

A Critical Study of William Allingham with
Special Reference to Laurence Bloomfield in
Ireland.

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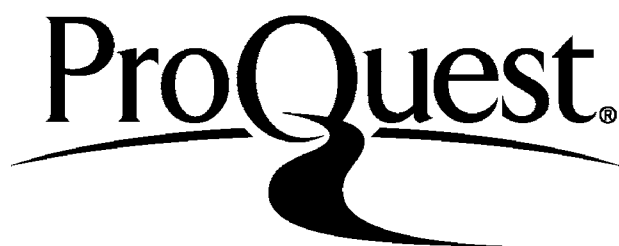
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a critical study of the work of William Allingham with special reference to his long, narrative poem Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland. The theme developed is that Allingham began as a poet of high promise and ended as one with a greatly diminished reputation. Reasons are offered for this decline, chief among them the failure of the Irish narrative poem to find a public, a failure which so affected the author that he was unable to consolidate his powers and remain constant to the kind of poetry best suited to his talents.

Chapter I gives an account of his reputation as a lyrical poet from 1850-77 and includes, as well as my own appraisals, the critical opinions of Allingham's contemporaries and of some twentieth century writers. It concludes with a brief summary of the causes that contributed to his arrested development, which was apparent from 1865 onward. One of these causes, the fate of Laurence Bloomfield, is made the motif of the next three chapters which include the details of its publication and reception, a full appraisal of it as a narrative poem, a discussion of its 'politics', an analysis of the reasons for its poor reception,

and some treatment of it as a turning point in Allingham's career. Chapter V follows the poet's career from 1877 to the end, appraises some of the later work and develops the idea that the sub-editorship and finally the editorship of Fraser's distracted him from poetry and contributed further to his decline. The Conclusion asks and answers the question, 'Did Allingham succeed in his poetic aims?' and passes judgment on him as a poet.

Throughout the study an attempt is made to show that certain weaknesses in Allingham's character made it possible for external circumstances to have such a detrimental influence on his career.

To My Mother and Father

CONTENTS

| | page |
|---|------|
| <u>Biographical Summary</u> | vi |
| <u>Preface</u> | x |
| <u>Chapter</u> | |
| I <u>Reputation as a Lyric Poet, 1850-77.</u> | 1 |
| II <u>Laurence Bloomfield: Publication and Reception</u> | 78 |
| III <u>Laurence Bloomfield: Narrative Poem</u> | 116 |
| IV <u>Laurence Bloomfield: 'Politics'</u> | 173 |
| V <u>The Unmaking of a Poet</u> | 211 |
| <u>Conclusion:</u> | 260 |
| | |
| <u>Appendix</u> | |
| I <u>The 'Echo' Business</u> | 273 |
| II <u>Allingham's American Reputation</u> | 277 |
| III <u>Note on 'Mervaunee'</u> | 288 |
| IV <u>'A Tale of the Irish Famine in 1846 and 1847 Founded on Fact'</u> | 291 |
| V <u>Another 'Flower Pieces'</u> | 294 |
| VI <u>Poems not included in Allingham's Published Books</u> | 296 |
| | |
| <u>Bibliography</u> | 301 |

William Allingham
Biographical Summary

The following summary is intended to acquaint the reader quickly with the most important events of Allingham's life and to draw attention to certain features of his character (abundantly clear even in this spare outline), namely his aptitude for friendships and his indecisiveness about settling permanently in one place, which are destined to have significant effects on his career as a writer.

The sources for this summary are: William Allingham: a Diary, (1907), and The Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XXII, Supplement.

- 1824 Born March 19, Ballyshannon, County Donegal, Ireland. Son of William Allingham and Elizabeth Crawford, both of Ballyshannon. Allingham family, originally from Hampshire, settled in Ireland in reign of Elizabeth.
- 1824-36 Childhood at home. Pupil at Wray's School in Church Lane, Ballyshannon.
- 1837 Attended Robert Allen's boarding school at Killeshandra, County Cavan. Unhappy there.

- 1838 Taken from school by father to earn his living.
Joined staff of Provincial Bank at Ballyshannon.
- 1839-46 Continued in Bank work, moving successively to
branches at Armagh, Strabane and Enniskillen.
- 1843 In summer, at age of nineteen, paid his first visit
to London.
- 1846 'Heartsick of more than seven years of bank-
clerking', obtained a post in the Customs. After
two months training in Belfast assumed duties in
town of Donegal. Preached Tennyson to fellow
workers. Found time for wide reading.
- 1847 In June, to London, for holidays. Met Leigh Hunt
and became frequent visitor at his house.
- 1849 In June, appointed Controller of Customs at Ramsey,
Isle of Man. July visit to London. Through
Henry Sutton met Patmore. Unexpected change in
September to Sub-Controller at Ballyshannon at same
salary of £120.
- 1850 Poems, his first volume published. In June, in
London, as the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Clough.
Growing friendship with the Pre-Raphaelites,

- particularly Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
- 1851 Through Patmore met Tennyson and spent a day at Twickenham. Beginning of a strong friendship.
- 1853 In September exchanged post at Ballyshannon for Customs Office at Coleraine.
- 1854 Gave up Customs in February to try luck at literary career in London. Wrote successfully for newspapers and periodicals but found professional journalism uncongenial. Returned to Ireland. Obtained new appointment in Customs at New Ross in July. Day and Night Songs.
- 1855 With Customs in Ballyshannon again. The Music Master and two series of Day and Night Songs.
- 1856-7 Visits to London. Saw a good deal of the Rossettis, Burne-Joneses, Morris and Carlyle. Went to Lake Country.
- 1858 Short tour in Switzerland and North Italy. Dined with Thackeray in Italy and accompanied him on visit to 'Father Prout'.
- 1859 In September, in London again. The next month travelled in Holland and Germany. Visited Goethe's house in Weimar.

- 1860 Edited Nightingale Valley, own selection of choice English lyrics.
- 1862 In September, exchanged Ballyshannon post for one in London. Second attempt to settle there failed. Intimate friendship with the Burne-Joneses. Back in Ballyshannon in December.
- 1863 In March, in London again to arrange another exchange in Customs. Assigned Lymington in Hampshire. Tennyson five miles away on Isle of Wight. May to November busy working on Laurence Bloomfield coming out in monthly numbers in Fraser's since November 1862.
- 1864 Laurence Bloomfield in book form. The Ballad Book. Met Garibaldi.
- 1865 Fifty Modern Poems. In May, in Dublin, to deliver lecture on poetry. Planned set of 'Japanese Poems'.
- 1866 In July, in London, on leave. Spent much time with Gabriel Rossetti, Morris and Burne-Jones. Father's death in October. Went to Ballyshannon immediately. Last visit to Ireland.
- 1867 In June, in London, on leave. Short tour in August, to Lyme Regis with Tennyson. In October to London.

- again to stay with Rossetti. Visit not a happy one. Friendship on the wane.
- 1868 In May, in London, on leave. Lunched with Browning. Shown the Old Yellow Book and told about forthcoming Ring and the Book. In December, in London again. In Browning's company again.
- 1869 In Fairyland (a poetic accompaniment to Richard Doyle's drawings).
- 1870 Finally gave up Customs. Settled in London as sub-editor of Fraser's under Froude.
- 1871-2 Saw much of Carlyle.
- 1873 Rambles of Patricius Walker (prose essays on walking tours in England and Ireland). Tour in Normandy, Brittany, Jersey and Guernsey.
- 1874 In June became editor of Fraser's. In August, married Helen Paterson, water-colour artist.
- 1875 November 8, first child born (Gerald Carlyle Allingham).
- 1877 Songs, Ballads and Stories. February 21, second child born (Eva Margaret Allingham).
- 1878-9 Almost daily companion to Carlyle.

- 1880 Spring and summer at Haslemere with family. Near Tennyson at Aldworth.
- 1881 Moved to Witley in Surrey for sake of his wife and children.
- 1882 Ashby Manor. May 11, birth of third and last child (Henry William Allingham).
- 1883 Evil May-Day.
- 1884 Blackberries.
- 1887 Rhymes for the Young Folk.
- 1887 Irish Songs and Poems.
- 1888 Flower Pieces and Other Poems. Left Witley for London for sake of children's education. Beginning of last illness (cancer).
- 1889 Illness increased. Surgery performed. Rallied and spent August at seaside with family. Here wrote last poem, 'Sunrise at Eastbourne'. From September went steadily down hill. Died November 18. Cremated at Woking. Life and Phantasy.
- 1890 Thought and Word.
- 1893 Varieties in Prose.

Preface

'The Poet of Ballyshannon' deserves to be remembered for more than a few songs like 'The Fairies' (invariably misquoted by its admirers) and 'The Emigrant's Adieu to Belashanny' which is usually sung on the green island when whisky has brought a sentimental rush of blood to the head. He deserves also to be exonerated from the charge of 'non-national', a rebuke aimed by their fellow countrymen at all Irishmen who have hearts, and not shamrocks, where their hearts should be.

This study then, seeks to do justice to the literary work of William Allingham by examining critically the majority of his poems, lyrical, dramatic and narrative, laying special emphasis on Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland which has been grossly neglected as a poem and underestimated as national verse. This long narrative is treated (1) as a novel in verse, a pastoral, a pamphlet, a study in linguistics, and an historical survey and (2) as a turning point in its author's career which so affected him that it was chiefly responsible for his failure to reach full stature as a poet.

There is no full appraisal of Laurence Bloomfield in print anywhere. The chapter in Dr. Hans Kropf's monograph, William Allingham und Seine Dichtung, (1928), which devotes twenty-two pages to it, sound as far as it goes, is little more than a briefly critical resume of the narrative with some remarks about its relation to the Irish Land Question and to Allingham's motives in writing it. Two other theses (unpublished), one by Patrick MacDonagh,¹ the other by William Burto,² also give it inadequate treatment because, presumably, they did not think it important to the development of their motifs. Dr. MacDonagh emphasizes 'the duality in William Allingham's work which is at once the result of a duality in his life' and shows that Allingham, pulled between love for Ireland and the intellectual attractions of England; between 'his emotional desire for a free Ireland and his mistrust of Irish patriots found himself in a political wilderness owning no land'. This confusion created two

-
1. 'The Life and Work of William Allingham', Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, (1952).
 2. 'William Allingham - A Critical Biography', Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., (1954).

kinds of poetry: one of 'innocence, the direct inspiration of his immediate surroundings', the other, 'a poetry not so much of experience as of literary conceptions of life'.¹ Dr. Burto's purpose is 'to fill in some gaps that exist in most accounts of Allingham's life and to give a brief appraisal of his poetry'.²

This study may be said to add to the knowledge of William Allingham and his work in that it embodies a detailed account of the publication and reception of Laurence Bloomfield, made possible by the courteous and kind co-operation of Macmillan and Co., who allowed me to make use of some forty MSS letters from Allingham to Alexander Macmillan during their business relationship of nearly twenty years. In addition, there is a comparison of the Fraser's text with that of the first edition; a full examination of the events of the poem against the background of Irish history; and a detailed consideration of why it failed to find a reading public, all these

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1. Preface to MacDonagh thesis.
 2. Letter from Dr. Burto, (February 20, 1958).

points having been left untouched by previous writers. Throughout the thesis attention is drawn to certain features of Allingham's character in order to make clear that, in this particular case, disposition contributed largely to the unmaking of a poet by himself.

The study is not exhaustive and therefore leaves undeveloped certain interesting aspects of Allingham's work because time spent on them would cause unjustifiable digression. For instance, the remarks about The Ballad Book are superficial because it is outside my purpose to deal with Allingham as an editor reworking old ballads. For the same reasons, the section on Fraser's is slim and includes only matter enough to round out the picture of his career and to show how his sojourn in journalism affected his poetry. It makes no serious attempt to compare him as editor with McGinn, Froude and Tulloch, a task well worth the trouble as it would provide the necessary sequel to Miss Thrall's Rebellious Fraser's, that wonderfully vivid account of the magazine's salad days when it was Regina, 'Queen of the Monthlies'. Also, his numerous critical papers, historical and familiar essays are referred to only in passing because it would

be distracting to the reader to give full treatment to the prose in a study whose chief emphasis is the poetry.

Certain information that the reader may expect to find is simply not available. More light would undoubtedly be thrown on the inspiration for Laurence Bloomfield and it would be possible to see the author at work upon it, if Allingham's letters to Rossetti had not been destroyed,¹ and if it were possible to come upon letters of his to Froude, which surely must have existed since he was the editor of Fraser's who accepted the Irish poem. Also, details of other publications are missing because the bombings during the Second World War destroyed the records of almost all Allingham's publishers. The period of the sub-editorship and finally the editorship, of Fraser's, is somewhat cloudy. Extensive research has turned up only the clues supplied in Chapter V. The 1888 edition of Laurence Bloomfield is still unavailable. The University of Illinois may hold the answer to many questions but as long as the material they possess is not open to the researcher one cannot say for certain.

1. See Letters D.G.R. to W.A., (Introduction), p.xxviii.

Investigation for this study has disclosed the existence of, in libraries on both sides of the Atlantic, a large amount of manuscript material, chiefly letters to and from Allingham. The University of Illinois has the bulk of it as the extract from the following letter shows:

We have in manuscript form some 800 unpublished letters, I should estimate, of friends of Allingham to him, not his own. They more or less compete with the published Letters to William Allingham. There are of course many of great interest and significance, but about 400 or more correspondents are represented and many by one or two or three letters only. As you can imagine, we also have the originals of most of the published correspondence, the ones in the book just mentioned, and some from other memoirs and biographies. We have mainly the residue of the Sotheby Sale of 1946 We have bought some on photostats from various American libraries - Princeton has some Rossetti and Ruskin letters; Yale; Columbia, Pierpont Morgan Library, Berg Collection of the New York Public Library ... ¹

And it is not likely that material for a complete study of Allingham is exhausted. There must be in existence numerous unsifted private papers and letters of his friends and acquaintances which would reveal pertinent

1. From R. Freeman, a member of the English Dept. of the University of Illinois, who is preparing a critical biography of Allingham's early life. Letter to me July 1, 1956.

information. Much is needed in the way of definitive biographies and editions of letters of prominent Victorians, many of them Allingham's friends, and some of the missing information may be provided when further work is done on Ferguson, Froude, Alexander Macmillan, Craik, Tulloch, Tom Taylor, William Carleton, Edward Burne-Jones, the Howitts, George Petrie, Edward Dowden, the De Morgans and George Du Maurier, to mention a few.

The Bibliography appended to this study is intended not only to draw attention to the material available on the subject but also to substantiate remarks in the text by illustrating the large amount of work Allingham did for magazines, work which proved a distraction from poetry. Under Books by William Allingham, the publishers have been included in order to show how many he had and to show also that the same book, with perhaps minor changes, was often published by a different company. This is not strange in itself but in this particular case it exemplifies Allingham's persistent, time-wasting habit of duplication rather than his popularity. The Allingham items disposed of at the Sotheby sale are listed in order to give some idea what is in the collection at Illinois.

It is my hope that 'A Critical Study of William Allingham, with special reference to Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland', will stimulate further interest in the poet and result in a definitive edition of his poetry and another of his prose, which if carefully annotated and sympathetically done would be a fruitful and pleasant addition to Victoriana. There is room also for separate editions of groups of his poems; of his songs, ballads and narratives. If there should be an Allingham revival I should prefer to see his work in small, well bound books that would rest easily, not tiresomely like heavier, exhaustive works, in the hands of fire-side readers, for Allingham is for the hours when the brain needs rest and one likes the comfort of beauty that is uncomplicated and serene.

Another edition of the letters is needed also; a task abandoned by Mr. Freeman because he thought he had not enough of Allingham's letters from which to compile such a book, an opinion with which I cannot agree. He is at present preparing a critical biography of the early years for doctoral dissertation and hopes to do 'a complete and

comprehensive biography and critical study for publication,
a work which ought to be a valuable contribution to the
knowledge of the period.

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgment and thanks cannot do justice to the co-operation and patience of many people who have assisted by research in various ways. My special gratitude, however, is given to my supervisor, Mrs. Geoffrey Tillotson of Bedford College, for her invaluable guidance and painstaking interest in this undertaking.

I acknowledge with gratitude the suggestion of Dr.E.R. Seary, Head of the Department of English at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, that William Allingham seemed a poet worth exploring as a subject for doctoral dissertation.

For permission to make use of autograph letters and copyright material I wish to thank Macmillan and Co., London, W.I.P. MacDonagh of Dublin, William Burto of Cambridge, Mass., the National Library of Scotland, the Library of the Queen's University of Belfast, the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, the Library of Columbia University, the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, and the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, England and the National Library of Ireland.

For other assistance I should like to thank Rev. Terence O'Donnell, O.F.M. of the Franciscan College, Gormanston, C. Meath, Dr. Parke, the Librarian of Trinity College, Dublin, Benedict Kiely of the Irish Press, the staff of the British Museum, the editor of the Donegal Democrat, Ballyshannon, Miss Judith Murphy, Miss Elizabeth Arakie, Miss Mary Bonneville and Miss Gabriella Ganz.

I am particularly indebted to the staff of the National Library of Ireland for their tireless patience and unfailing courtesy; and to the Irish Folklore Commission for the detailed references they so kindly sent me.

ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA

| | | |
|------|----------------|--|
| Page | 15, l. 5, | <u>for</u> 'three' <u>read</u> '3'. |
| " | 22, l. 18, | <u>for</u> 'thirty' <u>read</u> 'forty'. |
| " | 39, l. 18, | this 'book' (<u>Letters to W. A.</u> p.277), must certainly be the note-book mentioned in item 508 of Sotheby's Catalogue. See Bibliography p. 322. |
| " | 63, l. 21, | <u>read</u> 'party' <u>after</u> 'Young Irelanders'. |
| " | 93, | <u>read</u> the quotation marks outside the punctuation mark in each case. |
| " | 117, l. 3, | <u>for</u> 'but to look' <u>read</u> 'but one must look'. |
| " | 154, l. 1, | <u>for</u> 'Popian' <u>read</u> 'Popeian' throughout. |
| " | 174, | <u>reverse</u> the numbers 1 and 2 in both text and footnotes. |
| " | 202, ll. 1-11, | <u>read</u> as single spacing. |
| " | 256, l. 3, | date now known. See 'St. Patrick', <u>Household Words</u> , (April 5, 1856), pp. 279-83. |
| " | 264, | <u>add</u> the poem 'Emily' to list at the end of first paragraph. |
| " | 321-5, | <u>read</u> as single the quotation marks in each case. |
| " | 327, | <u>under Fifty Modern Poems add The Gentleman's Magazine</u> , (March, 1866), pp. 401-2. |
| " | 329, | <u>under Obituary Notices add Annual Register</u> , 1889, Part II, p. 165. |
| " | xxi, | <u>add</u> to paragraph 3, Princeton University, Harvard University and University of Leeds. |

I

REPUTATION AS LYRIC POET, 1850-77

William Allingham was eventually written off by the nineteenth century as a poet of exquisite lyrical ability who never reached the heights because he could not sustain his inspiration beyond short poems and whose epitaph may be found in one of Edmund Gosse's letters to Austin Dobson:

You must remember he is himself one of those who have never reached their Holy Land, but whose bones are strewn in the desert. Naturally the grapes are very sour on the clusters of Eshcol.¹

The twentieth century has paid him scant attention, remembering sometimes with pleasure and sometimes with a patronizing titter, his 'Up the Airy Mountain' and 'Four Ducks on a Pond'. He is, generally speaking, unknown today. Many have asked me, 'Who is he?' 'What did he write?' Few have ever heard of Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland. Those who have are mostly scholars and writers who dismissed it after curiously inadequate treatment. Among the offenders

1. Charteris, Hon.E., Life and Letters of Edmund Gosse, (1931), p. 84.

are the Irish writers, George O'Neill, S.J.,¹ Robert Farren,² J.N. Browne³ and Ernest Boyd;⁴ B. Ifor Evans when he declares that Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland by its 'length and its accomplishment will remain the most memorable of his poems',⁵ then firmly shuts his lips and says no more, and W.B. Yeats, who in spite of his high regard for Allingham's lyrics maintains that 'for long poems he had no faculty.'⁶

It is chiefly to do justice to Laurence Bloomfield and to show it as a turning point in its author's career that this thesis is being written; but also to examine his work as a whole in order to ascertain his true value in the world of letters. A good deal of the essential and worthwhile Allingham has been either overlooked or inadequately reviewed, and unhappily, he himself has injured his reputation by publishing editions

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1. Essays on Poetry, (1919), pp. 70-106.
 2. The Course of Irish Verse, (1948), pp. 52-53.
 3. The Arts in Ulster: A Symposium, (1951), ch.6, pp. 134-35.
 4. Ireland's Literary Renaissance, (1916), ch.4, p.80 seq.
 5. English Poetry in the Later 19th Century, (1933), p.109.
 6. United Ireland, (Dec.12, 1891), p.5.

of his poems in which he rarely separates the chaff from the wheat and displays a monumental lack of self-criticism and discrimination.

This is not to suggest that my thesis is to be an eye-opener to the hitherto blind. Critics have not been completely unjust to nor neglectful of 'the poet of Ballyshannon.' Many have written of him with appreciation and perspicacity, particularly M.L. Howe,¹ J. Lyle Donaghy² and W.B. Yeats.³ What remains to be done is to sift the material, past and present, to extricate Allingham from the often arbitrary judgments of nineteenth century reviewers, some writing to meet a deadline, some suffering from dyspepsia, envy, or the intoxication of having a column to themselves and whose opinions are not always to be trusted in an age when many magazines and periodicals thought it was great fun to be virulent, blase, despotic and as changeable as the weather; and to stimulate interest in the need for a definitive edition of work that has suffered badly from the parasitism of weather poems that Allingham seemed incapable of casting off.

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1. Philological Quarterly, (July, 1933), pp. 290-97.
 2. Dublin Magazine, (April-June, 1945), pp. 34-38.
 3. Articles, letters, etc. Some quoted later. See also Bibliography.

An examination of his position as a poet in the nineteenth century, seems to be the best starting point because he must be seen against his own background and through the eyes of his own age before being subjected to the less sentimental gaze of the twentieth century and before a personal criticism can be offered. To be fair, one must view dispassionately Allingham's Victorianisms and give them the credit they deserve even though they may outrage the less conventional, more naturalistic tastes of the twentieth century. For instance, the bloodlessness of 'The Music-Master' will exasperate the passionate and the unshy, but that is no reason for dismissing the poem as drivel. A certain amount of namby-pamby was part of the way of life of the Victorians and has to be taken into account in any appraisal of Victorian literature. Only when the namby-pamby is utterly untrue to nature may the bayonets of criticism be justly driven into it.

How then did the nineteenth century receive him? His first two volumes, Poems, 1850, and Day and Night Songs, 1854, brought forth a genuine burst of applause and great things were expected of the young Irishman with the gift of song. The enthusiasm of the reviews, however, was

tempered with caution. William Rossetti's,¹ one of the best and most carefully thought out, an epitome of contemporary opinion of the 1850 volume, recommended him for the temperance of his language and imagination, the beauty of his word painting and for his 'poetical comprehension of nature'; chided him for some artificial emotion, 'as being the expression in poetical phrase and manner of what might suggest itself under supposed conditions',² subjected his diction to very close scrutiny and left it an open question, whether Allingham, whom he ranked among the highest as a word painter and in his 'poetical comprehension of nature', would count as a future rival to Tennyson and Browning. Fraser's held the same view with some variations. It recommended him for language almost always terse, vivid, correct and free from mannerisms except in places where he imitated the old seventeenth century style in lines -

1. Critic, (October 15, 1850), p. 496.

2. Ibid.

... racy and sententious [lines], not unworthy of Vaughan or Herrick, right good models for a poet just now, because exactly antipodal to that vague and windy pomposity, against which we have been lifting up our voice. 1

Although Fraser's, the Leader, the Athenaeum and the Palladium censured him for trivial subject matter and the indiscriminate inclusion of weak poems and Patmore in the Palladium reprimanded him tartly for

... violence done to the genius of the English tongue: hideous Germanisms, in the shape of hyphen-wrought copulations of essentially independent words; omissions of the article and inversion of the natural order of nominative and verb, for the sake of the metre; lazy circumlocutions, and lines deformed by dashes, when a little thought would have indicated some different turn of phrase, allowing of the legitimate comma or semi-colon, 2

Allingham had no cause to complain of the reception of his first volume. There was praise aplenty for the young fledgling and from no mean sources. Browning wrote to him on September 23, 1851, to say that no one of the poets that had come forward within the last few years exhibited

1. (May, 1851), p. 507.

2. (November, 1850), p. 386.

so much promise and performance together and that his wife agreed with him¹; Walter Savage Landor was very much obliged for the gift of

... a very beautiful volume of Poems,
as far as I am able to judge in the
first half hour after their arrival ...²

Coventry Patmore, who saw much of Allingham's work in manuscript, and who was always a thorough, somewhat inconsistent critic, declared, in a letter dated, April 17, 1850, that he was the best lyric poet living, there was no doubt of that, and that he was fully persuaded that he would hear all the world saying so by-and-by.³ Writing to his wife in August of the same year he made it clear that Tennyson thought highly of Allingham's work:

I gave Tennyson Allingham's volume yesterday. A. would have had his head quite turned if he could have heard and seen Tennyson reading, 'Evening', 'The Serenade', 'The Pilot's Daughter' aloud among the water-lilies of the Lake. You know how much Allingham thinks of having his verses read in appropriate places and times. I was quite jealous of Tennyson's admiration of them.⁴

1. Letters to W.A.^(?) p. 94.

2. Ibid., p. 218.

3. Champneys, B., Memoirs and Correspondence, (1901), Vol. II, p. 173.

4. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 196.

and again to her in the same month:

... Speaking of Allingham, it is surprising what an impression he has made on Tennyson. He speaks of his immense capacities. etc., etc., and you know how chary generally he is of his superlatives. Tennyson has pointed out so many beauties I did not before perceive in A's poems that I am coming round to his belief that they are the best first book we have ever had.

It is satisfactory to find that my own judgment of these poems, made in opposition to everybody else's, is so confirmed. Curiously enough Tennyson saw the resemblance to Goethe immediately; and when I told him something about Allingham's manner and character, he dwelt upon the analogy over and over again, and seemed to contemplate for A. one of the most splendid careers, ever gone through by an English Poet. He quite sees his faults, his heartless artistism, and the great danger which may accrue from such extraordinary faculties united with so little wholesome feeling.¹

Patmore was surely indulging his vanity when he claimed that his judgment of the poems had been made in opposition to everybody else's. This statement was inaccurate and misleading. The whole reference, however, was of unusual interest because it not only showed that one of

1. Ibid., pp. 195-196.

England's greatest poets thought Allingham's work first-rate but it also made Allingham's failure to fulfil the promise of his youth all the more significant and worthy of investigation.

The 1850 volume continued to be lauded, in America and Ireland as well as in England. Emerson thought 'The Touchstone' wonderful and read it in the Town Hall at Concord to the citizens who had assembled there at the hour John Brown was executed in Virginia;¹ Sir Samuel Ferguson praised highly 'The Music-Master';² the North American Review,³ although squeezed for time made it clear that the 1850 volume was not unknown in America, and Thackeray, writing to Edward Chapman in 1850, to introduce Allingham to his first publisher, declared the volume of poems to be of such 'good mark that any publisher may be proud to act as Master of Ceremonies to them and introduce them to the world'.⁴

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1. Conway, Moncure, Autobiography, (1904), Vol.II, p. 127.
 2. Dublin Univ.Magazine, (November, 1850), pp.581-3.
 3. (July, 1853), p. 29.
 4. Ray, G., Thackeray Letters and Private Papers, (1945), Vol. II, p. 723.

The effect created by his first volume was summed up exactly in Allingham's remarks to Woolner that his book had succeeded in striking a good many of the mountain tops and they smiled upon him, but the ground, the public, was dark.¹ The reviewers, who had not been ungenerous, could not be blamed for the small sales. Allingham was encountering for the first time the unpredictability of the reading public and he grumbled with some truth that people when they saw his poems in Household Words surmised they were by this or that eminent hand but when they appeared with others in the volume by an unknown writer they could see all their defects and few of their merits.²

With the appearance of Day and Night Songs, 1854, the critics were wholly enthusiastic because Allingham had wisely reduced the number of poems to thirty-two (about a dozen of which had already appeared in the 1850 volume) as against the one hundred and ten of the earlier volume. The Leader was gracious and no longer

1. Letters to W.A., p. 285.

2. Unpublished MSS. in Dorset County Museum. Letter to Wm. Barnes, (March 4, 1851).

accused him of lack of real feeling or of inability to know when to blot.¹ The Literary Gazette claimed he was one of the few poets of the day whose pieces were worthy of being more than once printed² and the Athenaeum, which reviewed him faithfully and indefatigably up to his death, dropped the reserve of its first review of January 18, 1851, and spoke glowingly of his minstrelsy, his Tennysonian style, the Raffaele quality of his word painting, his reserved power and the ease with which he wrote.³

The 1855 volume, The Music-Master: a love story and two series of Day and Night Songs with nine woodcuts by Arthur Hughes, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Millais drew a flattering amount of attention from the reviews, in spite of the poems having appeared before. The censure was mild and gave no cause for discouragement. The volume was reviewed by the Irish Nation,⁴ the Athenaeum,⁵

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1. (August, 1850), p. 473. See also (March 4, 1854), pp. 211-2.
 2. (March 4, 1854), p. 201.
 3. (April 29, 1854), p. 518.
 4. (October 6, 1855), p. 90.
 5. (August 18, 1855), p. 943.

Putnam's Monthly,¹ the Irish Quarterly Review,² the Literary Gazette,³ and even by the aloof Edinburgh Review⁴ which published an article by Patmore, entitled 'New Poets' which treated 'The Music-Master' quite fully, as well as some of the shorter lyrics. That Allingham's reputation was spreading was further verified by the space given him in the American magazine Putnam's.

What emerged from the multitude of opinions and remarks about Allingham's work up to and including 1855 was that he was an exquisite lyricist, melodious, tasteful, fanciful and with a rare ability in verse to charm children; that his flair for utilising fairy themes and the supernatural was remarkably good; that he was not great but it was not categorically stated that he would not become so. The praise was constant and full, harped a good deal on the same tune and dubbed him a very promising squire, a bachelor, yet to prove himself worthy

1. (July, 1856), pp. 23-30.

2. (January, 1858), pp. 1127-41.

3. (July 7, 1855), p. 424.

4. (October, 1856), pp. 355-7.

of the Knighthood of Poetry. The future ought to have looked rosy to him. He had escaped the heavy denunciation and sarcasm endured by Tennyson,¹ Browning² and the Pre-Raphaelites³ at the hands of the leading reviews and many of his poems were considered to have exceptional merit. Charles Kingsley believed that with the exception of Allingham and Meredith all the young poets were a very hopeless generation.⁴ There was no need for the dumps displayed in his letters and diary. He had only to correct the immaturities of youthful verse and to develop by contemplation and hard work his particular talents in order to be considered a poet of the first class. Circumstances and his own character deemed otherwise.

His next publication was an anthology of selected lyrics, called Nightingale Valley, 1860. Its object was 'to delight the lover of poetry' and it

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1. Quarterly Review, (April, 1833), pp. 80-96.
 2. Edinburgh Review, (October, 1864), pp. 537-65.
 3. 'The Latest Development of Literary Poetry' (review of Swinburne, Rossetti and Morris), Quarterly, (January, 1872), pp. 59-84.
 4. 'Alexander Smith and Alexander Pope', Fraser's, (October, 1853), p.466.

made no claim to be exhaustive. It was a strikingly original volume in that Allingham indulged his own taste and displayed an amusing disregard for what he might have been expected to include. Thus he gave three lyrics by Carlyle and seven of his own, while Byron was significantly ignored, in deference no doubt to his considered opinion that

... no celebrated poet is so frequently faulty in diction, loose and untruthful in imagery, vulgar in versification, barren in thought, false in sentiment, as Lord Byron, none so narrow and unwise in his life philosophy, none so unwholesome in general effect.¹

He found space for celebrities like Joanna Baillie, Felicia Hemans and the 'corn-rhymer', Ebenezer Elliott, who were still read in the sixties although they were not so widely popular as they were in the thirties. Mary Boddington was represented by 'The Lady's Grave', a poem whose ballad quality probably won it a place rather than the knowledge that she was a lady from Cork. The Rossettis were familiar with her work and it was

1. Varieties in Prose, Vol. III, p. 299. Originally 'The Proposed Byron Memorial', Fraser's, (February, 1876), pp. 246-60.

perhaps through them Allingham first saw her poems.¹
It would be interesting to know the names of the books mentioned by Gabriel Rossetti to him in a letter dated April, 1856:

I have just been turning over the three parcels of books left for you with me, and a dismaller collection I never saw. Is it possible you read all that? The only one to my taste is a nice clean Mrs. Boddington.²

Was William Kennedy, the Irishman who became British Consul in Texas among them, whose 'Ned Bolton' was included in Nightingale Valley and criticized by Gabriel Rossetti as 'hardly as good as Dibden's best'?³

The wideness of Allingham's taste was further displayed by his inclusion of several American poets, Emerson, Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant and Poe⁴ (the poems of the latter enjoying great popularity in the nineteenth century in England) and by his interest in

1. Letters D.G.R. to W.A., (1891) p. 182.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

4. British Museum Catalogue has large number of various editions published in London in the fifties and sixties.

lesser known poets like Samuel Ferguson whose beautiful verses were little appreciated outside Ireland, and William Barnes, whose Dorsetshire dialect poems he introduced to the Brownings, Tennyson, Clough, Rossetti etc., etc.,¹ a fact he recorded, almost belligerently, in his diary, as if his critical ability had been in question. Both were represented by two lyrics each.

Wordsworth was given thirteen out of a total two hundred and ten in the volume, Tennyson eleven, Shelley six, Hood eight and Keats five, a grouping indicative of Allingham's reverence for the Lake Poet and the Laureate, whose early work he certainly imitated. In addition to these, Shakespeare, Herrick, Marlowe, Jonson, Vaughan, the Coleridges, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Burns, the Young Irelander Thomas Davis and Barry Cornwall mingle to provide a book delightfully fresh and even whimsical.

The inclusion of Blake and Browning were a tribute to the soundness of his poetic judgment. Allingham must be credited with an advance-guard position in making known a great poet to an age almost entirely

1. Diary, p. 109. All quotations are from the reprint of 1908.

unconscious of his great powers. Although Allingham knew his Blake before he met Rossetti¹ his interest was undoubtedly further stimulated by reading the MSS. book by Blake, **crammed** with prose and verse and drawings offered to Rossetti by Palmer, an attendant at the British Museum, for ten shillings in 1847.² The version of 'The Tiger' used in Nightingale Valley was the one in the MSS. in Rossetti's possession.³

Browning was not yet in the critics' good graces nor much noticed by the public. Allingham's courageous choice of 'My ^a Last Duchess' and 'Up at a Villa' pointed to his unerring good judgment.

The piquant unfamiliarity of the contents should have stirred the critics to controversy if not to whole-hearted praise, yet the reviews were inexplicably silent and ignored a book that need not shrink from

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1. Wrote an article on Blake for Hogg's Weekly Instructor in 1848. See Letters to W.A., p. 192. ~~Was not printed.~~ Also approached Slater, the publisher, about a new edition of Blake's poems. This was in 1849. See Diary, p.53.
 2. Rossetti, W., D.G. Rossetti: His Family Letters. With a Memoir, (1895), Vol.1, pp. 109-10.
 3. Nightingale Valley, (Notes), p. 276.

comparison with F.T. Palgrave's Golden Treasury which came out the next year and included in that edition deceased authors only and offered nothing so startling as Allingham's presentation of Blake. Although Allingham's intention was not historical like Palgrave's, and less unified, it did not deserve the neglect it received. It is a charming book, a credit to his editorship and to the purity of his poetic discernment. Such a personal selection of lyrics, was bound, of course, to invite diverging opinions like those of Gabriel Rossetti,¹ Whitley Stokes² and Denis Florence MacCarthy.³ Among other criticisms Rossetti thought that there was too much Wordsworth and he missed Byron, Henry Taylor and Herbert. What strikes the modern reader is the absence of Donne and Marvell (perhaps too strong for his essential reserve) although the presence of Herrick, Carew, Lovelace, Suckling and Vaughan indicated his awareness of writers not well known in the nineteenth century. Thomas Moore, whose work he thought superficial but unrivalled in its own kind⁴

1. Letters D.G.R. to W.A., pp. 214-20.

2. Letters to W.A., p. 271.

3. See Echo, (January 25, 1877). Also Appendix I, p. 273.

4. By the Way, (1912), p. 106.

was also absent.

From November, 1862, to November, 1863, he published 'Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland', in twelve consecutive numbers (missing only October, 1863) in Fraser's. In April 1864 it was first published in book form with the text considerably changed. In the same year he edited The Ballad Book, for 'the delight of lovers of poetry', and included some 'fourscore of the best Old Ballads in at once the best and most authentic attainable form.' It appeared again in 1872, 1892 and 1907. In 1866 it was printed for the first time in America by Sever and Francis. The issues raised by the first publication may be found in two reviews, one in the Athenaeum for January 21, 1865, pp. 83- 4, and in the Saturday Review for November, 1864, pp. 601-2.

At the appearance of Fifty Modern Poems in 1865 the reviews suggested that Allingham's genius was marking time. The lyric qualities praised in his earlier volumes were praised again but Fraser's saw fit to announce,

We have watched Mr. Allingham's career with interest, as his earliest volume was full of promise. The spring blossom of his imagination, however, we regret to say, does not seem likely to ripen into harvest.¹

and regretted that his phraseology, which they admitted was 'not merely good but often choice', did not reach that 'supreme excellence which Keats and Tennyson and Shelley reach'. The Reader² and the Pall Mall Gazette³ each gave him an interesting and sane review (particularly the Reader) but, on the whole, the general opinion appeared to be that Allingham was not and would not become a great poet.

The Irish Reviews partially explained his failure to progress. The Nation⁴ pointed out that many of the poems in the 1865 volume had appeared earlier (actually thirty had been published already in Household Words, the Athenaeum, Fraser's, and Macmillan's) and that 'some trifles in the collection might almost as well have

1. (November, 1865), pp. 633-4.

2. (April 29, 1865), p. 475.

3. (April 1, 1865), p. 467.

4. (May 6, 1865), p. 586.

been allowed to drift', thus hinting at Allingham's devitalising and growing habit of filling new books with old poems and displaying quite an extraordinary lack of discrimination. The Irish People¹ said much the same thing. The Irishman² gave him full credit for his lyricism, delivered him a rousing lecture on the evils of indifferentism, trounced his so-called philosophical and theological poems like 'Dogmatism' and ended with the very sensible advice to him, 'to desist from dabbling in the fast theology of the day'. Thus Fifty Modern Poems cannot be said to have put another star in Allingham's crown. What strikes one about the volume is that, beyond the little poem to Goethe called 'In Weimar', it showed not the slightest effects from his two European tours, one to Switzerland, North Italy and Paris in the summer of 1858 and the other to Holland and Germany in the autumn of 1859. When one thinks of the glories of these countries it is hard to forgive Allingham for passing them over in his poetry and finding space

1. (May 20, 1865), p. 410.

2. (April 8, April 15, 1865), pp. 651 and 667.

instead for insipidities like 'The Shooting Star' and 'On the Longest Day!' The pace of his social life and his fits of depression apparently tempted him to do what was easiest and to use old poems for new publications.

With all that fresh experience to draw on he displayed no great originality from 1865 to 1877. In 1869 he re-issued Laurence Bloomfield. In the same year he collaborated with Richard Doyle, the artist, in a delightful book called In Fairyland: A Series of Pictures from the Elf-World by Richard Doyle with a poem by William Allingham. This venture, however, shed more glory on Doyle than on Allingham.¹ In 1873 appeared the charming Rambles by Patricius Walker, prose essays of walking tours in England, Ireland and Scotland, published previously in Fraser's from December 1867 to July 1872 intermittently. In 1875 he supplied a lengthy sketch of Thomas Campbell's life for the Aldine edition of the British Poets and in 1877 recombined a large number of earlier poems in Songs, Ballads and Stories.

1. Spectator, (November 20, 1869), pp. 1365-66;
Daily News, (November 3, 1869), p.2.

By this time, however, even the faithful Athenaeum felt compelled to reprimand him for letting his ambition slumber:

... His early poems, with a few published some five years later, still remain among his very best. Occasionally a little song or ballad has since appeared which is up to the old level, but there has been no advance. What we all took to be noble promise has turned out to be the full performance, and Mr. Allingham's readers are, perhaps, half tempted to be unjust in proportion to their disappointment.¹

Before giving reasons for this loss of ambition and failure to develop, it seems wise, at this point, to offer a personal estimate of the poetry up to 1877 in order to see more fully what Allingham was capable of and to test the validity of the above remarks in the Athenaeum.

It might be well to begin with 'The Music-Master', since it seemed to be the chief poem of the 1850 volume and the author saw fit to revise it so thoroughly that in the Preface to the 1855 volume he said it was 'perhaps, nearly entitled to be considered as a new poem',² an

1. (August 4, 1877), p. 135.

