

Classic Poetry Series

William Allingham
- poems -

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William Allingham(19 March 1824 – 18 November 1889)

He was born in Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal, Ireland, and was the son of the manager of a local bank who was of English descent. He obtained a post in the custom-house of his native town and held several similar posts in Ireland and England until 1870, when he had retired from the service, and became sub-editor of Fraser's Magazine, which he edited from 1874 to 1879, in succession to James Froude. He had published a volume of Poems in 1850, followed by Day and Night Songs, a volume containing many charming lyrics, in 1855.

Allingham was on terms of close friendship with DG Rossetti, who contributed to the illustration of the Songs. His Letters to Allingham (1854-1870) were edited by Dr. Birkbeck Hill in 1897. Lawrence Bloomfield in Ireland, his most ambitious, though not his most successful work, a narrative poem illustrative of Irish social questions, appeared in 1864. He also edited The Ballad Book for the Golden Treasury series in 1864.

In 1874 Allingham married Helen Paterson, known under her married name as a water-colour painter. He died at Hampstead in 1889, and his ashes are interred at St. Anne's in his native Ballyshannon.

Though working on an unostentatious scale, Allingham produced much excellent lyrical and descriptive poetry, and the best of his pieces are thoroughly national in spirit and local colouring. His verse is clear, fresh, and graceful.

Other works are Fifty Modern Poems (1865), Songs, Poems, and Ballads (1877), Evil May Day (1883), Blackberries (1884), Irish Songs and Poems (1887), and Varieties in Prose (1893), and, arguably his most famous work, "The Faeries" (see below).

William Allingham: a Diary (1907), edited by Mrs Allingham and D Radford, contains many interesting reminiscences of Tennyson, Carlyle and other famous contemporaries.

The Ulster poet John Harold Hewitt felt Allingham's influence keenly, and his attempts to revive his reputation included editing and writing an introduction to The Poems of William Allingham (Oxford University Press/ Dolmen Press, 1967).

A Day-Dream's Reflection

Chequer'd with woven shadows as I lay
Among the grass, blinking the watery gleam,
I saw an Echo-Spirit in his bay
Most idly floating in the noontide beam.
Slow heaved his filmy skiff, and fell, with sway
Of ocean's giant pulsing, and the Dream,
Buoyed like the young moon on a level stream
Of greenish vapour at decline of day,
Swam airily, watching the distant flocks
Of sea-gulls, whilst a foot in careless sweep
Touched the clear-trembling cool with tiny shocks,
Faint-circling; till at last he dropt asleep,
Lull'd by the hush-song of the glittering deep,
Lap-lapping drowsily the heated rocks.

William Allingham

A Dream

I heard the dogs howl in the moonlight night;
I went to the window to see the sight;
All the Dead that ever I knew
Going one by one and two by two.

On they pass'd, and on they pass'd;
Townsfellows all, from first to last;
Born in the moonlight of the lane,
Quench'd in the heavy shadow again.

Schoolmates, marching as when they play'd
At soldiers once - but now more staid;
Those were the strangest sight to me
Who were drown'd, I knew, in the awful sea.

Straight and handsome folk, bent and weak, too;
Some that I loved, and gasp'd to speak to;
Some but a day in their churchyard bed;
Some that I had not known were dead.

A long, long crowd - where each seem'd lonely,
Yet of them all there was one, one only,
Raised a head or look'd my way;
She linger'd a moment - she might not stay.

How long since I saw that fair pale face!
Ah! Mother dear! might I only place
My head on thy breast, a moment to rest,
While thy hand on my tearful cheek were prest!

On, on, a moving bridge they made
Across the moon-stream, from shade to shade,
Young and old, women and men;
Many long-forgot, but remembered then,

And first there came a bitter laughter;
A sound of tears a moment after;
And then a music so lofty and gay,
That eve morning, day by day,

I strive to recall it if I may.

