingham's distinguished contemporary. Claiming for his poem "truth of detail" and impartiality, the poet relates the story of young Bloomfield, twenty-six, Irish-born and English-bred, who comes into possession of an estate in the town of Lisnamoy, a rural district of Ireland. Landlordism is very much the issue of the book. Bloomfield's fellow owners are unresponsive to the needs of their tenants. With a Carlylian sense of noblesse oblige, Bloomfield feels he must exert all his efforts to bring about better relations between owners and tenants. Pigot, the land-agent, ruthlessly evicts rent-delinquents from their homes and is eventually murdered, but Bloomfield and his wife Lady Jane continue to bestow their benevolence upon the village. Their show of love, Allingham wants us to know, is the saving remedy, the hope that may operate to make of Ireland "a noble place."

Allingham's *Fifty Modern Poems* of 1865 is another collection of short lyric fantasies and narratives. Among these is "Abbey Asaroe," a poem in heptameter couplets describing the mournful ruins of an ancient Cistercian religious house by a picturesque waterfall and recalling its founders. "The Lepracaun, or Fairy Shoemaker" is a children's song. "The Abbot of Innisfallen" is a "Killarney legend" recounting the singular experience of Abbot Cormac, who leaves his abbey for a stroll, and on his return, finds that two hundred years have elapsed. A longer poem is "George Levison; or, The Schoolfellows," a dramatic monologue in blank verse telling the sad story of the speaker's former schoolmate, of whom much was expected but who failed to live up to his promise. This poem was a favorite of Dickens's and appeared originally in his periodical, *Household Words*, in 1857. But the most notable poem in this volume is "The Winding Banks of Erne: or, The Emigrant's Adieu to Ballyshannon" (subtitled "A Local Ballad"). First published in book form in the United States in the 1861 revised and enlarged edition of *Poems*, in its final revision in *Irish Songs and Poems*, with "Ballyshannon" changed to the more authentic "Belashanny," the work is a poignant, if occasionally sentimental, evocation of the expatriate's longing for his homeland. As such, it has become one of the two or three poems most often identified with Allingham during the course



Cover designed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti for the 1884 edition of Allingham's second poetry volume

of his career and to this day. The poem begins:

Adieu to Belashanny! where I was bred and born;
Go where I may, I'll think of you, as sure as night and
morn.
The kindly spot, the friendly town, where every one is
known,
And not a face in all the place but partly seems my own;
There's not a house or window, there's not a field or
hill,
But, east or west, in foreign lands, I'll recollect them
still.
I leave my warm heart with you, tho' my back I'm
forced to turn—
Adieu to Belashanny, and the winding banks of Erne!

In 1870, Allingham retired from the customs service to act as subeditor of *Fraser's Magazine* under the celebrated historian James Anthony Froude. He continued in that capacity until 1874, when he succeeded Froude as editor. On 22 August 1874, he married Helen Paterson, who would eventually distinguish herself as a watercolorist and book illustrator. Twenty-four years younger than the poet, Mrs. Allingham lived until 28 September 1926, having survived her husband by thirty-seven years.

In addition to bearing their three children—Gerald Carlyle (born 8 November 1875), Eva Margaret (born 21 February 1877), and Henry William (born 11 May 1882)—she edited or coedited several posthumously published volumes of his prose and verse, including his *Diary* (1907). In 1879, Allingham resigned his editorship at *Fraser's* and for the remaining decade of his life devoted his energies exclusively to writing.

One of his first volumes published after leaving *Fraser's* was *Evil May-Day, Etc.* (1882), a slim book of one hundred pages containing fifty-three poems. Aside from the title work, which is long and philosophical, most of the poems are short lyrics. "The First English Poet" is a celebration of Caedmon, and "Three Sisters" is the original version of a brief elegy commemorating the Brontës. "News from Pannonia" is a dramatic interlude set in Rome in 180 A.D. involving two citizens who discuss the death of Marcus Aurelius. "No Funeral Gloom," a brief elegiac stanza, seems to be Allingham's most personal lyric statement. According to Helen Allingham's account in an editorial note to the *Diary*, the last line of this poem was among the dying poet's final words to her:

No funeral gloom, my dears, when I am gone,
Corpse-gazing, tears, black raiment, graveyard
grimness;
Think of me as withdrawn into the dimness,
Yours still, you mine; remember all the best
Of our past moments, and forget the rest;
And so, to where I wait, come gently on.