2. Preface, 1855 edition, p. vii.

exaggeration, in my opinion. It appeared again in 1860, a replica of the 1855 issue, and three times after, unchanged with the exception of a few words here and there from the 1855 version. Songs, Ballads and Stories carried it in 1877; Irish Songs and Poems in 1887 and ~~in~~ the second edition in 1890 of Irish Songs and Poems which formed the first volume of the collected edition of Allingham's poems in six volumes.

The kernel of this love story is that Gerald, a sensitive and brilliant musician, falls in love with Milly, one of his pupils and is too shy to speak out his love, leaves the country after his father's death, without explanation, and returns five years later to visit his beloved's grave, she having died of consumption and a broken heart. Her old nurse greets Gerald in the graveyard and gives him a package that Milly has left for him which shows him that she knew he loved her and that she too loved him. Feeling spiritually united to the dead girl he departs for the backwoods of the New World, where he lives in a kind of Walden, cherishing and preserving their love, but no pining introvert in his solitary work-filled life - rather an axe-swinging Thoreau and Carlyle

(without their personality) combined, a pantisocratic idealist, which would suggest that Allingham had read his *Wise Men* well.

The poem has quiet, steady beauty in many parts but it fails because the passiveness and unintelligence of the hero and heroine defeat any dramatic intentions Allingham had. Touching though they may be, one's sympathies cannot become actively engaged on behalf of such an inarticulate pair. Shyness offers an interesting subject for literature provided that it initiates conflict and tension in people who have a distinctive personal character and are not merely pathetic and ineffectual like Gerald and Milly. It is not convincing as a love story because it is difficult to believe that two people could be such ninnyes. If their feelings were as strong as the reader is led to believe, then they could not have kept silent, at any rate, not both of them. They are so passionless they scarcely seem to be flesh and blood. Milly makes no effort to be the mistress of her lot nor Gerald to cure himself of self-effacement that appears to be a compulsive obsession. Their condition is simply stupidity masquerading as fine feeling.

Other weaknesses are: loose ends in the story, incidents left dangling, unexplained implications. No adequate reason is given for Gerald's departure; Milly's sister with the 'envious eye and tongue of petty scorn', is a red herring. She comes upon Milly, eavesdropping on Gerald's musical revelation of love and Milly turns away. Why? Because she is too shy to be caught listening or because she dislikes this sister, so shadowy in outline? Why bother putting her in the story unless she is to play a role? Another disappointment is Allingham's failure to develop the theme of music. The fact that he is a musician has absolutely no effect on Gerald as a character. He would be the same were he the village bellows-mender.

It is interesting to note that Allingham himself was not unaware of his failure to be dramatic and the following extract from a letter to Arthur Hughes, dated 15/16 August, 1854, explains much of the tameness of 'The Music-Master'.

It never struck me till this question of pictorial illustration came, how little dramatic action there is in my poetry - this I believe to be partly the result of an innate preference for the lyrical, but partly of accidental circumstances,

for I much enjoy and value the dramatic element. The greatest difficulty in any art perhaps is, to present the dramatic thoroughly, without 'o'er-stepping the modesty of nature'. - Because you see, you must at once satisfy the passionate sympathies and the critical judgment - which are much opposed in general.¹

In this poem he obviously falls between the two stools of satisfying the passionate sympathies and the critical judgment. However, in spite of the general feebleness of the story there are occasional moments of dramatic impact. For instance, there is something strong and revealing in the contrast between the emotional upheaval suffered by Gerald as he leaves the grave-yard, thunder muttering in the sky, and the diamond sharpness of the imperturbability of the village:

Along the street was heard the laughing sound
Of boys at play, who knew no thought of death;
Deliberate-stepping cows, to milking bound,
Lifted their heads and low'd with fragrant breath;
The women knitting at their thresholds cast
A look upon our stranger as he pass'd.²

It is Allingham's characterization that lacks drama rather than his 'action'. There are many striking scenes in all

1. Letters to W.A., p. 53.

2. Songs, Ballads and Stories, (1877), p. 253, st.XLVII.

his stories in verse.

There are also moments when one is charmed by the descriptions of the countryside, the purity and disinterestedness of the love, and by the paean to music, but the enchantment is felt only in brief snatches because the lovers are too insipid to match in worth the beauty and mystery they are caught up in. The lyricism of the piece is sweet and gentle and recalls Tennyson's English idylls like 'Dora' and 'The Miller's Daughter'; it does not combine with action and character to make a truly dramatic lyric however.

Another weakness is the indefiniteness of the Irish setting. To tell the reader he wishes to hold some fair young listeners in a ring with echoes gathered from an Irish vale and then to throw out a few references to flutes piping 'Colleen Dhus' and 'Hawk of Ballyshannon', to dot his pages with a few cushla-ma-chries and asthores is not to write a regional poem. The reader knows the scenery is Irish because he is told so, and there is nothing Irish about Gerald or Milly. Vegetables have more nationality than they have. It is inconceivable

how the Edinburgh Review could have referred to its 'peculiar national colouring', unless it meant the national reluctance of an Irishman to propose to a girl. Gerald is no true Irishman even in that, because once an Irishman makes up his mind to have a woman, years though it may take him, he usually has her, even if like Paddy-Go-Easy¹ he follows her in dumb shyness along the roads and finally has recourse to a match-maker to do his wooing for him. What the poem requires is, not exaggerated Irishness but more faithfulness to Irish character and to human nature and less aping of Tennyson. As it stands it is depressingly unoriginal.

The revised version of 1855 does not induce me to change my opinion. Although several of the changes are for the better, they do little to lessen the mediocrity of the whole and at the same time they spotlight a weakness in Allingham's poetic disposition that may help to account for the stand-still he came to in his later poetry, namely a puzzling unevenness in his revisions; an indecisiveness that often results in an aimless shifting of syntax and

1. Hero in William Carleton's story of that name.

an arbitrary choice of words. His revisions are peculiar mixtures of clear-sightedness and myopia.

The improvements in 'The Music-Master' are there to be seen but are unable to cover the awful poverty of the characterization. However, it is only fair to point out that the 1855 version shows a tightening in structure, achieved partially by the shift from eighty-one stanzas in Part One of the 1850 volume to seventy-nine in the 1855 volume and from seventy-five stanzas in Part Two of the 1850 volume to seventy-two in the 1855 volume. There is also evidence of greater simplicity, less sentimentality and an avoidance of the preaching tone. The tediously pious and affected four-stanza introduction to Love and Music is dropped in 1855 and the tale opens swiftly and gracefully after the first stanza. Many real improvements are often accompanied by Allingham's spinsterish fussiness in changing the hero's name from Claude to Gerald, splitting hairs over prepositions and adjectives and see-sawing from something effective to something feeble and back again. Here are some samples:

XLIII

The faded moon of childhood, trembling white,
Now lingers low in her soul's flushing heaven,
As wooed in a farewell; the mounting light
Transfuses all the air with subtle leaven;
And shadowy mountain-peaks begin to show
Their unsuspected paths amid the glow.¹

is changed, in 1855, to

XXXIV

Now must the moon of childhood's trembling white
Faint in the promise of her flushing heaven;
Looks are turn'd eastward, where new orient light
Suffuses all the air with subtle leaven;
And shadowy mountain-paths begin to show²
Their unsuspected windings 'mid the glow.

With the exception of the second line of the later version, which is perhaps metrically better, this is six of one and half dozen of the other.

Or he strikes out perfectly effective phrases and inserts far less vivid substitutes:

XIX

Profound the moanless aching of the breast,
When weary life is like a dull grey eve
All wrung of colour, withering, and waste
Around the prostrate soul, too weak to grieve.

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1. Poems, (1850), p. 47.
 2. The Music-Master, (1855), p. 93.

Less awful far the outcry passionate,
With which an anguished strength accuses fate,¹

is much better than the revision,

XIX

Profound the voiceless aching of the breast,
When weary life is like a dull grey eve
Emptied of colour, withering and waste
Around the prostrate soul, too weak to grieve -
Stretch'd far below the tumult and strong cry
Of passion - its lamenting but a sigh.²

'Moanless aching' is more suggestive of the inward contractions of grief than the dead fact of 'voiceless grief' and it has onomatopœic value as well. In the silence of the 'moanless aching' one hears as well as feels anguish. Again, 'wring of colour', is more descriptive of the squeezing tightness of grief than 'emptied of colour.' Grief is an emptiness indeed, but it is a choking, wringing emptiness; it is angoisse. Then from decidedly weaker lines Allingham swings into the strong ending of the 1855 version with its terseness, its echoes of Herbert and its almost 'metaphysical' contempt for platitude. These two lines would be perfect except for the dull word 'sigh' which somehow flattens the

1. Poems, p. 67.

2. The Music-Master, (1855), p. 118.

effect of the whole. This last extract shows clearly the inequality of Allingham's revisions and the unsteadiness of his power. His lines often begin to soar, straight and true like the skylark, and then go lame half way up. 'The Music-Master' is essentially a wren and mere changes of syntax or the elimination of superfluous passages will not turn it into a Kingfisher.

Yet the reviews were, generally speaking, kind to it -- in some cases extravagantly kind -- indulging in none of the abuse heaped on Tennyson's early poems. The Irish Quarterly Review,¹ somewhat tardy in its praise, went so far as to say it was one of the sweetest poems in the language, that there was not a page of any part of it that it should not desire to linger fondly upon and that the tone of it alternately thrilled and soothed deliciously. Patmore deemed it the most touching poem he knew. Of the half dozen reviews I read, only the Irish Nation and Putnam's damned it with the faintness of their praise, a fact which might lead to some interesting speculations on the differences between English and foreign tastes in literature. Aubrey de Vere,

1. (January, 1858), p. 1137.

Holman Hunt, Thackeray, praised it; Gabriel Rossetti thought it full of beauty and nobility but added he was not sure it was not too noble or too resolutely healthy;¹ James Marshall, secretary to the Grand Duchess of Weimar gave a penetrating criticism when he said,

'The Music-Master' is overflowing with poetry, which 'runs to waste' in 'watering but the desert' of so meagre a story; - although I must say that the narrative, where there is narrative, flows with a grace, naïveté and straightforwardness, that puts me very much in mind of Chaucer, especially in his 'Prioress's Tale.'²

The poem is still a failure, in my opinion, even when judged by the Victorian standards of liking a good cry and a tender love story without sexual overtones. More affecting death-bed scenes are to be had in Dombey and Son and The Old Curiosity Shop; more pathetic love stories in Aurora Leigh, 'Oenone' and 'Andrea del Sarto' and if one wants to be soothed and thrilled like the writer in the Irish Quarterly, 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' will likely be found more suitable than 'The Music-Master'. The poem has no exciting rhythms or striking language to distinguish it from a dozen others of the same kidney. It is really little more than watered-down Tennyson.

1. Letters D.G.R. to W.A., p. 136.

2. Letters to W.A., p. 222.

Allingham's other stories¹ in verse will not be taken in chronological order but as the first group of a classification of his poems as stories, songs and ballads. To try to appraise his work volume by volume is a hopeless task because each contains so many of the same poems in new positions in the Table of Contents and exhibiting inconsequential verbal changes. The following appraisals will cover the poetry up to and including the year 1877. For the sake of unity 'The Banshee' will be treated although it does not appear until 1887 in Irish Songs and Poems.

'The Schoolfellows' was first printed in 1857, in Household Words² as 'George Levison; or The Schoolfellows!' It was included in a volume of Allingham's, for the first time, in Fifty Modern Poems, 1865, when it retained its title, 'George Levison or The Schoolfellows!' In 1877 it reappeared in Songs, Ballads and Stories as 'George Hildebrand; or The Schoolfellows' and again in 1889 in Life and Phantasy as 'George; or The Schoolfellows!'

1. 'The Schoolfellows', 'Mervaunee', 'Southwell Park' and 'Prince Brightkin.'

2. Household Words, (December 12, 1857), pp. 562-63. Dickens said the poem was mournfully true and that it had moved him very much. See letter to Allingham, Life and Phantasy, (1889), Notes, p. 161.

What, precisely, Allingham thought he was accomplishing by this shilly-shally with titles, must remain a mystery. It was apparently a compulsion he could not conquer.

The theme of this dramatic monologue is the unsubstantiality of having been 'cock of the school'. George Levison, idolized by the boys and thought certain to succeed in any venture, turns up, one night in summer, at the house of one of his old schoolfellows who, co-incidentally, has been thinking of him and their days battling with Greek and Latin syntax. One look at 'the sultan' of old tells that he has wasted his talents, is a dilettante and alcoholic, down on his luck and a sad contrast to his host, who, never a glamorous figure, is enjoying a happy marriage and full life after working his way through hardships to moderate prosperity.

The poem is a very good one. A chastened blank verse is its distinguishing feature. The construction has complete unity and coherence and the poetic statement of the sober truth of the story gains immeasurably by the unemotional tone employed. The imagery is sensitive and accompanies the unfolding of the tale, with its flashbacks and immediate scenes, like an attendant chorus, creating the setting, pin-pointing George's tragedy by steadily

invading the ear and the eye with the beauty and the peace of the country in contrast to the fevered life he leads and adding greatly to the poignancy of the whole. It is a moral tale told without preaching, in language as homely as Robert Frost's and as beautiful as Tennyson's, and Allingham, completely himself in this poem, achieves real originality. There are individuality and beauty abounding in the following extracts from the text of the 1889 version:

The noisy sparrows in our clēmatics
Chatted of rain,¹

From our garden wall,
Being low within, the great Whiterose-bush lean'd
A thousand tender little heads to note
The doings of the village all day long;²

.....

I heard her foot
Stir overhead; and hoped we should have time
Before the rain to loiter half an hour,
As far as to the poplars down the road,
And hear the corncrakes through the meadowy vale...³

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1. Life and Phantasy, (1889), p. 27, ll. 1-2.
 2. Ibid., p. 27, ll. 11-4.
 3. Ibid., p. 28, ll. 42-6.

The imagery, however, is not all of 'musk geranium leaves' and 'white sea-mew(s) swinging on the wave'. There are wonderfully explicit lines like, 'Hearing her ribbon whirring in the wind'; 'And all the moving million-peopled world'; eyes, 'meshed in ugly net-work like a snare'; 'warped every feature like a crooked glass'; 'made the decanter chatter on the glass like ague'; 'I brought him up the street among the rain-pools'. Perhaps the most memorable lines in the poem are,

Fog rested on my heart; till softly blew
The wind that clear'd it.¹

There is nothing unusual in the diction of this. The charm is somehow connected with the adroit use of monosyllables and weak endings of the three two-syllabled words.

Tennyson was very fond of this poem although he criticized it in a letter to Allingham dated October 21, 1856.

My opinion of your poem is that Georgy Levison is very good and graphic - the man I mean. The poem seems in parts too fine, in the style of the last century,

1. Ibid., p. 31, ll. 145-6.

and some of the worst parts of Wordsworth, a style which he inherited and could not quite shake off.

For instance your Corinthian bush means currants - why not say 'currant bush' at once. Wordsworth has 'the fragrant beverage drawn from China's heat' for tea. This sort of avoidance of plain speaking is the more ungrateful to me in your poem because other parts of it are quite unadorned and justly simple. Georgy himself as I said is well-drawn and remains, a picture upon the memory, and will remain I hope to do you honour in men's eyes.

As the offending 'Corinthian bush' is not in any of the printed versions, Tennyson must have read it in a 'book'² the author sent him. Allingham probably made other alterations too, because all versions, although they differ somewhat, are free from what might be considered 'the worst of Wordsworth', although in this particular case of the tea Tennyson should have realized that the pretension was mock heroic. It is amusing to hear Tennyson reprimand the Lake poet for pomposity when he is perfectly capable himself of referring soberly to a beard as 'the Knightly growth that fringed his lip.'

1. Letters to W.A., p. 278.

2. See letter just quoted.

One change is regrettable. In the version in Household Words are the lines,

From when the labourers trudging to their toil
With sickle, scythe, or spade, hear outpost cocks
Whistle a quaint refrain from farm to farm.¹

The later version,

From when the labourers, trudging to their toil
In earliest sunshine, heard the outpost cocks
Whistle a quaint refrain from farm to farm.²

is robbed of its Breughel quality by the substitution of 'in earliest sunshine' - an indefinite image - for the vigorous picture of the sickles and scythes trudging with the men.

'Southwell Park' was first published in Macmillan's Magazine in April, 1861, as 'Morley Park'; in Fifty Modern Poems, 1865, as 'Southwell Park'³ and still later in Life and Phantasy, 1889, as 'Bridegroom's Park', with minor changes. It is the tale of a bride confronted by the girl her bridegroom deserted previously. She drowns herself before the eyes of the newly wed couple.

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1. (December 12, 1857), p. 562.
 2. Life and Phantasy, (1889), p. 27. ll. 15-17.
 3. It also appeared as 'Southwell Park' in Songs, Ballads and Stories (1877).

The action, in four parts, moves from the highroad from where two village friends see the d~~e~~eranged woman flitting through the wood, to the artificial pool on the estate, where the bride and groom are in happy tête-à-tête, back to the wood again to hear the heart-broken musings of a wandering mind and onward to seven years later to hear the climax of the story from the same two friends who were on the highroad at the beginning. Full of possibilities for tragedy, the poem does not rise above Victorian melodrama, couched in rather stiff language:

Choose at will your path, my Queen,
Through this labyrinth of green,
As tho' 'twere life's perplexing scene.
To go in search of your missing book,
You careless girl? one other search? 1

and full of rhododendron bushes and 'heraldic brutes in stone' guarding ancestral gates. Insanity, suicide, swooning, a stillborn baby and death receive a mechanical treatment and the reader is not moved. Allingham is, unconsciously perhaps, trying to imitate 'Maud'. He captures drama in his events but the language is too

1. Life and Phantasy, (1889), p. 88, ll. 176-80.

stiff to allow the poem to be a good one.

'Mervaunee' first appeared in Songs, Ballads and Stories, in 1877 and again as 'The Lady of the Sea' in Irish Songs and Poems in 1887. It belongs to the Merrow tradition in Irish folk-lore and is but a variant of the universal legend of a mermaid who loves a mortal, lives with him as his lawful wife and is then released from the compact either unwittingly or intentionally by the husband. In this poem she marries a mortal and lives happily until she realizes she will outlive him by more than two hundred years. Tortured by thoughts of her approaching loneliness she allows her husband to give back to her the Cohuleen Druith, or little magical cap that will enable her to return to her home beneath the sea. As his life draws to a close, many years later, Dalachmar goes out with his two sons, in a ship, to find Mervaunee before he will give in to death. As he lies on deck, she comes, visible only to him. He goes into the sea with her and hand in hand they pass into Paradise.

The poem is in three parts. The first tells of young Dalachmar's life, pursuits, and his meeting with the Lady of the Sea. The description here suggests the voluptuousness of Marlowe, but only suggests because it

is not in Allingham's poetic nature to be fleshly. The second traces the married life of the pair and portrays beautifully the conflict of Mervaunee's love for Dalachmar and her growing apprehension of her fate. The third, in ballad measure, brings the tale to a swift, supernatural close.

The lines of the first two parts are rhymed but as Allingham says in a note¹ in Irish Songs and Poems, 'an interval of several lines is sometimes allowed, with definite metrical intention, between a rhyme and its fellow; but, with proper elocution, it is believed that no stitch will be dropt to the ear - which is the final judge of all metre'. The effect is certainly musical:

'Art thou at peace?' he said one day,
Kissing her lips. 'O Dalachmar!
Lov'st thou me yet? Thou dost, I know,
But still I'd have thee tell me so!'
I loved thee first ten years ago;
And now I love thee better far.
Nay, thou hast kept thy bloom of youth
All perfect.'
'Dalachmar, in sooth,
There is my sorrow!'²

1. (1887), p. 159, ll. 393-401.

2. All quotations are from version in Irish Songs and Poems, (1887 edition), p. 16-7.

The last four lines have the ring of a psalm and the lilt of the Gaelic cadence. More accurately the fourth and third lines from the bottom have the Biblical beauty and the last two that intonation one hears among the Welsh and Irish. The same plaintive music is heard in:

 But weary pass'd
Midwinter now. The barren sea
Roar'd, and the forest roar'd and he
Was lonely in his thoughts,¹

the plaintiveness that is always part of the sad sweet song of Gaelic literature, and which Allingham reproduces at times as well as Synge or Yeats. It is present again in the beautiful lullaby at the end of Part One, unfortunately too long for quotation here.

The ballad measure of Part Three, with its refrain,

(Hush a little for harp and rhyme:
This befell in olden time),

evokes very effectively the atmosphere of the supernatural but the 1887 version (and consequently the 1890 version) is marred by the intrusion of two stanzas of

1. p.9, ll. 132-5.

moralizing that are entirely out of place in this unearthly story. Allingham allows the ghosts of the re-united lovers to return to deliver a Parents'-Guide-to-Children address to their sons:

"Child! I left what I loved the most,
Feeling a fire within me burn,
For a day, an hour, - but not to return:
My sea-life was lost.

"Love brings all together at last.
Keep love safe, it will guard thee well.
We watch thee, - more I may not tell,
Till the years be past.¹

The first stanza, spoken by both at once, has point only if in the mouth of the mother alone; the second is a gaucherie unforgivable in an ethereal poem. It offends as a Christmas cracker motto would if introduced at a choral reading.

Yeats it is who sums up the real weakness of the piece in an article he wrote for the Providence Sunday Journal in 1888, entitled 'The Poet of Ballyshannon'.¹

This choosing and gathering of artistic moments, when he has a subject like The Lady of the Sea, is not enough. We are not satisfied. The mermaid bride of Dalachmar has too little of sea wonder and mystery. She is too modern and pathetic, too cheap. One

1. p. 22, ll. 555-62.

does not meet a mermaid every day,
and one does not like to be disappointed.¹

This is true. Mervaunee lacks hidden depths. She has neither the resourcefulness nor the passion of Yeats's Deirdre. She is too tame for a Celtic mermaid. The land of Cuchullan and Cormac and Brian Boru would be likely to have bred mermaids of more heroic manner than Mervaunee. It is this unshaded, unpassionate, low-powered characterization that causes many of Allingham's poems to just miss being great. It appears not to have made much of an impression because it is not once mentioned in Letters to William Allingham where fifty-seven correspondents are represented nor in Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham. The reviews referred to it merely in passing.

The last of the stories, 'Prince Brightkin', was first published in 1870 as an accompaniment to Richard Doyle's drawings in a book called In Fairyland. It is a simple little tale of a Fairy Prince wooing in disguise and winning a Fairy Princess. In spite of the description

1. Reprinted in Yeats's Letters to the New Island, (1934), p. 167.

of elfin activities - teaching wild snails their paces, squeezing dew from flowers for wine etc.; and the highly amusing inventory of the Princess's suitors, the poem has not the consistent charm of the shorter fairy pieces. There is none of the magical appeal of 'The Lepracaun', in which the mere idea of a fairy shoe-maker, 'a span and a quarter in height', hammering on little shoes, upon the rath, yellow buntings 'sighing' round him, is enough to gain complete surrender from a child, before he is further bewitched by the skipping rhythms of,

 'Big boots a-hunting,
 Sandals in the hall,
White for a wedding-feast,
 Pink for a ball.
This way, that way,
 So we make a shoe;
Getting rich every stitch,
 Tick-tack too!' ¹

Allingham has often been praised for his ability to draw children to his verses by his use of folklore. His reputation for this rests on a very few but excellent poems, namely, 'The Fairies', 'The Lepracaun', 'The Fairy King' and 'Fairy Hill'. 'Two Fairies in a Garden', a

1. Irish Songs and Poems, (1887), p. 148, ll. 30-7.

convincing gossip between a Night Fairy, on his way to stay till dark in the

dim and deep snow-palace
Of the closest lily chalice

and a Day Fairy going to warm himself 'in a thick red tulip's core', is a little too difficult for children with its talk of federalism and universal charity and its inventory of strange herbs.

In these poems, Allingham reveals his kinship with the fairy tradition in English poetry when he uses the crusty, revengeful little men of 'The Fairies' who steal Bridget and watch over her when she dies, like the dwarfs over Snow White, and the wrinkled, wizened, bearded elf of 'The Lepracaun' with his 'Humphs' and snuff-throwing, all of whom belong to the Celtic tradition of pixies and pookas. He also delineates the gentler fairies of the romantic tradition, guardian fays who watch over babies in their cradles, follow them through life and finally dance on Fairy Hill in honour of their weddings. However, Allingham is no mere imitator, and although there is some aping of Shakespeare in 'Two Fairies in a Garden' and 'Prince Brightkin', he achieves originality by pruning his material to a shape

most appealing to children. Shakespeare uses his fairies as counter-point to a theme of love and marriage and as deliverers of philosophic messages; Spenser turns his into allegorical figures of human size; Drayton and Herrick leave them elves but use them for parody. Allingham is closer to Hans Anderson and Grimm, without their horrific thrills, in turning to account the huge capacity for wonder in a child.

In contrast to the narrative poems are the scores of little songs, some of which are among the best lyrics of the century. They are happy or sad songs on Allingham's favourite themes of the open country in all seasons, the beauty of Irish girls, the joy and the bitterness of love; they echo the voices of birds, paint in words the colour and shape of flowers, indulge their author's whimsical desire to couple poets with the flowers he thinks appropriate to them, recall the legends of witches and banshees, muse dreamily on what the voices of the sea and the wind tell, view death with detachment, sin with horror and assert a personal faith in a Heaven and a loving God. Allingham's subject matter is not strikingly original in these lyrics.

He is not the poet of the unusual point of view, of passion or of unabashed frankness. It is the vitality and variety of his rhythms and rhymes, the sweetness of his melodies and the detailed beauty of his nature scenes that make his songs memorable and worthy of notice. Among the best are, in my opinion, 'Across the Sea', 'Oh, were my love a country lass', 'The Lover and the Birds', 'The Mowers', 'The Windlass', 'The Ruined Chapel', 'Cross-Examination', 'Mea Culpa', 'Abbey Assaroe', 'The Maids of Elfin-Mere', 'Death Deposed', 'The Witch Bride', 'The Fairies', 'The Lepracaun' and 'Homeward Bound'.

These songs bring out many of the best things in Allingham: his clarity, unaffectedness, his joy in the outdoors, and his un-erring ear. A good example is the following stanza from 'The Mowers'.

The noon-tide brings its welcome rest
Our toil-wet brows to dry;
Anew with merry stave and jest
The shrieking hone we ply.
White falls the brook from steep to steep
Among the purple heather, -
A scythe-sweep, and a scythe-sweep,
We mow the dale together.¹

1. Songs, Ballads and Stories, p. 207, ll. 25-32.

It captures marvellously well the uniform swish-swish of blades in grass and suggests the graceful dipping motion of the mowers at their work, gondoliers of the meadows. Again I am reminded of Breughel. The same beauty of refrain is heard in 'The Maids of Elfin-Mere.'

Years ago and years ago;
And the tall reeds sigh as the wind doth blow.

Only here the refrain is part of that misty, supernatural atmosphere Allingham knows so well how to create. It is not the story that haunts; it is quite simple and ruined when narrated in prose. Three damsels clothed in white come to a village spinning room every night and leave on the dot of eleven. The pastor's son falls in love with them and one night, in order to keep them longer, he puts the clock back. After they leave on the false hour they are never seen again. Lamentings are heard by the shore that night and next morning three stains of red are seen on the surface of the river. The pastor's son dies of a broken heart. What one carries in the memory is the acute sweetness of lines achieved by subtle rhyming, and a slight use of counterpoint in the fourth line

'Twas when the spinning-room was here,
There came three Damsels clothed in white,
With their spindles every night;
Two and one, and Three fair Maidens,
Spinning to a pulsing cadence,
Singing songs of Elfin-Mere;
Till the eleventh hour was toll'd
Then departed through the wold.

Years ago, and years ago;
And the tall reeds sigh as the wind doth blow.¹

There is mezzotinting also that is very effective. The poem surely makes good Allingham's assertion,

Language has music in it; from this Poetry (Verse-Poetry is always meant) derives its form and quality. It is the most melodious arrangement of language. The proportionality necessary for this end excites mystically a desire for proportionality in all other respects, reaching inward to the very spirit of² the thought which is to be expressed.

It also shows that Allingham's revisions are not always off the target. 'The Maidens of the Mere', the title given to the earlier version in the 1850 volume, is inferior to the revised, 'The Maids of Elfin-Mere' in the 1855 volume just quoted. The lovely refrain is missing, with its clever use of the vowel 'O' to suggest length of time and a blowing wind; and the imagery is

1. The Music-Master ... two series Day and Night Songs, p. 202.

2. Preface to Nightingale Valley, (1860), p. vi-vii.

not as interesting.

Very calm and sweet they were,
is not as descriptive as

Three white lilies tall and clear,
and

Spinning to a pulsing cadence
Came and sat three fairest maidens,
is far less subtle than the re-arranged,

Two and one and Three Fair Maidens,
Spinning to a pulsing cadence,¹

which by its gliding motion suggests the graceful, lily-quality of their movements.

'The Lover and the Birds' has received unjust neglect. Of twelve treasuries and anthologies of Irish verse that I have checked, only two include it: Lennox Robinson's, A Golden Treasury of Irish Verse² and William Butler Yeats's Sixteen Poems.³ The opening stanza gives the gist of the poem as well as showing the classic purity of the verse.

1. The Music-Master ... Day and Night Songs, (1855), p.202.

2. (London, 1925).

3. (Dundrum, 1905), Dun Emer Press.

Within a budding grove,
In April's ear sang every bird his best.
But not a song to pleasure my unrest,
Or touch the tears unwept of bitter love.
Some spake, methought, with pity, some as if in jest.
To every word
Of every word
I listen'd, and replied as it behove.¹

Not until the robin has sung to break down his bitterness does the lover have 'most comforting and gentle thoughts'. The sound peculiar to each bird is produced brilliantly by onomatopoeia with a difference. Allingham departs from the more usual method of forming words from the sounds, usually a word for each sound, as in Tennyson's 'clinking latch' or 'sparrow's chirrup' and has instead onomatopoeia of conversation, that of the shrill chaffinch, the jeering blackbird, etc., etc.

Scream'd Chaffinch, 'Sweet, sweet, sweet!
Pretty lovey, come and meet me here!'

or

'And what'll he do? What'll he do!' scoff'd
The Blackbird, standing in an ancient thorn,

or

1. Songs, Ballads and Stories, p. 27, ll. 1-8.

Worse mock'd the Thrush, 'Die! Die!
O could he do it? could he do it? Nay!
Be quick! be quick! Here, here, here!' (went
his lay)
'Take heed! take heed!' then, 'Why? why?
why? why? why?
See-ee now! See-ee now!' (he drawl'd) 'Back!
back! back. R-r-r-run away!' ¹

The economy of words, the lack of gush and the spirited pace of the conversation combine to produce a quick-witted lyric that has echoes of Elizabethan verse makers. The inspiration here is a literary one but it is one so thoroughly blended with Allingham's genuine love of nature, that the old trick of using birds and humans in dialogue together becomes a legerdemain in his hands.

Lying in a kind of no-man's land between songs, ballads and stories, 'Invitation to a Painter' is a kind of come-all-ye that carries the reader through Western Ireland on the fleet feet of swinging trochees - the trochees of 'Locksley Hall' - and leaves him breathless from the bracing tour. The poem is an invitation to a friend to leave London, the

1. Ibid., p. 28, ll. 25-9.

boundless jail of
bricks and gas,
Weary purgatorial flagstones, dreary parks of
burnt-up grass,¹

and come to Ireland to paint landscapes and conversation pieces against her background. Allingham's eye for colour, his sensitivity to every sight and sound of the Irish countryside are evident in the vivid descriptions. He treats his readers to a sight of the calm blue of Donegal Bay and the 'mighty billows rolling in from Newfoundland'; to 'yellow sand drifts of fantastic shapes'; 'sea fowl armies,' 'glittering sprats in millions' being loaded into boats while the last splashes of red stain the evening sky; the carts and horses waiting on the shore, house lights seen in the distance behind them, 'to 'travel through the night' to city markets;' and to glorious countryside where

... the turf swells thick-embroider'd with
the fragrant purple thyme,
Where, in plots of speckled orchis, poet larks
begin their rhyme,
Honey'd galium wafts an invitation to the
gipsy bees,
Rabbits' doorways wear for garlands azure
tufts of wild heartsease,

1. Ibid., p. 121, ll. 1-2.

Paths of sward around the hillocks, dipping into
ferny dells,
Show you heaps of childhood's treasure - twisted,
vary-tinted shells
Lapt in moss and blossoms, empty, and forgetful
of the wave.
Ha! a creature scouring nimbly, hops at once
into his cave;
Brother Coney sits regardant, - wink an eye,
and where is he?¹

The caressing care with which Allingham tints his hills and flowers, the bivouacing of rabbits, the peace and calm of the heathered dales, all help to produce the serenity of Daudet's Lettres de Mon Moulin. The visit to an Irish wake is excellent for its straightforward observation; so too the journey to the Holy Well and the description of the eel-fishery on the Erne. The poem was well received by the critics on its first appearance in Fifty Modern Poems, 1865, and deserved to be. Although it was included in Songs, Ballads and Stories in 1877, with some changes, the section on the wake was not added until the 1887 version in Irish Songs and Poems.

The ballads are, almost all, uniformly good and cry out to be edited separately with a thorough introduction and careful annotation. Only some of the

1. Ibid., p. 125, ll. 59-67.

best can be examined here and for the purpose of appraisal it seems best to divide them into three groups: the gay, come-live-with-me-and-be-my-love songs of wry-humoured Irishmen, like 'Lovely Mary Donnelley', 'The Milkmaid', 'Kate o' Belashanny', 'Kitty O'Hea' and 'Among the Heather'; the uncanny, unearthly ones like 'The Abbot of Inisfalen', 'The Ballad of Squire Curtis' and 'St. Margaret's Eve'; and the tragedies of love betrayed or blighted by death, of women fallen and crimes committed in jealousy, as in 'The Girl's Lamentation', 'The Nobleman's Wedding', 'Lady Alice' and 'Kostas'. 'The Dirty Old Man', 'King Henry's Hunt' and 'The Winding Banks of Erne', all excellent, must be classified separately as the quaint, the historical and the nostalgic, respectively. Allingham had some of these ballads printed on long sheets of blue paper, circulated them in the neighbourhood and thus heard them sung at cottage doors as he passed, on his walks.¹ He said, in the Preface to the 1855 volume:

1. Letters of D.G.R. to W.A., (Introduction), p. xxiii.

Five of the songs or ballads, The Milkmaid, The Girl's Lamentation, Lovely Mary Donnelly, Nanny's Sailor Lad and The Nobleman's Wedding have already had an Irish circulation as 'ha'penny ballads,' and the first three were written for this purpose... 1

Unfortunately none of these ballad sheets survives.

The first group is distinguished by the artless yet instinctively poetic speech of the Irish suitors, which Allingham has caught so well and the dancing, swaying rhythm of the lines which show that he knew how to put into verse in English the inflections of Irish voices. 'Kate o' Belashanny' is a good example of this:

One summer day the banks were gay,
The Erne in sunshine glancin' there,
The big cascade its music play'd
And set the salmon dancin' there.
Along the green my Joy was seen;
Some goddess bright I thought her there;
The fishes, too, swam close, to view
Her image in the water there.
From top to toe, where'er you go,
The loveliest girl of any, O, -
Ochone! your mind I find unkind, 2
Sweet Kate o' Belashanny, O!'

Similarly ingenuous love-talk and apt similes are heard in 'Among the Heather' and 'Kitty O'Hea,' and the suitors

1. p. vii.

2. Irish Songs and Poems, (1887), p. 37, ll. 13-24.

are neither mealy-mouthed nor identical. Kate's has tried bravado to gain his suit, threatening to jump in with the salmon; Molly's tries psychology and wins; Kitty's also, whose swerves from cajolery to self-pity and from self-pity to cocky indifference can only be conveyed by full quotation:

I

Now, Kitty O'Hea, darling jewel,
I wish you'd consider my case!
O, who could believe you're so cruel
To look in that beautiful face?
Let roses be jealous, - no matter!
The sunshine's in love with your cheek;
What singing-bird wouldn't I flatter
To say it's her voice when you speak?
Kitty O'Hea, O'Hea,
Kitty, give ear to my song.
Kitty O'Hea, O'Hea,
Kitty, I'm courting you long.

II

My thoughts I can never keep steady,
No more nor a man in a dream,
They caper like straws in an eddy
In place of pursuing the stream.
Amusement or meat I don't care for,
I moan like a cow gone astray;
Myself knows the why and the wherefore, -
I'm thinking of Kitty O'Hea.
Kitty O'Hea, O'Hea, etc.

III

I never objected, in reason,
To bear with a slight or a scoff,
But snow isn't always in season,
And Lent isn't very far off.
Shrove-Tuesday's the time for to shake one,
And single I'll not pass the day,
Young, old, maid or widow, I'll take one, -
So mind yourself, Kitty O'Hea!
Kitty O'Hea, O'Hea,
Kitty, give heed to my song.
Kitty O'Hea, O'Hea,
Kitty, I'm courting too long! ¹

This ditty, more than others, not only proves its author's flair for this kind of writing but also saves him from the pricks of unkind critics who may charge him with doing no more than improving old versions of ballads (no mean task in any case). Allingham's originality is unquestionable as his own testimony to 'Kitty O'Hea' bears out,

The tune of this song I picked up in Ireland many years ago, also its refrain, or something like it. Of other words no trace remains in my memory, if I ever heard them.²

The grim ballads are equally good. 'The Girl's Lamentation' and 'Kostas' are two of the best.

1. Ibid., pp. 102-03.

2. Ibid., (Notes), p. 161.

The former is original except for some part of the first three verses which he picked up from a singing peasant boy in Ballyshannon,¹ and displays Allingham's power to depict the turning of grapes to ashes and the terrible wormwood of rueing too late. It is the old story told particularly well in the stark manner of folk ballads but with inflections peculiar to Irish voices and with the picturesque turn of speech that the Irish never lose in joy or in sorrow. Any of the stanzas will show this:

For a maid again I can never be,
Till the red rose blooms on the willow tree.
Of such a trouble I've heard them tell
And now I know what it means full well.

.....

And what, O what will my mother say?
She'll wish her daughter was in the clay.
My father will curse me to my face;
The neighbours will know of my black disgrace.²

'Kostas' is Romaic, rather than Irish and has the terseness essential for good ballad poetry. Death

1. Ibid., (Notes), p. 162.

2. Ibid., p. 115, ll. 21-4; 29-32.

overtakes the bride on her wedding day and the groom arriving to find her grave being dug, bids the Sacristan dig it wide enough for two.

He drew his golden-hilted sword,
He plunged it in his breast;
And there the young betrothèd lie
Side by side at rest.¹

What strikes one after reading Allingham's ballads is his invariable achievement of drama, which he fails so often to produce in other poems.

The ballads of the supernatural are also excellent, in their way. 'The Banshee' and 'The Abbot of Innisfalen' are outstanding. The former, 'a ballad of Ancient Ireland', shows Allingham afoot in the realms of old Celtic literature, and most happily afoot there:

'Heard'st thou over the Fortress wild geese
flying and crying?
Was it a gray wolf's howl? wind in the
forest sighing?
Wail from the sea as of wreck? Hast heard it,
Comrade?' - 'Not so.
Here, all still as the grave, above, around,
and below.'²

Here is a new Allingham, the Gaelic Allingham who gains the praise of the Young Irelanders in the Nation's review

1. Songs, Ballads and Stories, p. 196, ll. 45-8.

2. Irish Songs and Poems, p. 145, ll. 1-4.

of Irish Songs and Poems for cleverly catching up and adopting the peculiar style and phraseology of the old Celtic bards; for using English that is not the English of English writers but has the stamp and seal of the Gaelic tongue set on every line and stanza; for metre that is Gaelic and words that seem to be far away echoes of the Gaelic anthology of other days.¹ The whole poem gives back to a later age the special superstitions, the heart-bursting nationalism, the fearlessness and the savagery of the early kings and warriors of Ireland. The language is heart-stopping in its vehement, imaged frugality. No word is wasted:

'Give me my helmet and sword. Whale-tusk,
gold-wrought, I clutch thee!
Blade, Flesh-Biter, fail me not this time!
Yea, when I touch thee,
Shivers of joy run through me. Sing aloud as I
swing thee!
Glut of enemies' blood, meseemeth, to-day shall
bring thee.'²

'The Abbot of Inisfalen', based on an old Killarney legend, is one of the most beautiful poems he has written. An Abbot goes out in the early morning to

1. (January 7, 1888), p. 7.

2. Irish Songs and Poems, p. 146, ll. 25-8.

pray. When he returns to the Abbey he sees strange faces and learns that two hundred years have passed away. He asks for absolution, dies and is buried, 'where lake and green sward meet'. The atmosphere that Allingham conjures up is mystic and as soothing as pearl. Four colours only appear in the poem: the green of the leaves under which the Abbot goes forth to pray, the red of the dawn waxing clear, the white of the small bird singing and the purple of the peaks of Killarney, which, used so sparingly, contribute effective contrasts and invite symbolic interpretation. The atmosphere of the whole is maintained by harmonious repetition as in,

He heard a small bird singing, and O but
it sung sweet!
It sung upon a holly-bush, this little
snow-white bird;
A song so full of gladness he never before had heard.
It sung upon a hazel, it sung upon a thorn;
He had never heard such music since the hour
that he was born.
It sung upon a sycamore, it sung upon a briar;
To follow the song and hearken this Abbot
could never tire.¹

The unhackneyed sweetness of lines two and three is the

1. Ibid., p. 105, ll. 18-24.

kind of melody that makes the poem so attractive. The blitheness of the rhythm never becomes trivial because it is varied by inflections of unaffected wonder and joy. The words and rhythms of Irish speech are fitted perfectly into English to make a truly Irish poem in English.