William Allingham

A Gravestone

Far from the churchyard dig his grave,
On some green mound beside the wave;
To westward, sea and sky alone,
And sunsets. Put a mossy stone,
With mortal name and date, a harp
And bunch of wild flowers, carven sharp;
Then leave it free to winds that blow,
And patient mosses creeping; slow,
And wandering wings, and footsteps rare
Of human creature pausing there.

William Allingham

A Memory

Four ducks on a pond,
A grass-bank beyond,
A blue sky of spring,
White clouds on the wing;
What a little thing
To remember for years-
To remember with tears!

William Allingham

A Seed

See how a Seed, which Autumn flung down,
And through the Winter neglected lay,
Uncoils two little green leaves and two brown,
With tiny root taking hold on the clay
As, lifting and strengthening day by day,
It pushes red branchless, sprouts new leaves,
And cell after cell the Power in it weaves
Out of the storehouse of soil and clime,
To fashion a Tree in due course of time;
Tree with rough bark and boughs' expansion,
Where the Crow can build his mansion,
Or a Man, in some new May,
Lie under whispering leaves and say,
"Are the ills of one's life so very bad
When a Green Tree makes me deliciously glad?"
As I do now. But where shall I be
When this little Seed is a tall green Tree?

William Allingham

A Singer

That which he did not feel, he would not sing;
What most he felt, religion it was to hide
In a dumb darkling grotto, where the spring
Of tremulous tears, arising unespied,
Became a holy well that durst not glide
Into the day with moil or murmuring;
Whereto, as if to some unlawful thing,
He sto]e, musing or praying at its side.

But in the sun he sang with cheerful heart,
Of coloured season and the whirling sphere,
Warm household habitude and human mirth,
The whole faith-blooded mystery of earth;
And I, who had his secret, still could hear
The grotto's whisper low through every part.

William Allingham

Abbey Assaroe

Gray, gray is Abbey Assaroe, by Belashanny town,
It has neither door nor window, the walls are broken down;
The carven-stones lie scatter'd in briar and nettle-bed!
The only feet are those that come at burial of the dead.
A little rocky rivulet runs murmuring to the tide,
Singing a song of ancient days, in sorrow, not in pride;
The boortree and the lightsome ash across the portal grow,
And heaven itself is now the roof of Abbey Assaroe.

It looks beyond the harbour-stream to Gulban mountain blue;
It hears the voice of Erna's fall - Atlantic breakers too;
High ships go sailing past it; the sturdy clank of oars
Brings in the salmon-boat to haul a net upon the shores;
And this way to his home-creek, when the summer day is done,
Slow sculls the weary fisherman across the setting sun;
While green with corn is Sheegus Hill, his cottage white below;
But gray at every season is Abbey Assaroe.

There stood one day a poor old man above its broken bridge;
He heard no running rivulet, he saw no mountain-ridge;
He turn'd his back on Sheegus Hill, and view'd with misty sight
The Abbey walls, the burial-ground with crosses ghostly white;
Under a weary weight of years he bow'd upon his staff,
Perusing in the present time the former's epitaph;
For, gray and wasted like the walls, a figure full of woe,
This man was of the blood of them who founded Assaroe.

From Derry to Bundrowas Tower, Tirconnell broad was theirs;
Spearmen and plunder, bards and wine, and holy Abbot's prayers;
With chanting always in the house which they had builded high
To God and to Saint Bernard - where at last they came to die.
At worst, no workhouse grave for him! the ruins of his race
Shall rest among the ruin'd stones of this their saintly place.
The fond old man was weeping; and tremulous and slow
Along the rough and crooked lane he crept from Assaroe.

William Allingham

Adieu To Belshanny

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

No more on pleasant evenings we'll saunter down the Mall,
When the trout is rising to the fly, the salmon to the fall.
The boat comes straining on her net, and heavily she creeps,
Cast off, cast off - she feels the oars, and to her berth she sweeps;
Now fore and aft keep hauling, and gathering up the clew.
Till a silver wave of salmon rolls in among the crew.
Then they may sit, with pipes a-lit, and many a joke and 'yarn'
Adieu to Belashanny; and the winding banks of Erne!