The title poem, more than seven hundred lines of blank verse cast into three parts, is a working out of religious doubt. The speaker first poses the dreadful possibility that there is no God. But his doubt is resolved by an essentially deistic response: God exists in nature, and one must avoid putting one's trust in words, science, or terrestrial wisdom.

Blackberries Picked Off Many Bushes, published in 1884, contains the least characteristic of Allingham's poems. Many of them are short, epigrammatic, and untitled snippets. Many reflect homely wisdom on religion, marriage, true love, science, politics, British imperialism, critics and criticism, writers and writing. A deistic note is sounded again, censuring both Darwinian scientific skepticism and traditional ecclesiastical orthodoxy. Though Allingham can write that "Man's only true delight/Flows from the infinite," he can also chide the church: "Clergy to guide poor us are given;/We



Helen Paterson Allingham's portrait of her husband, painted two years after their marriage in 1874 (National Portrait Gallery)

shall have need of none in Heaven./A life relieved from clergymen—/O yes, we shall be happy then!" While he attacks earthbound science—"The eyes of Modern Science do not grow/In the head, but hind-parts, and still gaze below"—he also gives the back of his hand to "primitive Christians": "'An infidel' you shout. I have, 'tis true,/But very little faith, sweet Sir, in you." To England, growing in imperial might, he throws out admonitory advice: "England! leave Asia, Africa, alone,/And mind this little country of thine own." And for his Irish countrymen he expresses a bemused sympathy: "An Englishman has a country/A Scotchman has two;/An Irishman has none at all,/And doesn't know what to do."

The *Irish Songs and Poems* volume of 1887 consists primarily of Allingham's final revisions of previously published poems, with musical settings for nine of them. Allingham's note to "The Girl's Lamentation" recalls that he first heard this song sung by a peasant boy in Ballyshannon and later recast it, a practice which he had pursued with several of his Irish poems based on local or national legends. (In 1864 Allingham had been awarded a Civil List pension of sixty pounds, increased to one

hundred pounds in 1887, for thus contributing to the perpetuation of Irish folk culture.) In "The Girl's Lamentation" the tale is of a maiden who is betrayed by her lover, bears his child, and is subsequently abandoned and disgraced. "Kate O'Bela-shanny," a bittersweet tribute to a proud and beautiful girl, is one of the poems with a musical setting.

The frontispiece to *Flower Pieces and Other Poems* (1888) is an 1855 woodcut by D. G. Rossetti illustrating "The Maids of Elfin-Mere." The book is dedicated to Rossetti, "whose early friendship brightened many days of my life, and whom I never can forget." Rossetti and Allingham were close friends during the flush years of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. P. R. Brethren Rossetti, Thomas Woolner, and Edward Millais saw in Allingham's Irish songs and legends the kind of poetry that the Brotherhood cherished. Though he was never a member of the P. R. B., he filled the role of sometime Irish auxiliary. *Flower Pieces and Other Poems* contains mostly revisions of earlier poems. "The Wondrous Well" is a curiously enigmatic poem concerning four pilgrims who die searching vainly for a miraculous well, while "Shepherds who by the mountain dwell,/Dip their pitchers in that Well." "The Faithless Knight" tells of an abandoned girl and her inconstant lover. "Squire Curtis" is a ballad of the ghost of a murdered wife haunting her husband-murderer and causing him to confess his crime. "The Dirty Old Man," published originally in Dickens's *Household Words* and another favorite of his, is a balladlike rendering of the true story of Nathaniel Bentley, known inelegantly as Dirty Dick, and of his hardware shop, called The Dirty Warehouse. Conceivably, as Allingham remarks in a note, the eccentric Bentley might have given Dickens the idea for Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*.

Life and Phantasy (1889) includes definitive revisions of "George Levison" and "Three Sisters," among other reworkings of poems. Two short lyrics, one dealing with Goethe and the other with Wordsworth, appear in a section labeled "Places." In this section, too, is "Stratford-on-Avon," a dialogue between two contemporaries of Shakespeare; their Warwickshire dialect, Allingham tells us in a note, was authenticated by no less an expert than George Eliot. A group of poems under the heading of "Natural Miracle" tells of life's disappointments and bittersweet pleasures. The poems in "Shadowings" reflect doubts and misgivings about life in general.