An Irish poem of another kind, 'The Winding Banks of Erne', an emigrant's farewell to his beloved Belashanny, points yet again to Allingham's versatility in ballad writing. The swing of the lines, the charm of Irish place names - Kildoney, Coolmore, Beleek, Breesie Hill, Coolnargit - and the rhymes chosen to go with them, the sentiment without the sentimentality and the pretty pictures, all contribute to the nostalgic appeal of this unsophisticated song.

'The Dirty Old Man', yet another ballad with a difference, is one of Allingham's best. It was first printed in Household Words for January 8, 1853, and used by Dickens, so Allingham believed, as the source of the Miss Havisham story in Great Expectations. Perhaps this was so but the poem would not have been the sole source as the main facts of the case were in circulation¹ at the

1. See Fraser, R., 'A Charles Dickens Original', Nineteenth Century Fiction, (March, 1955), pp. 301-07.

time. It was a memorable poem, in almost minuet time and full of restrained humour and delightful details. One line is a masterpiece of wit.

'Twas a Spiders' Elysium from cellar to roof.

One final ballad must be praised before going on to other things - 'King Henry's Hunt'. Briefly the story is that Henry the Eighth is out hunting with his friends and puzzles them exceedingly by refusing to mount his horse. Frowning and scowling he sits on a felled oak. A cannon shot is heard. He leaps to his feet and goes, immediately, with roaring joviality, to the hunt. The cannon was the signal that Anne Boleyn's head had fallen. Tomorrow Henry will become Jane Seymour's devouring bridegroom. What Allingham accomplishes here is a paradoxical wild comedy that brings home with added force the culpable savagery of this woman-eater, the gliaour of Hampton Court. He uses the trappings of melodrama to make Henry ridiculous. His horse is a 'pawing' horse. Henry pulls his girdle, twitches his beard, knits his brows, bites his lips and roars like a bull. He is nailed to our memory by the following stanza, wonderful in spite of the dubious rhyme, 'leavy'.

King Harry rode a mighty horse,
His Grace being broad and heavy.
And like a stormy wind he crash'd¹
Through copse and thicket leavy.

The closing stanza blots out the sight of the bloody axe by interjecting the pleasant picture of Epping Forest, leaving the reader to ponder on the contradictions of life: the comedy in wickedness, beauty in the midst of horror and the mysteries of laughter and pain. This poetic tour de force has been given scant attention by the critics.

Ballad writing was very much in vogue in the nineteenth century, among poets both Irish and English, Mangan, Ferguson and Davis writing theirs in a spirit of deep love for Ireland; Rossetti, Swinburne and Morris following in theirs the Pre-Raphaelite dream of revitalizing poetry and art. Allingham, very much in the swim, wrote in the tradition of the folk ballad, baldly, dramatically. His ballads belong with the bitter and gay songs that were sung to the stamping of feet far back in time; those of Rossetti, Morris and Swinburne with the sophisticated literary ballads in the tradition of Coleridge and Keats. 'Sister Helen,'

1. Songs, Ballads and Stories, p. 193, ll. 49-52.

'Troy Town', 'Faustine' and 'The Eve of Crecy', beautiful though they are, have an artificiality and lushness of imagery that one does not associate with ballads. As ballads they are over-dressed, over-stated and conscious of their beauty, tapestries in words rather than heartfelt songs. Rossetti's often leave nothing to the imagination as a glance at his inexcusably long 'Rose Mary' will show; Allingham's, by their brevity do not rob the reader of the thrill of suggestion. Allingham's inspiration, although not exclusively Irish, is closer to the ballad poetry of Ferguson's 'Pastheen Finn', 'Cashel of Munster' and 'The Burial of King Cormac' and is more versatile because he handles equally well, legends and stories English, Irish and Greek. Their originality is the more striking in the face of his aptness to be influenced by other poets. He steers his own course in balladry, copies no one and initiates his own individual minstrelsy and succeeds, as he does in no other genre, in maintaining an undeviating excellence.

It is not surprising that his ballads are so different from Rossetti's for instance, because he was not an unqualified admirer of Pre-Raphaelitism and was

largely unaffected by his association with its adherents. In later life he flatly denied their having had any influence on his poetry:

I saw lately in a Biographical Dictionary that at an early age I came under the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites: a mistake: I wrote and published my first volume (in the same style, as far as it went as my subsequent poems) in 1850 before I ever heard of Pre-Raphaelitism, if indeed it existed then. I have never joined myself to any clique or party whatever but I grew acquainted later with most of the so-called Pre-Raphaelites and personally intimate with some of them.¹

Allingham was unconsciously prevaricating. Pre-Raphaelitism did exist in 1850 and he certainly knew the Rossettis in July 1850.² Whether he knew them or not in April 1850, he must have known something about the uproar caused by the Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the April exhibitions of that year. If the news had not reached him in Ballyshannon he would have heard it from his friends when he was in London in July. Poor health

1. Unpublished MS., in New York Public Library. Letter to D.J. O'Donoghue answering request for facts for his Poets of Ireland: a Biographical Dictionary. Published in three parts, 1892-93. Letter undated but letter heading 'Eldon House' puts it after Dec. 1888 when the Allinghams settled in Eldon House, Lyndhurst Rd., Hampstead.

2. See Diary, Entry, Friday, July 19, p. 58.

probably made him forgetful in 1889 and a little querulous about Pre-Raphaelite influence on his poetry which cannot be entirely discounted when one reads 'Half-Waking' or the revised 'Maids of Elfin-Mere'.

His opinions of other poets of the period throw much light on his own methods in poetry.

Rossetti's verse obviously irritated him

It is plain that the simple, the natural, the naïve are merely insipid in his mouth; he must have strong savours, in art, in literature and in life. Colours, forms, sensations are required to be pungent, mordant.¹ [Examples of R's tastes in poetry follow.]

Swinburne² he thought, 'elaborated, so violently emphatic, so really cold-blooded,' showing a great display of literary power to no result.

Even the more conventional poets did not tempt him to imitation. Clough's work he found often 'too truthful to be good as art, resembling rather a coloured photograph than a picture';³ Arnold's 'Thrysis' was too artificial and not in the spirit of the age.⁴

1. Diary, pp. 162 - 63.

2. Ibid., p. 143.

3. Ibid., p. 143.

4. Ibid., p. 288.

and Patmore was 'deranged on the subject of High Finish in Poetry'.¹

On the whole his lyric poetry is romantic without the egotism of Keats, Shelley and Byron. It is closer in spirit and expression to Wordsworth and Tennyson without being unduly imitative. Occasionally he captures the peculiar animation of Elizabethan song and the cynicism of seventeenth century love poetry. Occasionally too he anticipates the pertinent brevity of Housman and the Gaelic flavour of Yeats. Like other Romantics he wrote a long narrative but showed his individuality by avoiding 'medievalism' and 'the golden past' and choosing his subject out of the unromantic present. Like them too he was concerned with the mysteries of life, the nature of things but he lacked the intellectual power to make good poetry out of ideas. He was the poet of small things and at his best created fine lyric poetry out of them. Unfortunately he could not maintain a uniformly high standard, originality, banality, courageous innovation and clever,

1. Unpublished MS., Queen's University, Belfast, Letter to Henry Sutton, (November 8, 1850).

lifeless imitation mingling in his work, and as a result he found his reputation diminishing. The pronouncement in the Athenaeum¹ in 1877, that there had been no increase in poetic power was true of the lyrics but not of the narrative and dramatic verse as a thorough examination of 'Mervaunee' and Laurence Bloomfield by the critics would have shown. Nevertheless, it was undeniable that in 1877 the reviewers could add nothing to what they had already said about 'the poet of Ballyshannon'.

When one considers that this is the poet Yeats championed thus:

It is time for us over here to claim him
as our own, and give him his due place
among our sacred poets; to range his
books beside Davis, and Mangan, and
Ferguson; for he, too, sang of Irish
scenes and Irish faces; ²

to Katherine Tynan in 1895,

Now that Christina Rossetti is dead,
you have no woman rival: You,
Ferguson and Allingham are, I
think, the Irish poets who have done
the largest quantity of fine work; ³

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1. See above, p. 23.
 2. United Ireland, (December 12, 1891), p. 5.
 3. Wade, A., Letters of W.B. Yeats, (1954), p. 253.

and to Mrs. Allingham in 1904 to ask her permission to make a small selection of her husband's poems for a special publication by the Dun Emer Press,

I have the greatest possible admiration for Mr. Allingham's poetry. I am sometimes inclined to believe that he was my own master in Irish verse, starting me in the way I have gone whether for good or evil;¹

that Tennyson praised to the skies, whose ballads were translated into German by Dr. Julius Rodenberg and whose 'Four Ducks on a Pond' was presented to his students in Tokyo by Lafcadio Hearn as 'naked poetry,' 'great poetry' and 'very much resembling in quality the spirit of Japanese poetry,'² one wonders why he failed to develop the full power of his talent.

There were a number of causes for his failure. His books did not sell, either because of the unpredictableness of the book trade, too much competition from other writers³ or Allingham's extraordinary lack of self-

1. Ibid., p. 446.

2. Bisland, E., Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn, (1906), Vol. II, Appendix, p. 521.

3. Particularly from Tennyson and Browning in 1850, 1855 and 1864 with In Memoriam, Maud and Enoch Arden; Christmas Eve and Easter Day, Men and Women and Dramatis Personae.

criticism (all the more extraordinary in one acknowledged to be a capable critic of other men's work) in publishing paltry poems alongside of good ones and his dreary habit of recombining groups of old poems in different editions so that no new volume was really new; or all three causes together.

Another cause lay in his own personality. In one sense, he lacked a constant mind. He tried to do too many things. He wanted to be a great poet and he wanted, perhaps unconsciously, to be one of and with the highest literary circles of his day. His social engagement books, if he had any, would be a sensational find for scholars. The Diary gave records of hours, weeks, months spent in the company of the most famous writers and poets of the day, who must have confused him by their conflicting suggestions

'Keep to lyrics,' says one (Patmore);
'Hold by the Tale,' says another (Clough);
my own feeling is with the former at
present.¹

so that it was difficult for him to achieve that isolation of the spirit and imagination that is necessary for

1. Letters to W.A., (Letter to Woolner, January 8, 1851), p. 286.

great poetry. In order to be a great poet one need not live apart from others. Witness Farringford with its teeming life of babies and literary friends. Allingham, however, spent so much time writing to, talking to, visiting and recording conversations with so many people that his poetic faculty must have suffered from the frequent crowding it received from his Boswellian faculty. One cannot be a Johnson and a Boswell at the same time. Neither can one be a great poet and an almost professional collector of friendships. Without his ardently cultivated friendships he would have been a less interesting man; with them he was a lesser poet because he let them take up too much of his time.

His tendency to hero worship probably bred a sense of inferiority in him as he drew closer to lions like Tennyson and to writers far more popular with the public than he himself was. Depressed by the apathy of the public, worried about money and further divided by Carlyle's nagging him to write Irish history he seemed unable to collect himself and continued to shop round, writing things unsuitable to his genius in order to lift the economic burden by trying to sell what sold for others.

He always had money worries as his own letters and those of his friends showed. At his death, his estate was a mere £269. 16s. 6d.¹ All these things, together with his struggle to make up for his lack of university education by serious and deep reading; his jauntings hither and yon in the interests of Her Majesty's Customs; his two attempts and failures to settle in London; his longing for marriage and a home; and his uncongenial task of editing Fraser's for four years contributed to his indecisiveness and so filled his days and his mind, that the wonder is he wrote as much and as well as he did.

However, the fate of Laurence Bloomfield was perhaps the greatest cause of his loss of ambition and his ultimate failure to bring his poetry to full growth. It will now be examined in detail, as a turning point in his career.

1. Died November 18, 1889. See will Somerset House.

II

LAURENCE BLOOMFIELD: ITS PUBLICATION AND RECEPTION

Allingham's longest poem, Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland, was the most crucial in his career because its cool reception by the public and its small sales turned the author away from a genre in which he showed powerful potentialities, and caused him to scatter his talents so that he never did reassemble them. Instead, he continued to fill new volumes with the contents of old ones, occasionally attempted poems flavoured with the philosophy and theology of the age, distinguished only by their mediocrity, and in general so dissipated his powers that his work was everything by turns and nothing long. Had Laurence Bloomfield succeeded, it seems likely that Allingham would have written Irish history in verse, outdistanced Ferguson's Lays of the Western Gael and perhaps crowned his efforts with an Irish epic. As it was he never rallied from the blow to his pride, his hopes of profit and, very probably, of fame, and Laurence Bloomfield was left to lie among the world's forgotten poems.

It was a work of five thousand rhymed couplets, in twelve chapters, which outlined and dramatized the state of Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century, and gave the Tenant-Landlord Question chief emphasis. The story, straightforward, almost documentary, traces the course of a young landlord, Laurence Bloomfield, rising to his responsibilities by turning his back on the attractions of Absenteeism and staying home to help his tenants by fighting with steady, unviolent determination the evils of Insecurity of Tenure. He first crosses swords with Landlordism when he champions the Doran family, faced with eviction, against the shrewd, ruthless land-agent, James Pigot, who is eventually ambushed and shot by lawless Ribbonmen. Under Bloomfield's wise direction his estates and his tenants prosper and the poem ends on a note of high hope for the future. The slim plot is accompanied by vivid portraits of landlords, grim details of Irish hovels and unkempt Irish towns, noisy, vital descriptions of a horse-fair and a Ribbon meeting, soft pastorals glowing with scarlet-berried hawthorn, wild rose, rowan and woodbine, and Irish girls beetling laundry down by the brook or dancing on the green. The poem reveals a political Allingham, a national

Allingham - not national, however, in a way to please Young Irishmen or Fenians - an Allingham with new resources for satire, pastoral and epic, resources left undeveloped by his own withdrawal. To understand that withdrawal the reader must learn the history of the poem's creation, growth and publication, a history that not only helps to explain the poet himself but also is a commentary on the heart-breaking alternations of the lives of literary men.

The poem was first mentioned in a letter to Gabriel Rossetti, dated March 12, 1860:

I am doing something occasionally at a poem on Irish matters, to have two thousand lines or so, and can see my way through it. One part out of three is done. But alas! when all's done, who will like it? Think of the Landlord and Tenant Question in flat decasyllables! Did you ever hear of the Irish coaster that was hailed, 'Smack ahoy! what's your cargo?' 'Timber and fruit!' 'What sort?' 'Besoms and potatoes!' I fear my poem will no better fulfil expectations! ¹

1. Letters of D.G.R. to W.A., p. 230.

Nearly two years later he published it in Fraser's, in twelve parts, running from November 1862 to November 1863, missing only October 1863. An entry in the Diary for October 22, 1863, displays the same lack of confidence, the defeatist air of the letter to Rossetti:

I receive proof from Fraser's Mag. of the twelfth and last chapter of L.Bloomfield. Eight of the chapters I have written month by month (missing one month) for the magazine. So fate would have it. It's not properly compacted as to plan, and never will be now. But with indefinite time at command I should most probably, as so often before, have tried a dozen different shapes and ended by throwing the thing aside. It has good work in it here and there.

A story in 5000 lines,
Where Homer's epic fervour shines,
Philosophy like Plato's --
Alas, I sing of Paddies, Priests,
And Pigs, those unromantic beasts,
Policemen and Potatoes! ¹

Why, 'Alas! '? Perhaps he felt that his every-day, contemporary subject matter was too far removed from the lofty ideals of Matthew Arnold's 1853 Preface, which defended so ably the past as a subject for poetry and not likely to interest a public nurtured on Keats and

1. pp. 90 - 1.

Shelley and grown used to Medieval Knights, Italian Renaissance noblemen, Sohrabs, Rustums and Philip Van Arteveldes. He found himself somewhat in the position of Thackeray quarrelling with the art of Dickens as unrealistic and advocating that a coat should be called a coat and a poker a poker,

... and must be nothing else according to my ethics, not an embroidered tunic, nor a great red-hot instrument like the Pantomime weapon.¹

Allingham's hesitancy and fear of going against the prevailing wind are plainly seen at the beginning of Chapter XI:

Virgil, Tom Tusser after him, have sung
The rules of farming with melodious tongue;
And shall my Muse make venture? not afraid,
If need there were, to call a spade a spade.
Too oft, neglecting fashion, she incurs
The public's coldness and the publisher's;²

and his realization of the difficulty of writing realistic verse at the beginning of Chapter X:

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1. Ray, G., Thackeray Letters and Papers, (1945), Vol. II, p. 773.
 2. Laurence Bloomfield, (1864), p. 223, ll. 1-6. All quotations will be from the 1864 edition unless otherwise stated.

Alas, you count me a prosaic bard,
Good reader! Think what Horace says, how hard
It is to sing of every-day affairs.
More willingly by far the minstrel dares
Three flaming dragons than a single pig;
Knights in full armour, giants church-tower big,
Are easy folk to handle, by the side
Of one policeman.¹

The nature of his difficulty is not quite clear. It should be easier to describe a familiar pig or policeman than an unfamiliar dragon or knight. To make them acceptable to an age addicted to romance was another matter and presumably what he meant. Yet the Victorians, still very fond of their Guineveres and Galahads, were flexible enough to welcome less glamorous figures like Tennyson's country folk and Clough's vacationing Oxford undergraduates and ought to have been able to accept Irish peasants as well. Realizing, no doubt, that hesitation was not likely to solve his problems since it is impossible, in any age, to gauge beforehand the reactions of the professional critics and the reading public, he called on Chaucer to 'afford(his)verse a little touch of aid' and took the plunge. In so doing he allied

1. p. 199, ll. 1 - 8.

himself with the reviews¹ which deplored the avoidance of contemporary subjects in poetry, considered anachronistic the treatment of Victorian current events and problems against Medieval or Renaissance backgrounds, squirmed under the weight of second-hand Keatsian poetry thrust upon them and asked for less ornament and more humanity in literature; and also with poets like Clough, Patmore, the Tennyson of Maud and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who, although she suffered in other respects, from the broadsides of critics², ironically enough shared their concern for the state of English Poetry and in Aurora Leigh made a spirited plea for verse that should vibrate with the activity of the age in which it was written:

The critics say that epics have died out
With Agememnon and the goat-nursed gods;
I'll not believe it ...

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1. See 'The State of English Poetry', Quarterly, (July, 1873), pp. 1-40; 'Modern Light Literature - Poetry', Blackwood's, (February, 1856), pp. 125-38; 'Alexander Smith and Alexander Pope', Fraser's, (October, 1853), pp. 452-66; 'New Poets', Edinburgh, (October, 1856), pp. 337-62; review of Longfellow's 'Golden Legend', Athenaeum, (December 6, 1851), p.1303.
 2. See 'Aurora Leigh', Blackwood's, (January, 1857), pp.23-41. Aytoun was the reviewer; also 'The Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning', Edinburgh, (October, 1861), pp.513-34.

.....
Ay, but every age
Appears to souls who live in't (ask Carlyle)
Most unheroic. Ours, for instance, ours:
The thinkers scout it, and the poets abound
Who scorn to touch it with a finger-tip:
A pewter age, - mixed metal, silver-washed;
An age of scum, spooned off the richer past,
An age of patches for old gaberdines, ¹
An age of mere transition, meaning nought
Except that what succeeds must shame it quite
If God please. That's wrong thinking, to my mind,
And wrong thoughts make poor poems.
Every age,
Through being beheld too close, is ill-discerned
By those who have not lived past it

But poets should
Exert a double vision; should have eyes
To see near things as comprehensively
As if afar they took their point of sight,
And distant things as intimately deep
As if they touched them. Let us strive for this.
I do distrust the poet who discerns
No character or glory in his times, ²
And trundles back his soul five hundred years,
Past moat and drawbridge, into a castle-court,
.....

Nay, if there's room for poets in this world
A little over-grown, (I think there is)
Their sole work is to represent the age,
Their age, not Charlemagne's, - this live, throbbing
age,
That brawls, cheats, maddens, calculates, aspires. ³

1. (Sixteenth edition, 1880), p. 186.

2. Ibid., p. 187.

3. Ibid., p. 188.

Laurence Bloomfield, seemingly an acceptance of this challenge, did not tempt the public to reward Allingham's courage in the field. The reviews which had been loudest in their demands for the death of escapist poetry, Blackwood's, the Quarterly, and the Edinburgh Review - terrorists among nineteenth century periodicals - ignored the poem and continued to fray the nerves of poets by demands for a rigid standard, prejudices against naturalistic expression and their nasty habit of passing over qualities that tallied with their own conclusions about poetry and pouncing on something else such as Rossetti's so called fleshliness, Mrs. Browning's wordiness and unwomanly frankness, her husband's use of the grotesque or his conventions used in The Ring and the Book to give the case from various points of view, or Tennyson's portrayal of madness in Maud. Innovations were usually dubbed unnatural or vulgar. Allingham who had committed none of the heinous poetical crimes of Smith and Bailey¹ nor indulged in egotistical verse that boiled down to informing the public, 'See what a

1. 'New Poets', Edinburgh, (October, 1856), pp. 337-62.

highly organized and peculiar stomach-ache I have had! Does it not prove indisputably that I am not as other men are',¹ was rebuffed by silence from the giant reviews and partisan criticism from the smaller ones. The public, fickle and unpredictable, had failed him as he had suspected they would. One needed to be tough to face the vicissitudes of the literary world.

There is no evidence that the poem caused a stir as it went through Fraser's. The magazines which usually devoted a section to brief reviews of the monthly issues of rival periodicals, paid it no heed. This omission was perhaps due to the vacillating tastes of reviewers, their petty jealousies of rival magazines or to the unforeseen contingencies of the literary world. The Spectator apparently did not like it. On November 1, 1862, the month of the first number of Laurence Bloomfield, the section entitled 'The Magazines' stated,

1. Charles Kingsley in 'Alexander Smith and Alexander Pope', Fraser's, (October, 1853), p.459.

Only the stories are poor in Fraser. That has, we think, always been, in a greater or less degree, a feature of this magazine, and it is becoming a marked one now.¹

'Stories' might be meant to include the Irish poem but it would have been rash to call it 'poor', the first number only having been read. However, five months later there was still no praise;

Fraser is unequal this month For the rest the number is dull. 'Late Laurels' may be a good tale by and bye; but it is only moderate at present, interest centering chiefly in a bitter kind of Beauty who rejects everybody; and Mr. Ruskin is really unbearable on 'Political Economy', the more so, for the occasional beauty and even wisdom of his thoughts.²

On October 3, 1863, the month Allingham missed and when regret might have been expected at the absence of a number there was still no mention of Laurence Bloomfield but a re-iteration of the unfavourable opinion of the stories in general:

1. p. 1227.

2. (April 4, 1863), p. 1844.

Fraser, with good stories, would be the best of the magazines; as it is, unlike all others, it depends mainly upon its padding.¹

There is nothing in the Diary to throw light on its poor reception. Possibly the slimmess of the plot made it a bad choice for serial publication because the suspense in the story - at its best not very rousing - was lost when served up in portions month by month, instead of less brokenly in a single volume. It lacked the 'make 'em wait' quality so necessary to keep up public interest and was thus essentially unsuitable as a serial. Its readers probably bought Fraser's anyway and not just to find out what happened to Pigot or the Dorans. Allingham would have been wiser to publish in book form first.

In spite of the cool reception he went ahead with plans to publish it in a single volume. This venture also was not successful and both the difficulties encountered seeing it through the publisher and its small sales must have had a damaging psychological effect on Allingham and militated greatly against his

1. p. 2582.

self-confidence and happiness in his future work. The progress of Laurence Bloomfield through the press and its fate on the market are worth recounting not only for the light it throws on its author but also for the history it records of the heart-break and competition met in the world of letters, where 'the breaks' often make so much difference, either spoiling a writer's life or sending him to the top or giving him a reputation he does not honestly deserve.

Macmillan's had offered to publish Laurence Bloomfield at their own risk and on the half-profits system:

You write, 'I will publish at my own risk an edition of Lawrence Bloomfield, 750 copies at 5/ and divide profits with you' - I accept the offer, and send the first three chapters - I hope you will begin printing immediately. If I may say anything about the typography I say the blackest ink you can - and I think it would be better to have no running heading to each page.

Pray let me know as soon as you can - Hit Christmas if possible - For one thing it is likely that Tennyson's new volume will be coming out by and by - which would be sure to sit on my baby.¹

1. Unpublished Macmillan MS., Letter from Allingham to Alexander Macmillan, (November 13, 1863).

The half-profits system allowed the publisher to charge the author for paper, print, binding, advertising, complimentary copies and commissions for lobbying, and in addition, to take a percentage of the sale price. This system was found by some authors to be too great a risk because they sometimes got no profit and had to pay a difference to the publisher. The Royalty system, urged by some but not in vogue at the time, had the publisher undertake all printing responsibilities and differed from the other practice in that it paid the author for the number of his books that did sell but protected the publisher by letting him retain the security given by the author before the printing was undertaken. Although a failure meant that neither publisher nor author was in an enviable position, the author, by this scheme would not be forced to make up a difference. Unhappily, however, the amount received for books sold might not be enough to offset the security paid to the publisher earlier, and the Royalty system would then appear to be best only for established authors whose sales would not be so uncertain as those of newcomers. All systems had their disadvantages, chiefly for the authors, and only a successful book

would dispel them all at the same time, so that Allingham's acceptance of Macmillan's offer was as wise as any other step he might have taken.

The half-profits system could prove an annoyance to publishers as well since an author who was footing the bill for advertising, binding etc. would feel entitled to dictate the printing policy. There was some indication of this in the Macmillan-Allingham correspondence when the publisher beseeched the author not to insist on placing his advertisement in such a position that it would be considered, 'a part of the book in its integrity',¹ and the author begged the publisher to put back the heading, 'Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland' at the top of each chapter's first page,² a request Macmillan granted. There is a gap in the correspondence from December 1863 to March 1864 which would, undoubtedly, contain much pertinent information but from the letters that remain it is possible to see

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1. Macmillan, G., Letters of Alex. Macmillan, (1908), p.168.
 2. Unpublished Macmillan MS., Letter from Allingham to Alex. Macmillan, (December 23, 1863).

that Allingham, always gentle and courteous, was nevertheless as pesty an author as ever plagued a harassed publisher: * 'Do not advertise Lawrence till after I write again'; 'I have concluded to spell his name Laurence'; 'You can now advertise the book as soon as you please'; 'If it be possible I beg that you will alter lines 163, 164 in Chapter II, page 12, thus'; 'Will you oblige me by sending a copy of L.Bloomfield to ...'; 'That's all I think - have I exhausted your patience?' - this last query following a request that complimentary copies be sent to thirty-nine addresses of private persons as well as to eleven Irish newspapers; 'Have you any shamrocks in your wood? If yes you might give our title page a bunch'; 'Will you kindly do this (at my cost) as the Lent debate on Ireland is fixed for the 10th, put the following advertisement into the Athenaeum, Spectator and Saturday Review of the 7th ...

* All quotations in this paragraph are from the Macmillan MSS. between November 1863 and March 1864. The rest from the same MSS. between November 1863 and November 1880, unless otherwise stated.

Also insert the same advertisement in Pall Mall Gazette - not consecutively, but with interval of two days between each two insertions'.

Finally the poem was published in March 1864. That it did not sell is clear from the wistful, 'I should so like it to have sold,' and clearer still from a letter to Macmillan five months later;

Have you quite left off advertising poor L.B.? I have seen several of your advertisements with other works of poetry¹ but not that. Don't be so hard upon it.

Two weeks later he wrote thanks for 'the show-off of L.B. in the Athenaeum'. By September 1864 he was complaining bitterly

I wonder the Daily News has taken no notice of L. Bloomfield (or has it?). The Saturday Review too that reviews tenth rate novels. But after all what matters it!

and his discouragement at the financial failure of the poem was evident in the same letter:

1. (August 26).

Many thanks for your offer as to my new volume. Bell and Daldy made the same some months ago. I have had thoughts of printing it here at Lymington - having given up all notions of making money by my rhymes - and getting a London agent.

Laurence Bloomfield seemed ill-omened from the start. Allingham wanted it out by Christmas 1863; it did not appear until three months later. There were the customary delays and annoyances of publishing, many of them Allingham's own fault. He certainly held up operations by requests for changes in the text; he was dilatory and begged for mercy on consideration of having had unusual perplexities to bother him for the last year but the Printer was slow too and he had been left without proofs for a fortnight at a time.¹ He felt that the seven shilling selling price, of which he said he had heard many complaints, as opposed to the first agreement of five shillings, 'cooked his goose'. Perhaps it did but there is no evidence that the sales soared in 1869 when the price was dropped to four and six. Also he gave little opportunity to buy to those

1. See following letter.

who could afford seven shillings because he sent out a large number of gift copies which were probably passed along among friends with the result that sales were further lessened. He thought he had been swamped by the publication of Enoch Arden and Dramatis Personae. Tennyson's sales, up to 16000 by September 1864, might have had some effect on the fate of Laurence Bloomfield, but certainly Browning's star was not yet in the ascendant. As late as October 1864, the Edinburgh Review was castigating Sordello as 'the most illegible production of any time or country'¹ and carping at Dramatis Personae. Allingham's argument is not convincing. The Victorian era more than any other found room for a large number of minor poets to flourish. He always found publishers for his volumes even though they must have known they were putting old poems inside new covers. The reasons for the failure of Laurence Bloomfield go deeper than indecisiveness about selling price and bad luck to be publishing at the same time as Tennyson, and will be examined fully later.

1. p. 546.

In spite of Allingham's struggle for the recognition of his poem the story of the re-issue in 1869 was equally pathetic and revealing. Negotiations were open again on February 4, 1868, when he wrote to Macmillan,

You might perhaps, now that Irish affairs are uppermost¹ - give Laurence Bloomfield a chance by putting some copies in a new binding, making the price 5/ (as originally intended) and advertising it a little with your other publications. With all its faults the book is worth something

P.S. I felt sure from the first that 7/ would itself settle the hash of the volume - as to objections to reducing the price it is likely that there are few if any copies now in booksellers' hands. Any loss from that source I am willing to bear myself.

From another letter to Macmillan some days later it appeared that his publisher was not enthusiastic about the proposal:

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1. Fenian rising in Ireland in 1867 and the Clerkenwell Outrage brought the Irish Question to the fore in Parliament again and roused more people to realize that England owed Ireland justice.

Thanks for your note. To send L.B. to an auction room right now would appear to me very ill-timed and I hope you will not think of doing so, but that you will be good enough to keep the book till the end of the present season. I hope to have some conversation with you on the subject, as I think of going up to town and perhaps something better for both of us may be hit upon ... Changes are in the wind - take care I don't get into fashion.

By March 7, 1868, Allingham was up to his old tricks of worrying his publisher (Macmillan presumably having agreed by now to re-issue the poem) with proposals that must have been a terrible nuisance:

... Would there be any chance of admission to your magazine for a paper (short) setting forth the Irish land doctrine of L. Bloomfield? ... I don't want to puff my book, but to set forth its doctrines.

If that was not puffing one wonders what was! Alexander Macmillan must have possessed a saintly patience or Allingham a compelling charm because he never once wrote the publisher without besieging him with requests, proposals, counter-proposals and complaints about one thing or another which would have driven a man of weaker nerves to exhaustion. However by June 1869 the re-issue was under way:

I return the proofs with thanks and trust you will now launch the refitted craft without delay, while the wind is blowing from the right quarter. ¹

The price, I understand, is to be 4/6 - would there be any harm in marking that on the book's back? I myself like to see the price marked on a book, and in this case it is to be especially desirable.

The reduced price made no difference to the sales, and the debates in Parliament waxed hot, nobody heeding the sane exposition of the Irish Question in Laurence Bloomfield, which had suggested, seven years earlier many of the ideas (Disestablishment was not among them) now being rolled on waves of oratory, over the floor of the Commons.

He must have been raw with humiliation, when, five months later he directed Macmillan to send copies to the Marquis of Salisbury, Earls Greville, Derby and Bessborough, the Bishops of Winchester and Peterborough, Lord Dufferin and the Rt.Honourable J. Stansfield, and too bruised to feel the indignity of knocking at the doors of the great like a persevering huckster or of

1. Bill for Disestablishment and Disendowment of Church of Ireland was before the House. Second reading carried June 19, 1869.

nagging his publisher to 'give the little book a lift in the magazine right now - It has matter in it I tell you' - and to give him three pages to 'set forth the intention of the poem.'

With this sad history behind it the re-issue appeared with a new title-page and chapter-headings, an index and a new eight-page preface full of Allingham's 'politics'. The differences in the title-page are interesting. In 1864 it read simply: Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland / A Modern Poem / By William Allingham / London and Cambridge / Macmillan and Co./ 1864; in 1869: Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland / or / The New Landlord / 'Insula Sanctorum.' - Johannes Colganus, 'A^cta SS.Hib.' passim. / 'A blessed island!' - Vulgar English translation / By William Allingham / Author of 'Day and Night Songs', 'Fifty Poems', etc. / New and Cheaper Issue, with a Preface / London / Macmillan and Co., / 1869 - a pretentious page of unsubtle salesmanship.

Macmillan's did not print any fresh pages of text but used the unsold sheets of the first edition. This is clear from an examination of the gatherings in

each volume, which are made up of octavo sheets of eight leaves each - i.e. gatherings in eights - and whose gathering marks are identical. These signatures range from A to U and in addition to the letter used affix the numeral 2 to the second leaf of each gathering. Another proof is the presence of the sub-heading A Modern Poem on the first page of the text of the 1869 version. This occupies the same position in the 1864 version where it also appears on the title page but is omitted from the title page of the re-issue. If newly printed sheets had been used, the sub-heading would not have appeared at all.

Were such definite proof absent there is still strong evidence for supposing that the re-issue was made up of the unsold sheets in new bindings. My own copy of the first edition, a gift to Violet Dickson from the author and inscribed, 'To Miss Dickson from W. Allingham. Feb. 1867', contains revisions in his hand-writing, which do not appear in 1869 but are to be seen, among further changes, in an 1890 edition by Reeves and Turner and an identical edition by Longmans

Green and Co., in 1893. For example, in Chapter XII of the 1864 edition are the lines,

And rich the country now, with shady roads
And hollow lanes embank'd with fern; white [loads]¹
Of fragrant hawthorn bloom, but when this bloom
Grows fainter, bramble roses in its room; 2

between them in the author's hand are,

[white] loads
Of hawthorn-flow'r; which faded, in its room
The wilding-rose, and honey-suckle bloom; 3

lines not entirely felicitous but showing a slight improvement in metre and syntax, which did not appear in print until more than twenty years later. The inclusion of 'loads' in the Errata of the 1869 volume further supports the case for the use of the unsold sheets.

The re-issue made little impression on the public. A few letters arrived from the recipients of complimentary copies, among whom were John Stuart Mill⁴ and W.H. Lecky,⁵ bearing praises but mentioning that they had read it all in Fraser's years earlier. George Eliot, who received

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1. Not in text.
 2. p.255, ll. 5 - 7.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Letters to W.A., p. 223.
 5. Ibid., p. 220.

a copy as late as 1874, sent him a note saying that his narrative was touched with a higher poetry than Crabbe's.¹ In November, 1869, he received, entirely unsolicited, a request from Lady Waldegrave for twenty copies to be sent to her at Phoenix Park in Dublin where her husband, Chichester Fortescue, was then Secretary of State and was in the process of laying his Land Bill before the Cabinet. Allingham seemed unaware of the circulation his book might have when talked about and distributed by this beautiful woman and powerful political hostess. Instead he was worried she did not mean to pay for her copies and he wrote Macmillan to be sure to send her a bill.²

Altogether the poem had a small circulation and did not fill the pockets of either author or publisher. Allingham, however, went doggedly on pushing his neglected work and trying to relieve Macmillan of the persistent remainder. On August 8, 1874, he wrote to him:

1. Ibid., p. 177.

2. (November 20, 1869).

Many thanks for your obliging letter as to 'Laurence Bloomfield'. If the Irish bookseller takes the 182 in sheets at 1/6 I should like to have the 18 bound ones myself at the same. Could I?

The result of that proposal is not available but Allingham still did not give up, and on April 13, 1878, was petitioning Craik of Macmillan's thus:

The murder of Lord Leitrim has turned attention to the Irish Ribbon Conspiracy - Could your firm kindly do something to bring forward 'Laurence Bloomfield', which has so much on that subject - (studied, I may add, chiefly in County Donegal and with very unusual opportunities -?

Macmillan's did not rise to the bait and in 1880 that firm heard the last of the Irish poem:

As to 'Laurence Bloomfield' 'tis a pity the ill-wind in Ireland can't blow him a little good - The book is very germane to matters talked about: but - Pray what do you mean to do with the unsaleable-at-any-price remainder? I suppose you would not charge me much ¹ for it if I relieved your warehouse?

As there are several long breaks in the Allingham-Macmillan correspondence, viz., December, 1863 - March 1864; November 1864 - February 1868; November 1869 -

1. (November 17, 1880).

August 1874; August 1874 - April 1878; April 1878 - April 1879 and April 1879 - November 1880, it is impossible to say for certain if the 1880 letter was really the last of the matter with Macmillan or what happened to the unsaleable remainder. The Macmillan side of the correspondence is not available, and the missing Allingham letters either have been destroyed or are among the vast number of letters to and from him that are at present under the control of the University of Illinois and are not open to the research student. What there is, however, does give substantially a record of the publication of Laurence Bloomfield and illuminates, to the point of being social history, the relationship of an author and a publisher.

Somewhere between 1880 and 1888 Allingham came to an agreement with Reeves and Turner to publish a new edition. Records of the transaction are not available because it has not been possible to trace this firm which went out of business around 1910. The new edition seemed to be connected with the scheme he described in a letter to Sir Samuel Ferguson, in a letter of

June 6, 1885, but was finally published alone:

... another scheme of publication now seems preferable to me, namely to produce the Poems in one volume and the Prose in another, independently. The former might be named, 'Poems of Irish Life and Landscape.' It would include Laurence Bloomfield (revised) which has been out of print for some time, with various old pieces of mine, narrative, lyrical and some new. I confess the thought is dear to me of distinctly connecting my name as a Poet with that of the Old Country - and at the same time with yours: would you give me the honour and gratification of accepting the Dedication?¹

This would appear to refer to the 1888 edition included in the List of Works at the end of the Diary, and said to be dedicated to Samuel Ferguson and published by Reeves and Turner. Up to now no copy of it can be found. That it was published is certain from the lists of publications for the month of April, 1888, in the Bookseller² (it sold for 3/6) and in a brief notice in the Athenaeum;³

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1. Unpublished MS. in National Library of Ireland, Dublin. No two volume edition, one of Poems, the other Prose, was ever published.
 2. (May 4, 1888), p. 564.
 3. (April 4, 1888), p. 467

We are glad to see that Mr. Allingham has published a new edition (Reeves and Turner) of Laurence Bloomfield, a poem based on accurate knowledge of Ireland, and worth reading at the present time, although written a quarter of a century ago.

It was issued again by Reeves and Turner in 1890 and was, presumably, part of the Complete Works in six volumes which sold for £1.10.0.¹ It is unlikely that this was a new edition or even a new impression because either would indicate a sell-out which is doubtful in the face of the silence concerning Laurence Bloomfield in both the Diary and Letters to William Allingham, after the 1869 re-issue. Also the 1890 volume is identical with the one brought out by Longmans Green and Co. in 1893 which appears to be made up of the unsold sheets of the 1888 stock as the following letter to me from Longmans and Green indicates:

The poems of William Allingham were published by Reeves and Turner in 1888 and we took them over in 1893 on behalf of Mrs. Allingham, so we acted as distributors of the remaining stock. We are sorry we are not able to tell you what happened to Reeves and Turner, nor

1. Bookseller, (December 13, 1890), p. 1452.

to give you any details concerning the sales of these poems but we can say that the number of copies which we took over was quite small.¹

The 1890 and 1893 volumes are both gathered in eights. This would seem to deny their being made up of unsold sheets from the 1888 edition, which, according to the Bookseller² was printed as 12 mo. However, McKerrow states that it is undoubtedly possible for a book to be printed as a 12 mo. (i.e. for the leaf to be one-twelfth of a sheet) and yet be sewn in eights, though he cannot give an example.³ My own guess is that the leaves in the 1888 volume are sewn in eights as Reeves and Turner would scarcely give themselves the pointless task of re-arranging the gatherings from twelves to eights. These strong suppositions can only be proved when an 1888 volume comes to light.

As far as can be determined, Laurence Bloomfield was never published after 1893. Whether there was an

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1. (November 25, 1957).
 2. (May 4, 1888), p. 564.
 3. McKerrow, R.B., Introduction to Bibliography, (1948, third impression), p. 168.

American edition is not certain. In a letter to Macmillan, dated November 19, 1863, Allingham said,

Let me hear about Laurence - It is likely that Ticknor and Fields may soon publish it at Boston, U.S.