The music of the waterfall, the mirror of the tide,
When all the green-hill'd harbour is full from side to side,
From Portnasun to Bulliebawns, and round the Abbey Bay,
From rocky inis saimer to Coolnargit sand-hills gray;
While far upon the southern line, to guard it like a wall,
The Leitrim mountains clothed in blue gaze calmly over all,
And watch the ship sail up or down, the red flag at her stern
Adieu to these, adieu to all the winding banks of Erne!

Farewell to you, Kildoney lads, and them that pull on oar,
A lug-sail set, or haul a net, from the Point to Mullaghmore;
From Killybegs to bold Slieve-League, that ocean-Mountain steep,
Six hundred yards in air aloft, six hundred in the deep,
From Dooran to the Fairy Bridge, and round by Tullen Strand,
Level and long, and white with waves, where gull and Curlew stand;
Head out to sea when on your lee the breakers you Discern!
Adieu to all the billowy coast, and winding banks of Erne!

Farewell, Coolmore - Bundoran! And your summercrowds that run
From inland homes to see with joy th'Atlantic-setting sun;
To breathe the buoyant salted air, and sport among the waves;

To gather shells on sandy beach, and tempt the gloomy caves;
To watch the flowing, ebbing tide, the boats, the crabs, The fish;
Young men and maids to meet and smile, and form a tender wish;
The sick and old in search of health, for all things have their turn
And I must quit my native shore, and the winding banks of Erne!

Farewell to every white cascade from the Harbour to Belleek
And every pool where fins may rest, and ivy-shaded creek;
The sloping fields, the lofty rocks, where ash and holly grow,
The one split yew-tree gazing on the curving flood below;
The Lough, that winds through islands under Turaw mountain green;
And Castle Caldwell's stretching woods, with tranquil bays between;
And Breesie Hill, and many a pond among the heath and fern
For I must say adieu-adieu to the winding banks of Erne!

The thrush will call through Camlin groves the live- long summer day;
The waters run by mossy cliff, and banks with wild flowers gay;
The girls will bring their work and sing beneath a twisted thorn,
Or stray with sweethearts down the path among growing corn;
Along the river-side they go, where I have often been,
O never shall I see again the days that I have seen!
A thousand chances are to one I never may return
Adieu to Belashanny, and the winding banks of Erne!

Adieu to evening dances, when merry neighbours meet,
And the fiddle says to boys and girls, "Get up shake your feet!"
To 'shanachus' and wise old talk of Erin's gone by -
Who trench'd the rath on such a hill, and where the bones may lie
Of saint, or king, or warrior chief; with tales of fairy power,
And tender ditties sweetly sung to pass the twilight hour.
The mournful song of exile is now for me to learn
Adieu, my dear companions on the winding banks of Erne!

Now measure from the Commons down to each end of the Purt,
Round the Abbey, Moy, and Knather - I wish no one any hurt;
The Main Street, Back Street, College Lane, the Mall, and Portnasun,
If any foes of mine are there, I pardon every one.
I hope that man and womankind will do the same by me;
For my heart is sore and heavy at voyaging the sea.
My loving friends I'll bear in mind, and often fondly turn
To think of Belashanny, and the winding banks of Erne.

If ever I'm a money'd man, I mean, please God, to cast
My golden anchor in the place where youthful years were pass'd;
Though heads that now are black and brown must meanwhile gather gray,
New faces rise by every hearth, and old ones drop away
Yet dearer still that Irish hill than all the world beside;
It's home, sweet home, where'er I roam, through lands and waters wide.
And if the Lord allows me, I surely will return
To my native Belashanny, and the winding banks of Erne.

William Allingham

Aeolian Harp

O pale green sea,
With long, pale, purple clouds above -
What lies in me like weight of love ?
What dies in me
With utter grief, because there comes no sign
Through the sun-raying West, or the dim sea-line ?

O salted air,
Blown round the rocky headland still,
What calls me there from cove and hill?
What calls me fair
From thee, the first-born of the youthful night,
Or in the waves is coming through the dusk twilight ?