Beginning in 1887 with *Irish Songs and Poems*, Reeves and Turner published a six-volume edition of Allingham's works. The last of these volumes,

containing *Thought and Word* and *Ashby Manor, A Play in Two Acts*, was published posthumously in 1890. *Ashby Manor* (first published in 1883) has to do with the conflict between Cavaliers and Roundheads in the middle of the seventeenth century. Despite a few excellent moments, it is an unimpressive work; it is no surprise that it was never produced. The poems in the volume are somber and in the grim philosophical mode. Under the heading of "Graves and Urns," the poet repeats "No Funeral Gloom," "In Highgate Cemetery," "Urn Burial," and "The Funeral." In anticipation of his cremation he includes "A Poet's Epitaph": "Body to purifying flame,/Soul to the Great Deep whence it came,/Leaving a song on earth below,/An urn of ashes white as snow." Allingham died in London on 18 November 1889. Estranged from his native Donegal for a quarter of a century, the exile returned at the last to be buried in the Ballyshannon churchyard.

In its obituary notice of 21 November the *London Times* identified Allingham as "an agreeable poet." Such uncontested faint praise seems to have become the poet's posthumous lot. "Agreeable" enough he was, in person (subdued and somewhat self-effacing) and in his writings, but any more significant estimate of his life and work is a matter of real dispute. The principal matters at issue are his poetic accomplishment and his authenticity as an Irishman. As for the first, the critical consensus has been that Allingham did not wish to, or could not, fulfill the promise of a considerable lyrical gift. Even Yeats, one of his greatest admirers, faults him for spending so much time on incessant revision of works, for lacking the discipline to vault into the sphere of the major poets. Says Yeats: "He was the poet of little things and little moments. . . . The charm of his work is everywhere the charm of stray moments and detached scenes that have moved him. . . . Exquisite in short lyrics, this method of his was quite inadequate to keep the interest alive through a long poem. *Laurence Bloomfield*, for all its stray felicities, is dull, and 'The Music-Master' and 'The Lady of the Sea' are tame and uninventive. He saw neither the great unities of God or of man, of his own spiritual life, or of the life of the nation about him. . . ."

One can hardly disagree with Yeats's judgment. The case of *Laurence Bloomfield* is especially ironic. Allingham was proud of Turgenev's praise of the poem—"I never understood Ireland before," the Russian is reported to have said after reading it. But though others, including George Eliot, praised it too, *Laurence Bloomfield* failed to win

popularity in the poet's lifetime and is now almost completely neglected, and understandably so. Also, as Yeats suggests in connection with "Evil May-Day," though Allingham as a philosopher is mildly attractive (he abhors cant, he stands out against ostentation and hypocrisy in religion, he is intellectually honest and clear-headed), he is ultimately unimpressive in his verse.

The second point of dispute has to do with Allingham's claim to being an Irish poet. Though born and raised in Ireland, he was not of ancient Celtic stock, was neither Catholic nor conservative in politics, and did spend the last twenty-five years of his life in England. To many Irishmen of his day and afterward, therefore, he was, to a degree, a deserter, just as he proved to be an exotic to his British friends. In 1970, in *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, Allingham is identified as "not really an Irish poet. His literary affinities were with the English Pre-Raphaelites, and he had no marked feeling for Irish thought and speech." Actually, both before and after his self-exile, he retained a keen interest in his Irish heritage and in the plight of Ireland centering about the land question; and he conducted elaborate researches into ancient Irish balladry.

But when all is finally said, Allingham deserves to be read as the writer that he elected to be, not as the one that he might have been. His fragile lyric achievement survived him and may yet retain for him a minute but secure place in English literature. Yeats was ever fond of a brief verse in which Allingham offers his poetic apologia. One may observe that for all his insufficiencies, he lived up to this credo as he conceived of it:

A wild west Coast, a little Town,
Where little Folk go up and down,
Tides flow, and winds blow:
Night and Tempest and the Sea,
Human Will and Human Fate:
What is little, what is great?
Howsoe'er the answer be,
Let me sing of what I know.

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