There is no evidence that it was published but one would have to see the cost books of Ticknor and Fields for proof, as those that have been published discuss entries only up to 1858.¹

Although the poem did not sell, it received a good deal of attention from the periodicals in 1864. It was reviewed by the Athenaeum, Chamber's Edinburgh Journal, the Dublin Review, the Irishman, the Irish Nation, the Reader and the Spectator.

The Irish reviews were uniform in their opinion that the poetry of Laurence Bloomfield was better than its politics. The Irishman felt compelled to give him

1. Tryon and Charvat, Cost Books of Ticknor and Fields and their Predecessor 1832-1858, Bibliog.Soc.of America, N.Y., 1949. Sequel not yet forthcoming.

'the low rank of Mitigated Whig',¹ and to chastise him for false liberalism² in his desire for a fast friendship between England and Ireland and for Irish loyalty to the Crown. The Nation and the Dublin Review recommended his Security-of-Tenure policy but, quite naturally, did not see eye to eye with his anti-Catholic prejudices. The Irishman, always long-winded, let their review run to three parts³ in three consecutive weeks and lambasted Allingham for his stupid picture of O'Hara locking his daughters up as nuns,⁴ his misrepresentation of the ideal of Catholic education and his characterization of Bloomfield as a man who took the liberty of giving his tenants no liberty of thought, and tempered their approval of his Security-of-Tenure programme with the shot that Mr. Allingham perceived the evils of the Tenant-at-Will system with regard to individuals but that he had not understood it as applied to nations:

1. (April 23, 1864), p. 682.

2. Ibid.

3. (April 23, April 30, May 7, 1864), pp. 682; 698; 714.

4. Laurence Bloomfield, (1864), p. 34.

Without self-government the Irish nation in Ireland is a tenant-at-will, subject to every woe, and every evil of the system. 1

The Irish reviews are more interesting to read than the English because they are aglow with the hot patriotism and eloquence of the devotees of the Cause. Partisan politics however, are not often capable of objective criticism. The Dublin Review avoided politics and congratulated him on his development from a style 'thin and jejune [style] to language more animated, more concentrated and more sustained' and attributed to the poem a triple success - 'the success of a pamphlet, the success of a novel of Irish life, and its own more proper and legitimate success as a regular pastoral'.²

Most of the reviews, Irish and English, were impressed by the portraits of the Irish landlords. Chamber 5', praising the unaffected lucidity of his verse which enabled one to read him without the wet towel to the forehead necessary to read Browning, felt that this poem might entitle him to be called the modern Crabbe and that he possessed some epigrammatic skill which

1. p. 682.

2. (April, 1865), p. 320.

Crabbe had not.¹ The Spectator thought it very 'pleasant poetry and very good social philosophy', and added that the 'Social Science Association might publish it with much more profit to Ireland than many of their papers on Irish land laws'.² On the other hand they thought it lacked narrative interest and that the types sketched did not become subservient to some one central and more deeply studied character.³ The Reader⁴ gave it thorough, and in some respects, the harshest treatment, although they softened each blow with a contradictory pat on the head. Allingham's poem reminded them of Goldsmith, Crabbe and Miss Edgeworth. The principal defect of the poem was its subject; the work dragged and interest dwindled but this suspended interest was never long without being re-animated by something striking for its pathos, poetry and truth. They did not doubt that the life of the Irish poor was susceptible of

1. (August 13, 1864), p. 523.

2. (April 30, 1864), p. 507.

3. Ibid.

4. (May 7, 1864), p. 579.

poetic treatment and if Mr. Allingham felt himself the man for such a task they would recommend him to follow Crabbe's method in undertaking short narratives rather than long poems and by addressing himself principally to the domestic affections. Viewed as a succession of sketches, the merit of Laurence Bloomfield seemed to them very great; as an organic whole it must be pronounced less successful. Still, it was the production of great abilities consecrated to high aims and controlled by a discriminating taste. The contradictions and the half-truths apparent in this review, suggest a need for a re-assessment of the poem, an appraisal free from the limitations imposed by a newspaper column and from the subjectivity of partisan Irishmen.

Private individuals, as well as reviewers, paid it compliments which although often solicited were sincere. Tennyson praised it and said it was a very difficult thing to do;¹ Ford Madox Brown said it seemed to him to be Allingham's highest flight, 'a work with a high aim, and begun on a real solid foundation (a rather

1. Diary, p. 99.

rare quality in modern poetry) and in execution faultless';¹ Turgenev was reported to have said after reading it, 'I never understood Ireland before!'² Sir Edward and Lady Burne-Jones admired it;³ Gladstone quoted it in the House of Commons apropos of maintaining duty on whiskey;⁴ Browning thought it 'not so poetical as some of your things - but O so clever!'⁵ and his own testimony in his diary entry for April 22, 1864, supported the claim that the poem did not go unobserved:

Laurence Bloomfield published. Many letters and notices of it came to me, mostly favourable ...⁶

The fact remains that the poem did not sell and never became popular reading because the subject matter was not likely to draw the man in the street who knew little about the real state of affairs in Ireland and cared less. English sympathy for Ireland was a scarce commodity in the 19th century when Englishmen were too

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1. Letters to W.A., p. 92.
 2. See Lionel Johnson's Biog. Sketch of Allingham in A Treasury of Irish Poetry, (1900), Vol.V, p. 365.
 3. Letters to W.A., p. 126.
 4. Diary, p. 99.
 5. Ibid., p. 100.
 6. Ibid., p. 99.

busy with their own grievances against capitalists and factory owners to be soft-hearted about a people alien to them in all things from religion down to food and drink. It was only in the sixties that educated and humane men of affairs were beginning to realize the justice of Irish agitation in Parliament and began to raise their voices, unsolicited, on Ireland's behalf. It is not surprising therefore, that an Irish poem tinged with 'politics' would not be read. The neglect shown it by nineteenth century readers is at least understandable. More blameworthy are the twentieth century critics who, blind to its merits, fostered the idea that Allingham could not handle a long narrative poem.

III

LAURENCE BLOOMFIELD: NARRATIVE POEM

Although Laurence Bloomfield is not without flaws it does not deserve the neglect it has received for nearly a century. Its author has been at the mercy of an indifferent public, and reviewers who, in his day, were often too busy or uninterested to offer more than a trite criticism of his work; of Irish writers so dyed with bright green patriotism that their eyes, short-sighted from too much emerald pigment, have been unable to view dispassionately another's less emotional love of country; and of twentieth century critics who have chosen to dismiss the piece with brief allusions to it as Allingham's longest poem, an unequal work proving that he cannot handle a lengthy narrative; an estimate so false that one can only conclude that the twentieth century has never really looked at Laurence Bloomfield.

A common complaint against it was the slimness of the plot in what was called a novel in verse, scarcely a legitimate criticism because the quantity of links in the chain of cause and effect is not what necessarily makes a good narrative but rather the quality of the whole. It is fruitless to use the same tools to criticise a novel in verse and a novel in prose. The

verse novelist is curtailed in a way no prose writer ever is and it will not do to examine Allingham's work as one would a novel by Thackeray or George Eliot but to look at it exactly as it is: a narrative commentary on the state of Ireland in the nineteenth century, accomplished by a combination of elements of the novel, the pamphlet, pastoral, satire and historical documentation. If the combination displays force, relevancy and unity it is immaterial that the plot is slim.

Although there is not much suspense and the characters do not impinge on one another in an exciting manner the story is not dull as some critics maintain. It is a series of highly charged episodes and tableaux held together by the unifying theme of Landlord versus Tenant. The pattern of the piece is clear. On the one side are the landlords, on the other the country folk. The landlords are described rather than made to move through the scenes; the peasants, also described, are put in motion as well and the reader moves with them to a Ribbon Lodge, Rose Muldoon's wake, to Mass, to Lisnamoy Fair. By making one group of protagonists stationary and the other movable Allingham achieves contrast and makes the point that landlordism is like a granite wall, immovable and proof against the sallies of the surging tenantry. This is good design which

helps the matter of the twelve chapters to cohere and to avoid rambling.

The construction is good and shows careful planning. The poem opens on an Irish road along which Laurence is riding to dinner at Lisnamoy House and the reader is immediately aware of vivid local colour in lines condensed and effortless, that give to the life the manners of the Irish peasantry and echo a leisurely clip-clop as the

Horseman on a handsome grey
Along the high road takes his easy way,
Saluted low by every ragged hat,
Saluting kindly every Teague and Pat
Who plods the mud or jolts on lazy wheels,
Or loudly drives a patient ass with creels,
(Short pipe removed before obeisance made)
Or checks, regardant, his potato-spade;
'Fine day,' the young man says with friendly nod,
'Fine day, your honour, - glory be to God!' 1

And while Laurence jogs along, the omniscient narrator, for the story is told in the third person throughout, gives, in retrospect, young Bloomfield's life.

1. Laurence Bloomfield, (1864), pp. 3 - 4, ll. 3 - 12. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations in this chapter are from the 1864 edition.

Chapter Two moves from the delineation of Laurence's character to a description of his estates, 'the worst in fame', 'red murder stalking in full daylight', and to an incisive summing up of his neighbouring landlords.

Chapter Three seats the reader at dinner at Lisnamoy House where these types are further outlined, this time by their conversation which performs the double task of making clear the condition of Ireland and condemning the landlords out of their own mouths; a neat stroke of irony that is not missed by the reader.

Chapter Four introduces the Dorans, who, as a family typical of many victims of the Landlord System, supply valuable documentary evidence. In their happier moments they represent the peace and joyousness of Irish country life.

Chapter Five describes, with what appears to be great accuracy, the squalor of an Irish village called Ballytullagh and spares neither the viciousness of the peasants nor the heartlessness of the eviction-bent land bailiff, James Pigot. It completes the setting for the action, thus allowing the story to gain momentum in Chapter Six which, in its turn, begins the

preparations for the turning point. At this half-way mark, Neal Doran, tired of being afraid to improve his father's land lest Pigot should raise the rent, and tired of a restlessness he does not altogether understand, goes out to join a Ribbon Lodge, an action that is to have far-reaching consequences.

Chapter Seven plunges into the stark scene of an eviction and shows Allingham's sense of drama and timing, because placed as it is between 'Neal at the Lough' (Chapter VI) and 'A Ribbon Lodge' (Chapter VII) it explains without justifying why good men join secret societies and why the deeds of Ribbonmen are so savage. There is no moralizing, no diffuseness, just grim facts that speak for themselves.

Chapter Eight conveys all the ignorance, shindy and whiskey fumes of a Ribbon meeting and brings the story closer to its climax. Neal Doran is chosen to help punish Jemmy Burke for 'sending in proposals for a farm at Meenabo'; the place to 'dry beat' him is to be Lisnamoy Fair. After the meeting is dissolved, the sentence of death is served on Pigot by the secret Five.

Chapter Nine makes real use of suspense and works up to a high pitch of excitement. The description of the Horse Fair delays the climax - a good trick to keep up the readers' interest - but then events move fast. Neal becomes involved in a fight and is arrested. Pigot is sent for because the boy belongs to the estate under his management. Refusing him bail he goes to show Bloomfield an Informer's List with Doran's name on it. Word runs through the Fair like fire through prairie grass and the Ribbonmen drop all subsidiary plans to prepare an immediate ambush for Pigot. The reader is agog to know what will happen next.

Chapter Ten supplies the answer and brings the story to its climax and turning point. Bloomfield has not made up his mind to read the Informer's List. A noise outside his door brings him to Jack Doran's side. The old man, having walked to Lisnamoy to petition Pigot not to dispossess him, faints when he hears that his son has been 'taken up' on Ribbon business. Sympathy for him causes Laurence to tear up the List unread and to get rid of Pigot as his agent. The bailiff's race is run and after the climax of his deposition, he rides out

to his death down a road lined with scarlet-berried trees. This climactic chapter is a double turning point of both action and character for not only is it now possible, by the removal of Pigot, for Laurence to direct a new course of land management but also his beau geste has set him free as an individual. What before were only thoughts, soul-searchings, indecisions, are now deeds that result in a happy, just regime by a conscientious landlord.

The story really ends with the death of Pigot and in drawing it out for two more chapters - the two longest in the book - Allingham falls prey to feebleness. Chapter Eleven shows Laurence, seven years later, married to a paragon and in command of himself and his estates, improving his lands and essaying slowly the innovation of peasant proprietorship. The description of his reign is further augmented by a wearisome inventory of the objets d'art of the Manor House, a caustic, excellently written diatribe against the Church of Rome, and brief glimpses of the Dorans busily justifying, by their industry, Bloomfield's bounty to them. Chapter Twelve

uses a house-party of English and Irish as a plausible excuse to discuss politics, and Allingham's conservative policy is put into Laurence's mouth before his wife ends the story with her conviction that Ireland will be a noble place. Hand in hand she and her husband climb a purple hill to look at the scenery before they leave on the morrow for a holiday in Scandinavia:

 Their bosoms with a wordless rapture swell'd,
 Gazing upon these glories. Laurence held
 The wifely hand, with little ring wherethro'
 Her life-stream coursed in wandering veins of blue,
 And press'd it to his lips with perfect love.
 A psalm was in their souls to God above.
 Earth, ocean, spreading round them, and on high
 The regions of the everlasting sky.¹

Although this Victorian-Valentine ending is no worse than a host of others in which hopes are high, love-knots truly tied and morals neatly turned, it is a pity that a work of such force and colour should peter out. The feebleness and bad versifying in much of the final two chapters are due to diffuseness in his method of bringing the reader up to date on all characters and events. Had he expended fewer lines on the architecture and antiques of Croghan Hall, his wife's

1. p. 290, ll. 556-63.

bonnet and shawl and his tenants' white-washed walls and more on Isaac Brown's Workhouse and the St. John's Eve celebrations, his ending would have been memorable and striking. Instead, he turned gossip, ignored his own warning,

And yet I will not rival Martin Doyle,
Mehi, or Stephens; 'twere a thankless toil.
For, every rule and detail strictly given
Whereby our Laurence in his course has thriven,¹
.....
Another man were scarcely help'd along,
Who deals with different people, different facts,²

and gave as much detail of Laurence's landlordism and politics as Martin Doyle³ Mechi⁴ and Stephens⁵ did of soil and implements in their Hints to the Small Farmers of the County of Wexford, How to Farm Properly and The Book of the Farm respectively. The result is a flattening of tone and a crowding-out of dramatic moments.

1. p. 224, ll. 27-30.

2. p. 225, ll. 34-5.

3. Pseud. for Wm. Hickey, See D.N.B., Vol. IX, p. 807; also Dublin University Magazine, (April, 1840), pp. 374-6.

4. John Joseph Mechi, agriculturist, cutler, inventor of 'magic razor strop'. See also D.N.B., Vol. XIII, p. 200.

5. Henry Stephens; studied agricultural methods in England and abroad. See Concise D.N.B., (1948 Reprint), p. 1242.

There is nothing in these last chapters to indicate that the author is capable of drama like that in his eviction scene or the penetrating portrayal of Neal driven by romantic patriotism to join the Ribbonmen - a scene of powerful insight into youthful discontent and a brilliantly condensed description of Irish history from the past to the present which Dr. Hans Kropf thinks is used by Allingham to justify Neal's patriotic fervour as well as to bring Irish history to the English public.¹

In spite of these discursive last chapters which give the impression of disproportionate length the poem is carefully constructed. The trouble Allingham took to maintain unity and dramatic intensity is clear from a comparison of the Fraser's version and the first edition of the poem. He changed and re-arranged hundreds of lines and although the net quantitative result was that the 1864 edition had four lines fewer than the first version the gain in tightened structure justified the permutations. The following details give some idea of the labour put into Laurence Bloomfield:

1. William Allingham und seine Dichtung ... (1928), p.114.

| <u>Fraser's</u> | | <u>First Edition</u> | |
|-------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| <u>Titles: Parts I-XIII.</u> | 11. | <u>Titles: Chapters I-XIII.</u> | 11. |
| Lawrence | 257 | Laurence | 257 |
| Neighbouring Land- lords | 292 | Neighbouring Landlords | 283 |
| A Dinner at Lisnamoy House | 374 | A Dinner at Lisnamoy House | 390 |
| The Dorans | 342 | The Dorans | 393 |
| The Bad Parish | 485 | Ballytullagh | 491 |
| Lough Braccan | 371 | Neal at the Lough | 322 |
| Ballytullagh | 363 | Tenants at Will | 276 |
| A Ribbon Lodge | 345 | A Ribbon Lodge | 365 |
| The Fair | 315 | The Fair | 330 |
| Pigot | 388 | Pigot | 393 |
| Lord and Lady | 540 | Lord and Lady | 544 |
| Midsummer | 638 | Midsummer | 662 |
| | <hr/> 4710 | | <hr/> 4706 |

The greatest number of changes occurs in Chapter VII with a discrepancy of eighty-seven lines. However, the difference is one of re-arrangement rather than omission. For instance, ll. 35-85 of Part VII of Fraser's are shifted, with slight changes in text to ll. 1 - 54 of Chapter V in the 1864 version. Similarly,

ll. 86-119 of Part VII of Fraser's become ll. 55-88 of Chapter V of the other. Thus the loss of eighty-five of the lines is accounted for; the other two merged in altered syntax. The clue to why Allingham goes to so much trouble to re-arrange his lines seems to lie in the titles he gives to the various divisions of the poem. Part V in Fraser's is called 'The Bad Parish' and Chapter V of the 1864 edition, 'Ballytullagh'; Part VII in Fraser's is called 'Ballytullagh' and Chapter IV of the other, 'Tenants at Will'. The change is for the better and shows that Allingham must have realized the increase in dramatic power by keeping together in one chapter, 'Ballytullagh', his general descriptions of the parish. This leaves Chapter VII free to be the grim, short story of the eviction, its pathos unimpaired by other details of parish life. The inclusion of the raffle got up to buy Rose Muldoon a shawl and the dance without which a raffle is incomplete is not irrelevant but a natural consequence of the eviction; equally natural are Dr. Larmour's wrathful outburst and Neal's summons to attend a Ribbon meeting the following night. These occurrences are all motivated by the act of

dispossession and belong with the inevitable medley of emotions that accompany a tragedy. One of the shortest chapters, it is a very model of dramatic unity.

One would expect the transfer of lines from Part VII to Chapter V to have made it much longer than the corresponding part of the Fraser's version. This is not so because in the original number, 'The Bad Parish', are portraits which are omitted in their entirety from the 1864 version, namely, the portraits of Father Flynn, Father Con Macguire and Father James McGann, which together run to forty-three lines. Although this omission is an error of judgment on Allingham's part, it mars the flavour of the poem rather than its structure. The real weakness of the poem is in his failure to justify the length of his final chapters by the use of uniformly good diction, disciplined description and dramatic acumen.

Within this narrative structure, so painstakingly built, many excellently delineated characters move. Their portraiture recalls Dryden's penetrating sketches, Pope's wit, Crabbe's irony, Goldsmith's gentleness, Carleton's parochial actuality and Chaucer's physiognomical description. The thumb-nail sketches of the 'petty

princes' of the land are brilliantly revealing. Allingham's cuts are made with a razor not a truncheon and the result is slick, without being superficial, satire. Sir Ulick Harvey, Lord Crasher, Finlay, Dysart, Brown, the O'Hara and Pigot are netted like insects and mounted for inspection. Sir Ulick heads the band of landlords:

Born in the purple, he could hardly know
Less of the tides of life that round him flow.
The Laws were for the Higher Classes made;
But while the Lower gratefully obey'd,
To patronize them you had his consent,
Promote their comfort, to a safe extent,
And teach them - just enough, and not too much;
Most careful lest with impious hand you touch
Order and grade as plann'd by Providence.¹
.....
His judgment feeble, and his self-will strong,²
He had his way, and that was mostly wrong ...

Crasher, the absentee is damned by the lines:

-
1. p. 23, ll. 36-44.
 2. p. 24, ll. 52-3.

He lives abroad; a firm in Molesworth Street
Doing what their attorneyship thinks meet.¹

.....
Twice only in the memory of mankind
Lord Crasher's proud and noble self appear'd;
Up-river, last time, in his yacht he steer'd,
With crew of seven, a valet, a French cook,
And one on whom askance the gentry look,
Although a pretty, well-dress'd demoiselle, -
Not Lady Crasher,

My Lord with gouty legs,
Drinks Baden-Baden water, and life's dregs,
With cynic jest inlays his black despair,²
And curses all things from his easy chair.²

Finlay, the 'Prince of Glenawn', is epitomized with
uncompromising candour:

No fool by birth, but hard, and praised for wise
The more he learn'd all softness to despise,
Married a shrew for money, louts begot,
Debased his wishes to a vulgar lot,
To pence and pounds coin'd all his mother-wit,
And ossified his nature bit by bit.
A dull cold home, devoid of every grace,
Distrust and dread in each dependent's face,
Bullocks and turnips, mighty stacks of grain,
Plethoric purse, impoverish'd heart and brain, -
Such Finlay's life; and when that life shall end,
He'll die as no man's debtor, no man's friend.³

In contrast to the wealthy landlords who often
use the intelligence of agents to make their estates

1. p. 25, ll. 74-5.

2. p. 26, ll. 89-95; 100-3.

3. p. 27, ll. 110-21.

prosper, is Dysart, the sloppy, incompetent owner of Termon:

on the river side,
Domain and mansion of insolvent pride,
..... drawing from ancestral ground
One sterling penny for each phantom pound
Of rent-roll, lives, when all the truth is known,
Mere factor in the place he calls his own;
.....
Despised for cunning, and for malice fear'd,
Yet still by custom and old name endear'd
To Celtic minds, who also better like
A rule of thumb than Gough's arithmetic, -
Dysart has shuffled on, to this good day, 1
Let creditors and courts do what they may. 1

His portrait is not complete unless he is seen against the background of his run-down house and in showing this Allingham manages to indict the whole class of dirty, lazy, incompetent squires who are as much to blame for ruining Ireland as absentees or tyrants at home:

The house is wondrous large, and wondrous mean;
Its likeness year by year more rarely seen;
A ragged billiard-table decks the hall,
Abandon'd long ago of cue and ball,
With whips and tools and garments litter'd o'er,
And lurking dogs possess the dangerous floor.
Ghost, from Proconsul Rutland's time, show in
To this great shabby room, which heard the din
Of bet and handicap, oath, toast, and song,
From squires and younger sons, a vanish'd throng,
Who drank much wine, who many foxes slew,

1. p. 28, ll. 126-31; ll. 138-43.

Hunted themselves by creditors all through,
And caught at last, or fairly run to earth;
A cold and ghastly room of bygone mirth.¹

Trollope confirms the existence of Dysarts in The McDermots of Ballycloran (1847) and Lever in Lord Kilbobbin (1870) but it is a tribute to Allingham's skill that he can suggest in a dozen lines the whole sorry history of a house probably set on the downward path by an attempt to live up to the splendour of entertainment established by 'hair-brained',² Rutland's vice-regal court in the late seventeen hundreds.

By the time Allingham reaches shrewd, wealthy Isaac Brown, he is indulging a rich humour and thrusting at his quarry with the ridicule of Molière, Swift and Pope:

All preachers love him; he can best afford
The unctuous converse and the unctuous board;
Ev'n the poor nag, slow-rattling up the road
In ancient rusty gig a pious load,
Wags his weak tail, and strikes a brisker trot,
Approaching Brownstown, Isaac's pleasant lot.
For though at Poor-House Board was never known
A flintier Guardian-angel than good Brown,
As each old hag and shivering child can tell, -
Go dine with Isaac and he feeds you well.

1. p. 29, ll. 144-57.

2. Locker Lampson, G., A Consideration of The State of Ireland, (1907), p. 38.

And hear him pray, with fiercely close-shut eyes!
Gentle at first the measured accents rise,
But soon he waxes loud, and storms the skies.
Deep is the chest, and powerful bass the voice,
The language of a true celestial choice;
Handorgan-wise the holy phrases ground,
Go turning and returning round and round;
The sing-song duly runs from low to high;
The choruss'd groans at intervals reply;
Till after forty minutes' sweat and din,
Leaving perhaps too little prayer within,
Dear Brother Brown, athletic babe of grace,
Resumes his bench, and wipes his reeking face.¹

O'Hara, 'the rigid Catholic' completes the picture
(Pigot and Bloomfield excepted) of the 'Eight Lords of
Land, terrestrial gods', and is summed up in lines
sharp, but lacking the humour of Brown's picture:

Disgusted long since with a public life,
Hates England's name, but censures noisy strife;
Is proud, dyspeptic, taciturn, and shy,
Learn'd in forgotten trifles, dead and dry;
Secluded from the troublous world he lives,
And secret help to church and convent gives.
Low-let, ill-till'd, and unimproved, his lands
Are left in lazy, sneaking flatterers' hands,
Most of them of his Bailiff-steward's tribe,
Nor any who withhold that rascal's bribe.²

The excellence of these portraits is rivalled
by the presentation of the Ribbonmen in Chapter VII.
The Ribbon Lodge is found by picking one's way along a

1. pp. 31-2, ll. 191-213.

2. p. 34, ll. 248-57.

narrow lane and stopping at Mat Gorman's 'dirty door', inside of which a sow is 'lodger' upon the floor, and 'climbing a 'shaky stair' to Matthew's schoolroom where 'rough desks and benches range along the wall' and windows are 'patched with inky leaf and clout'. The gallery of rogues begins with 'the knot of "labourin' boys"' who

Yawn wide and mope, till whiskey in their brain
Kindle its foolish fire, with flashes vain
Wrapt in dull smoke, to send them blundering back
O'er field and fence upon their homeward track.
From outhouse loft, at need, or barnfloor bed,
The clumsy body and the stupid head
Escape, with matchbox, or with stick in fist,
To burn or batter as their leaders list,
With knife to maim the cows, or loaded gun
To rake a peaceful window and to run.¹

They stand for upstarts everywhere, in any age. They are the unruly mob who represent man without reason and who only add to friction and feud by obedience to the orders of unscrupulous superiors. The whole chapter is an indictment of sedition and might almost rank as an addition to the Yahoo tradition in literature. Skilfully condensed, it is as effective a description of the pernicious nature of Ribbonism as Carleton's graphic, exciting story of Rody the Rover or The

1. pp. 157-8, ll. 41-50.

Ribbonman (1845).

Excellent too, is the picture of Bill McGann,
the 'keen, small, withered, disputatious man',

With spectacles on nose, and quid in jaw,
Ready to argue histh'ry, po'thry, law,
Religion, science, or the latest news.
Bill earns his frugal crust by making shoes;
Debate his recreation, - most of all
With "Lordy" Mullan glad to try a fall;¹

and of the Delegate, which in its impressive unloveliness
and vitality suggests Chaucer's unsqueamish portrayal
of the Summoner, or Hogarth's mean-faced rakes,

Big, elderly, and spare,
With serious begging-letter-writer's air,
Some thin locks train'd across his yellow skull,
His features large, yet all the lines are dull,
Small watery eyes, but not a watery nose,
Huge fungoid ears, harsh skin befitting those;²

and of the Ribbon Parish Master Tim Nulty,

That light-built, long-neck'd man with 'brocket'
cheeks.
Spoilt priest, attorney's extra clerk, and then
Sub-tax collector, handy with his pen.³

Dan Mullan, 'being as orator their boast', displays
the streak of Dickensian exuberance and humour all too

1. p. 158, ll. 55-60.

2. p. 160, ll. 91-6.

3. p. 161, ll. 109-11.

infrequent in Allingham:

A little man with shoulders set awry,
Huge head, flat nose, a grey and furious eye;
Lame in one leg, he limps upon a stick,
Yet few with all their limbs can move so quick;
Daniel's chief joy is hearing Daniel speak;
Strong words are his, though utter'd in a squeak;
And first he flings a fiery glance around,
Like chief to warriors on the battle-ground.

.....
'Drink, ye pathriot crew,¹
Our frinds in sweet Ameriky an' France!
To liberáte us may they quick advance,
An' with five hundre' thousan' Paddies bould,
The Sunburst on their great green flag unrowl'd,
Sweep every Englishman from say to say
Into perdition! - O trice glorious day! -
Immortal cause of Ayrin! - broadsoord, pike,
An' faugh-a-ballagh,² boys! we'll nobly strike
For libertee, for —³

The lines here seize the threshing motions and the bravado of the drunk as well as the brawling tone of Irish patriotism. One is struck also by the purebred talk, so different from the determined Paddyism of writers like Dion Boucicault whose Irishmen are a travesty. Dan Mullan's colourful language is real; that of Myles in The Colleen Bawn false and ridiculous:

-
1. p. 167, ll. 219-28.
 2. Clear the way.
 3. p. 168, ll. 229-37.

I'll give ye a cowstail to swally, and make ye think it's a chapter in St. Patrick, ye spalpeen! When he called Eily the mistress of Hardress Cregan, I nearly stretched him - begorra, I was full of sudden death that minute! Oh, Eily! acushla agrah asthore machree! as the stars watch over Innisfallen, and as the wathers go round it and keep it, so I watch and keep round you, mavourneen.¹

It is indicative of the malice of circumstances and the perversity of man that while The Colleen Bawn with its broth-of-a-bhoyism was playing in almost every city in the United Kingdom and in the United States, Allingham was pleading with Macmillan's 'to give the little book a lift in the magazine just now', and trying desperately to get rid of the 1869 issue. Boucicault's stage Paddyism, misrepresentative though it was of the real Ireland, was triumphant, while Laurence Bloomfield, a true picture of the country, was received with a rustle of polite interest and heart-breakingly small sales.

The great value of the portraiture in Laurence Bloomfield is that it is not one-sided and it covers a good deal of ground. There are, besides 'the Eight

1. Nineteenth Century Plays, ed. G. Rowell, (1953), p.188.

Lords of Land', a dozen types, drawn as fully, who reflect the attitudes and opinions current in Ireland in the nineteenth century. There are: 'great Nassau Blunderbore who is convinced

'Each Papist is his Queen's and Landlord's foe,
And every Priest conspires to keep him so!' ¹

'angry Duff' the believer in force:

'Sooner than let this Ballytullagh stand,
'I'd tear it down, by Jove, with my own hand, -
.....
'By George I leave no man of mine in doubt, -
'Vote as I bid you, or I turn you out!'
True Orangemen were Blunderbore and Duff,
Each spoke his mind, and each made noise enough;²

and Parson Boyd, bland, urbane:

Who travels, has a house in Mountjoy-square,
And to his parish comes for change of air,³
.....
'I can't think ill of every popish priest,'
Says Boyd, - 'our own are harmless men, at least;
Vulgar no doubt, and very wrong, of course,
But still, admit the truth, we might have worse.'⁴

-
1. p. 41, ll. 41-2.
 2. p. 44, ll. 87-8; ll. 93-6.
 3. p. 42, ll. 55-6.
 4. p. 43, ll. 71-4.

One of the best portraits of the lot is that of the skilful doctor in Chapter VII. A hater of Papists, enraged by the filth, laziness, and obstinacy of the inhabitants of Ballytullagh, and the rottenness masked by the name of patriotism, he has little patience with Ireland but a good deal of kindness for the sick. His bitter denunciation of nationalism, one suspects, is wrung out of him by the very pity he rejects for a people he sees as their own worst enemy:

'Ireland, forsooth, "a nation once again!"
If Ireland was a nation, tell me when?
For since the civil modern world began
What's Irish History? Walks the child a man?
.....
What Ireland might have been, if wisely school'd,
I know not: far too briefly Cromwell ruled.
We see the melting of a barbarous race,
Sad sight, I grant, sir, from their ancient place;
But always, everywhere, it has been so;
Red-Indians, Bushmen, Irish, - they must go!'¹

The sketches of the Catholic clergy are the least interesting of the lot and decidedly inferior to those Allingham used in the Fraser's version but did not choose to retain in the first published edition of the poem.

1. p. 148, ll. 195-8; ll. 203-8.

Here are Father O'Flynn,¹ Father Con Macguire and
Father James McGann as they appear in Fraser's for the
first and last time:

Neal was baptized by good old Father Flynn,
Kind easy soul, who thoughta laugh no sin.
Slow as he march'd along, or jogg'd as slow
On 'Bounce', a hunter twenty years ago,
With humourous eye, broad hat, and yellow wig,
Three spacious coats to make his bulk more big,
Around his neck a cravat three turns thick
Stout gaiter'd legs and silver-headed stick,
Whoever met was always glad to meet him
Nor Orangemen themselves refused to greet him;
Parson and Presbyterian with a smile
Own'd his familiar face and life devoid of guile.
To him succeeded Father Con Macguire,
Keen, slender, swarthy, full of life and fire,
Witty and courteous, friends with old and young,
French and Italian ready to his tongue
(A Paris student, finish'd off in Rome),
With lords and ladies he was quite at home,
But knew the people's notions, words and ways;
Some vanity and brag his chief dispraise;
And loosely would he handle things divine,
Yet kept safe hold perhaps, - to judge him is not mine.
Young Father Con, not ignorant of life,
Quick and undaunted, yet avoiding strife,
Gave hand to heretics (on this side hell),
Help'd the new Schools along, and wish'd them well,
Whilst legal churchmen proudly stood aloof,
Nor used with Romish Priests a common roof.
At Gubacreeny School this priest had found
Neal the best boy, and made his praise resound, -
Had lent him books, discoursed him after Mass,
And fed his hopes; - but Father Con alas!

1. Probably modelled on Fr. John Cummins, a friend of
Allingham's father. See Diary, p. 21.

Caught typhus fever at a poor man's bed
And one sad morn 'twas whispered, 'he is dead',
Father Adair now reigneth in his stead,
Whose curate first was Father James M'Gann,
A small, submissive, mild, lymphatic man,
After his duty tending to peruse
Permitted books and Catholic reviews,
Poor diet, thin but greasy broth, scrag-made
And poignant by the pepper-caster's aid; -
Whose curate now is Austin O'Muldoon
A strong, dark, sombre man of thirty one.¹

It is difficult to account for the omission.

Perhaps Allingham thought the poem long enough.

Although there is some awkwardness in syntax and metre it is not beyond correction or sufficient reason for scrapping the whole. He was not likely to have been scrupulous of offending Catholics and if they were touchy his references to Father Austin as 'sullen and side-long-eyed' (in both versions), and to knowledge in the Catholic schools being considered poison unless 'cooked in the black ecclesiastic pot' were as likely to have ruffled their feathers as any remark about Father Con's loose handling of things divine. It seems more likely than any of these reasons, that between the publication of

1. (March, 1863), pp. 351-2, ll. 142-84.

the fifth number in Fraser's in March 1862 Allingham was irked by some bishop's pastoral letter or some current Catholic opposition to the National School System and in a moment of spleen cut out the Addisonian-Chaucerian portraits of more compromising priests and left only the conspiratorial figures of Father Austin and Father John Adair who would suit his anti-clerical tone better than the charming three he penned first. They would weaken his picture of what he considered a narrow Catholicism and contradict his anti-clerical outburst in Chapter XI. The obvious relish with which he cites the success of Bloomfield's Model School for Lisnamoy and the defeat of Father Adair's plans to have the Christian Brothers, suggests that Allingham was wrought up about a current educational crisis and was at odds with the idea that priests were benevolent and humble or anything but conspirators and obstructionists.

Allingham's anti-Catholic bias was not Orange bigotry but an incapability to accept or understand organized religion; a psychological state dating back to his early years. As a child (and later in life) he found the Service of the Established Church meaningless, and

his family's strict adherence to it bred in him a distaste for Churches and even an antipathy towards the idea of Eternal Happiness.¹ Taken clandestinely to Mass one day by his nurse he was repelled by the poverty of the congregation and the intonation of the priests. Later he argued with another nurse, Kitty Murray, that Protestants were superior to Catholics because, 'the Catholics you see, are poor people'. As he grew older the divisions between the two sects upset him and these together with his rejection of dogma made him completely unorthodox and hence prone to look on all Catholics as priest-ridden. That some Irish priests in the nineteenth century were narrow and tyrannical does not justify the scorn he pours out on the ideal of Catholic education and one would be unable to respect his judgment if it were not apparent that he is without real malice, for in the sixth Chapter² he is quick to acknowledge the injustice done to Catholics by past laws and in the fifth Chapter³ his description of the Canon of the Mass

1. Diary, p. 23.

2. p. 130, ll. 235-40.

3. p. 108, ll. 405-9; p.109, ll. 410-2.

is noticeably reverent. Had the Protestants been as forward in their claims as the Catholics, they would have felt the sharp edge of Allingham's tongue also.

The characterization of Laurence has been found weak. The Spectator's comment that the poem does not culminate in any over-mastering individual interest, that the types sketched do not become subservient to some one central and more deeply studied character¹ is justified only if Allingham intended his poem to be a psychological study. His own remark in the Preface of the 1869 issue, vague as it is,

The title of the poem is intended to indicate that Laurence's work, and its effects on his own life and character, make him the central figure in the picture, not finally as landlord, but as man.²

need not be interpreted as an expressed intention to write a Crime and Punishment or a Mayor of Casterbridge. Laurence is to be shown as landlord and man but not necessarily minutely delineated as a man. It is not a case of attempting mental analysis and failing. Laurence is as central to Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland as Tom is

1. (April 30, 1864), p. 507.

2. p. v.

to Tom Jones. As the pivot which allows the action to swing from misery to hope, as the one person who develops in the poem (the change in Neal Doran is simply stated not shown) he is the central figure without being the most interesting one. He is the chief carrier of Allingham's message and a man with a message is immediately handicapped as a free character. Also, dull, conventional and idealistic young men like Bloomfield are very true to life and in using the type Allingham is only following the earlier tradition of unimpressive heroes which runs, almost unbroken from Fielding to Dickens - Emily Bronte excepted - until the 'moderns' George Eliot, Meredith and Hardy undertake the analytical novel. One would not of course object to a more lively Bloomfield - he is utterly without humour or charm - but in this particular case it is beside the point to demand a more dominating hero. Moreover he is not as tame as he is alleged to be if one considers how he stands up to Pigot; nor is his delineation superficial as a more careful examination of the poem will show.

The opinion of the Dublin Review that Laurence Bloomfield had 'its own more proper and legitimate success as a regular pastoral', is very apt and invites closer inspection.

A pastoral is a portrayal of country life allowing room for realism as well as rustic idealization and pretty conceits. Allingham's pastoralism is the realistic kind that avoids the partiality of both Crabbe and Goldsmith, whom he is said to resemble, and is free from the sentimental nostalgia of The Deserted Village and the unrelieved gloom of the pictures in The Borough. He rejects with Crabbe the idyllic conventions of Corydons and Phyllises, flutes and happiness unalloyed:

On Mincio's banks, in Caesar's bounteous reign,
If Tityrus found the Golden Age again,
Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong,
Mechanic echoes of the Mantuan song?
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where Virgil, not where Fancy, leads the way?
Yes, thus the Muses sing of happy swains,
Because the Muses never knew their pains;¹

and chooses to look at the countryside and the peasants as they really are. Thus his ruralism has a rare charm and truth and belongs to the early and genuine Theocritan tradition. Paddies in ragged hats driving donkeys hung with creels, cornstacks seen through rusty sycamores, pigs, tattered children, tumble-down shacks, broken stone

1. 'The Village', Bk.I, Poetical Works of George Crabbe, ed. A.J. and R.M. Carlyle, (1932), p. 34.

fences, black bogland, pools of dirty water - 'Paddy's castle moat' - are shown to the reader, as well as young folk jigging on the green and colleens doing their 'broidery in the shade'. The hum of the housewife's wheel, the crowing of the cock, the swish of a scythe, the lowing of cattle, the fiddle squeaking 'Heart o' my Kitty', bonfires on St. John's Eve, the bedlam of conflicting brogues at the fair, and the tinny music of the carousals sound the activity in the villages. Money in the stocking, Kemps and Kayleys, fairy doctor's rhymes to help a headache or a cow gone dry, asses' shoes for keeping harm away and blessed candles for death beds indicate the customs, superstitions and faith of the peasant Celt. Scenes of squalor are succeeded by landscapes that have all the full-bodied movement and vigour of the masterpieces of the Breughels:

Ere yet the sun has dried on hedge and furze
Their silver veils of dewy gossamers,
Along the winding road to Lisnamoy
The drover trudges and the country boy,
With cows that feign would crop its fringe of sward,
And pigs, their hindfoot jerking in a cord,
And bleating sheep; the farmer jogs his way,
Or plies his staff, and legs of woollen gray;
The basket-bearing goodwives slowly move,
White-capp'd, with colour'd kerchief tied above,

On foot, or in the cart-front placed on high
To jolt along in lumbering luxury;
Men, women, pigs, cows, sheep, and horses tend
One way, and to the Harvest Fair they wend;¹

and this robustness, in turn, gives way to the gentle
beauty of the spring and summer sequences:

When eager skylarks at the gate of morn
Keep singing to the sower of the corn
In his brown field below; the noisy rooks
Hold council in the grove-top; shelter'd nooks
Bring forth young primroses and violets;
The woodland swarms with buds, the ash-tree sets
Dark lace upon his bough, - with tenderest green
The larch-spray tufted, pallid leaflets seen
Unfolding and uncrumpling day by day.²

How sure-footed Allingham is here in his use of the
couplet. No monotony, no school-boy precision of
pentameters beaten out like the time of a self-taught
fiddler tapping his foot. The loveliness of these lines
is chiefly in the tenderness with which he etches flowers
and trees and echoes birds' songs, the same lyrical
tenderness with which Brahms set down his notes for the
second and third movements of his Symphony No.1. in C. Minor.