O yellow Star,
Quivering upon the rippling tide -
Sendest so far to one that sigh'd?
Bendest thou, Star,
Above, where the shadows of the dead have rest
And constant silence, with a message from the blest?

William Allingham

After Sunset

The vast and solemn company of clouds
Around the Sun's death, lit, incarnadined,
Cool into ashy wan; as Night enshrouds
The level pasture, creeping up behind
Through voiceless vales, o'er lawn and purpled hill
And hazéd mead, her mystery to fulfil.
Cows low from far-off farms; the loitering wind
Sighs in the hedge, you hear it if you will,--
Tho' all the wood, alive atop with wings
Lifting and sinking through the leafy nooks,
Seethes with the clamour of a thousand rooks.
Now every sound at length is hush'd away.
These few are sacred moments. One more Day
Drops in the shadowy gulf of bygone things.

William Allingham

Amy Margaret's Five Year Old

Amy Margaret's five years old,
Amy Margaret's hair is gold,
Dearer twenty-thousand-fold
Than gold, is Amy Margaret.
"Amy" is friend, is "Margaret"
The pearl for crown or carkanet?
Or peeping daisy, summer's pet?
Which are you, Amy Margaret?
A friend, a daisy, and a pearl,
A kindly, simple, precious girl, --
Such, howsoe'er the world may twirl,
Be ever, -- Amy Margaret!

William Allingham

An Evening

A sunset's mounded cloud;
A diamond evening-star;
Sad blue hills afar;
Love in his shroud.

Scarcely a tear to shed;
Hardly a word to say;
The end of a summer day;
Sweet Love dead.

William Allingham

Autumnal Sonnet

Now Autumn's fire burns slowly along the woods,
And day by day the dead leaves fall and melt,
And night by night the monitory blast
Wails in the key-hole, telling how it pass'd
O'er empty fields, or upland solitudes,
Or grim wide wave; and now the power is felt
Of melancholy, tenderer in its moods
Than any joy indulgent summer dealt.
Dear friends, together in the glimmering eve,
Pensive and glad, with tones that recognise
The soft invisible dew in each one's eyes,
It may be, somewhat thus we shall have leave
To walk with memory,--when distant lies
Poor Earth, where we were wont to live and grieve.

William Allingham

Daffodil

Gold tassel upon March's bugle-horn,
Whose blithe reveille blows from hill to hill
And every valley rings--O Daffodil!
What promise for the season newly born?
Shall wave on wave of flow'rs, full tide of corn,
O'erflow the world, then fruited Autumn fill
Hedgerow and garth? Shall tempest, blight, or chill
Turn all felicity to scathe and scorn?

Tantarrara! the joyous Book of Spring
Lies open, writ in blossoms; not a bird
Of evil augury is seen or heard:
Come now, like Pan's old crew, we'll dance and sing,
Or Oberon's: for hill and valley ring
To March's bugle-horn,--Earth's blood is stirred.

William Allingham

Down On The Shore

Down on the shore, on the sunny shore!
Where the salt smell cheers the land;
Where the tide moves bright under boundless light,
And the surge on the glittering strand;
Where the children wade in the shallow pools,
Or run from the froth in play;
Where the swift little boats with milk-white wings
Are crossing the sapphire bay,
And the ship in full sail, with a fortunate gale,
Holds proudly on her way;
Where the nets are spread on the grass to dry,
And asleep, hard by, the fishermen lie,
Under the tent of the warm blue sky,
With the hushing wave on its golden floor
To sing their lullaby.

Down on the shore, on the stormy shore!
Beset by a growling sea,
Whose mad waves leap on the rocky steep
Like wolves up a traveller's tree;
Where the foam flies wide, and an angry blast
Blows the curlew off, with a screech;
Where the brown sea-wrack, torn up by the roots,
Is flung out of fishes' reach;
And the tall ship rolls on the hidden shoals,
And scatters her planks on the beach;
Where slate and straw through the village spin,
And a cottage fronts the fiercest din
With a sailor's wife sitting sad within,
Harkening the wind and the water's roar,
Till at last her tears begin.