His joy in the countryside and his sensitiveness to
its features,

Rich are the warm, long, lustrous, golden hours,
That nourish the green javelins of the wheat,

1. pp. 179-80, ll. 1-14.

2. pp. 235-6, ll. 240-8.

The delicate flax, the tufted clover sweet,
And barley's drooping beard, and speckled oats.
The yorlin's trembling sigh of pleasure floats
On sultry wind; the landrail's hoarse crake-crake
Still keeps the meadows and cornfields awake
When two clear twilights mingle in the sky
Of glowing June,¹

result in such individual beauty that one is tempted to suggest that Allingham's pictures of rural Ireland, delicately detailed and full of acute observation, are more satisfying to the reader than Goldsmith's recollections of Auburn. His landscapes are misty; his hawthorn bush is never described; the colours of the seasons do not light up his lines; his portraits are of the internal man, physiognomy is neglected. Although his metrical skill is greater than Allingham's and the quality of his verse uniformly higher its charm is the sentimental one of 'auld lang syne' more easily achieved than the Donegal poet's aim to charm the indifferent by a realism that shared the pretty and unpretty. Undoubtedly he studied the ease of Goldsmith's lines but he was not drawn to imitate anything else:

1. pp. 255-6. ll. 12-20.

Goldsmith's Deserted Village is a very elegant and finished piece, as by an English Virgil, but what does it show us? of what is it a picture? There is not a single Irish touch from beginning to end.¹

Although Allingham puts one in mind of Goldsmith he is closer to Crabbe. There is the same sturdy detail, the same determination to tell the truth and gloss nothing, the same sharp phraseology, without the deep psychological insight into human character. It is doubtful that Allingham could have portrayed anything as moving and terrifying as the half-mad remorse of Peter Grimes, but had he continued to write narrative verse he would have done well to study Crabbe's chief talents: brevity, irony and a grasp of the motives of human character, and in that way made his art more concentrated. George Eliot noticed the Crabbean influence in Laurence Bloomfield; so too did Henry Sidgwick in a letter to Mrs. Clough in 1869 in which he spoke of the inferiority of Clough's Mari-Magno tales to Crabbe's, although he admitted 'there was great skill and faculty' in the 'limpid ease of the style' and that he had been made to feel this by a comparison with the only other Crabbean poem he knew of

1. By the Way, (1912), p. 112.

in recent times, Allingham's Laurence Bloomfield.¹

Laurence Bloomfield owes nothing to Mari-Magno. Even if he had seen the MSS.² he would not have been influenced by it because he dismissed the tales very summarily in his article on Clough:

They are all very modern and matter-of-fact both in style and substance, and include many characteristic and interesting remarks on life.³

And on the whole he was not enthusiastic about Clough's poetry which he considered wholesome brown bread with little enticement for the palate and without any lyric faculty or feeling⁴ although he thought enough of him to follow his advice given in a letter in 1850:

My own opinion is still against your frittering away your power in short things - follow Chaucer and facts.⁵

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1. Sidgwick, A.S.& E.M.S., Henry Sidgwick, a Memoir, (1906), p. 216.
 2. Not improbable. A friend of the Cloughs, and had been consulted by Mrs.Clough about other MSS. of her husband. See Diary, p. 107.
 3. Fraser's, (October, 1866), p.534.
 4. By the Way, (1912), p. 110.
 5. Correspondence of A.H.Clough, ed.F.L.Mulhauser, (1957), Vol.I, p. 287.

Crabbe he did not discuss but undoubtedly would have thought him prosy too. Chaucer was his ideal and he attempted his method. Silent about Pope he nevertheless practised his ringing sarcasm; Crabbe he absorbed more deeply than he knew; yet one cannot say he imitated any of them. Laurence Bloomfield has strong individuality derived from a successful combination of satire and pastoralism.

Allingham's use of heroic couplets suggests the influence of Pope and Dryden as well as Chaucer and Crabbe. Many of them are crisp, telling and as neatly turned as Pope's without their epigrammatic brilliance, forceful alliteration and general richness of language:

Gowns, books, degrees, will leave a fool a fool,
But wit is best when wit has gone to school;¹

Amelia thinks Pre-Raphaelites are wrong,
Complains of Robert Browning's knotty song,
And Pictor, hot in cheek confutes the fair,²
But soon forgives her for her gold-red hair;

Arithmetic the one true Church must own,
And Grammar have its orthodoxy known;
Or else, keep free from learning's dangerous leaven,
Guided, in blessed ignorance, to Heaven.³

1. p.10, ll. 128-9.

2. p.266, ll. 216-9.

3. p.244, ll. 404-7.

More Popian still is his scornful inventory of Ireland's misrulers in the style of the dunce parade of The Dunciad:

Edwards and Henrys waste the land by turns,
The bloated King her ancient worship spurns,
Entrench'd within the fortress of her frill
His sour-faced daughter works her shrewish will,
Cajoles or strikes, unpitying, to destroy
Fraternal patriotism, her worst annoy.
Ultonia last its undulating fields
And dark-blue mountains to th'invader yields;
From far Tyrconnell, like a northern gale,
O'Donnell sweeps upon the English Pale;
O'Neill defends the passes of Tyrone;-
Last of the princes, these are also gone.

Let pedant James now part the plunder'd lands,
And chaffer out his bag of Bloody Hands;
Let slippery Charles depute his squire, Black Tom;
The blacker "Curse of Cromwell" spread its gloom;
From Orange William sneaking Shemus fly,
And brave men for a coward vainly die;
Where slaughter ends let treachery begin; 1
Ireland must lose, no matter who may win.

Here however is a low-powered Pope, incapable of the intellectual gymnastics and fire necessary to maintain the high standard of the master's verse. The above shows Allingham unable to keep up the pace. The thrill of O'Donnell's descent on the English and O'Neill's defence of the pass at Tyrone, is lost in the anti-climax of 'Last of the princes they are gone', and the bitter

1. pp. 129-30, ll. 215-34.

sarcasms about 'pedant James' and 'slippery Charles' are spoilt by the unforgivable blunder of rhyming 'Tom' and 'gloom'. It is just this sort of thing that has brought the charge of an uneven style against Allingham. It is present again in the following:

Mud hovels fringe the "Fair-green" of this town,
A spot misnamed, at every season brown,
O'erspread with countless man and beast today,
Which bellow, squeak, and shout, bleat, bray, and neigh.
The "jobbers" there, each more or less a rogue,
Noisy or smooth, with each his various brogue,
Cool wiry Dublin, Connaught's golden mouth,
Blunt Northern, plaintive sing-song of the South,
Feel cattle's ribs, or jaws of horses try
For truth, since men's are very sure to lie,
And shun with parrying blow and practised heed
The rushing horns, the wildly prancing steed.
The moisten'd penny greets with sounding smack¹
The rugged palm, which smites the greeting back.¹

Although the metre and diction convey vigorously the push and sway of a fair ground mob, the medley of brogues and the peculiar violence of an Irish handshake to seal a bargain struck, there is some clumsiness in the versification that mars otherwise good lines. One feels that the fourth line is hammered out for the sole purpose of finding a rhyme for 'day', and the jerky movement and

1. p. 183, ll. 71 - 84.

infelicitous phrasing of lines nine and ten are very trying to the ear; yet from such awkward phrases and forced rhymes he can swing round to the subtle understatement of

'Tis three o'clock; each noble tinker's eye,
Is wet; the trim shillelaghs wave on high;¹

which suggests that enough whiskey has been drunk for the fights to begin. Then follows the free-for-all between Neal and the tinkers. Throughout the brawl the couplets have a punching rhythm, the reader catching in them the flailing and surging of the fighters. A touch of Allingham's infrequent humour appears in the grimly funny picture of the gipsy woman following the green-coated policemen as they drag the offenders off to jail:

One tinker's faithful wife pursues their track,
A dirty baby on her dirty back,
The bright tin porringers that round her cling
Clashing and flashing gaily as they swing.²

The couplets in Laurence Bloomfield also have the Drydenian ring, especially in the sketches of the landlords. This is interesting in the face of Allingham's

1. p. 189, ll. 199 - 200.

2. p. 191, ll. 234 - 7.

rather sweeping dismissal of the author of Absolem
and Achitophel:

His verse is declamation, muscular, resonant,
witty, and essentially unpoetic; though by
dint of his critical faculty, general intelligence,
and long practice in that business of versifying
he produced some vivacious and memorable lines.
He and his like have no true brotherhood
with Chaucer and Shakespeare.¹

By 'unpoetic' Allingham means lacking true poetic
impulse, impulse more intuitive, more emotional than
mere intention or conscious effort and allied with true
Imagination rather than Fancy and revealing the highest
sensibility to beauty.² 'He and his like' may or may
not include Pope, whom he does not mention, an omission
which leads one to suspect he shared the contempt many
of his contemporaries had for the Augustan's conception
of poetry. The question then arises what made him choose

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1. By The Way, (1912), p. 104. The fragments collected
by Mrs. Allingham in this volume lose some of their
value by being undated. However, in this particular
case the judgment seems permanent because Dryden is
still rated low in 1880. See Diary, p. 301.
 2. 'On Poetry', Varieties in Prose, Vol. III, pp. 270-1.
Originally one of the 'Afternoon Lectures on Literature
and Art', given in Dublin, May, 1865; later published
in Fraser's, April, 1867, pp. 523-36.

a metrical form used by the poets he seemed to reverence least? Admiration for Chaucer undoubtedly who also wrote in heroic couplets; a desire, perhaps to prove that a metrical scheme suitable for pamphleteering was not incompatible with lyricism; a dissatisfaction with current practices, and a yen to be different. His remark in a letter to Carlyle in 1850 that 'to avoid writing in most of the forms now in use is one of the prime mental sanitary measures',¹ suggests he may mean metrical forms as well as other kinds. It is ironic to think his choice of the heroic couplet may well have prejudiced anti-Popians against Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland and diminished its chance of popularity.

The diction of the poem includes many double-barrelled words, chiefly adjectives, striking in effect, precise and sturdily individual, without tending to conceit. The best are: 'clod-crushing', 'moon-shaped', 'rich-brained', 'grove-tufted', 'ghoul-greedy', 'back-lane' (lodgings), 'low-murmuring' (secrets), 'begging-letter-writer's' (air), 'fly-like' (zeal), (giants) 'church-tower' (big)

1. Unpublished MS., National Library of Scotland. Letter, August 27, 1850.

'chalk-white', 'dark-fruited', 'duffel-grey', 'sidelong-eyed', 'house-and-village sprinkled' (plain), 'water-gnawn' (fantastic stones), 'bitter-bad' (temper). (Courage drawn dry to) 'earthquake-ebb' and the reference to Parson Boyd's second daughter who 'Sunday-schools' (the drowsy poor) are excellent examples of his infrequent but equally striking nounal and verbal transpositions.

He gains effects also by the use of the very plainest adjectives, nouns and verbs as in the sardonic

There sits the sturdy Bailiff big with fate;¹
the sad inference of

It should have been a peaceful, grateful time;
But o'er this landscape enmity and crime
Like shadow lay. The harvesting is done;
The shadow stays in spite of moon or sun;²

or the Gaelic intonation of

King Brian he is dead, who smote the Dane.³

The plainness and freedom from conventions of these lines contribute to the general originality of the poem.

1. p. 205, l. 114.

2. p. 36, ll. 280-3.

3. p. 128, l. 210.

If the versification and the language were of a consistently high quality throughout, Laurence Bloomfield would rank as a great work. Unfortunately the writing is often feeble; forced rhymes, couplets too regular and devoid of invention, syntax halting and school-boyish are too frequent to be overlooked. The awkwardness Allingham apologized for in the 1869 Preface is affirmed by couplets like the following:

One who has studied, travell'd, lived, and thought,
Is brave, and modest, as a young man ought; 1

You look, and guess him dangerous and deep,
Full of dark plans that make your flesh to creep; 2

Gay speed we. That's the steward's house, - his name
Neal Doran (he's the same, and not the same);
His wife and he are up at Croghan Hall,
Best aids to trim our little festival; 3

If Bloomfield were an angel from the skies
They could not hunger more with ears and eyes; 4

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1. p. 6, ll. 53-4.
 2. p. 98, ll. 212-3.
 3. pp. 239 - 40, ll. 319-22.
 4. p. 208, ll. 172-3.

Where Denis Coyle and Bridget welcome you;
Not as the dismal "Royal" wont to do,
With shabby waiter, old and drunk, proud host
And sluttish chambermaid, poor fare, high cost.¹

Faulty rhymes like 'blood' and 'mood', 'course' and 'nurse', 'course' and 'worse', 'Brown' and 'grown', 'host' and 'cost', 'Tom' and 'doom' are unforgivable as are his clumsy combinations of 'but when', 'although but', 'though but in (boyhood's down), 'but not by' and 'ever when'.

However, the passages of direct speech are almost entirely free from awkwardness, a fact more striking when one remembers Allingham's self-acknowledged difficulties with the dramatic action of his narrative poetry.² Although his story often lacks dramatic impact, the speech of his Irish peasants never does. A curious oversight by his reviewers is their failure to recognize the potentialities for literature in the idiom of Laurence Bloomfield. It has 'no deference at all to the stage traditions of Paddyism',³ and has 'not one unmeaning line or phrase written at random',⁴ which is another way of saying that the characters

1. p. 242, ll. 359-62.

2. See Chapter I above, p. 26.

3. Laurence Bloomfield, (1864), Preface, p.vii.

4. Preface, (1869), p.v.

speaking the language of the Celt whose Gaelic is forgotten and is replaced by the language of the Conqueror (but overlaid by memories of the ancient language) and that the diction has meaning for these Celts. This diction however seeks to avoid what Allingham considers the impurities of a 'corrupt dialect'.¹ His first reference to Irish-English as corrupt is made in 1855 in the Preface to The Music-Master and two series of Day and Night Songs when he confesses that he does not find it easy in ballad writing to employ a diction that might hope to come home to the Irish peasant, who speaks English, using his customary phraseology and keeping within the laws of poetic taste and the rules of grammar:

for that phraseology, being as regards its structural peculiarities but an imperfect or distorted expression, not an ancient dialect like that of Scotland, is generally too corrupt (though often forcible) to bear transplantation into poetry;²

and that the difficulty in using words in their exact significance which popular custom has assigned makes 'the choice of words for poetry in Irish-English narrowly limited,

1. Preface, (1864), p.vii.

2. p.viii.

instead of there being that accession both of variety and raciness which is sometimes in the gift of a genuine peculiar dialect'.¹ He mentions it again in the Preface of the 1864 edition of Laurence Bloomfield, but it is conspicuously absent from the new preface of the 1869 issue and by 1871 he has modified his 'corrupt dialect' to 'little peculiarities unusual forms, some of them old-fashioned English, some translated or adapted from Gaelic forms'.² He still maintains, however, that Irish-English cannot be considered a 'distinct dialect like the Scotch' and that a 'not unimportant poetic result might possibly be attained by the union of poetic genius with a knowledge at once familiar and exact of Irish life, and of Irish-English idioms'.³ This, as A.P. Graves points out, is an important modification of view:

and surely such forms, derived as they are from Shakespearian English and classical Gaelic, are as ancient and respectable in

1. Ibid., p.ix.

2. Varieties in Prose, Vol.II, pp.130-1. Originally, 'In Scotland', one of the 'Rambles of Patricius Walker', Fraser's, (December, 1871), p.755.

3. Ibid., p.131.

their historic and literary associations as the idioms of the modern Scotch dialect.¹

Quite so! What Allingham means by refusing Irish-English the name of a 'distinct dialect like the Scotch' is certainly not clear. It is a mere quibbling to distinguish, as his argument would if applied, 'Tam O'Shanter' as 'distinct dialect' and 'The Night Before Larry was Stretched' or the 'Cruiskeen Lawn' as something less.

Although, in my opinion, he overstated the difficulties of writing poetry addressed to readers who spoke two kinds of English, by under-valuing the intelligence of both the Irish peasants and the English-Irish, he was right to stress the need for a proper examination of Irish-English. He himself did more than he realized to put into poetry the genuine speech of the Irish peasants he knew from County Donegal to County Wexford to Waterford. As he tramped around Ireland listening to the songs and conversation of the natives he was doing exactly what Synge had done when he went to the Aran Islands and used his ears to the best advantage. He anticipated Synge, Yeats and Lady Gregory

1. 'William Allingham', Transactions Royal Society of Literature, Vol. XXXII, (1914), p.156.

in their fight for an Irish literature and gave the Irish peasants an honourable place in poetry.

Yet he could have done more had he not indulged his mistaken notion that Irish-English provided a narrow choice of words for poetry. In his effort to avoid the crudities of stage-Paddyism and the so-called impurities of a corrupt dialect he was inclined to be as snobbish as Colonel O'Critical¹ whose Don't Pat (1885), sought to banish, along with the ungrammatical, many characteristic and legitimate practices of Irish speech. Irish-English was not limited, but Allingham limited himself by a self-imposed etiquette of language founded partly, as far as one can judge, on the fear that unless he considerably pruned his diction it would not be understood by either the English or the Irish and by a choice of metrical form which forced him to ignore many charming Irishisms with which the language was overflowing and whose rhythms would not fit the regular beat of the heroic couplet. Consequently he could not 'let himself go' as Synge and O'Casey did and his Irish peasants' speech,² good though it is, was

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1. Pseudonym for Francis S. Stoney.
 2. A glance at P.W. Joyce's English as We Speak it in Ireland (1920) will show the genuineness of the dialect in Laurence Bloomfield but also the wealth of idiom Allingham left untouched.

robbed of a good deal of wild humour and lilt. He must have had to abandon dozens of characteristic phrases because there is nothing in Laurence Bloomfield to equal in flavour, 'He died roaring like Doran's bull'; 'you're as grand as Mat Flanagan and the cat'; 'that's a fine doorful of a woman'; or the peculiar charm of, 'Oh, I did'; 'Ah, I didn't'; 'Ah, I'm tired of him for a horse'. Nor would a judicious use of proverb, redundancy and the overworked Irish Bull have made him a pander to the false and popular notion of Irish-English.

As with his other publications he did a good deal of revision on Laurence Bloomfield, the changes in the 1850⁶⁴ edition falling into four main groups: verbal changes, often the substitution of a single word that is more apt, vivid or metrically efficient (although sometimes the change is too arbitrary to be significant); altered syntax resulting in smoother, more pointed verse; the transfer of large portions of the poem from one position to another for the sake of continuity, unity, and dramatic impact, and changes in dialogue. Thus:

A sickly, timid wife; stout daughters three,
Attired as smartly as they dare to be,
And reading stealthy novels; such the rest,¹

becomes

His timid, sickly wife is sore afraid.
His three stout daughters dare not go array'd
Too smartly, but read novels unconfess'd.²

His dropping 'stealthy' as an adjective is wise.

Although he means 'stealthily' he cannot make it fit the
metre and substitutes a correct but uninventive sentence.

He again exercises perception when he changes

Ghastly and cold is now this room of mirth.³

to

A cold and ghastly room of bygone mirth;⁴

or the pretentious triteness of

'O condescend my feeble quill to aid',⁵

to

'Afford my verse a little touch of aid'.⁶

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1. Fraser's, (December, 1862), p.713, ll.228-30.
 2. (1864 version), p. 33, ll.226-8.
 3. Fraser's, (December, 1862), p. 712, l.157.
 4. (1864 version), p. 29, l. 157.
 5. Fraser's, (August, 1863), p. 208, l.9.
 6. (1864 version), p. 199, l.9.

or

Uncounted costly pleasures thinn'd his gold,
And now he lives abroad, diseased and old;¹

to

On every pleasure men can buy with gold
He surfeited; and now, diseased and old,
He lives abroad;²

the use of 'surfeited' providing a reason for Lord Crasher's 'gouty legs' and suiting much better the general description of this old roue than ~~does~~ the reference to his thinned gold, pointless in the face of his lavish yachting parties and his 'seventy properties' at home.

There are frequent examples of improved metre, as in the change from

No wish he harbour'd to convert the Jews,
Or Catholics, or Russians, or Hindoos.³

to

No wish he harbour'd to convert the Jews,
Turks, Russians, Catholics, Chinese, Hindoos;⁴

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1. Fraser's, (December, 1862), p. 710, 11.72-3.
 2. (1864 version), p. 25, 11.72-4.
 3. Fraser's, (November, 1863), p. 638, 11.162-3.
 4. (1864 version), p. 264, 11.166-7.

or

'A radical' is he in politics;
What more? his son has play'd some scampish tricks,
And skulking sullenly about the place,
Avoids his father's unforgiving face.¹

to

His son, a scamp, and always in disgrace,²
Skulks from the father's unforgiving face,

the condensation of the latter tightening the sentence structure as well as streamlining the metre.

The revisions in dialogue are frequent and not always easily accounted for. When Neal arrives to join the Ribbonmen he is challenged by the sentry. The Fraser's version gives it thus:

Off from the brow flies one assailant's hat,
And shows the grinning face of Wicklow Pat.
'Gondoutha! You're no aisy man to houl' -
We tuk you for a spy, upon my sowl! -
Ye're sarchin' for a pot o' goold, it's like?
Or maybe settin' long-lines for the pike?
Or drammin' o' the good oul' ancient time?
And sure, to love one's counthry's not a crime,
Unless by tyrants' reck'nin'. Whisht, I say!
(This to his comrade). 'By St.Pether's kay,
I'd trust him if he never tuk an oath!
Sure Nail is well acquainted with us both;³

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1. Fraser's, (December, 1862), p. 713, ll.224-7.
 2. (1864 version), p. 33, ll.224-5.
 3. (April, 1863), p. 502, ll.303-14.

while the 1864 version compresses twelve lines to eight,

Till now the hat from his assailant flies,
And shows Tim Nulty's merry-twinkling eyes,
A Ribbonman of note, who oft has fill'd
The stripling's ear with flattery not unskill'd.
'Yourself, man! - searchin' for the pot o' gold?
'By japers, you're no aisy bird to hold!
''Tis you Nail, not a spy, - I'm glad to see it.
'Luck's in our meeting: now or never be it!' ¹

and shows a deliberate avoidance of Irishisms which, although in genuine use at the time, might, if used unjudiciously, bring against him the charge of exaggeration in the Boucicault manner. The zeal with which he prunes the speeches of the flamboyant Ribbonmen, and the omission of many of the Gaelic phrases used in the original certainly indicate his intention to write what he considers a pure Irish-English. The revisions on the whole improve the poem by tightening flabby lines, omitting dull summaries and generally heighten the tone of the verse.

The changes in the 1888 edition (and consequently in the 1890 and 1893 editions) follow the same pattern but include some additions. For example, in Chapter Nine, eight lines follow the conclusion which seals Pigot's doom,

1. pp. 131-2, ll. 266-73.

'A job 'twill take him just an hour to do.
'Tis four at present. To your places, boys!'
The whisper done, they vanish without noise,¹
And mingle with the turmoil out of door,
Less crowded, more unruly than before;
For, bargains over, cash and uiskebaugh
Make all things merrier; anxious good-wives draw
Their lingering husbands homeward; dance and song
Grow wilder, and more bacchanal each throng
In every street and tavern of the town;
With darkness from the mountains creeping down.²

This brings the day at the Fair to its full circle thus increasing the unity of the chapter without lessening the suspense.

Other changes usually improve the metre, tighten the syntax or prove more apt as when,

With crew of seven, a valet, a French cook,³
is changed to

With Maltese valet and Parisian cook,⁴

or ' 'Twould only,' Jack thinks, 'drive our Agent mad.'⁵
to the more Irish

' 'Twould only make our Agent twice 'st as mad.'⁶

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1. (1864 version), p.196, 11.328-30; (1893 version), p. 96, 11.328-30.
 2. (1893 version), p. 96, 11.331-8.
 3. (1864), p. 26, 1.92.
 4. (1893), p. 11, 1.92.
 5. (1864), p. 83, 1.376.
 6. (1893), p. 41, 1.374.

and

Lord Chancellor, Archbishop, or Premier,¹

to

A Bishop, Judge, or Cabinet Minister.²

The care he lavished on the diction and the verse makes the failure of the poem the more regrettable, for his care made no difference to the sales and showed him that poetic industry was not a marketable quality unless the language happened to catch the ears of a public always vacillating in taste, and absolute in their rejection of works they might not be in the mood to accept.

Apart from its poetic quality, the language of Laurence Bloomfield is also an interesting study in linguistics as it gives many specimens of English as it was spoken in Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century. Had the reception of the poem been warmer he would undoubtedly have continued his experiments with the idiom of the Irishman and his 'attempt to cultivate English narrative poetry on entirely new ground' and done for Irish poetry what Maria Edgeworth and Carleton had

1. (1864), p. 194, l.293.

2. (1893), p. 95, l.293.

done for Irish fiction and Synge ^{was to do} for Irish drama. He would have learned to adapt his metres to the great variety of Irish-English idiom and produced an enriched peasant speech that would have inaug^uerated a literary renaissance. Instead he did not develop his interest in philology and apparently had no wish to constitute himself the one who was to unite poetic genius and an exact knowledge of Irish life and Irish-English idioms in order to attain a 'not unimportant poetic result'. One feels that the rejection of Laurence Bloomfield subsequently cost English Literature some fine dialect poetry from the man who, far from being only 'the twitterer of Ballyshannon', had spoken in deeper tones on behalf of his people, used their language to speak to them and received nothing in reply.

LAURENCE BLOOMFIELD: 'POLITICS'

Although the pastoralism of Laurence Bloomfield is perhaps its chief attraction, its merit as history is great because the author has a rare impartiality which re-assures readers that his facts are trustworthy and marks him as a competent historian. As history is seldom unbiased the truth of Anglo-Irish relations has been much obscured by the comfortable illusions of partisan writers whose favourite arguments stress either the faultlessness of Irishmen in their conduct to England or the right of Englishmen to crush an upstart nation. The value of Allingham's poem is that it explains, without exaggeration or frenzy, a portion of Irish affairs from an 'on the spot' position and is, despite its spasmodic anti-Catholicism,

free from personalities, and neither of
an orange nor a green complexion.¹

The Irish are made to shoulder their share of the blame for Ireland's ills and are not let bask in the sunshine of

1. Laurence Bloomfield, (1864), Preface, p.vii.

O'Connell's praise that they are the finest people on the face of God's earth.¹ Their laziness, improvidence and revengefulness are stacked beside the land-grabbing and intolerance of the English with the result that the reader is keenly conscious that although England has shamefully mismanaged and misused Ireland, the Irish are diminishing the justice of their claims by the virulence of their retaliative methods and their eagerness to blame all their ills on everyone but themselves. The stagey ferocity of Captain Starlight's letter to Pigot,

'Take Notis, Big gut, if one claw you lay
'On Tullah, you'll forever roo the day -
'So change your tune, and quickly, or by God
'This warnin is your last - we'll have your blud...?²

is a very symbol of the reckless, unreasoned patriotism, perpetrated by country bumpkins with a flair for leadership and play-acting. Vagabond kings, they strut their hour of majesty in the back-lanes of Ireland, striking back at an authority that galls them, without any attempt to appreciate the problems of authority or to realize that although a system is at fault relief does not lie in

2. Laurence Bloomfield, (1864), p. 49, ll.192-5.

1. O'Connor, Hon.Sir James, History of Ireland, (1926), Vol.I, p.201.

violence. Instead, like wayward children they repudiate new laws simply because they are new-fangled, fail to sift the just from the unjust laws, and go on the rampage:

Sheep were soon missing, cattle night by night
Dock'd of their tails, hamstrung, or kill'd outright;
The grazier too, at last, was waylaid, left
Of breath and blood and all but life bereft;
And every witness question'd in the case
Mere falsehood swore, with calm unblushing face.¹
.....
..... when their crimes they plan and plot,
Regard the blessed clergy scarce one jot.
Some few, the leading scoundrels and the worst,
Would laugh at Pio Nono if he curs'd;²

Jack Doran's attitude is at the other extreme. He lies too quietly in his corner deeming it 'best to hide away the wisdom he possessed',

'Tis wise to show a miserable face;
A decent hat, a wife's good shawl or gown
For higher rent may mark the farmer down;
Beside your window shun to plant a rose
Lest it should draw the prowling bailiff's nose.³

His expediency, reasonable at least, is less harmful than the unreasonableness of the disgruntled:

1. Ibid., p. 93, 11.107-12.

2. Ibid., p. 99, 11.228-31.

3. Ibid., p. 75, 11.224-8.

'But common evils which to life belong
'Patricius will account a personal wrong;
'Suckled on grievances, his mind is bent
'To charge on others all his discontent;
'Half curses England when his tooth-ache stings,
'Half blames th'Established Church for frosty springs
'And rainy summers...'¹

and less ignoble than the self-protection of the 'rich, neighbouring farmers' who are in a better position to fight for justice than the small tenant. Their selfishness does not escape Allingham's plumb-line:

noway ill-disposed,
Their cautious lips, if not their eyes, keep closed;
They dread revenge, they dread the public shame
That clings and reeks around th'informer's name;
For Ireland's long tradition, lingering yet,
Hath in two scales the Law, the People set.
Nay, Ribbonism keeps Landlordism in check:
They blame, they fear, but will not break its neck;
To them belongs no sense of commonweal,
Authority as alien still they feel,
Ruled, without partnership or wholesome pride,
By Government that governs from outside.
.....
..... but every man
Takes all advantage that he safely can.
And so, as in the chamber of a mist
Moving as they move, sadly they persist,
And let the puzzling world be as it list.²

1. Ibid., p. 272, ll.318-24.

2. Ibid., pp. 94-5, ll.135-46; 153-7.

Let not the reader think, however, that Laurence Bloomfield was written to tell the Irish their faults; it was written on their behalf:

Seven centuries are nearly finished since the political connexion began between England and Ireland; and yet Ireland remains to this hour not a well-known country to the general British public. To do something, however small, towards making it better understood, is the aim of this little book.¹

It makes very clear that England is largely responsible, by her measures in the past, for nourishing the peculiar truculence and savagery rampant in nineteenth-century Ireland. Clear-sighted analysis of national virtues and vices is necessary for the writing of good history because facts, unrelated to the people they concern, lack pertinency and narrow the historian's view. Allingham's method guards against the kind of prejudice so evident in benighted writers like Fraude, whose English in Ireland did irreparable harm, as it was

the source of nearly everything on Irish history that has of late years been written here and, I believe, in America and its single

1. Laurence Bloomfield, (1869), Preface, p.iii.

object is to blast the character of the people, representing them as hopelessly, irredeemably bad, justifying every past act of oppression, and trying to arouse to the utmost, sectarian passions both against and among them.¹

Allingham was too honest not to see both the good and the bad in people.

The strict fairness of his historical approach is equalled by the accuracy of his historical facts. The period covered by the poem appears to be somewhere between 1850 and 1860. The Great Famine of '47 is not mentioned nor the three terrible years succeeding it, and the emphasis given to the Security-of-Tenure policy suggests that he was concerned about the failure of the Tenant Right Movement in 1850 and was allying himself with its exponents who were pushing peasant proprietorship, in an effort to remedy the injustice of evictions. The poem, under way in March, 1860², records events that were current in the decade from 1850 to 1860 but were as true in the thirties and sixties. Allingham's details tally with those in reliable records of the period. Evictions were prevalent

1. Private Letters of W.H.Lecky, (1947), p.20.

2. See Letters D.G.R. to W.A., p.230.

from 1849 - 1862. 281,032 persons¹ lost their homes in those years, often in circumstances as cruel as those described in Laurence Bloomfield. Ribbonism had not died out and existed in more or less every district of Donegal in 1862² as well as in other counties and the 'general condition of the country, more particularly as regards the agricultural class was [is] gloomy'.³ The pictures of whining beggars, naked children, boglands and shaggy fields around Lisnamoy correspond to those in Carlyle's journal of his visit in 1849, ~~and~~ published by Froude as Reminiscences of My Irish Journey, 1882 (which, according to Mary Aitken, Carlyle never intended to publish):

Ugly spectacle: sad health: sad humour:
a thing unjoyful to look back upon. The
whole country figures in my mind like a
ragged coat; one huge beggar's garb'dine;
not patched or patchable any longer;⁴

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1. Brownrigg, Sir H.J., (Inspector General), Report on the State of Ireland, (1862, 1863 and 1864), p. 30.
 2. Ibid.,
 3. Ibid., p. 53.
 4. Preface (by J.A. Froude), p.vi.

Saw at another point of the road, large masses of people camped on the wayside, (other side of Mallow I think?) 'waiting for out-door relief'; squalid, squalid, not ¹ the extremity of raggedness seen at Kildare.

Allingham includes also the workhouses which filled Carlyle with horror in 1849 and have been testified to by all historians. They were still very much in evidence when Laurence Bloomfield was being written. The one to which the evicted tenants in Chapter VI may go if they choose to 'trouble Pigot's cart and horse' is one of hundreds in parishes all over Ireland, overseen by Guardians just as flinty as Isaac Brown. Although Allingham's concern is more for the children in them he nevertheless sees clearly the evils of a system that robs the able-bodied, adult poor of their self-respect and encourages dishonest landlords to evict their tenants in order to avoid paying rates for their maintenance. Hence Laurence has many 'a tedious battle fought' to bring slowly about his reforms,

1. Ibid., p. 125.

For weekly there, sat once a Guardian Board
To guard the landlords' purse from pauper horde,
To guard the bed where age and sickness lie
From touch of comfort - let them live or die, -
.....
To guard poor children, trembling little slaves,
Cast on our pity by misfortune's waves,
From spade and needle, watching lest they learn
The skill that might a scantest living earn,
Using, faith, hope and charity being dead,
Political-economy instead,
Training with anxious negligence a race
To live their country's burden and disgrace.
Sad without guilt, and punish'd without crime,
Those joyless children dragged their weary time,
Or issuing from their prison two by two
Distress'd the road with cheeks of ghastly hue, -
Unlike the brisk though tatter'd urchins there,¹
Not highly fed, but free from Guardians' care.

He might have gone on to explain to the British public the dire effects of the 'quarter-acre clause' in the amended Poor Relief Bill of 1847, which extended relief to the poor outside the workhouses on the condition that no one occupying more than a quarter of an acre of land could apply to the government for help. This 'compelled peasants to give up their little holdings in thousands, in order to qualify for relief; so that emigration now

1. (1864), p. 246, ll.438-56.

trod on the heels of famine, and soon developed into that silent exodus which has gradually altered the face of the country. In fact, the petty occupiers were dispossessed by the clumsy benevolence of the State'.¹

Allingham's treatment of landlordism is also historically accurate. The Irish peasants either resided on estates that went to ruin because of mismanagement by lazy, unprogressive, ignorant Irish squires, or on estates vigilantly kept up by agents dedicated to filling their own pockets or their masters' whether absentee or resident, at the expense of the peasants whose rents were raised if they improved their holdings and who were evicted if they could not pay them.² Absentee landlords like Lord Crasher were common, and the firm in Molesworth Street with seventy separate properties under its care was, in Allingham's words, 'no fancy picture'.³ His quarrel, however, is with the moral irresponsibility of the absentees towards their tenants:

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1. Locker-Lampson, G., Consideration of the State of Ireland, pp. 274-5.
 2. See Butt, Isaac, The Irish People and the Irish Land, (1867), p.105, for corroboration of this. Also see Knocknagow, (1879), Charles Kickham's famous novel of Irish rural life in the fifties and sixties.
 3. Laurence Bloomfield, (1893), Notes to Ch.II, p.145.

'A trust, to help our fellow men, we own;
True right of property is this alone.;'¹

rather than with the merely economic implications. Ever rational, he does not hide the truth that under Phinn and Wedgley's government, Crasher's estate becomes an agricultural Eden and a sharp reproof to the insolvency of the resident landlord, Dysart. It is historically true that estates often flourished under absenteeism and possibly the peasants too, depending on the character of the agents and the landlords, although the sarcastic reference to

Phinn comes half-yearly, sometimes with a friend,
Who writes to Mail or Warder to commend
These vast improvements, and bestows the term
Of 'Ireland's benefactors' on the firm,
A well-earn'd title, in the firm's own mind,²

suggests that in this particular case the gain was on the side of the owners. Sir Ulick Harvey's arbitrary snatching of ancient holdings from conscientious tenants; Isaac Brown's conacre and sub-letting; Pigot's rackrents and the general exploitation of tenants are equally true

1. Ibid., (1864), p. 51, ll. 233-4.

2. Ibid., pp. 25-6, ll. 84-8.

and are the very evils that the Landlord and Tenant Act of 1870 remedied to some extent and the Land Act of 1881 improved on by establishing the three F's - Fair Rent, Fixity of Tenure and Free Sale. Allingham's exposure of landlordism and the expression of his land policy gives him a share in this act, described by A.M. Sullivan as abolishing for ever

the landlordism that had been a curse to Ireland; namely, the landlordism of avarice, the landlordism of dominion, and the landlordism of caprice;¹

a share that was never acknowledged by the Irish people because his kind of patriotism was not stirring enough to attract the attention of a nation fed on O'Connellite oratory and Young Ireland propaganda.

In so far as Laurence Bloomfield is a cry against and an indictment of a standing abuse it is close to being a pamphlet. However, it is difficult to agree with the Dublin Review that it has had the success of one. For one thing it fell on deaf ears. Most successful pamphlets

1. O'Connor, Hon. Sir James, History of Ireland, Vol. II, p. 90.

raised a commotion. Defoe's Shortest Way with Dissenters put him in the stocks where he was showered with flowers by those Dissenters who were clever enough to grasp his irony; Sydney Smith's Letters of Peter Plymley to his brother Abraham heaped such ridicule on the Protestants of England that the Government exhausted itself trying to find out the author and ended by granting the Irish Catholics long over-due Emancipation; Carlyle's Nigger Question destroyed the friendship between John Stuart Mill and himself and William Cobbett's pugnacious, unpolished public letters cost him thousands of pounds in fines as well as a good many broken windows. For another, it was too mild. To hit the target a pamphlet must fill the reader with rage or delight before it will touch his conscience. Laurence Bloomfield has none of Swift's brilliant ferocity, Milton's accumulative crushing logic, Smith's overwhelming irony, Pope's singular mastery of abusive language or the at least momentary one-sidedness so essential for good pamphleteering. His satiric bits give way quickly to pastoral descriptions, an argument for peasant proprietorship is succeeded by a visit to a

farm house or village wake. Impartiality, leisurely word-painting and the necessity for plot development all lessen the pamphlet quality of the piece. Whether in prose or verse a good pamphlet glories in singleness of purpose, sustained argument and what might be called a lyrical impudence. Laurence Bloomfield was too well-bred, too impartial, insufficiently ratiocinative to be more than a second cousin twice-removed to the pamphlet and it certainly did not have the success of one.

The 'politics' of Laurence Bloomfield are interesting because they embody Allingham's outlook on the contemporary scene and moreover suggest a reason why the poem failed to find Irish readers. These 'politics' are conservative, reasonable and safe, and by no means 'popular'. His keen observation of the Irish character led him to distrust the Home Rule Movement and the efficacy of an Irish Parliament, and to advocate a course which, in the face of existing facts, was sentimental and inoperative. The Preface to the 1869 edition, which contained his main ideas in summary, proved this: England had mismanaged Ireland because she had failed to take into account the very great

differences in character and history between the two nations; Catholic-Protestant hostilities had further aggravated the situation and caused him to doubt the value of Dis-establishment:

all Irishmen, speaking generally, are partisans, of a singularly narrow and violent type; to an educated opposition of parties and a reasonable discussion of contending views they are totally unaccustomed; and now it is possible that 'agitation' may be bolder, and that new centres of disturbances may become active.

But the bad consequences will, I trust, be transient, and the good consequences permanent.¹

He felt that Ireland, as yet, was unfit to manage her own affairs but that its unfitness in no way justified the 'coarse and invariable contempt' that the English had added to their 'systematic maltreatment of the most sensitive of races', and if they changed their attitude to the 'warm-hearted, kindly mannered people, gifted with intellectual and artistic vivacity and brilliant in the battlefield', they would be happy to go hand in hand and heart in heart with the people of England mutually learning and teaching many things, marching together in the vanguard of human progress' and 'when men of either country, who at every turn prefer paltry and essentially party considerations

1. p.vii.

changed to the large, simple and eternal views of truth and duty, they would be met with intelligence and gratitude by the Irish.'

That was all very pretty but how could Allingham hope to reconcile two peoples innately and irremediably antipathetic to one another! Irish nationalism, bred by a commendable pride in Erin's history and a reverence for her saints and scholars, had grown warped through the centuries and was being whipped into chauvinism by dedicated patriots in the nineteenth so that it became a cherished possession of the people to be guarded at all costs from fool-hardy attempts to deprive them of it. The contrast between what they had been and what they were - a serf nation - burned them like fire and their pain was not to be palliated by the awakening conscience of English statesmen. It was beside the point to believe, as Bloomfield's friend Camlin did, that Ireland needed England:

'I would that Irishmen could Ireland rule.
'They cannot - Irishmen are still at school;
'Their master, England, unbelov'd 'tis true,
'But can we find a better one? can you?'¹

1. Laurence Bloomfield, (1864), p.261, ll.118-21.

Whether she did or not she did not want England. Her reputation for humour did not stretch to an appreciation of the superb irony of an English Pope having made a gift of her to Henry II. Like rebel angels the Irish would fight God Almighty Himself to possess Ireland against an outsider. Gerard Manley Hopkins grasped the very nature of Irish patriotism when he wrote to A.W.M. Baillie from Dublin on February 20, 1877, that the amendment of wrongs and abuses by England had not conciliated the Irish, it had inflamed them:

For these steps have done nothing to give them, but have nevertheless done much to bring them nearer getting, the object of their undying desire and now of their flaming passion. That is what they call Nationhood. The passion for it is of its nature insatiable and Home Rule will not satisfy it; it will be a disappointment too like the rest. ¹

His words proved only too true. Romantic patriotism swelled until it exploded into the bloody conflict of the 1916 Easter Rebellion which left Padraic Pearce, for all

1. Abbott, C., Further Letters of G.M.H., (1938), pp.134-5.

his heroism, dead in the arms of Mother Erin, and his country a hot-bed of moral and political confusion in spite of his grand gesture of declaring it a republic. In quick succession followed the sordid Anglo-Irish war (1919-21) with its terrible law of the gun-man and the advent of the avenging Black and Tans, which forced the Home Rule issue and gave Ireland dominion status in July, 1921.

As Hopkins predicted they were not satisfied. They turned now from the past practice of fighting Englishmen and Orangemen and fought one another. De Valera and his shadow republic encouraged further discord by their political behaviour and in June, 1922, the Republic of Ireland and the Irish Free State were at war.

Allingham's distrust of Home Rule was sound but one feels bound to quarrel with his polite hopes for a loving family partnership with England, which was simply sentimental in view of his knowledge of the Irish character. He should have known that the Irish would stop at nothing short of a republic and that to satisfy them as soon as possible would have been the most practical procedure. Then let them tear and maul each other if they wanted to.

It was only a half-truth for him to re-iterate that England and Ireland could not be governed alike. The plain fact was that Ireland could not be governed by England at all as long as there was a sufficiently large body of patriots to see that the people kept up the nationalistic spirit. The Irish, freed from patriots' oratory might have settled peacefully under an enlightened English rule but the vast difference in temperaments leaves grave doubts in one's mind.

It was these 'politics' that earned him the epithets 'non-national' and 'false liberal'. Even Yeats, in extraordinarily inaccurate terms accused him of non-nationalism:

Allingham, though always Irish, is no way national. This widely effects his work. Like Lever and Lover he does not¹ take the people quite seriously

.....
What a sad business this non-nationalism has been! It gave to Lever and Lover their shallowness, and still gives to a section of Dublin Society its cynicism. Lever and Lover and Allingham alike, it has deprived of their true audience. Many much less

1. Letters to the New Island, (1934), p. 168. Reprinted from Providence Sunday Journal, (September, 1888), Review of Irish Songs and Poems.

endowed writers than they have more influence in Ireland. Political doctrine was not demanded of them, merely nationalism. They would not take the people seriously - these writers of the Ascendancy - and had to go to England for their audience. To Lever and Lover Ireland became merely a property shop, and to Allingham a half serious memory.¹

Only a man in his early twenties, as Yeats was then, could have written so foolishly and his tone of pitying reproof unwittingly revealed, not Allingham's faults, but the great weakness in Ireland's conception of nationhood, namely, her willingness to give ear and aid to mediocre men, whether writers, politicians or upstarts provided their Erin go Bragh was sufficiently noisy and their spirit of romantic martyrdom high. It was this sort of twaddle that gave the Irish gunman his shameful hour and saddened those whose patriotism was less bloody-minded. Allingham loved Ireland, worried about her, respected the people. He hated a 'Nation'² because the nationhood that built it was so often, narrow, isolationist, irresponsible and selfish,

1. Ibid., pp. 173-4.

2. Varieties in Prose, Vol. II, p. 258. See also 'Rambles of Patricius Walker: In London', Fraser's, (November, 1870), p. 581.

If there seemed to be any chance of 'Home-Rule' making Ireland indeed more homely in the best sense, instead of Ultramontane, and more ruly in thought and act, instead of a thousand times more chaotic than ever, I would become a 'Home-Ruler' today.¹

And because he could not yet trust his people to rule themselves and said so he was branded as non-national and told he did not take them seriously, while rapparees like Dan Breen,² so many 'playboys of the western world' thrrove on the admiration accorded their patriotic gun-fire and guerilla warfare and were deemed nationalist for murdering their Irish brethren.

In the light of subsequent events Laurence Bloomfield is not without elements of prophecy. The bloodshed that followed on Home Rule, the problem of Partition, the troublesome activities of the I.R.A., then and now, Eire's aloofness from Britain and international affairs and her exclusiveness in general, recall Allingham's doubts of the ability of the Irish to rule themselves and

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1. Ibid., p.60. See also 'Rambles of Patricius Walker: In Devon and Cornwall', Fraser's, (January, 1877), p.584.
 2. A railway track-walker and Sinn Feiner said to have begun the Anglo-Irish war. Blows his trumpet in My Fight for Irish Freedom or Dan Breen's Book, (1924).

justify his fear of Home Rule. However, there is absent today the almost constant uproar which prevailed when England ruled the island and although it is debatable whether the Irish are better off by themselves it is clear that they had to be cut loose from their conquerors and that Allingham's hope for a partnership between the two countries was a pipe-dream. His 'politics', sound enough in theory were hopeless as a practical measure.

These same 'politics' may be said to account largely for the small sales of Laurence Bloomfield. As an answer to existing problems it was too quiet, too impartial, not incendiary enough for a nation fed on polemics and oratory. After the heroics and heroisms of the land wars the Irish were not likely to relish a poem that rapped their knuckles as well as those of the Sassenach. Indeed Allingham must have seemed more English than Irish to them. His Security of Tenure programme was approved, as the reviews showed, but his 'foreign' policy was too chary of Home Rule and smelt too much of let bygones be bygones to be sweet in the nostrils of a people naturally inflammatory and too scarred by memories of Penal Laws and

attempts to force Protestantism upon them to be favourably impressed by his conscientious fairness and his sincere belief that Ireland needed England. They were too accustomed to looking upon themselves as heroes to tolerate being told their faults or represented other than blameless.

The anti-Catholic bias in the poem must also have militated against its success. The author was not likely to be applauded by Irish Catholics for telling them they were being 'guided in blessed ignorance to heaven' by what he considered a dictatorial church. The Nation took him to task for

passages in the work which cut unfairly and ungenerously against men who are giving practical service to Ireland, to religion, to morality ...¹

And undoubtedly others agreed.

In addition to all this not many Irishmen would have been buying books in the sixties. There would not have been a large reading public among the peasants, thousands of whom had died or emigrated during the famine years. Those who remained had no money for books or if they had would rather put it in a sock. James Duffy,

1. (May 21, 1864), p. 618.

William Carleton's publisher, writing the novelist in 1855 to refuse Red Hill, said there was a slump in the trade:

The people seldom think of buying books, because they are luxuries, which they can do without. Some people will say the times were never better than they are now - see what prices farmers are getting for the produce of the land, etc. This is all very true, but they should bear in mind that farmers never buy books in the country, but generally lay by all the money they can lay their hands on, and if they buy a prayer or school-book for their families, they think it so much money thrown away.¹

There is no evidence of any great improvement in the sixties. Samuel Ferguson testified to this same small market for books as late as 1878 when he said, in a letter to Allingham,

I shall publish in Dublin, although the fate of other home products might be a warning to me to expect little recognition. However, I am very earnestly bent on helping, as far as I can, independent Irish publishing enterprise.²

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1. O'Donoghue, D.J., Life of William Carleton, (1896), Vol.II, p. 215.
 2. Lady Ferguson, Sir S.Ferguson in the Ireland of His Day, (1896), Vol.I, p. 352.

And Yeats said that

nothing was read in Ireland except newspapers, prayer-books, and popular novels,¹

and in an attempt to make himself heard turned to writing plays:

... if Ireland would not read literature it might listen to it, for politics and the Church had created listeners.²

Politics had bred readers too but readers of dailies and weeklies. From 1842 onwards the Irish were bewitched by patriot-journalists who gave them their money's worth by packing their papers with controversial leading articles, great bursts of oratorical prose, impassioned letters to the editor (often of consummate irony and marathon length) and yards of patriotic verse and rousing stories. Men, surely, must have found irresistible the impulse to measure one rival newspaper against another; to weigh the merits of the O'Connellite Pilot and Young Ireland's Nation, that young, fresh journal with its policy 'to create and foster public opinion and to make it racy

1. Yeats, W.B., Autobiographies, (1955), p. 396.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 396.

of the soil'. To read newspapers in Ireland was to take part in campaigns under rival generals. Those who admired John Mitchell probably switched to his paper when he broke his connection with the Nation because he thought it too tame and started his own more revolutionary United Irishman. When it was seized by the authorities after his trial in May of '48, The Irish Tribune was immediately established and two weeks after it the Irish Felon to keep Mitchell's politics green. For almost every variation of opinion as well as for every new movement there seemed to be a new paper. Fenianism gave birth to The Irish People; Parnellism to United Ireland and so on. It was not likely that the man in the street would bother much with books in those days - especially one written by an Irishman who was disinclined to view Erin as the blameless victim of a modern Bull of Minos and Paddy as an intrepid ^{Theseus} ~~Perseus~~ coming to slay the monster - when he could associate himself with all the excitement swirling around a Press that had the Church and the State foaming at the mouth. The triumph of the Irish Press was that it won the people. Sir James O'Connor's outright condemnation is not altogether just:

With rare exceptions, the popular press of Ireland has been one of the most baneful poisons of Irish life. It is enough to make the educated man a lunatic because it exists and to make the uneducated man a lunatic because he believes what he reads.¹

It was an instrument of mass culture, dominating the people, encouraging the party spirit, aiding national literacy and immortalizing the peculiar brand of self-determination known as Irish patriotism. Its victory however did not help to fill the pockets of authors, publishers or book-sellers.

Then again, if the Irish had been interested more in literature than in politics they would not have been inclined to pay seven shillings for a picture of Ireland and themselves when they could have and had had these - and much more to their taste - in Carleton's novels and stories as they circulated in the Christian Examiner, the Family Magazine, the Dublin Penny Journal, Duffy's Hibernian Magazine, the Dublin University Magazine and in one and two shilling editions in James Duffy's Library of Ireland and Simms and McIntyre's Parlour Library. Also,

1. History of Ireland, (1926), Vol.II, p.227.

Carleton, adept at running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, if he offended his readers with tales of their sloth¹ and viciousness² disarmed them with his Willy Reillys³ and moved them with his saga of the famines and their horrors and the charity and courage of the victims⁴ so that when all was said and done they were still convinced they were a darling people and a darling nation. Allingham never learned the market value of making the Irish laugh or of showing them their miscellaneous charms and so he never won them with his narrative. He was one of the unlucky ones for whom no home market existed and for whose clear-sighted analysis there was little demand. He had to be satisfied to salve his hurt with the ruefully true remark that

Ireland herself is too poor and unsettled,
and in too backward a stage of civilization
to afford a public for literature,
unconnected with party controversies. On
the whole - whatever may be unthinkingly

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1. The History of Paddy-Go-Easy and His Wife Nancy, (1845).
 2. Rody the Rover or The Ribbonman, (1845).
 3. Willy Reilly and his Dear Cooleen Bawn, (1855).
 4. The Black Prophet, (1846).

said to the contrary, Ireland presents an ungrateful soil for the cultivation of the higher belles lettres.¹

The English, as well as the Irish, did not read the poem because they were constitutionally out of tune with the Gaels and unable to participate mentally in their troubles or understand their character. They were not inhuman, as their subscription funds during the Great Famine show, but there was no bond uniting the two people. Carlyle's coldness was typical of the Saxon attitude:

Talk again England versus Ireland; a sad unreasonable humour pervading all the Irish population on this matter - 'England does not hate you at all; nor love you at all; merely values and will pay you according to the work you can do'! No teaching of that unhappy people to understand so much.²

Tennyson's remarks about Ireland, probably mock-serious to provoke a humourless Allingham, were nevertheless sufficiently pointed to suggest the general reaction of the people Allingham wanted for his audience:

1. Diary, p. 348.

2. Reminiscences of My Irish Journey, (1882), p. 53.

T. - ... Ireland's a dreadful country! I heartily wish it was in the middle of the Atlantic.

A. - Below the surface? ...

T. - No, no, a thousand miles away from England. I like the Irish—I admit the charm of their manners - but they're a fearful nuisance.

A. - Very troublesome ... but there 's some truth in the popular Irish notion that nothing can be got from England except by agitation.¹

Although his wish that they blow up the 'horrible island' was sheer teasing, he probably intended to drive home the point that the English soon forgot they had been conquered by the Normans and settled down to living peaceably with them, while the Irish, over-run by the descendants of the same Normans were 'raging and foaming to this hour'. A

1. Diary, p. 293; see also p.297 for comparison of the Irish and the Normans.

nice point indeed! which if entertained by England should have convinced her earlier that the Irish were not likely to subscribe to the gentlemanly behaviour of shaking hands with the enemy after the battles were over. The conflict between Ireland and England was not a boxing match between Eton and Harrow, the victor gracious, the loser a good sport. It was the pull of a deeply jealous nationalism against an arrogant conqueror and to expect the Irish to play the game and stay conquered showed a singular lack of insight into their character. Allingham's remark that Tennyson knew 'not a wit more of its [Ireland's] history than does the average Englishman - who knows as nearly as possible nothing. To him as to A.T. the very name of Brian Boru is a joke',¹ was a significant comment on the Victorians in general who liked Sheridan's Lucius O'Trigger and Boucicault's broths of boys better than the Dorans, Muldoons and Tim Nultys of Laurence Bloomfield. The English, with the exception of statesmen who knew from experience how serious they could be, thought the Irish amusing, dashing and deliciously outrageous. Dramatists

1. Diary, p.199.

and novelists helped the legend of 'the mad Irish' grow and the Irish in literature became circus performers with a brogue who were welcomed like the Christmas Pantomime or Barnum and Bailey. It is doubtful that Laurence Bloomfield would have sold in England if it had been written by Homer himself. Allingham, unluckily, wrote it while the English were still charmed by pseudo-Irishness¹ and had not yet developed a taste for naturalism.

The sorry history of the publication and reception of this poem made it the turning point of his career and largely responsible for his failure to develop and to fulfil the expectation of his critics. Receiving no encouragement to develop his new abilities displayed in Laurence Bloomfield, disillusioned and with little in his pocket he never again tried anything like it, satiating instead his 'innate preference' for the lyrical, continuing to string words together after his lyrical inspiration was

1. G.C. Duggan's, The Stage Irishman, (1937), is an interesting commentary on and history of the stage Paddy.

dormant and, what was worse, writing what he thought would sell. Consequently his later work, small though its output, was lifeless and mediocre. If only he had possessed the drive to persevere against public apathy and nourished his talent for history in verse he would have accomplished wonders in narrative and dramatic poetry and perhaps have produced an epic. He had left a large amount of material untouched: the whole expanse of ancient Irish history, certainly not exhausted by Ferguson; the scores of legends to be found in every county; the scourge of Cromwell's visit; the Great Famine,¹ to mention a little of it. Perhaps he felt that Carleton had covered everything - he very nearly had - but there would have been room for both of them, one complementing the other. The Black Prophet, although written in 1846, told the story of the famines of 1817 and 1822, which the author had witnessed; Allingham could have told the story of the hungry forties. By polishing his Chaucerian and Popian manner, by developing the verse form and the style of

1. See Appendix IV, p. 291.

'George Levison' he could have produced excellent verse pamphlets and dramatic lyrics on subjects Irish that would have done him credit as a poet and finally gained him recognition. It is not far-fetched to predict great things for a writer who has been favourably compared to Chaucer, Pope, Crabbe, Goldsmith, Wordsworth and Tennyson.

Or if he had devoted himself to prose history after the failure of Laurence Bloomfield, the result would have been better than the feeble poetic efforts of his last twenty years. He had a distinct flair for history. Carlyle thought his Introduction to the Ballyshannon Almanac for 1862, excellent and perhaps the very best written anywhere for such a purpose. It was,

So clear, so brief, definite, graphic; and a fine genially human tone in it. That is the feat: to extract a little Poetry (which is not Fiction) from the black rocks and bare hillsides of the Irish Fact lying round you You have read well, - or fairly begun to do so, - and to think; and be silent, till you find out. Persist in that course if you are hero enough; and you will **decidedly** come to something.¹

1. Letters to W.A., p.135.

But he was not a hero and he did not persist although he gave every appearance of intending to write a history of Ireland as his letter to Browning shows, a letter asking him to speak on his behalf when he requested to be relieved from his duties as Custom's Officer and given £150 a year while he did historical research:

My hope of some day doing a stroke of useful work in the elucidation of Irish History has been revived lately by some conversations with friends. During long residence in Ireland I have made many preparations but need the command of my time, and access to libraries, records, places and persons. In short, I would fain make a deliberate study of Ireland - historical, topographical and social, hoping to do, if not a History, some useful work to that end.¹

Carlyle was against the increased pension and thought Allingham had nothing to gain by moving from Lymington to London:

You have no idea how much a man loses by tumbling up his location, and getting into a totally new environment of his commonplace condition of existence time after time I know nothing you can get

1. Unpublished MS. in British Museum. Letter December 14, 1865. (44408 f. 17).

by 'searching libraries' In short, my dear Allingham, if the officials altogether refuse you, I shall be sorry for your disappointed humour, but I shall think the chance of your Irish History (which you could indeed do better than any - body if the Devil didn't hinder) is improved for us thereby.¹

In the same letter he pointed out Allingham's dilatoriness:

I did then² expect from you in ~~the~~ course of time something quite superior as the History of Ireland; but you pulled up your tether again, took to shifting about again, and I suppose there is nothing done.³

thus putting his finger on a characteristic weakness further aggravated by the blighting experience with Laurence Bloomfield. This was in 1865; by 1867 he had not advanced much. With almost self-deceptive humility he wrote to Carlyle:

I have by no means given up my designs on Ireland, and am sending Froude a paper on the Annals. I see now how far I am from being fit at present to write a Book and desire to practise my hand in corpore vili of Magazine papers - done as well as I now can,⁴

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1. Letters to W.A., p.137.
 2. 1862 when he praised Introduction to Ballyshannon Almanac.
 3. Letters to W. A., p.137, (Letter December 25, 1865).
 4. Unpublished MS., - National Library of Scotland, (Letter, November 1867).

and in 1869 was grumbling about the fate of an article on Irish place names intended for Fraser's:

The second part was duly sent in (after costing me a good deal of work) but Froude found it not amusing enough - too much of a 'Dictionary' for a magazine, in which no doubt he was right.¹

He simply could not rise to the gigantic task of an Irish History and he never got beyond the long article, 'Seven Hundred Years Ago',² which summarized graphically and authoritatively events from the Dark Ages to the arrival of Henry II in 1170 and proved that Allingham was a competent historian because his method was not only careful, full of honest scholarship and free from bias, but also resulted in an attractive style.

From 1870 - 79 he tied himself to the uncongenial task of sub-editing and then editing Fraser's and never marshalled his talents for another attempt at the things he could do best. No one encouraged him to try another narrative poem and so he continued with extreme short-

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1. Unpublished MS., National Library of Scotland, Letter to Carlyle, July, 1869. The first part in number for June, pp.780-93 and supports the strong supposition that Allingham had a considerable 'book knowledge' of Gaelic although he did not speak it fluently.
 2. Fraser's, (August, 1870), pp.135-58.

sightedness, to fill new volumes with a predominance of old poems and a smattering of new ones, mostly vogueishly philosophical, without realizing that to fight public apathy with more works like Laurence Bloomfield could not have done his poetic reputation as much harm as the pot-boilers of his later years did.

The maxim that a poet is born not made is not the whole truth. Part of him has to be moulded by his own character and the circumstances surrounding and influencing him. Allingham's career is an interesting study of the unmaking of a poet by his own personality and the harsh inconstancy of the literary public, his particular disposition playing him into the hands of Self-pity, Misjudgment and poetic Sloth, all mortal foes of Reputation. However the finish of the story must be told before a final judgment of his poetry is made, and a survey of his productions from 1877 to his death in 1889 will round out the picture and contribute to that end.

THE UNMAKING OF A POET

After the failure of Laurence Bloomfield there was a decided falling off in the quality of Allingham's writing. Fifty Modern Poems, 1865, and Songs, Ballads and Stories, 1877, were full of good things which, however, had already been published either separately in magazines or in previous books and therefore added little to his reputation. What was new, after these publications, was presented with a diffidence that suggested he knew he was writing what was not suitable to his talents. From 1882 onwards he did not cease to apologize for himself. His first play, Ashby Manor, 1882, was introduced thus:

This little play was written (several years ago), to be acted, if the fates should ever prove so kind. Practical familiarity with the stage is a most important qualification for a dramatist, the present writer is well aware; and must humbly own that he has it not. All he can say is, he has seen many plays, and always had a wish to try his hand.

But it is easier to write a Play than to find a Manager who will read it; and so the would-be Dramatist prints his piece to get it out of his mind - wherein several other inventions are fluttering, far better than this, and really worth the attention of Managers. Even the present specimen might perhaps in good hands give an audience pleasure.

If insisted on for scene-shifting reasons it could be divided into four so-called Acts of one Scene each. The action is in two.¹

1. Preface, (1882). No heading or page-number.

If this was unlikely to re-assure a reader, the Prologue was even less likely to re-assure an audience:

A Trembling Author - use him kindly, pray! -
Presents to you to-night his first essay.
'Tis all his own - words, characters, and plot;
But all is nothing, if it please you not.
Then try to like it; half the battle's there!
And you, fair Ladies, O be more than fair
In this, be generous to him; recognize ¹
His good intentions with indulgent eyes.

It was never staged under Allingham's authorship. According to Mrs. Allingham² he sent it to several London managers, one of whom entered into correspondence with him and praised the play. Some months later this same manager produced a "kind of clumsy parody of Ashby Manor - with senseless melodramatic additions and an entirely irrelevant fifth act". When the manager's attention was drawn to this he said he remembered very little about Ashby Manor, a remark which might well be true as the piece is neither original nor memorable.

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1. Prologue, Thought and Word, (1890), p.99.
 2. See Diary p.307; See also Athenaeum, (August 23, 1890), p.250 for comment on Allingham's accusation against the Manager.

In a mixture of blank verse and prose, it tells swiftly and without melodrama a story of the clash of human inclinations and loyalties against a background of war - in this case the Civil War of Charles I's reign. George Fortescue, a young Cavalier, is captured while hiding out at Ashby Manor, the home of the Roundheads, the Radclyffes. Wounded and ill he is cared for by the women of the house and made welcome by the Colonel when he returns unhurt from the field at Naseby. Charlton Radclyffe, a stock Machiavellian figure, plots to ruin his uncle, the Colonel, by 'framing' a treason charge against him and hence inheriting all his property. His plans misfire when his villainous assistant, made revengeful by rejection, turns informer and tells the truth. Colonel Radclyffe's loyalty is no longer in question, and the Cavalier army conveniently surrenders, thus removing the obstacle to the marriage of Naomi Radclyffe and George Fortescue who could not be wed while they were technically enemies.

The review in the Academy says almost all there is to be said of its quality as a play:

... in truth, it is not easy to like or dislike it very much. The worst that can be said of it is that its interest is slight; the best, that it contains a pretty song and some good passages.¹

It re-echoes Shakespeare in some parts:

Ah, dreadful days! when fellow-countrymen,
Companions, neighbours, friends, stand opposite
With deadly and implacable resolve
To deluge English soil with English blood!
Thou God of Battles! be my husband's guard!
His cause is Thy cause:²

Poor men are freer: who in all his realm
So hampered as the King? I would to Heav'n
I were a neatherd on my own estate
And she a milk-maid! ³

And it gives glimpses of Allingham's lyrical ease in infrequent lines like

The whole rich world
Basks like a mellow apple in the sun.
That corn was green when first I cross'd your bounds
A fugitive, - now, amber head to head,
Nodding and whispering as peacefully
As if no hostile camp or battle-field
Scored England's face with ugly frowns and scars.⁴

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1. (February 3, 1883), p.73.
 2. Thought and Word, (1890), p.121.
 3. Ibid., p.149.
 4. Ibid., p.133.

There is a spirited scene between Fortescue and Colonel Radclyffe as George contemplates changing sides in order to be eligible as Naomi's husband but finally stands firmly to his duty. There are other theatrically effective moments but the play lacks power because the characterization is mediocre and the language generally undistinguished.

To fill out his story and cause diversion he creates, as minor characters, a few Northamptonshire dairy-maids and plough-boys and gives them dialogue in a dialect which is superficially authentic, as a glance at either T. Sternberg's The Dialect and Folk-Lore of Northamptonshire, (1851), or Anne Elizabeth Baker's Glossary of Northamptonshire Words and Phrases (1854) will show. They display the peculiarities of the Western dialect,¹ viz., v for f, z for s and d for th:

G.F. How far are we from Naseby village?

Tom. Zome dree mile, zir, a' 'ood zay.²

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1. Said by Sternberg to be the speech of the district bordering on Oxford and Buckingham and known as the West Country dialect.
 2. Thought and Word, p.100.

.....

Tom. Not me. But I were vrighted too, at thoughts o' biding here. Long prayers and short commons, thinks I. But the smell o' dinner encouraged me like; and when I tastis your home-brew, 'They're vellow-creatures!' I zays - and zo I've vound ye, Prue, I will zay.¹

Similarly they appear to follow the Northamptonshire habit of sounding one syllable words such as face, bake, right, as two syllables, thus:

Prue. I wur raight frightened^{*} o' thee
at first, measter Trivet.²

but their speech is without the colourful vocabulary and idiom of the dialect to which it belongs.

The fact that Allingham did not turn to Irish life for the material for his first play indicates how deep was the cut inflicted by the failure of Laurence Bloomfield. Rather than put a speech he was familiar with into the mouth of a Wicklow Pat or a Donegal man he toyed, at second-hand, with an alien dialect and worked at a hackneyed plot against an English seventeenth century historical background. The language of the play is a

1. Ibid., p.158.

* 'frighted' in 1882 edition.

2. Ibid., p.158

mixture of second-rate Shakespearian blank verse for the aristocrats and an over-simplified patois for the peasants. The result is flavourless and self-conscious.

Evil May-Day, published in 1882, is a slim volume containing the title poem and fifty four others, ranging in length from several pages to a few lines. On the whole, the poems are new although several had made their debut in magazines some time previously. The chief one, 'Evil May-Day', having appeared in two parts in Fraser's¹ in 1878, added a third section in 1882. A declaration of faith, it proves that Allingham is out of his depth in philosophical and theological poems. Similar in theme to In Memoriam, it is stiff and self-conscious in comparison with Tennyson's heart-felt, sustained symphony of grief, love, doubt, joy and faith. Allingham's poem, although stirring in parts, and containing many good lines, is little more than a lengthy statement of one man's loss of faith; Tennyson's is a song of universal pain and mystery, filling the reader with wonder at the lyrical

1. Part One, (September), pp.381-4; Part Two, (November), pp.537-44.

exposure of a man's mind and heart, the dignity of human suffering, and awe at the glimpse given of man searching for the answer to the problem of pain and for peace of mind in a world that turned upside down when Adam fell. One feels that Allingham sat down to ponder what he would write about next, decided that the conflict between religion and science would be a stylish subject and then began to manufacture emotion for a religious poem.

The first part of the poem opens with a description of May, but it is an evil May-day because the speaker is recording for the reader his own loss of faith:

But now, there is No God.

After the first sharp pain I wrote this down
To ease awhile my heart-ache. Count not these
But idle words; for since I wotted first
Of my own being, never grief like that.¹

The second part is a long invocation to his son to beware of words:

Beware, my Son, of words!
.....
Of words false gods are made, each doom'd at last
A worn-out idol to the lumber loft
Or trim museum, - concourse wonderful,
Superb, grotesque, pathetic, and obscene! ²

1. Thought and Word, (1890), p.20, Part I, 11.98-103.
2. Ibid., pp.22-3, Part II, 11.50-6.

and of Science that seeks to reduce the world to diagrams; and to trust rather 'nature's own rich symbolism':

Value appearances, and study these
To see them well, - your first relationship,
Your last and truest too, with circumstance;
More excellent by far to apprehend
Than all disclosures of analysis.
Upon the surface earthly Beauty blooms,
Yielding itself to every loving eye,
Known heavenly in its correspondences
When Seer or Poet comes;¹

to beware of Dogma, of 'cold and rigid formula'; to
let Imagination teach the worth of appearances:

Through appearances
Beheld with keen and sympathetic eyes
Imaginative insight pierces deep
To something secret, - not mechanical
But spiritual, and wholly beyond reach
Of Science, ²

and thereby to find faith in God:

But what the best eyes at their best behold
Is Truth Divine;³

that, according to Allingham is the path to Truth:

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1. Ibid., p.25, ll.150-8.
 2. Ibid., p.27, ll.205-10.
 3. Ibid., p.30, ll.325-6.

'How do we know Him? - In the heart and soul. 1
What is He? - No one hath the power to know.' 1

But the Imaginative ones come closest to knowing while the less sensitive and the unimaginative are doomed to a less positive faith because they cannot value appearances; a point refuted by the burning faith of many an ignorant peasant. However, this knowing in the heart and soul what God is (although no man has the power to know!) is the foundation of Allingham's faith which he deems sufficient to save his son from his father's Gethsemene^a of doubt. With almost vainglorious conviction he claims,

At least, thou shalt escape one evil thing -
My Evil May-day ... 2

- a prediction no man can make.

Part Three is a fairly impassioned re-statement of faith and a rejection of materialism:

For, whichsoever way you turn your face
And journey through th'illimitable vast
You come to Nothing or you come to God, 3

which, however, Allingham does not consider complete without a melodramatic picture of theologians and churches

1. Ibid., p.30, ll.310-1.

2. Ibid., p.31, ll.341-2.

3. Ibid., p.31, Part III, ll.2-4.

as so many big bad wolves devouring people's happiness and setting up a False Vision in place of the transfiguring 'glimpse of inmost truth' that comes to man through his own imaginative efforts:

And what destroys it, or prevents it? This -
The setting-up False Vision in its place,
By obsolete pretended evidence,
Untrue in fact, impossible in kind,
Still palm'd on innocent souls when full of trust
And love and wonder. Once these holy names
And emblems meant what now they cannot mean,
As well thou knowest; yet thou teachest them
For absolute truth to tender longing souls,
Fastening their faith, their highest faculty,
To forms decay'd, worm-eaten through and through.
Vile coward! murderer of thy children's peace,
Preparing for them sick and crooked lives,
The end perhaps despair.¹

Here again is that bitter aversion to organized religion that Allingham all his life displayed. It robs his poem of intellectual force because spleen not logic is invoked to support an argument that makes no concessions to the logic of orthodox Christians.

As a personal declaration of faith the poem is interesting; as a philosophical and theological argument it is weak because it rejects Revelation without examining

1. Ibid., p.33, ll. 68-81.

it as History, relies too much on external appearances which could, according to the mood of the believer, lead just as logically to a belief in an unloving, vindictive God, side-steps, as Tennyson does, the problem initiated by a 'Nature red in tooth and claw', and ignores the fact that much theology and dogma rest on firm philosophical principles.

The poetry is not of high quality. The style is sermonizing, and heavy with Allingham's explanations to himself. The versification, blank verse in iambic pentameters, is competent but the diction lacks originality and is often tasteless. Outmoded, melodramatic interjections, apostrophe and expletives such as, 'Poor fool', 'nay, courage', 'vain conceit!' 'Pretence of continuity!' 'tis thou!' 'peradventure', spoil the language. And the following is too prosaic to be effective either as the poetic grotesque or the poetic naturalistic:

Learning can nourish Wisdom, when good food
Is quietly digested; but, too oft,
Unfit, ill-cook'd or overloaded meals
Lie crude and swell the belly with wind, or breed
Dull fat, mistook for portliness and strength.¹

1. Ibid., p. 29, Part II, ll.275-9.

The second-longest-poem in the volume, 'News from Pannonia',¹ is a sapless paraphrase of the philosophy of Marcus Aurelius, in the form of a dialogue between two friends, Drusillus bringing news of Aurelius' death to Probus in Rome. They sit down to ruminare on the Emperor, Probus feeding Drusillus questions, his answers to which are revelations of the great man's ideas on life. The question, 'Was his age twelve lustra?' brings forth Aurelius' ideas on death; 'Was he a bookish man?' his recipe for attaining wisdom; 'Had he any guess of how the world is made?' his conception of Creation and the Creator; 'Will new Caesar follow the fierce Bellona's flashing helm?' his hatred of war and the immortality of the soul and so on. The speakers have no individuality and the language is stilted. The Athenaeum, in a review of Thought and Word, in which it appeared again, together with 'Evil May-day', said very aptly:

It reads as if a clever upper-form boy had had the subject set him for an essay, and had resolved to distinguish himself by doing it in dialogue and blank verse.²

1. First published in Fraser's, (March, 1881), pp.400-10.

2. (August 23, 1890), p.250.

There is little that is outstanding among the remaining poems in the volume. 'The First English Poet',¹ records the miracle of Caedmon in language that strives for Biblical simplicity and beauty but succeeds in being only flat and prosaic:

Caedmon at her bidding boldly sang
Of the Making of the World, in words
Wondrous; whereupon they wotted well
'Twas an Angel taught him, and his gift
Came direct from God: and glad were they.

Thenceforth Holy Hilda greeted him
Brother of the brotherhood. He grew
Famedest monk of all the monastery; ²

'A Week-Day Hymn', 'Que Sçais-Je', 'In A Book of Maxims', 'A Nursery Rhyme for the Elders' (sonnet), 'An Invitation' and 'See What Lives of Mortals Are', and 'The Winter Pear' are trifles, trite, sententious, undistinguished and too heavily burdened with the task of 'endeavouring to put in words some faint hint of the highest truths - inexpressible in any form of language'.³

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1. First published in Macmillan's, (July, 1881), pp.27-8.
 2. Thought and Word, p.87, ll.63-70.
 3. Dedication to Evil May-Day, (1882).

A few poems are memorable: the inimitable 'Four Ducks on a Pond' which tells with the barest use of words of the inexplicable joy communicated by a scene in nature; the entirely successful little dialect poem 'John Clodd' which shows the simple-minded fellow, not knowing what ails him, going to Mary to find out from her that he is in love with her; and the charming 'Familiar Epistle to a Little Boy' - charming in spite of its doggerel lines because in it the reader sees a father trying to explain himself to his eight year old son. 'I'm But a Lowly Gooseberry' and 'Liber Loquit^ur', worthless as poetry, are interesting for what they tell about Allingham at this period. The humility of

I'm but a lowly gooseberry,
Hanging on my native tree
Here i' the sunshine of the garden
(For which I humbly beg your pardon)
Just within the children's reach;
Don't be angry with me, pray,
Master Critic, - did I say,
Ever say I was a peach! ¹

merely embarrasses the reader. A grown man, and one with some reputation as a poet, ought not to write like that.

1. First appeared under 'Ivy-Leaves', Fraser's, (July, 1878), p.130. Evil May-Day (1882), p. 86.

If he genuinely believes in such lowliness it is an impertinence therefore to undertake to argue against as big a subject as orthodox Christianity. On the other hand if a man considers himself equipped to handle a highly intellectual theme it is very poor psychology indeed to prod the reader, at the final page, to buy his wares:

If perchance you like my look
Buy (don't borrow) me, little Book;
Money I was never made for,
But the printing must be paid for;
If you purchase for a groat
Per thousand lines, find one good thought
Per thousand, am I dearly bought,

and arrant nonsense to talk about being a gooseberry. A curious blend of confidence, self-depreciation and bitterness is evident in all his later publications, the result, I suggest, of disappointment over Laurence Bloomfield and dissatisfaction with his new brand of writing which was on the whole, pompous, self-consciously invented and unappealing but which he felt would sell. And he wrote to sell, because, married in 1874, he now had a wife and family to support. He contributed continually to many magazines and with great luck always found

publishers willing (perhaps because they were not fully aware of his habit) to let him bundle together his latest poems (few enough) and a heap of old ones.

In 1884 a new edition of Day and Night Songs appeared. The Academy¹ greeted it graciously with nostalgic pleasure; the Pall Mall Gazette² with condescension and the loyal Athenaeum³ with the hope that he would return to his old lyrical way instead of writing books like Blackberries.

This latter volume, published almost simultaneously with the other, by Philip and Son, was entitled, Blackberries: Picked off Many Bushes by D. Pollex and Others and Put in a Basket by William Allingham and was new with the exception of somewhat more than a dozen verses published in Fraser's twelve years earlier under the title of Brambleberries.

It is a collection of short poems, aphoristic, epigrammatic and maximatic, on life, death, sin, science

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1. (May 24, 1884), pp.364-5.
 2. (May 31, 1884), p.4.
 3. (July 5, 1884), p.9.

and religion, friendship, solitude, love, patriotism, critics, books, poets, poetry and human foibles, that is a cross between Martin Tupper and La Rochefoucauld. Although some good things appear, the verses on the whole need more of the Frenchman's brilliance, Oscar Wilde's perverse wit and Ogden Nash's sharp-shooting humour to make them exhilarating.

Frequently he hits the target:

'Vile money!' True. Let's have enough,
To save our thinking of such stuff;¹

If I could hate thee, Squirmley, thus I'd curse -
'Remain thyself!' - I could not wish thee worse; ²

Mary would have loved me well
Could I but have let her;
Mary's gone, and, sooth to tell,
Sorely I regret her.
Were she here - much I fear
We should do no better; ³

Women, in and out of season,
Act on great men's public lives:
Truly now, the Turks have reason
In their management of wives! ⁴

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1. (1893 Edition), p.82. All quotations from Blackberries are from this edition.
 2. p.126.
 3. p.57.
 4. p.61.

The rest is wholesome advice in mediocre verse:

How Man is like to Ape we have now heard
 enough and to spare;
How Man is unlike Ape is better worthy our care.
All that proves us animal, let us not fear to scan;
Then hopefully, heartily turn to all that makes us man;¹

Adventurous Spirit, trying every road,
You'll find you come to nothing, or to God;²

empty effusions such as

Clergy to guide poor us are given;
We shall have need of none in Heaven.
A life relieved from clergymen³
O yes, we shall be happy then!

The English Nation is my vexation,
 The French is twice as bad
Germany she bothers me
 And America drives me mad!⁴

One or two at a time
 Give your soul some;
A little dose of rhyme;⁵
 More is not wholesome;

The figures of Heroes by history outlined
Can only take colour and life from your mind;⁶

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1. p. 26.
 2. p. 28.
 3. p. 33.
 4. p. 69.
 5. p. 120.
 6. p. 121.

I dreamt I went to hell one night.
The little devils were impolite.
But Satan with his sweetest air
Bow'd me to a redhot chair; ¹

and platitudes dressed up in an uncomfortable sophistication:

That base curmudgeon who in Nelson's stead
Was made an earl (the one true Nelson dead),
And flung poor generous Emma to the dogs,
Would sooner when his hour approach'd, I'll swear,
Have chosen Erebus's fiery bogs
Than Heav'n, if sure to meet Horatio there. ²

This little book was presented to the public with that same diffidence mentioned earlier. It was 'For Anybody'; at the end the reader was told:

If one single verse you find
Palatable to your mind,
Be that the core, the rest the rind, ³

and, with a bitter expectancy of failure the collection was launched:

Now, little Book, go thy ways!
Move, if thy legs will carry thee!
Pleasure nor profit nor praise
To me - trudge off, nor tarry thee!.. ⁴

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1. p. 82.
 2. p. 119.
 3. p. 170.
 4. p. 171.

He wrote Ferguson, when the book was in press, that it would please nobody and yet out it must come.¹ These remarks together with several sour comments on critics, in the text, suggest that he was writing to sell and not succeeding.

The Athenaeum² and the Pall Mall Gazette³ reviewed it without enthusiasm but the Academy's recommendation indicated there was still a public for this sort of thing:

This little book is very interesting as a perfectly sincere, outspoken record of the daily cogitations of a mind which is no echo, of one who sees into the heart of things for himself A meaning is always there, and often put very happily A wise and witty little book, an earnest and a merry little book, a truly original book ... 4

It was not original, not merry and not very interesting. William Black, the novelist, liked it or so he said when he wrote to thank Allingham for a gift copy of 'the delightful Blackberries', a book 'one can take up at any moment, sure to find some fruitful text' and whose

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1. Sir Samuel Ferguson in the Ireland of His Day, (1896), Vol.I, p.359.
 2. (July 5, 1884), pp.8-9.
 3. (May 31, 1884), pp.4-5.
 4. (May 24, 1884), p.364.

introductory motto was 'in itself delightful'.¹ The rest of his friends and acquaintances appear to have been silent about it.

This publication is a good example of Allingham's paradoxical behaviour as an author during the last ten years of his life. Timid and diffident, sour, and either too hurt or too stubborn to try other poems of Irish life, he ran the risk of writing a book that belonged to the family of Martin Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy which, although in its fiftieth edition in the 80's, had nevertheless helped gain for its author the abuse and parody heaped on him by critics in the 60's and 70's. To write moral tags in the eighties was to invite the whips of the Saturday Review. Allingham's courage did not falter and a lighter style than Tupper's probably saved him from harsh critics. The same courage used in fields more suitable to his talents would have been more profitable.