William Allingham

Four Ducks On A Pond

Four ducks on a pond,
A grass-bank beyond,
A blue sky of spring,
White clouds on the wing;
What a little thing
To remember for years-
To remember with tears!

William Allingham

Half-Waking

I thought it was the little bed
 I slept in long ago;
A straight white curtain at the head,
 And two smooth knobs below.
I thought I saw the nursery fire,
 And in a chair well-known
My mother sat, and did not tire
 With reading all alone.
If I should make the slightest sound
 To show that I'm awake,
She'd rise, and lap the blankets round,
 My pillow softly shake;
Kiss me, and turn my face to see
 The shadows on the wall,
And then sing Rousseau's Dream to me,
 Till fast asleep I fall.
But this is not my little bed;
 That time is far away;
With strangers now I live instead,
 From dreary day to day.

William Allingham

In A Spring Grove

Here the white-ray'd anemone is born,
Wood-sorrel, and the varnish'd buttercup;
And primrose in its purpled green swathed up,
Pallid and sweet round every budding thorn,
Gray ash, and beech with rusty leaves outworn.
Here, too the darting linnet hath her nest
In the blue-lustred holly, never shorn,
Whose partner cheers her little brooding breast,
Piping from some near bough. O simple song!
O cistern deep of that harmonious rillet,
And these fair juicy stems that climb and throng
The vernal world, and unexhausted seas
Of flowing life, and soul that asks to fill it,
Each and all of these,--and more, and more than these!

William Allingham

In Snow

O English mother, in the ruddy glow
Hugging your baby closer when outside
You see the silent, soft, and cruel snow
Falling again, and think what ills betide
Unshelter'd creatures,- your sad thoughts may go
Where War and Winter now, two spectre-wolves,
Hunt in the freezing vapour that involves
Those Asian peaks of ice and gulfs below.
Does this young Soldier heed the snow that fills
His mouth and open eyes? or mind, in truth,
To-night, his mother's parting syllables?
Ha! is't a red coat? - Merely blood. Keep ruth
For others; this is but an Afghan youth
Shot by the stranger on his native hills.

William Allingham

Kate O'Belashanny

Seek up and down, both fair and brown,
We've purty lasses many, O;
But brown or fair, one girl most rare,
The Flow'r o' Belashanny, O.
As straight is she as poplar-tree
(Tho' not as aisy shaken, O,)
And walks so proud among the crowd,
For queen she might be taken, O.
From top to toe, where'er you go,
The loveliest girl of any, O,-
Ochone! your mind I find unkind,
Sweet Kate o' Belashanny, O!

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,
Sweet Kate o' Belashanny, O!

My dear, give ear!-the river's near,
And if you think I'm shammin' now,
To end my grief I'll seek relief
Among the trout and salmon, now;
For shrimps and sharks to make their marks,
And other watery vermin there;
Unless a mermaid saves my life,-
My wife, and me her merman there.
From top to toe, where'er you go,
The loveliest girl of any, O,-
Mavrone! your mind I find unkind,
Sweet Kate o' Belashanny, O!

'Tis all in vain that I complain;
No use to coax or chide her there;
As far away from me as Spain,
Although I stand beside her there.
O cruel Kate! since that's my fate,
I'll look for love no more in you;
The seagull's screech as soon would reach
Your heart, as me implorin' you.
Tho' fair you are, and rare you are,
The loveliest flow'r of any, O,-
Too proud and high,-good-bye, say I,
To Kate o' Belashanny, O!

William Allingham

Late Autumn

October - and the skies are cool and gray
O'er stubbles emptied of their latest sheaf,
Bare meadow, and the slowly falling leaf.
The dignity of woods in rich decay
Accords full well with this majestic grief
That clothes our solemn purple hills to-day,
Whose afternoon is hush'd, and wintry brief
Only a robin sings from any spray.

And night sends up her pale cold moon, and spills
White mist around the hollows of the hills,
Phantoms of firth or lake; the peasant sees
His cot and stockyard, with the homestead trees,
Islanded; but no foolish terror thrills
His perfect harvesting; he sleeps at ease.