His next book, Rhymes for the Young Folk, 1887, dedicated 'to Gerald, Eva, and little Henry and others like them', is a collection of poems, some new, some old, most likely to appeal to children and illustrated with

1. Letters to W.A., p.76.

multi-coloured and sepia monochrome drawings by Helen Allingham, Kate Greenaway, Caroline Paterson and Harry Furniss. Some old favourites appear - 'The Fairies', 'The Lepracaun', 'Robin Redbreast' and the appealing game-poem 'Here and There' with its:

Where's Lucy? where's Lucy?
Far, far in the wood,
With wild birds for play-mates
And beech-nuts for food?

No, here she is! here she is!
Happy and gay,
With singing and ringing
To join in our lay.

Where's Gerald? where's Gerald?
He's out in the snow;
The stars shining keenly,
The cold wind doth blow.

Where's Evey? where's Evey etc.etc.,¹

each stanza accompanied in the margin by a medallion drawing (by Caroline Paterson) of the children's activity. Among the new poems, 'The Cat and the Dog' and 'Tom Cricket', are mildly amusing but not sufficiently inventive. Perhaps the best things in the book are two pictures by

1. Rhymes for the Young Folk, (1887), pp.37-8.

Harry Furniss: one, a vital drawing of the peppery lepracaun standing on the leaf of a hare-bell offering the intruder snuff just before flinging it in his face; the other, a beautifully drawn picture of the aged fairy King with an almost alarmingly jovial face handing his crown to a witch because it is so heavy it almost bends him down. The little book, worthy to be a collector's item, seems to have made no mark and I have not been able to find a single notice or review of it.

Irish Songs and Poems, published in 1887, contained thirty-two of his best songs and ballads, all having appeared in previous books, with the exception of 'The Banshee' which had appeared once only, in Longman's Magazine for May of the same year,¹ and 'A Stormy Night', once only, in Longman's in December, 1884². Nine of the songs were accompanied by Mrs. Tom Taylor's musical score. The Academy³, the Irish Nation⁴ and Yeats in the Providence

1. pp. 44-5.

2. pp. 148-55.

3. (December 24, 1887), pp.418-9. Allingham thought review "cheeky" and 'blundering'. See Diary p.371. Charles Sayle was the reviewer.

4. (January 7, 1888), p.7.

Sunday Journal¹ reviewed it favourably although the Academy chided him for changes in text which spoiled rather than improved the original version. The latter periodical also praised 'A Stormy Night' as 'perhaps the most powerful and dramatic [poem] in the book'.

It is a good poem. In sixteen stanzas of varying length, it tells starkly and with dramatic economy, the tale of a second son, a fisherman on the coast of Donegal, who falling in with bad companions thrives on shady doings. Lying in wait, one night, to loot a ship they have watched wreck itself on the rocks, he, separated from the others, pulls one of the survivors to shore, finds a money-belt on him, grapples for it with the half-dead stranger, gets it and flings its owner back into the sea. Later, looking over the treasure he finds the name of his long-absent brother on the belt. With a wild shout he leaps out of his shelter and confronts what he believes to be his brother's ghost. In madness and despair he either falls or jumps into the sea. The brother had not been drowned and goes home to bring joy

1. (September 2, 1888), n.p.n.

to his parents and to eventually wed. It is a convincing poem. There is no melodrama, no striving for effect, only effective description, swift movement and heightened moments. The setting is graphically presented:

but descending
To find the Atlantic, thou leavest night lonely,
And vapours grown frantic are blackly upwending,
Like thoughts never spoken but shudder'd at only:
Harsh blast hurries past, heavy gloom hath dropt down
Like a night within night, over fields, over town.¹

And nothing can be better than the awful reality of the death-struggle between two brothers or the horror of the recognition scene:

A knife-slash! Coins of glitt'ring gold
Across the sullen fire-shine roll'd,
The Dead Man's treasure; also shone
A brass plate on the Belt, whereon
Was writing. Redmond stirr'd the flame,
Stoop'd forward, saw his Brother's name.
Springing to his feet upright
With one hoarse yell that tore the night
He flung the tent-sail open.²

Both are told with the fierce concentration and thrift of Greek tragedy, and the recognition scene recalls the moment of awful realization in Oedipus Rex when the king

1. Irish Songs and Poems, (1887), p.136, ll.13-8.

2. Ibid., p. 142, ll.195-203.

knows at last the crimes he has committed. The style on the whole, however, is Wordsworthian; the atmosphere not unlike that in Crabbe's 'Peter Grimes' or 'Abel Keene'. The final stanza which describes the rain-clouds rolling away and shows the little town going about its daily business spoils the poem by its anti-climax. And the additional blemish of empty lines and forced rhymes, including the appalling one of 'stitching' and 'kitchen', makes one very impatient with the author for the carelessness which he never fully repaired during his whole career.

Flower Pieces,¹ in 1888, was dedicated to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'Whose early friendship brightened many days of my life and whom I can never forget'. The book is divided into three main sections: Flower Pieces, Day and Night Songs and Ballads etc; these are sub-divided into Flowers and Months, Flowers and Poets; Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter; and Translations and Adaptations respectively. The collection is simply a re-arrangement

1. See Appendix V, p.294 for details of an 1887 edition.

of poems written from 1850 onwards.

The twelve sonnets grouped under Flowers and Months had been printed intermittently in the Athenaeum¹ from March 1882 to April 1885. The daisy, snowdrop, daffodil, primrose, hawthorn, wild rose, honeysuckle, meadowsweet, heather, ivy, chrysanthemum and gorse are each eulogized in language that is a medley of conceits, botanical nomenclature, studious observation and a forced relationship between life and flowers. 'The Snowdrop' becomes the 'Fair Maid of February - a drop of snow enchanted to a flower', which in turn becomes the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin in a conceit that is by no means inevitable and very clumsily introduced. 'The Daffodil', 'gold tassel upon March's bugle-horn', is an undistinguished restatement that this golden flower is the herald of spring. The school-girlish playfulness of 'The Wild Rose' is painful. Roses can be roses without first having been 'innocent girlish kisses' charmed to 'a flight of small pink Butterflies'. The coyness and jejune fancy of the following would convince

1. See Bibliography, p. 307.

one that Allingham was in his dotage, were he not to redeem himself in other places:

See, Rosie! sure thy sister-flow'r it is
 (Rosa Sylvestris one hath named thee well);
Methinks I could imagine gloomy Dis
 Whirling you, with a wildrose wreath, to dwell
In Hades. Only one thing sweet as this,
 One thing - come closer - nay, I'll never tell!¹

'Heather' is better because it avoids juggling with silly conceits and speaks plainly and movingly of the land where the heather blooms:

Vast barren hills and moors, cliffs over lakes,
 Great headlands by the sea - a lonely land!
 With Fishers' huts beside a yellow strand
Where wave on wave in foam and thunder breaks,
Or else a tranquil blue horizon takes
 Sunlight and shadow.²

The choice of verse form for these effusions is not a happy one. The sonnet form is not a maid-of-all-work and requires the most perfect blend of thought and emotion for its effect as well as a sestet that either heightens or at least equals the emotional appeal and the beauty of the octet, a sestet that leaves the reader excited, as if poised for flight into a new world, or

1. Flower Pieces, (1888), p. 8, ll.9-14.

2. Ibid., p. 11, ll.1-6.

absorbed in a great quiet of contemplation as at the finish of Shelley's 'Ozymandias'. It ought not to be used by a poet who is 'thinking up' poetry and playing a party game of how many things may be said about flowers. At his worst in these sonnets he is not much better in others. In fact he is not a good sonneteer. Epithets and moral tags are forced into the mould at the expense of sound and sense:

Nature still grows thee, Gorse, regales her bees on
Stretches of English land, wide, windy, sunny,¹
Free from the fetters of that monster, Money;

windy pomposity takes the place of deep emotion:

Dolt! Coward! Rogue! must Ages yet to be
Inherit, with Life's necessary griefs,
What thou thyself perceivest base in thee? —²

awkward syntax offends frequently:

O that I could hold
One path, nor wander to the fen, nor dare
Between the precipice and wild beast's lair!
Penalties are establish'd from of old;³

or

1. Ibid., p. 14, ll.3-5.

2. 'A Nursery Rhyme for the Elders', Thought and Word, (1890), p. 59, ll.9-11.

3. 'Danger', Life and Phantasy, (1889), p. 41, ll.11-4.

Oft have I search'd the weary world in vain,
And all the rest find love and peace of heart,
But I can only find a sluggish pain,
As one by one the sombre days depart,
Presenting many a toy and useless gain; 1

fuz₂ily conceived ideas and bad metaphors mar many lines, as in 'A Singer', and generally speaking, his octets might just as easily change places with his sestets for all the growth and inevitability there is from the beginning to the end of his sonnets. This is particularly true of, 'On the Sunny Shore',² 'Late Autumn',³ and 'In a Spring Grove'.⁴

However to return to the appraisal of Flower Pieces. The second sub-division, Flowers and Poets, includes the ten poems of the 1850 volume in which various flowers are chosen as emblematic of certain poets. Chaucer is assigned the wallflower, Spenser the honeysuckle, Shakespeare the rose, Milton the agave, Keats the hyacinth, Shelley the Egyptian lotus, Leigh Hunt the sweetbriar, Scott the blue bell, Tennyson the jasmin and

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1. 'Long Delayed', Life and Phantasy, (1889), p.19, ll.1-5.
 2. Songs, Ballads and Stories, (1877), p. 70.
 3. Fifty Modern Poems, (1865), p. 42.
 4. Songs, Ballads and Stories, p. 16.

Browning the tiger lily. Although there is perception in Allingham's choice and the verse is pleasant and free from obtrusive conceits, this remains 'thought up' poetry, game-playing in poesy, which hardly enhances a man's artistic reputation. As the Athenaeum puts it:

But is such fancy-mongering worth while?
We could make out a good case for dubbing
Mr. Allingham a periwinkle, or a clematis, or
an orange blossom, or lots of other flowers,
and we could do the same sort of thing
mineralogically, or ornithologically or
entomologically; but the game is fitter for
children, and they have many such. We
ask for something better from a man of
Mr. Allingham's repute and ability.¹

The collection of Day and Night Songs and ballads included in the volume is very good but as all the poems appeared years before they have already been appraised.

His last published books were Life and Phantasy in 1889 and Thought and Word in 1890. These complete his works now arranged in six volumes. They contained nothing new and provided yet another re-arrangement of old poems; to what purpose is not clear in spite of Allingham's careful Prefatory Note which explained that

1. (May 18, 1889), p. 624.

There are various modes of producing what a man is able to produce, and in my case I have, as it were, gone on knitting, in the midst of other occupation, a little web of poetry for myself and those near me out of designs suggested by the influences of the passing hours, have looked back at these from time to time, reconsidered, re-touched, omitted, filled up, added new things to old. This is in the main a tolerably accurate hint of the process whereby for the most part these six volumes have taken substance and shape, and they ought at least to show something of the quality of homogeneity, so far as this may belong to a man's progress through successive stages of life and their various moods.¹

The reader's immediate re-action to this is that homogeneity may be achieved without perpetually serving up old wine in new bottles.

His last poem was written three months before his death, while he was at Eastbourne, where he went after his operation for cancer and where for a few weeks he seemed to be a little better. He used to get up to watch the sunrise and on the morning of August 10, between 4.30 - 5 a.m. he wrote 'Sunrise at Eastbourne - a Photograph', a poem in his old manner of tender joy in picturing the lovely things around him. As it was never

1. Prefatory Note to Life and Phantasy, (1889). No page number.

published outside the Diary (as far as I know) it is worth quoting in full:

Dim sea, dim sky, - a level streak or two, -
A gradual flush in the chilly atmosphere, -
What flames upon that eastern head? The Sun!
A blazing point - a hemisphere - full orb -
Laying a road of gold across the wave,
Gilding wet glossy sands, green-swarded cliffs,
Fresh-flowing tide-streams, far-off sails, tower-clouds.
Till wide-spread heaven, as lifts the Globe of Fire,
Is fill'd with yellow light, and Day rules all,
Two Shrimpers, black amid the radiancy,
Pushing their nets along the ripple's verge,
These are the only life; our silent Town,
With smokeless chimneys, glittering window-panes,
Still sunk in torpor and fantastic dreams.
Town after Town along this English coast,
And down the shore of France, awakes in turn:
Thousands of ships, unpausing day or night,
Of every country bathed by the salt flood,
Slide smooth between them, each upon its course,
As rolling Earth on hers, and I on mine,
And each on his of all my fellowmen.¹

The image of the shrimpers, black against the golden light of dawn, is one of Allingham's happiest and most memorable, showing that the lyric spark was not dead although now it was too late to rekindle it.

He worked at his writings until the end. Two weeks before his death he wrote to Craik of Macmillan's,

1. Diary, p. 385.

in a pathetically crabbed hand, to thank him for consenting to publish a 'book of humourous selections' he was preparing. As this is the sole reference to it one cannot say whether a manuscript exists or whether in 1889 the book was only an idea yet to be put into writing. However Allingham saw clearly what he wanted to do:

My book of humourous selections (tho' I say it who shouldn't) will be incomparably better than any I have seen. Title (which pray keep to yourself)

The Comic Muse

'Mirth with thee I mean to live'.

It will have many famous pieces of course, many not well known - a nice little introduction and notes.

Why not have it as a volume of your Golden Treasury series?¹

Many reasons have been offered for the poetic inertia and sins of misjudgment of Allingham's later career, chief among them the failure of Laurence Bloomfield because, at a crucial moment in his development, when he needed public approval to feed his self-confidence and

1. Unpublished Macmillan MS... Letter (November 3, 1889).

to make his growing reputation more solid, the public let him down, an occurrence which brought to the surface and kept in operation the traits in his character least likely to help him persevere against the difficulties met in the literary world. Thus self-pity and bitterness, mingled with over-sensitiveness, corroded his spirit of lyricism, a chronic lack of self-criticism made him attempt unsuitable subjects, indecisiveness robbed him of fixity of purpose and anxiety about money forced him to turn to nine hampering years of journalism. He played into the hands of circumstances and unmade himself as a poet. The years with Fraser's did nothing to revive his ailing Muse and contributed largely to the further diminution of his reputation.

As sub-editor, under Froude, 1870-4, and as his successor, 1874-9, he was distracted from poetry by the hundreds of demands on his time and nerves that accompany the task of filling a monthly magazine. In addition, he was not happy in his association with this periodical as the following letter indicates:

I retire from Fraser when the June number is finished and feel as if a term of penal servitude were drawing to a close ...¹

And his curt notice of resignation at the end of the June number suggests the same thing:

After editing Fraser's Magazine for nearly five years, I now with true satisfaction resign that trust into fitter hands. Various great improvements are prepared, and will begin to be seen in the July number; but this is my Successor's business, to whom I wish all manner of prosperity, and so make my bow.²

As late as 1884, he was remembering with pain it seems, these harassing years, for in his diary entry for June he wrote:

Nine years of subediting and editing Fraser, and what a list of people I have offended for life, by declining their contributions or in other ways! My name was known in connection with the Magazine, and people applied to me personally and took personal offence, even when J.A.F. was the really responsible person. Enough of it! ³

Edmund Gosse's remark in a letter to Austin Dobson testifies to Allingham's having offended people and also suggests a reason for his milk of human kindness having

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1. Unpublished Macmillan MS.. Letter to 'My Dear Grove' (?) April 12, 1879.
 2. (1879), p. 800.
 3. Diary, p. 323.

curdled:

I know Mr. Allingham tolerably well, and my experience of him is somewhat out of keeping with his reputation. He is considered cold and unsympathetic; I must say he was the very first person (outside the circle of friends) that saw any merit in my work. My first published article appeared in Fraser and since then the Magazine has always been open to me. At the same time I have never sent poetry to him, and unless he distinctly asked it of me I never should. For in all probability the poetry of younger men is the thing of all others he can least bear. You must remember he is himself one of those who have never reached their Holy Land, but whose bones are strewn in the desert ...¹

If his grapes were sour and he was unhappy, it was partially his own fault. He had helped the decline of his reputation by duplication of his work and he frayed his nerves by a failure to toughen himself against the disappointments of and the malicious sport encountered in the literary world of the nineteenth century. He ought to have expected attacks; few writers had escaped them and so far he had got off very easily. Journalists were often insensitive and one had to be prepared for their cruelty. Allingham smarted under their gibes and usually allowed his feathers to be unduly ruffled. His squalls

1. Charteris, Hon.E., Life and Letters of Edmund Gosse, (1931), pp. 83-4.

with the Echo¹ and the Spectator² prove this. He had sense enough however to ignore the rudeness of the following attack.

A writer in The World bore him a particular grudge and marked his retirement as editor by the following virulent remarks:

There is thus perhaps no reason to be surprised that a desperate attempt seems about to be made to galvanise into life a periodical which to all intents and purposes has been long since defunct. Because a gentleman is a fifth rate poet it does not necessarily follow that he is likely to make a sensible or fortunate editor; and the succession of a bard by the name of Allingham to the most brilliant master of English prose now living, as conductor of a magazine with which the great memory of Thackeray will be forever associated, proved an even more dismal failure than might have been expected. The crowning achievement of this moonstruck litterateur, which might well have ensured him dismissal by his employers, was to publish in a recent number of the magazine, an irrelevant, idiotic, but most insolent and ill-bred letter on the Byron Memorial³

The article, 'The Proposed Byron Memorial',⁴ was unfortunate

1. See Appendix I, p. 273.

2. See p. 250 following.

3. 'The Inevitable Scot', The World, (May 21, 1879), p.8.

4. Fraser's, (February, 1876), pp.246-60.

in that Allingham, concerned with the knotty problem of art and morality, and blind to the pitfalls before him, charged with the ~~one-sided~~^{single-minded} intent of a bull and demolished both Byron's poetry and his right to a monument, on moral grounds. To be perfectly logical he might have questioned the continued presence of monuments all over the country. Critically inadequate as many thought the article to be, it is nevertheless a gripping piece of writing because Allingham, roused to moral fury, produces a vivacity, irony and eloquence not frequent in his rather solemn prose, and his attack on Disraeli's¹ verse as the work of a man least capable of judging the best poetry, is extremely diverting.

That Allingham fretted under such attacks is clear from his 'pea-shooting' encounter with the Spectator. As the writer of the monthly 'Ivy Leaves' sent to his friend Mr. Yorke, (a relative of Nol Yorke I presume) he wrote a collection of opinions, maxims, reviews and little poems on topical matters and often vented his spleen on

1. Disraeli proposed the memorial.

his arch-enemies the critics. In February, 1878,¹ he fired the first pea by reprimanding the Spectator for habitually sitting in judgment on Fraser's in its column 'The Magazines'. The Spectator² replied on February 16, that it had a perfect right to its opinions and aimed a few more shots at Allingham's editorship. Unable to let well enough alone he defended himself.³ The Spectator kept quiet until May⁴ and then published, (without malice ~~of~~ aforethought it claimed later) an unfavourable and unfair review of Songs, Ballads and Stories although the examples of bad rhymes given were painfully true. Allingham, dignity gone to the four winds, charged⁵ the weekly paper with deliberately debunking his poetry as a retaliation for his criticisms and it in turn made a reply⁶ that made Allingham look petty, suspicious and silly.

1. pp. 264-5.

2. p. 220.

3. (March 1878), pp.400-1.

4. (May 4), pp.569-70.

5. Fraser's, (June, 1878), p.801.

6. (June 8), p.739.

The Spectator's remarks in the first place were not worth upsetting oneself about but Allingham, unjustifiably touchy, made himself ridiculous and added to his unhappiness as a journalist.

As to the falling off in the quality of Fraser's, referred to by The World and also by Mrs. Oliphant in her Memoir of The Life of Principal Tulloch, when she referred to Tulloch's being

... a fit and likely person to undertake the resurrection of 'Fraser's Magazine', an old and once prosperous periodical, which had sunk into partial insignificance,¹

it would be rash to saddle Allingham with the blame for it. Francis Newman, unlikely to be a flatterer, although a frequent contributor, wrote him that he prized Fraser's more since it had been under his management as he seemed to have succeeded better than Froude had done in excluding inferior material and that although a tendency towards justifying the slave-party was to be regretted, the articles seemed to him of remarkably uniform goodness and intrinsic value, showing a judicious editor,² and

1. (1888), p. 348.

2. Letters to W.A., p. 248.

Carlyle, according to his niece, Mary Aitken, thought highly of the magazine under Allingham's editorship:

Uncle has just finished reading the Magazines, and he says that Fraser is out of sight the best of them all and he is sure it will rather 'set' Principal Tulloch to edit it as well as you have done all through.¹

These opinions appear to me to be sound.

Allingham allowed a wide range of articles and had many eminent men as contributors. Carlyle did for him 'Early Kings of Norway' and there were interesting essays from F.W. Newman, Richard Jeffries, Percy Fitzgerald, Edmund Gosse, Richard Garnett, Froude, Professor Owen, 'Shirley' and P.W.Joyce. Ireland and things Irish were given ample space and ranged from Joyce's 'Spenser's Irish Rivers' to David Fitzgerald's 'Ancient Laws and Customs of Ireland' to a defence of landlords by W.Bence Jones, an English landlord in Ireland who refused to accept Griffith's land valuation in 1880 and was boycotted, without, however, giving in an inch. Literature was not

1. Unpublished Carlyle MS., National Library of Scotland, Letter from Mary Aitken to Allingham June 1, 1879.

neglected and the magazine catered to catholic tastes by supplying articles as different as W.R.Ralston's 'Sicilian Fairy Tales' and C.E.Turner's 'Studies in Russian Literature'. Allingham had nothing to be ashamed of in his editorship. If not an unusually brilliant one it was capable and open-minded and not at all as dreary and heavy as The World would have it believed.

These years with Fraser's further distracted him from poetry by giving rise to a large number of prose essays written by himself for the magazine and published in a three-volume edition, Varieties in Prose, by Mrs. Allingham, in 1893. The first two volumes contain 'The Rambles of Patricius Walker', the earlier ones having been published in a volume of that name in 1873. The essays are leisurely and chatty, full of personal opinions on things in general and full of biographical details of famous people whose home town or favourite haunt he happens to be walking through. He moves happily from idea to idea: children should be taught to read music as well as words; there is a need for a universal language; the stations in small towns ought to

erect large guide maps; indiscriminate destruction of old buildings and bad restoration of others are an abomination; Nationalism is an evil; Westminster Abbey is cluttered; Ireland needs an Irish Burns, and so on. The third volume has weightier things and includes among the Irish Sketches the excellent 'Seven Hundred Years Ago'. Among the critical essays is the notorious one on Byron, and an inadequate, essentially antipathetic one on Baudelaire.

His power to concentrate on poetry seemed to slip further from him. Ideas came occasionally and after half-hearted attempts he abandoned them. Writing Ferguson in 1885, to wish him well in his undertaking of a translation of St. Patrick's Confessions into blank verse, he said,

Your undertaking this subject is all the more interesting to me inasmuch as, many years ago, I planned and commenced a poem on the Saint, in the form of a Cantata —

'The mighty feast proclaim!
Kindle its sacred flame!'

and so forth. But want of sympathy with some aspects of the affair caused this scheme to be flung aside, with a heap (alas!) of other fine intentions. You will make a noble thing of it ...¹

1. Lady Ferguson, Sir Samuel Ferguson in the Ireland of His Day, (1896), Vol. I, p.360.

Sticking power was what he needed, not sympathy. He had sympathy enough to write an excellent account of the saint in his essay 'St. Patrick's Day' (^{APRIL 5, 1556}~~undated~~),¹ where he recorded the traditional belief that Patrick illustrated the doctrine of the Trinity by using the shamrocks at his feet on Tara Hill, without working himself up to a red heat about people setting up 'false visions' and murdering their children's peace, as he did in 'Evil May-Day'.

Earlier still, in 1878, when sending his final 'ivy leaf' to Mr. Yorke, he showed the same lack of concentration in his account of another poem he nearly wrote, but did not because

like many another, [it] paused a
little while before me in airy
completeness, then wavered away,
uncaught in any subtle mesh of words.²

It was to have been a dialogue between Chaucer and William Caxton, 'their shades, pacing without footfall the moonlit cloisters of Westminster', and debating whether 'Poetic

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1. Varieties in Prose, (1893), Vol. III, pp. 111-22.
 2. 'Ivy Leaves', Fraser's, (December, 1878), p. 797.

Genius should perish by the hand of his slave', and 'Literature be pressed to death by the improved steam engines and more occult machinery of Journalism and "The Trade"'. Speculation about it is idle, but done properly it could have been a topical poem of great originality.

After his retirement from Fraser's there were ten years of life left him, during which a fresh burst of poetic energy could have been expected. The beauty of Witley, in Surrey, where he settled from 1881-8 did little, however, to revive his sleeping lyrical talent, although it is probably to a Surrey scene that we owe the inimitable 'Four Ducks on a Pond'. And he was not prepared to turn seriously to narrative and dramatic verse as a substitute for songs. Ireland was calling him but he would not give in fully to her inspiration. He made concessions to his yearning by writing the two best poems of his later period, 'The Banshee' and 'A Stormy Night' on Irish subjects and with an Irish background and by asking his son in 'Familiar Epistle to A Little Boy', to see Ireland someday;

See Ireland, dear Sonny! my nurture was there;
And my song-gift, for which you at least are to care,
Took colours and flavours unfitted for vogue
(With a tinge of the shamrock, a touch of the brogue
Unconsciously mingling and threading through all)
On that wild verge of Europe, in dark Donegal.
- 'Dark,' did I say! - Is there sunshine elsewhere?
Such brightness of grass, such glory of air,
Such a sea rolling in on such sands, a blue joy
of more mystical mountains.¹

The whole poem is a love-song to Ireland.

Although he has not set foot there for over twenty years,
his eyes are filled with her 'green hills' and 'lonely
west coast' - the 'house' of his dreams - and his ears
with her music. He fervently wants his boy to see and
feel the magic Ireland held for his father, but wonders if
he will:

with fresh heart and eyes take a look,
At the poor lonely region,- ah, where will you see
The heavenly enchantment that wrapt it for me?²

And now it was too late for him to sing again of the
Silk of the Kine; illness was closing in on him. He
had written of Ireland early and late but the period in
between had brought him the maiming hurt of the rejection

1. Irish Songs and Poems, (1887), pp.154-5, ll.56-65.
2. Ibid., p.155, ll.69-71.

of Laurence Bloomfield, a rejection which encouraged flaws in his personality which were to prevent his swansong being either an idyll, ballad or epic of the land of 'broad emerald meadows fill'd with flow'rs'¹ and 'rocky pastures, lonely lakes',² which he had glorified in his best songs.

In December, 1855, he wrote to Henry Sutton that his literary ambition was perhaps to exhibit the particular in the light of the universal, through the medium of an atmosphere of Art.³ In another letter dated July, 1855, he told his

I see, feel, breathe. I don't think I really get beyond this - though I may make an attempt to do so.

He admitted an 'instinctive preference for the lyrical' and thought the lyrical to be 'the essential poetic faculty, unobtainable by any study or effort.'³ This lyrical

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1. 'An Irishman to the Nightingales', Irish Songs and Poems, (1887), p.99.
 2. 'The Western Wind', Irish Songs and Poems, p.3.

3. By the Sea (1852), p.117.

Conclusion

The case of William Allingham has been presented; the verdict must follow. However, it would be unfair to pass final judgment on a poet without considering his aims and deciding whether he carried them out. What then, as a poet, did Allingham want to do and did he achieve his ideal?

In December, 1850, he wrote to Henry Sutton that his literary ambition was perhaps to 'exhibit the Particular in the light of the Universal, through the medium of an atmosphere of Art'.¹ In another letter dated July, 1855, he told him,

I see, feel, worship. I don't think I really get beyond this - though a man may make me admit anything almost.²

He admitted an 'innate preference for the lyrical' and thought the lyrical to be 'the essential poetic faculty, unattainable by any study or effort'.³ This lyrical

-
1. Unpublished Allingham MS., in Queen's University of Belfast.
 2. Ibid.
 3. By the Way (1912), p.135.

faculty was to be put to work to produce melody, proportion and harmony, a point he re-iterated many times but which is clear from the following few examples:

That poetry ought to be musical, i.e.
delightful to the ear, is 'an opinion that fire
cannot burn out of me';¹

What chiefly makes a Poem? not opulence, nor grace,
Nor grandeur, nor simplicity; the subject nor
the measure;
But sweetness of proportion, to have everything in place;
Such Poem is a ripen'd fruit, an everlasting
pleasure;²

-- and such is Poetry;
Where, through harmony of words
Murmurs harmony of things.³

This was the method he thought best for fulfilling the high vocation of the Poet whom he believed to be a 'maker', a secondary creator, divinely taught who

reconstructs the shattered world and shows it
still complete and beautiful.⁴

He put his poetic ideal in a nutshell in a little poem called 'Poesis Humana', first published in the

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1. 'Ivy-Leaves', Fraser's, (February, 1878), p.260.
 2. Blackberries, (1893 edition), p.104.
 3. Ibid., p.105.
 4. 'On Poetry', Varieties in Prose, Vol.III, p.258.

Evil May-Day volume: (1882):

What is the Artist's duty?
His work, however wrought,
Shape, colour, word, or tone,
Is to make better known
(Himself divinely taught),
To praise and celebrate,
Because his love is great,
The lovely miracle
Of Universal Beauty.
This message would he tell. 1
.....
His gentle magic brings
The mystery of things;
It gives dead substance wings;
It shows in little, much;
And, by an artful touch,
Conveys the hint of all. 2

He did indeed sing of the miracle of Universal Beauty, seeing a World in a Grain of Sand and Heaven in a Wild Flower. He produced many exquisite lyrics full of joy in the glories of the outdoors and the various manifestations of Love, human and divine in the world around him. But he did not cultivate in his poetry the beauty of the world of pain, of the shattered world. He did not know how to make music out of the derangements in the Macrocosm and the Microcosm, to find inspiration in

-
1. Life and Phantasy, (1889), p.153.
 2. Ibid., p. 154.

the unorthodox beauty of the wastelands of human existence. He was too prudish, too inhibited to venture beyond the conventional, and although one must feel grateful for his best poetry it is regrettable that his idea of beauty proved to be a restricted one. The great poets showed the world with its two faces, the one serene and lovely, the other split and scarred, without feeling they had to reconstruct the broken face before revealing the complete head. The weakness in Allingham's poetic system is that he did not allow room for manifestations of the seamier side of life, or the sexual side, both of which had to be kept in the background. This over-niceness robbed his work, particularly his later verse, of depth, and an understanding of the less regular, more intricate expressions of human nature and prevented his appreciating poets like Baudelaire, Byron and Gabriel Rossetti. For all the 'gentle magic' of his lines he did not bring his readers really close to the mystery of things.

His method of composition resulted in much poetry that was delightful to the ear. However, his concept

of the musical in verse produced the soft, flowing, pensive strains of a Chopin rather than the intensity of a Wagner. Only occasionally as in 'The Banshee', did he make music with crashing chords, more intensity, more rudeness of sound, less traditional prettiness. 'Sweetness of proportion' he achieved when his lyrical impulse, his language and the form that contained them were in full harmony and bred the inevitability that is a requisite of good poetry. Examples of this proportion are numerous but a few like 'The Maids of Elfin Mere', 'George Levison', 'Abbey Assaroe', 'An Irishman to the Nightingales' and 'The Banshee' will serve as illustrations of the point.

He succeeded in his aims when he did not force his Muse onto foreign territory. He failed by overstraining his capacities and attempting so called philosophical and deeply reflective poetry which he was ill-equipped to handle because of the inherent limitations of his mind and hence of his imagination. His attitude to Science and organized Religion, evident in poems like 'Evil May-day', revealed a habit of lashing out at what

he did not understand, a flaw indicative of a narrow-mindedness not compatible with the highest poetry. In spite of his wide reading he had only a smattering of philosophy and no conception of metaphysics. Not that one needs to be an Aristotle or a Maritain to be a good poet but one needs something of the art of dialectic which will prevent intellectual poetry from becoming a medium for rhapsodies. Allingham's 'philosophical' and 'theological' verse was fed, too often, by his own prejudices or by some isolated piece of bigotry he had run across or by a temporary inability to resist platitude.

The mistake of his life was not to have consolidated his powers. Instead, he dissipated them by lack of concentration, lazy repetition, failure to eliminate faulty syntax and bad rhyming, and by flitting from one unsuitable subject to another. He never firmly decided where his powers lay so that when his lyric impulse needed time to refresh itself he kept flogging it to little advantage instead of turning to other paths open to him. He should have cultivated his very real talent for short narratives like 'George Levison' or 'A Stormy Night', in

which he combined, in a perfect rhythm, certain aspects of character, description and dramatic action. Thus he would have trained himself to undertake the same kind of thing on a larger scale. He was not able to weave a complex relationship of characters, all impinging on one another in an interesting way. 'The Music-Master' proved this; also Laurence Bloomfield to some extent. He could never probe the depths of character, as Browning did in The Ring and the Book or the depths of feeling as Meredith did in the sonnet sequence Modern Love but he could create types and make them blend completely with story and background and he could write dramatically and convincingly when he chose to take the trouble. This talent he let slide. Had Laurence Bloomfield succeeded with the public he would have learned to strengthen his narrative and dramatic power so that in his later years, good poems would have predominated and would not have been far-apart oases in a desert of miscellaneous mediocrity. Had Laurence Bloomfield succeeded he might have written an epic; if not that, at least a series of Irish stories that would have had great originality.

His critics proved unhelpful because, although they indicated clearly what he should avoid, they annoyed him so much by their failure to appreciate his aims in Laurence Bloomfield that he did not benefit from their remarks. Yeats's summing up, written after Allingham's death, is an epitome of Irish opinion of the 'poet of Ballyshannon':

He is essentially a poet of the accidental and fleeting - of passing artistic moments ... He had no sense of the great unities - the relations of man to man, and all to the serious life of the world. It was this that kept him from feeling Ireland as a whole; from writing of the joys and the sorrows of the Irish people, as Davis, and Ferguson and Mangan have done, and from stirring one's blood with great emotions. Had he felt the unity of life, he with his marvellous artistic faculty, could have given us long poems that would be really alive; but not feeling it, the best he could do was Laurence Bloomfield, with its fine pictures of detached things, and its total failure as an Irish epic of the land troubles.¹

This was only half the truth. To imply that he was neither a Carleton nor a Homer was not very helpful. When he attempted to sing of Ireland's sorrows nobody

1. United Ireland, (December 12, 1891), p.5.

heeded him. The eviction scene¹ in Laurence Bloomfield is a cry of pain for Ireland that Yeats and all critics before him ignored.

The drama of it is unforgettable. The 'raw and chill' of an Irish morning creates the atmosphere, as the armed police - 'damp vapours brooding on the barren hill' - trudge with the sheriff towards the homes of the dispossessed, 'six big-boned labourers, six crow-bar men', hired at half a crown, accompanying them. They close in on the cottages to the sounds of wailing sorrow. In double line they stand before the doors; - 'And ranks of polished rifles wetly shine' - a poor old man, tears on his face, tries to speak, fails, and

Mutely upon the doorpost prints a kiss,
Then passes out for ever; ²

and a young man, with heart-breaking dignity, refuses to accept permission to return temporarily to the shelter of the houses and scorns the Workhouse:

1. (1864 edition), pp.139-44.

2. Ibid., p.142, ll.90-1.

'We're thankful to you! but there's no one here
'Going back into them houses: do your part. '1
'Nor we won't trouble Pigot's horse and cart.'1

Finally a woman rushes forth to curse the instigator
of the misery:

'Vengeance of God Almighty fall on you,
'James Pigot! - may the poor man's curse pursue,
'The widow's and the orphan's curse, I pray,
'Hang heavy round you at your dying day!'2

If this is not feeling Ireland, one wonders what is.

It seems to me that he was as Irish as Ferguson,
Davis or Mangan. He felt Ireland as wholly as they did
but his feeling was different; certainly less emotional
than Davis's or Mangan's. Yeats's criticism tempts one
to over-simplify and to say that an Irish poet could
not be considered to 'feel Ireland whole' unless he
stayed at home, ransacked the country's ancient history
for subject matter and never questioned lyric declarations
like Davis's

She is a rich and rare land;
Oh she's a fresh and fair land,
She is a dear and rare land -
This native land of mine.

-
1. Ibid., p.143, ll.108-10.
 2. Ibid., ll.115-18.

No men than hers are braver -
Her women's hearts ne'er waver;
I'd freely die to save her,
 And think my lot divine

.....
Could beauty ever guard her,
And virtue still reward her,
No foe would cross her border.
 No friend within it pine.

Allingham's view of Ireland included the reverse side of the picture and his love was not diluted by what he saw. He saw her loveliness and sang of it; he saw her weaknesses and stated them. What prevented Irish critics from placing him in the same class as Ferguson, Mangan and Davis was his disinclination to pursue Irish history in verse and his tendency to remove the false sentiment from patriotism. There was in his poetry too much of the spirit of 'Irish Annals' (1852) for it to stir the nineteenth century Irishman:

MacMurlagh kill'd Flantagh, and Cormac killed Hugh,
Having else no particular business to do.
O'Toole killed O'Gorman, O'More killed O'Leary,
Muldearg, son of Phadrig, kill'd Con, son of Cleary

.....
The Abbot of Gort, with good reason no doubt,
With the Abbot of Ballinamallard fell out,
Set fire to the abbey-roof over his head,
And kill'd a few score of his monks, the rest fled

.....

Young Donnell slew Murlagh, then Rory slew Donnell;
Then Connell slew Rory, then Dermod slew Connell;
O'Lurcan of Cashel kill'd Phelim his cousin
On family matters. Some two or three dozen
Of this Tribe, in consequence, killed one another.
MacFogarty put out the eyes of his brother
James Longhair, lest James should be chosen for chief.
At Candlemas, fruit-trees this year were in leaf.
King Toole, an excitable man in his cups,
Falls out with King Rorke about two deerhound pups,
And scouring the North, without risking a battle,
Burns down all the houses, drives off all the cattle;
King Rorke to invade the South country arouses,
Drives off all the cattle, burns down all the houses.¹

The Englishman lost interest in Allingham because he did not fulfil his early promise. The result was that, having bored the English and offended the Irish, he did not know how to recover himself and exhibiting an inherent lack of self-criticism he followed a course that proved harmful to his poetry. However, his work is worth study because of the melody and picture-making of his best lyrics and the peculiar sweetness and sadness of his short narratives and idylls; and also because it is so illustrative of the interplay of character and circumstances shaping the destiny of a poet. His own estimate

1. By the Way, (1912), pp.14-5.

of himself, written to Woolner in January, 1851, is the best final judgment that one can make of 'the poet of Ballyshannon':

I am genuine, though not great, and my turn will come if people once begin to guess that there is some meaning in everything I say. Some intended at least.¹

1. Letters to W.A., p.285.

APPENDIX I

The 'Echo' Business

On January 25, 1877, Denis Florence MacCarthy¹ wrote a long letter to the editor of the Echo chiding him for the injustice of allowing Scottish writers in England the name 'Scottish' but denying Irish writers in England the name 'Irish'. 'The same "Conspiracy of Silence" against Ireland occurs also in the Sister Arts of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture and Music". The letter was signed 'William Allingham' and contained an ironic criticism of Nightingale Valley which suggests that MacCarthy resented his own exclusion from the selection as well as that of Moore and others. He never dreamed that the 'forgery' would pass but Allingham, humourless and ruffled, took it seriously, demanded an apology from the Echo, wrote a denial of the letter to that paper and to the Times, Daily News and Athenaeum, and in general made a fool of himself leaving the practical joker, master of the field.

1. My attention was drawn to the identity of the writer in the Echo and to some of the details of the case by W.I.P. MacDonagh's thesis 'The Life and Work of William Allingham', Trinity College, Dublin, (1952). Consequently I examined the MacCarthy papers in the National Library of Ireland.

This little episode showed that Allingham could not bear criticism easily. Although MacCarthy's letter had a sting in it, it could not be classed as anything but humourous malice, best replied to by silence. Allingham must have known that Nightingale Valley was a good collection. His own powers of criticism should have told him so; and there were eminent men to back him up. Ruskin said he 'never saw so beautiful and rich a gathering';¹ Richard Garnett thought it 'a very tasteful selection altogether';² and Palgrave obviously thought well of it as he endeavoured to 'beat it', according to Woolner who wrote Mrs. Tennyson on October 8, 1860:

Palgrave called in this evening; he is busy reading all the Poets for the purpose of making a collection to publish which he intends to beat that of Allingham.³

Allingham's touchiness about his own work probably helped to breed the enemies he referred to in a letter to Moncure Conway, on November 10, 1865, and who seemed to

-
1. Letters of W.A. to R. and E.B. Browning, (1914), p.10. Letter February 2, 1860.
 2. Letters to W.A., p.189.
 3. Thomas Woolner His Life in Letters, (1917), p.199.

be more plentiful than ever during his years as sub-editor and editor of Fraser's:

You have seen perhaps how I am handled by a scribbling Scotch Parson in Fraser this month - which vexes me, being already out of sorts, more than it ought. I have somehow a host of small enemies - but why should Froude have allowed this?¹

But why should not Froude have allowed it? The review² was not unfair. Allingham was upset, apparently because the writer said he was not Keats or Tennyson, that he had not fulfilled the promise of his youth and that real poetry was missing in his work. A man is entitled to his own opinion and there was a good deal of truth in this one, which was severe rather than damning. Had Allingham allowed criticism of himself to give rise to self-examination rather than pique he might have written a larger amount of good poetry.

MacCarthy's letter is worth quoting in part as it gives an opinion of Nightingale Valley and offers as well an example of the rather tasteless spoofing abroad in

-
1. Unpublished Allingham MS., Columbia University Library, New York.
 2. Of Fifty Modern Poems, Fraser's, (November, 1865), pp. 633-6.

the papers of the day:

..... you will permit me to state that whenever I myself have had the opportunity, I have acted on the principle I here advocate. In my 'Nightingale Valley' ... expressly intended for 'English' readers, the name of the greatest of Irish poets is not once mentioned. The Swan of Avon is there, the Owl of Cripplegate is there, and the Skylark of La Spezia soars sunward in my valley. The Eagle of Missolonghi, no doubt is conspicuous by his absence owing to this noble bird and bard being totally beyond my grasp, but the Tom-tit of Scone - 'the sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong' - has been rigorously hunted from the Sacred enclosure. The author of 'Lalla Rookh' finds no rookery in 'Nightingale Valley', the sweet singer of 'Paradise and the Peri' is shut out from 'the Paradise of Birds'. Others, too, are omitted from the natural fear the editor felt of being supposed to traffic in painted birds. Thus, Peacock, who has written some of the easiest-flowing lyrics in the language, is not allowed even a single screech. In place of such large and unwieldy specimens of poetical ornithology I have given several conspicuous perches to the tuneful twitterer of Ballyshannon and the Soaring Seagull of Dublin Bay

The letter continues in much the same tone and becomes so openly waggish that one wonders how Allingham could have thought it necessary to deny the authorship of it. His lack of humour was more noticeable than MacCarthy's questionable sense of fun.

APPENDIX II

Allingham's Reputation in America

He was also not unknown in the United States. Nor was his growing reputation in that country entirely due to his own lobbying. News of his work occasionally reached the public through Putnam's, Harper's and the North American Review. He gained a flattering amount of attention, either directly or indirectly from Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, W.E.Channing, Moncure Conway, Charles Eliot Norton, John Greenleaf Whittier and Ticknor and Fields, and was probably fairly widely discussed in literary circles judging from letters to him, and from several other references. Emerson¹ wrote him in 1851 that he had read his poems with much interest and found in them the old joy which made one more a debtor to Poetry than anything else in life; that W.E.Channing was charmed with the sea landscape running through them all and that Thoreau rejoiced in many of the pieces.

1. Letters to W.A., p. 45.

Moncure Conway¹ was even extravagant in his praise and felt that, in some respects, Laurence Bloomfield was Allingham's greatest poem and recommended it as a necessity for anyone who wanted to see Ireland as it was in the nineteenth century. Hawthorne, although he said he disliked poetry, wrote to William Ticknor, asking him to have Allingham's poems distributed to people 'tinctured with poetry and such nonsense'; 'to editors of magazines and newspapers and anyone who would take the trouble to notice them'. Allingham had apparently sent the American author a number of copies of his poems (which editions is not disclosed) and Hawthorne thought them good enough to give himself the trouble of writing to Ticknor. In the same letter he said

Do ask Whipple to take them into his gracious consideration. There is great merit in some of the pieces. 'Cross-Examination', for instance, is wonderfully pithy. I can't say I have read them all, for I dislike poetry. But I know the author, and should be glad to get him an American reputation, - which he deserves as much as a good many whose works you have published.

1. 'South Coast Saunterings in England', (Saunter 4), Harper's, (August, 1869), p.347.

I enclose a list of persons to whom Allingham has already sent the poems. Please to write 'With Author's compliments' on the title-pages of those you distribute.¹

Unfortunately the list was not included in printing the letter. Hawthorne's puffing would appear to have resulted in Field's writing to Allingham offering to publish his work. Two letters from Allingham² bear this out. That a book was published is certain because the North American Review gave it a notice in April 1862. It was entitled simply Poems by William Allingham. / Marked First American edition. / Boston. / Ticknor and Fields. / 1861. / 32 mo. pp.276 / Blue and Gold /

However, as far as one can judge neither the author nor the publisher made much of a personal impression on one another because when Fields and his wife visited England in 1869 and were entertained at Farringford, Allingham who was invited by Tennyson to meet them, made a singularly non-committal entry in his diary³, although Annie Fields asked him for 'The Touchstone' in autograph

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1. Ticknor, C., Hawthorne and his Publisher, (1913), p.147.
 2. Letter to Fields April 4, 1860; another to Fields May 2, 1860. Unpublished Allingham MS. in Huntington Library, San Marino, California. See Appendix II, pp.283-7.
 3. Diary, pp.198-9.

and he obviously enjoyed conducting Miss '(Biglow Papers)' Lowell on her first walk in English fields, - 'only us two'. Fields did not mention him in his Yesterdays with Authors (1871) and various published recollections nor did Ticknor in his Life and Letters. Allingham's Diary had no reference to the American edition of the poems, to the correspondence concerning it, nor to the Sever and Francis edition of The Ballad Book, printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1866. Mrs. Allingham's editing of her husband's Diary was not first rate and possibly, for reasons of her own, she deliberately deleted entries¹ or passed them over as unimportant. Some light may be thrown on the subject when the sequel is published to The Cost Books of Ticknor and Field and their Predecessor 1832-58, a significant work published by the Bibliographical Society of America in 1949.

Allingham's reputation in America spread further by his inclusion in anthologies. In 1881 he was

1. MS. diary contained material never published. Mrs. Allingham's horror of hurting anyone living caused her to delete. This is testified to by her son Gerald in two letters (August 12 and 5, 1947) to W.I.P. MacDonagh. Copies in my possession.

represented in A.M. Williams's Boston publication, The Poets and Poetry of Ireland by three poems and the eviction scene from Laurence Bloomfield, in James T. Fields and Edwin P. Whipple's, The Family Library of British Poetry: from Chaucer to the Present Time, 1350-1878 by two poems; in 1887 in the New York publication, The Household Library of Ireland's Poets by sixteen poems, edited by Daniel Connolly; and again in 1889 by eight poems in John Boyle O'Reilly's New York publication, The Poetry and Songs of Ireland.

Rhymes for the Young Folk was published in 1915 by F. Warne and Co., (London and New York) and Robin Redbreast and Other Verses¹ by Macmillan's (New York) in 1930, this latter really another edition of Rhymes for the Young Folk.

That he continued to be represented is borne out by the testimony of his son, Henry Allingham, at his father's Centenary Celebration in 1924, sponsored by the

1. Saw a copy, privately owned, in Ballyshannon. Library of Congress Catalogue lists it as well as the 1915 Rhymes for the Young Folk.

Irish Literary Society in London, when he said that, on visiting the New ~~States~~ World during the 1914-18 War he found that his father's works were known and honoured. A Government Official told him that 'The Fairies' was known to every American child because it was in all the school-reading books, and that ^{found} the same ^{to be} true in Canada, _(Henry Allingham) when he visited it as a minor member of a mission, the heads of which were a general and a baronet. At the hotel a waiter told them that a representative of the leading paper wanted to come up, and while the general and the baronet were guessing which of them the reporter wanted, the waiter explained that he wanted to see Mr. Allingham to learn all he could about his distinguished father.¹

1. Irish Book Lover, (April, 1924), p. 79.

Correspondence with James T. Fields

Lane, Ballyshannon.

April 4, 1860.

Dear Sir,

The opportunity of putting myself into the shape of an American book under your auspices is very welcome. My poems, as far as I know, have not hitherto been reprinted in the States, except one here and there in the newspapers.

As I am on the eve of leaving home for a short time, I think it well to write now and tell you that I leave the parcel addressed to you, care of Mr. Trübner, in the hands of my sister Miss Catherine Allingham, who will forward it if necessary. In all likelihood, however, I shall send it myself, sometime next month, and probably with a preface for the edition.

Pray observe that you must not call it The Poetical Works of W.A. - nor anything else implying completeness, for I hope to do a good deal more in that way. Either 'Poems by W.A.' or 'The Music-Master and Other Poems' would do. I should myself prefer the latter title.

I fear there is no chance of revising proofs across the Atlantic. A clever misprint would poison all my pleasure in the book - but things must be as they may.

In haste and with thanks,

I am, dear Sir,

Truly yours,

W. Allingham.

Lane, Ballyshannon,

Ireland,

May 2, 1860.

My dear Sir,

I am sending the packet of poems by Simon Shiel Esq., a gentleman who expects to be in London about the end of this week. The short preface shall follow in a few days at farthest.

Should you happen to be in Messrs. Bell and Daldy's in Fleet Street, you might see there an edition of my poems with woodcuts. These woodcuts¹ are in certain qualities, I think, above the common mark. However it will not suit my plans to use them in any future English edition. If these blocks could be of service to you (either now or hereafter) you might have them at a moderate cost.

Bell and Daldy have recently published a volume of choice English lyrics and short poems with notes, the proprietorship of which volume (whosoever the editor or

1. Not used in American edition of the poems.

editors may be) rests in my hands. It is the kind of book about which no two judgments will precisely agree - Still I think Mr. Ruskin's is perhaps not unlike the verdict that most of the cultivated philopoetic world will arrive at, and he wrote to the Editor that he 'never saw so rich and beautiful a gathering' of poems. It must be confessed though, that the said Editor's taste is odd in some points - he has put in many poems of obscure writers and ignored several famous names. Few of your American bards would be content with their awards - but I am gossiping. Pray look at the book and see, if (which I don't in the least expect,) it would do to reprint across the water.¹

One of the notes in the volume just mentioned (It is called 'Nightingale Valley' by the by) says that 'hardly any great poet, certainly no modern one, has been so inaccurately printed as Shelley'. This is quite true and I have it much at heart to see a carefully revised

1. This elaborate pretence to hide what was already known to many of his friends shows A's curious oversensitiveness about his own work and at the same time his assiduous though back-handed salesmanship.

edition brought out. I have myself made many obvious corrections and Mr. Browning has made a great many. I have hopes of obtaining opportunities for deliberate examination of all, or most of the existing MSS. of the poet. With every alteration of the present text, a precise statement of the reasons for it would of course be made. This will sooner or later, be done in England but commercial crisis may retard it. Suppose you were to take the initiative and let me set about the matter with an eye to your press?¹

If, being fresh from Rome you can give me any news of my friends the Brownings, I beg of you to do so - and pray believe me

Yours truly (though in haste)

W. Allingham.

1. Apparently this scheme came to nothing. W. Rossetti undertook the task about five years later.

APPENDIX III

Note on 'Mervaunee'

The poem, a variation of the many merrow legends in Irish folk-lore, points to a good deal of originality in Allingham's treatment of the relationship between a mortal and a creature from the sea. After an attempt to find a definite source for 'The Lady of the Sea' I have come to the conclusion that he used as source material only the points common to all merrow legends; - the inability of the sea-people to submerge without the magic cap (or sealskin if seals) and the hungering for their home beneath the waves - all the rest was his own invention, his own conception of the bitter-sweet marriage of two aliens, the one a mermaid, the other a Celtic prince. As far as I know there is no legend existing with a hero and heroine called Dalachmar and Mervaunee. Thomas Wall, Librarian of the Irish Folklore Commission, University College, Dublin, has suggested to me that Allingham invented his names as Mervaunee suggests a sea-woman (Mer = sea; vaun Irish = woman) and Dalach

is the Donegal name for an O'Donnell; mar or mor Irish = great or big; thus the great prince O'Donnell. Allingham had some knowledge of Irish so there is nothing implausible in this idea.

The published legends which he probably read vary the same tale over and over. An Irishman comes upon a seal-woman without her skin or a mermaid without her Cohnleen Driuth, (she has usually wandered away from her friends who have been dancing on the beach) is smitten by her beauty, persuades her to marry him, hides her magic cap, lives happily with her for years until one day she finds the cap and returns to the sea. Nearly all these stories are broadly comic since the heroes are strapping Irish fishermen with heavy brogue and twinkling humour like Dick Fitzgerald in Croker's 'The Lady of Gollerus' or Hall's story of John O'Glin and the seal-woman.

Allingham wanted something more dignified, more tragic for his purposes and thus made his characters nobler, more sensitive and intelligent than the couples usually met in such stories.

Merrow Tales Consulted for This Note

- (1) T. Crofton Croker's Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland, London, (1862).
'The Lady of Gollerus' p. 180
'Flory Cantillon's Funeral' p. 190
'The Soul Cages' p. 195
'The Lord of Dunkerron' p. 211
'The Wonderful Tune' p. 215
- (2) T. Kneightley's The Fairy Mythology, London, 1850.
The Mermaid Wife p. 169
- (3) Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Hall's Ireland, London, 1843, Vol. III.
'John O'Glin and the Seal Woman' p. 408

APPENDIX IV

A Tale of the Irish Famine in 1846 and 1847,
Founded on Fact

W.I.P. MacDonagh in his thesis 'The Life and Work of William Allingham' draws attention to the existence of a printed pamphlet called A Tale of the Irish Famine in 1846 and 1847, Founded on Fact,¹ undated and described on the title page as 'Not Published' but 'Printed by William Allingham' at Reigate. Dr. MacDonagh suggests it may be by Allingham.

It is a short account of the starvation of a family and of the father's return too late with the money that should have saved them. Neither the events in the story nor the piety and resignation of the mother are false to the facts of the time but the writing is so sentimental and so lax that it quite fails to bring home the horror of what it describes. Its aim was to arouse pity and indignation and the will to assist and amend, and this too was the aim of Laurence Bloomfield. It seems improbable that even as early as 1847, and impossible that after 1863 Allingham could have written so badly in prose. And yet the tale is such as he might have told.

1. It is not mentioned in any bibliography of Allingham and there is no copy in the National Library, Dublin, or the British Museum. The late M.J. MacManus possessed a copy.

Reigate is not far from Lymington and the quotation from Coleridge on the title-page, -

... So many are
The sufferings which no human aid can reach,
It needs must be a duty doubly sweet
To heal the few we can

would be in character. Also - and the merest of straws this - the name given to the father in the tale is Denis, which is the name of a principal character in Laurence Bloomfield.¹

It is not far-fetched to suppose it his. On January 15, 1849 he wrote to Henry Sutton:

As to what I 'mean to do' - I mean to write a little-sort-of-story (more of character than incident) - scene the Irish county. What it will turn out in the making up (a tailorly phrase!) I can't imagine - The only rule I know is to try to make it a real thing, and let the rest take chance. But by the bye, it is not to be an 'Irish Story' - of roguery and broguery.²

Also his prose was not always first rate long after the 1850's. On November 29 of that year he wrote to Leigh Hunt after he had written 'The Wedding Ring' for Leigh Hunt's Journal³.

1. 'Life and Work of William Allingham'. (1952), pp. 90-1.

2. Unpublished Allingham MS., Queen's University of Belfast.

3. (January 18, 1851), pp.105-8.

I have been, almost always, an impatient reader of prose, conjuring out, as it were, the meaning, without attending to the construction, and other circumstances have helped to make me an awkward proser, but I am not too old to mend, and mean to try.

I suppose it takes more genius to write Poetry, but it certainly takes more stupidity to write Prose. There must go lump to the leaven.¹

So he might well have written badly in prose either before or after 1850.

He wrote sentimentally too, as his rendering of the love story in 'The Wedding Ring' shows.

The fact that the tale was privately printed is not proof that it was written by Allingham but it does not lessen the probability because private printing was not unusual with him. There is the example of the advance copy (1887) of the flower poems from Flower Pieces and Other Poems (1888)² and 'Stratford and Avon and Roses' listed in Dobell's Catalogue, No. 229, (1914); O'Hegarty's Bibliography of Allingham, and Halkett's and Laing's Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature, (1926).

1. Letters to W.A., pp. 11-12.

APPENDIX V

Another Flower Pieces

In March 1956, I wrote Trinity College, Dublin, to ask if the Library contained any Allingham manuscripts. The Librarian thought that there might be a few letters among Edward Dowden's correspondence with literary men of the time. The assistant¹ who examined Dowden's papers made an interesting discovery. Among his letters was a small paper pamphlet of 32 pages, entitled Flower Pieces and with an inscription in the author's hand on the cover: To Edward Dowden Esq. /with good wishes for 1887/ William Allingham/

This was probably a private printing which Allingham had done for circulation among his friends. It appears not to have been previously known. There is no trace of it in the British Museum Catalogue, the Cambridge History of Bibliography or P.S.O'Hegarty's separate bibliography of Allingham.

The pamphlet measures 128 mm. x 95 mm. There is no printer's or publisher's name on it. The entire 32

1. W.O'Sullivan.

numbered pages are occupied by the poems. The 4 pp. of cover are, of course, not numbered and bear only the title on p.1 and a floral ornament on p.4. Its contents are the same as those of the first 32 pages of Flower Pieces and Other Poems published in 1888 by Reeves and Turner, i.e. it contains the twelve poems grouped under Flowers and Months and the eighteen under Flowers and Poets. The text is the same as that of the 1888 volume with the exception of a few lines in 'Roses' and 'At a Window'. The 1888 volume runs to 192 pages of verse and 3 pages of notes, and includes Day and Night Songs ('Printed in the literary form in which I desire it may remain'¹), Ballads etc., and poems Translated and Adapted.

Public attention was drawn to the pamphlet by Professor H.O. White of Trinity College in the T(S.L.) for August 17, 1956, p. 487.

1. Flower Pieces (1888), Notes, p. 192.

APPENDIX VI

Poems Not Included in Allingham's Published Books

The two poems quoted below are not included in any of Allingham's published books. The first, 'The Cobbler and the Round Tower' was printed in the June number of the Dublin University Magazine for 1858, (p.668). Badly written and lacking point it is nevertheless interesting as an example of Allingham's use of Irish legend and Irish speech. Had he worked at it the poem might have ranked with descriptive songs like A.P. Graves's 'Father O'Flynn'. As this poem stands it is neither narrative nor lyrical and fails because Allingham does not make up his mind on which to put the emphasis.

It is also interesting to note that this cobbler probably served as model for Bill McCann in Laurence Bloomfield. A comparison of the following,

The keen, small, wither'd, disputatious man,
With spectacles on nose, and quid in jaw,
Ready to argue histh'ry, po'thry, law,
Religion, science, or the latest news.
Bill earns his frugal crust by making shoes;
Debate his recreation, - most of all
With 'Lordy' Mullan glad to try a fall.¹

1. (1864), p.158, ll. 54-60.

with the third stanza of 'The Cobbler and the Round Tower' verifies this suggestion, although the description of McCann is considerably pruned and the tone less broadly humorous:

D.U.M. The Cobbler and The Round Tower June 1858

On a certain wayside stands a very old Round Tower,
Split well-nigh in two by a rent in the wall:
It was stately for ages; and many a sound tower
Has perish'd while this has been threat'ning to fall.
The wind murmurs keens over long-forgot scenes,
Faint rumours of battle, thin quiring of psalms,
Where, winter and summer, it patiently leans,
Like a poor old blind beggar expecting an alms.

'When the Wisest in Ireland', says ancient tradition,
Shall touch it, then tumbles the magical Tower:'
And a Cobbler at one time, by neighbours' decision,
Was fully endued with this perilous power.
Indeed, he kept wide to the road's further side;
For who better versed in ould sayins than he,
That in argumentation the parish defied,
Upon learning of every sort, shape, and degree?

He had science to puzzle a college-professor,
The best theologian he fear'd not a fig,
He'd chat so he would, Lady Leinster (God bless her),
Or argue the law with a judge in his wig.
He could take a command by sea or by land,
Could regulate Ireland, besides the Hindoos,
Or sew up the Tenant-right question off-hand,
Or hammer the Church, like an ould pair of shoes.

Cook, mariner of Whitby, gave the chart
Another England in the great South Sea.
Lo, re-embodied now by Woolner's art,
The bold and honest Spirit! who once more
Will voyage to that Australasian shore,
The fog-bank show'd him, lifted suddenly:
Bearing a message, without tongue or pen,
As brief, as full, as English words could say.
There on his breezy column will he stand,
The bloodless conqueror, viewing sea and land.
An English city, in whose deep blue night
For Charles's Wain the Southern Cross hangs bright,
Ships from old England gliding up the bay,
 And signify with that uplifted hand,
 (The gesture once of joy-astonished heart,)¹
 'Greeting to all my Brother Englishmen!'

Other poems not included in Allingham's published works are: 'Sunrise at Eastbourne', already quoted, and curiously, omitted by Mrs. Allingham in her selection for a 1912 edition of Poems, brought out by Macmillan's as part of their Golden Treasury Series; 'To H.D.T.'² written as the result of 'a kind of affectionate anger' felt at the death of Thoreau whom Allingham thought fool-hardy and said so in lines crude in execution and in very doubtful taste; and an

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1. Quoted from a letter to Mrs. Woolner, June, 1878, in Thomas Woolner R.A., Sculptor and Poet, His Life in Letters (1917) by his daughter, Amy Woolner, p.308. See also Fraser's (August, 1878), p.268 as part of series 'Ivy-Leaves' written every month by Allingham.
 2. 'Ivy-Leaves', Fraser's, (June, 1878), p. 804.

untitled poem to the Brownings to express his pleasure at having heard from them.¹

'To H.D.T.', is perhaps worth quoting as an example of Allingham's poetic decline. He was apparently blind to the emptiness of such lines.

Ah me! the stout man's dead,
Hath done our hope much wrong;
His sermon and his song
Are much discredited
His boldness, was it brag?
Weak brethren were his scorn,
He lord of river, wood and crag
Crony of snow and tempest, night and morn;
 Who took no keeping
 Of eating, sleeping,
Lay on the mountain side aloof,
 Careless of hearth and roof;
 For, ah! that hollow cough of his,
Poor man, is no new scoff of his;
Now must he fear a drop of dew,
The summer wind would pierce him through;
Faintly, faintly, comes his breath;
He yields, before his time, to death.
Not wise the man, what'er he be,
Nor safe who lack humility.
 - But Henry! I am sad for thee.

1. Letters of William Allingham to Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, (1914), pp. 2-3.

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- 'Evey', (January 25, 1851), p.119.

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- 'The Wedding-Ring', (January 18, 1851), pp.105-8.

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- 'Memory', (October 28, 1922), p.242.

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- 'A Stormy Night', (December, 1884), pp.148-55.
- 'Fairy Hill or The Poet's Wedding', (November, 1885), p. 59.
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- 'The First English Poet', (July, 1881), pp.227-8.
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- 'Footpaths', (April 27, 1882), p.4. Contains two short poems, 'The Stolen Path' and 'Welcome Park'

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'A Letter From Mona', with some account of St. John's Fair and the Tynwald Court (Ramsey, Isle of Man), date uncertain, 1850, pp.147-50. Article accompanied by Allingham's own drawing of St. John's Fair and the Tynwald Court and dated 1850.

Photostat in my possession

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'Ballad of Squire Curtis', (April, 1868), pp.77-8.

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(Allingham) 1 letter: Allingham to Hawthorne,
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(Allingham) 1 letter: Allingham to D.J.O'Donoghue, n.d.
Photostats in my possession

Brotherton Library, University of Leeds

(n.MS. n.) 2 letters: Allingham to Sir E. Gosse,
(April 26, 1872, June 15, 1874).

(n.MS. n.) 1 letter: H.Allingham to Sir E. Gosse,
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(MS.44408.f.217) 1 letter: Allingham to Browning,
(December 14, 1865).

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(July 2, 1875).

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- (Coy Kendall MSS.Coll.) 1 letter: Allingham to Stephens,
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(Conway MSS. Coll.) 1 letter: Allingham to Mrs.Conway.
n.d.
(Coy Kendall and Conway 2 letters: Allingham to M.D.Conway,
Coll. respectively) (November 10, 1865,
August 13, 1867).
Photostats in my possession

Cambridge University Library

- (Add. 5354. 151.) 1 letter: Allingham to Professor
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- (In scrapbook labelled 1 letter: Allingham to W.Barnes,
'2 M.S.')
- (In scrapbook with W. 1 letter: Allingham to W.Barnes,
Barnes Book Plate on cover) (March 4, 1851).
(In scrapbook with W. 1 letter: Allingham to W.Barnes,
Barnes Book Plate on cover) (November 25, 1886).
Copies in my possession

Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California

- (HM 12919) 1 letter: Allingham to Walter Dever-
ell, (November 22, 1853).
(FI 107 - 8) 2 letters: Allingham to James T.
Fields, (April 4, 1860,
May 2, 1860).

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- (6 MS Am 1280) 6 letters: Allingham to Emerson, (November
16, 1847, March 4, 1848,
October 9, 1870, April 9, 1873,
April 15, 1873, September 6,
1875).

- (b MS Am 1280.) 1 letter: Henry Sutton to Emerson,
(June 8, 1848).
- (b MS Am 1088.) 4 letters: Mary Aitken Carlyle to Charles
Eliot Norton, (January 3, 1875,
November 20, 1875, June 11,
1877, November 6, 1877).
- (b MS Am 1088.) Charles Eliot Norton's Journal
(November 17, 1872 to February
6, 1873).

Macmillan and Co., Publishers, London

- 39 letters: Allingham to Alexander Mac-
millan, (May 26, 1863 -
August 8, 1864).
- 1 letter: Allingham to 'My Dear Grove'
? possibly 'My Dear George' i.e.
George Craik, (April 12,
1879).
- 5 letters: Allingham to Craik, (April 13,
1878, November 17, 1880,
January 20, 1887, August 18,
1887, November 3, 1889).

National Library of Ireland

- (MS. 2040) 1 letter: Allingham to W.B.Kelly,
(June 1862).
- (MS. 2040?) 1 letter: Allingham to Petrie,
(November 30, 1853).
- (MS. 5747. 1-3) 1 letter: Allingham to Mrs. Ferguson,
(May 15, 1874).
- 2 letters: Allingham to Ferguson,
(December 20, 1883; June 6,
1885).
- (MS. 3486) 1 letter: Allingham to Ferguson,
(March 31, 1879).
- (MS. 1849?) 'The Pilot's Pretty Daughter'
autograph draft
- (MS. 3306.) A book of airs with words by Allingham.

- (MS. 7243-48.) Diaries of Denis Florence MacCarthy.
(MS. 7250-53.) Diaries of Florence MacCarthy, son of D.F. MacCarthy.

National Library of Scotland

- (MS. 3823.ff.136-7, 147-63, 169-75) 8 letters: Mary Aitken Carlyle to Allingham, (August 7, 1874, June 1, 1879, October 22, 1881, June 13, 1882, November 8, 1882, Friday n.d., another, n.d., May 25, 1883).
3 letters: Mary Aitken Carlyle to Allingham, (October 1, 1881, October 29, 1881, December 10, 1881).
1 letter: Dr. John Carlyle to Allingham, (July, n.d. 1883?).
- (MS. 3218.f.111.) 1 letter: Allingham to Carlyle, (July 5, 1857).
- (MS. 1766.f.271.) 1 letter: Allingham to Carlyle, (August 27, 1850).
- (MS. 1768,ff.123, 133, 206, 298.) 4 letters: Allingham to Carlyle, (December 17, 1865, January 27, 1866, December 15, 1866, November 2, 1867).
- (MS. 1769,ff,123,281.) 2 letters: Allingham to Carlyle, (July 3, 1869, December 4, 1870).
- (MS. 1774.f.202.) 1 letter: Allingham to Mrs. Carlyle, (February 17, 1861).
- (MS. 666.106.) 1 letter: Allingham to Carlyle, (1872).
- (MS. 1777.f.4.) 1 letter: to Allingham from Longmans, Green and Co., (February 1, 1875).
- (MS. 1778.f.58.) 1 letter: Allingham to Masson, (November 20, 1875).
- (MS. 4528.f.36.) 1 letter: Allingham to the editor of Blackwoods, (February 1, 1889).
- (MS. 4289.f.64.) 1 letter: Froude to Allingham, (1872).

(MS. 3660.117, 145-6.) 3 letters: H. Allingham to Alan Reid, (July 11, 1892, July 7, 1893, July 20, 1893).
Microfilm in my possession

Pierpont Morgan Library, New York

(n.MS.n.) 2 letters: Allingham to Mary Howitt, (June 16, 1857, August 10, 1862).
Photostats in my possession

(MA. 381.) 8 letters: William Rossetti to Allingham, (October 22, 1850; January 14, 1851; April 15, 1860? February 3, 1861? July 25, 1864; June 26, 1868? April 14, 1876?).

(MA. 925.) Transcript of 'The Touchstone' which Allingham copied out for the auto-graph album of Mrs. James T. Fields.

Princeton University Library, New Jersey

There are a number of letters of William Allingham in the Princeton Library, about thirty of them to Coventry Patmore.

No details to date.

Addenda

July 11th 1958.

3 letters received by Allingham from W. Rossetti and C. Patmore. Letters written by Allingham are addressed to R. S. Bell (1), J. M. Cameron (1), Mrs. Conway (1), Mrs. Elia Dickinson (1), A. Halman Hunt (1), F. Galton (1), Newman (1), Mrs. C. Patmore (4), and W. Stokes (1). There are several others addressed to unidentified correspondents. Twenty-five letters approximately.

Queen's University of Belfast

(MS. 1/125) 46 letters: Allingham to Henry Sutton, (1848-62)
Microfilm in my possession

Dr. Williams's Library, London

(56 b in 1854 vol. of H. Crabb Robinson's Correspondence) 1 letter: Allingham to Crabb Robinson, (June 8, 1854).

Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn.

(MS. n. subject to change. Yale prefers that they be omitted).

1 letter: Allingham to F. Locker-Lampson, (July 9, 1879).

1 letter: Allingham to W.J. Linton, (November 18, 1883).

Part of a letter to Clough, (October 25, 1855).

In a red cloth case.

13 letters from Clough to Allingham.

Letters from Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Clough, Ruskin to Allingham. No details given. Probably most of the published letters

2 letters: George Eliot to Allingham, (February 13, May 21, 1877).

12 letters: Walter Savage Landor to Allingham, (1850-4).

'Winter Verdure': autograph manuscript sonnet.

MSS. in Possession of W.I.P. MacDonagh

Note-book historical and linguistic jottings
Certain MS. poems and letters of Allingham.

3 letters: Gerald Carlyle Allingham to W.I.P. MacDonagh, (August 12, August 24, October 6, 1947).

2 letters: Emily Grace Allingham to W.I.P. MacDonagh, (July 8, July 21, 1947).

1 letter: Nell Allingham to W.I.P. MacDonagh, (August 8, 1945).

2 letters: Maud I. Allingham to W.I.P. MacDonagh, (June 26, July 15, 1945).

· Copies in my possession

Letters: Property of P.H.L. Allingham Esq.¹

Sold by Sotheby and Co. July 29, 30, 1946²

The Allingham Correspondence. A series of letters addressed to William Allingham, the poet, and to his wife, Helen Allingham, watercolour painter. The Allinghams knew and corresponded with nearly all the literary and artistic people of their time and the correspondence covers a period of practically a century. Many of the letters were written in the eighteen-forties, yet the correspondence continues into the present century to include a letter written to Mrs. Allingham from John Drinkwater shortly before his death.

1. Son of Henry Allingham second son of the poet.

2. See Sales Catalogue of Sotheby and Co., July 29 and 30, 1946, pp.45-8.

- 503 BROWNING (ROBERT) and ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING. Two A.L.s, written jointly and signed by both Mr. and Mrs. Browning, 4 pp. 8vo. Florence, 1853 and 1858, to William Allingham, describing their life in Florence, a visit to Culvy to see Rousseau's house etc.....
£9. Myers
- 504 BROWNING (ROBERT). Correspondence with Allingham, consisting of 13 A.L.s of Robert Browning, 21 pp., 8vo, and 24 A.L.s of William Allingham, 1851-1888, an intimate series of letters containing besides references to the poet's work, glimpses of Carlyle, Emerson and others. Mention Allingham's marriage and Mrs. Browning's death; also seven A.L.s of Miss Sariana Browning (sister of R. Browning) to William Allingham
£30. Myers
- 505 CLOUGH (ARTHUR HUGH) Poet. Thirteen A.L.s 55 pp., 8vo 1849-61, to William Allingham, refers to his "Bothie" and "Ambarvalia"....."The Moral World is rather scandalized with it", and contains references to Tennyson, Carlyle, and Froude, also draft A.L. of W.Allingham to Clough.
£3. Myers
- 506 ELIOT (GEORGE). Mrs. M.E. Lewes, six A.L.s, 14 pp., 8vo 1874-77, to Mr. and Mrs. Allingham. In one letter George Eliot invites Mrs. Allingham to undertake the illustrations for "Romola"; another interesting letter relates to the dialect of the Midlands and refers to "Adam Bede".
£12. Maggs
- 507 OWEN (SIR RICHARD), Zoologist. Zoologus, an article on the Jardin Zoologique d'acclimation du Bois de Boulogne, holograph manuscript; 19 pp., folio (page 2 is missing; also three A.L.s of the same to W. Allingham respecting the publication of the article.
£1. Myers
- 507A DICKENS (CHARLES). Six A.L.s, 9 pp., 8vo., 1848-1857 to William Allingham, respecting Allingham's contributions to Household Words. One letter contains an elaborate explanation for having to return Allingham's MS. owing to Miss Martineau having supplied a contribution on a similar subject.
£11. Maggs

507B GOETHE (J.W.VON) German Poet. Stanza of six lines in his handwriting with covering note of J.Marshall, Secretary to the Grand Duchess of Saxe-Weimar. Weimar 22 October, 1859, oblong 8vo.

£12. Patch

508 ALLINGHAM (WILLIAM). Note-book containing Original Poems in his handwriting, including George Levison, or The Schoolfellows, The Mowers, Winter Verdure, Mea Culpa, Robin Redbreast, Three Sisters and the Queen of the Forest. 25 pp., 8vo.

A note by William Allingham inside the cover states that this volume has been in Tennyson's possession for a time, and it contains several notes throughout in Lord Tennyson's handwriting.

£12. King

509 EMERSON (R.W.). Three A.L.s, 11 pp. 4to and 8vo, 1847-51 to William Allingham, refers to Allingham's "The Pilot's Daughter" which he has showed to Coventry Patmore and Clough "... I should gladly have seen you with eyes ... that may yet happen. But your way is onward and upward," etc.; also 3 A.L.s of W.A. to Emerson, containing two holograph poems.

£15. Myers

510 TENNYSON (ALFRED, LORD). Two A.L.s and a letter subscribed and signed 8 pp., 8vo, 1855-56 to William Allingham criticising his correspondents work "... in parts too fine in the style of the last century and some of the worst parts of Wordsworth." Tennyson goes on to criticize Wordsworth's avoidance of plain speaking; also the original explanatory heading in Tennyson's handwriting intended for his poem "Despair", but not printed, 1 p., 8vo.

£10. Maggs

511 TENNYSON. KNOWLES (SIR JAMES). Notes from Aspects of Tennyson 16 pp., 8vo, and 2 pp. of pencil notes, auto M.S., published in the "nineteenth century".

£1. Myers

- 512 ROSSETTI (DANTE GABRIEL). Two Holograph Poems "Adieu" and "Fortuna", 2 pp., 8vo, also "Bothwell" in D.G.Rossetti's handwriting, 2 pp., 4to, with note by W. Allingham "Copied for me by D.G.Rossetti in the British Museum Library"; and A.L.s of E. Siddal (afterwards Mrs. Dante Gabriel Rossetti) to William Allingham.

£10. Randle

- 513 THACKERAY (W.M.). Three A.L.s, 3 pp., 8vo, 1852-60, to W. Allingham. One letter in the early slanting hand, the other two in the later upright handwriting refers to "The Virginians" etc.

Thanking the correspondent for the gift of fish ...
£6. Maggs

- 514 CARLYLE (THOMAS). An interesting series of 9 A.L.s, and a L.s, 28 pp., 8vo, 1850-74, to William Allingham advising Allingham as to his reading and studies; also three A.L.s of Jane Carlyle, one an amusing letter relating to anecdotes of Ruskin. Nine A.L.s of Mary Carlyle; A.L.s of John Carlyle, a signed photograph of Carlyle, M.S. notes by W. Allingham on Carlyle, and a lock of hair

£38. Maggs

- 515 HAWTHORNE (NATHANIEL). A.L.s., 2 pp., 8vo, 29 June, 1855, to William Allingham, with a reference to introducing Allingham's work to American readers; also two A.L.s of Henry W. Longfellow to the same 7 pp., 8vo, 1876, respecting Allingham's contributions in "Poems of Places". (3)

£17. Maggs

- 516 LANDOR (WALTER SAVAGE). Eleven A.L.s, 30 pp., 8vo, and an incomplete A.L., 1850-54 to William Allingham. Interesting letters containing criticisms of the work of the Brownings, De Quincey, Cowper and others

£28. Maggs

- 517 ALLINGHAM (WILLIAM) Poet. Correspondence of William Allingham and his wife Helen Allingham (water colour painter), consisting of over 800 A.L.s, of the celebrated Authors and Artists of their day, together with numerous original Poems of W.Allingham and draft replies to many of the letters. (parcel)

These letters are nearly all of interest and include A.L.s of William Barnes, Ford Madox Brown, Sir Frederick Burton, Randolph Caldicott, George Du Maurier, William de Morgan, Kate Greenaway, Holman Hunt, Thomas Hardy, Richard Jeffries, Charles Kingsley, J.S.Mill, F.W. Newman, Coventry Patmore, Thomas Woolner, W.B.Yeats, W.M.Rossetti, D.M.Craik, Aubrey de Vere, etc., also letters from America and Australia by members of the Allingham family.

£90. J.H.Valentine

- 518 RUSKIN (JOHN). Fourteen A.L.s, 24 pp., 8vo, 1855-1877, to William Allingham, discusses contemporary poets. "Neither Lowell nor Longfellow write finished - or even good poetry." Severely criticizes modern German art.... "Berlin ugly! You should have seen Munich.... was this year at Cologne, Dusseldorf, Dresden, Berlin, Hanover, Nuremberg, Munich, saw not one piece of enduring Modern Deed in Iron, Stone, Wood or Paint," etc.

£9. Myers

- 519 TROLLOPE (ANTHONY). Three A.L.s, 5 pp., 8vo, 1855-1877 to William Allingham, refers to a contribution of Allingham to the "St. Paul's Magazine", etc.; also 29 A.L.s of Sir Edward B. Jones, many with humorous sketches and 23 letters from members of his family, all to William Allingham.

£14. Myers

- 520 HUNT (LEIGH). Interesting series of 18 A.L.s, 64 pp., 8vo, 1843-56 to William Allingham, also five A.L.s of W. Allingham to Leigh Hunt and two A.L.s of Thornton Hunt and one of Vincent Leigh Hunt.

In this attractive correspondence, Leigh Hunt discoursés on poetry, phrenology, and describes what he considers "goodness". There are references in his letters to Keats, Shelley, Carlyle, Landor, Thackeray, and others. In one letter Leigh Hunt sings the praises of the young lady Allingham he was later to marry. In another letter Leigh Hunt looks forward to the time when "Steam Carriages" will carry him all over the world.

£48. King

- 521 MORRIS (WILLIAM). Eight A.L.s, 26 pp., 8vo.,
1869-1881 to William Allingham, largely relating to
Socialism and predicting economic changes
£17. Randle
- 522 BROWNING (ELIZABETH BARRETT). Four highly
interesting A.L.s, one with a postscript in Robert
Browning's hand, 20 pp., 8vo Rome, Florence and Siena
1859-1860 all to W.Allingham.
- Mrs. Browning refers to a new work by her
husband [The Ring and The Book]
£17. Myers

Reviews and Notices of Allingham's Works

Poems, 1850

- Athenaeum, (January 18, 1851), pp. 78-9.
Critic, (October 15, 1850), pp.496-8. [W.Rossetti]
Dublin University Magazine, (November, 1850),
pp. 581-3 [Ferguson]
Fraser's, (May, 1851), pp. 506-9.
Leader, (August 10, 1850), p. 473.
North American Review, (July, , 1853), p.29-30.
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Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, (September, 1850), p. 581.
National Era, (May 1, 1851) [John Greenleaf Whittier]
Unable to obtain photostat, Issue missing

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- Athenaeum, (April 29, 1854), p. 518.
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Duffy's Fireside Magazine, (June, 1854), pp. 246-8.
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- Poems (American edition), 1861
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In Fairyland, 1870

- Daily News, (November 3, 1869), p. 2.
Spectator, (November 20, 1869), pp. 1365-6.

Rambles by Patricius Walker, 1873.

- Pall Mall Gazette, (February 10, 1873), p. 12.
Saturday Review, (February 8, 1873), pp. 187-8.
Spectator, (March 8, 1873), pp. 313-4.

Poetical Works of T. Campbell, 1875.

- Spectator, (September 4, 1875), pp. 1123-5.

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- Academy, (September 15, 1877), p. 265.
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[B. Betham-Edwards]
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