William Allingham

Let Me Sing Of What I Know

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

William Allingham

Lovely Mary Donnelly

Oh, lovely Mary Donnelly, my joy, my only best
If fifty girls were round you, I'd hardly see the rest;
Be what it may the time o' day, the place be where it will
Sweet looks o' Mary Donnelly, they bloom before me still.

Her eyes like mountain water that's flowing on a rock,
How clear they are, how dark they are! they give me many a shock.
Red rowans warm in sunshine and wetted with a shower,
Could ne'er express the charming lip that has me in its power.

Her nose is straight and handsome, her eyebrows lifted up,
Her chin is very neat and pert, and smooth like a china cup,
Her hair's the brag of Ireland, so weighty and so fine;
It's rolling down upon her neck, and gathered in a twine.

The dance o' last Whit-Monday night exceeded all before,
No pretty girl from miles about was missing from the floor;
But Mary kept the belt of love, and O but she was gay!
She danced a jig, she sung a song, that took my heart away.

When she stood up for dancing, her steps were so complete,
The music nearly killed itself to her feet;
The fiddler mourned his blindness, he heard her so much praised,
But blessed his luck not to be deaf when once her voice she raised.

And evermore I'm whistling or lilting what you sung,
Your smile is always in my heart, your name beside my tongue;
But you've as many sweethearts as you'd count on both your hands,
And for myself there's not a thumb or little finger stands.

Oh, you're the flower o' womankind in country or in town;
The higher I exalt you, the lower I'm cast down.
If some great lord should come this way, and see your beauty bright.
And you to be his lady, I'd own it was but right.

Oh, might we live together in a lofty palace hall,
Where joyful music rises, and where scarlet curtains fall!
Oh, might we live together in a cottage mean and small,
With sods or grass the only roof, and mud the only wall!

O lovely Mary Donnelly, your beauty's my distress,
It's far too beautiful to be mine, but I'll never wish it less.
The proudest place would fit your face, and I am poor and low
But blessings be about you, dear, wherever you may go.

William Allingham

Meadowsweet

Through grass, through amber'd cornfields, our slow Stream--
Fringed with its flags and reeds and rushes tall,
And Meadowsweet, the chosen of them all
By wandering children, yellow as the cream
Of those great cows--winds on as in a dream
By mill and footbridge, hamlet old and small
(Red roofs, gray tower), and sees the sunset gleam
On mullion'd windows of an ivied Hall.

There, once upon a time, the heavy King
Trode out its perfume from the Meadowsweet,
Strown like a woman's love beneath his feet,
In stately dance or jovial banqueting,
When all was new; and in its wayfaring
Our Streamlet curved, as now, through grass and wheat.

William Allingham

On A Forenoon Of Spring

I'm glad I am alive, to see and feel
The full deliciousness of this bright day,
That's like a heart with nothing to conceal;
The young leaves scarcely trembling; the blue-grey
Rimming the cloudless ether far away;
Brairds, hedges, shadows; mountains that reveal
Soft sapphire; this great floor of polished steel
Spread out amidst the landmarks of the bay.

I stoop in sunshine to our circling net
From the black gunwale; tend these milky kine
Up their rough path; sit by yon cottage-door
Plying the diligent thread; take wings and soar--
O hark how with the season's laureate
Joy culminates in song! If such a song were mine!

William Allingham

Places And Men

In Sussex here, by shingle and by sand,
Flat fields and farmsteads in their wind-blown trees,
The shallow tide-wave courses to the land,
And all along the down a fringe one sees
Of ducal woods. That 'dim discovered spire'
Is Chichester, where Collins felt a fire
Touch his sad lips; thatched Felpham roofs are these,
Where happy Blake found heaven more close at hand.

Goodwood and Arundel possess their lords,
Successive in the towers and groves, which stay;
These two poor men, by some right of their own,
Possessed the earth and sea, the sun and moon,
The inner sweet of life; and put in words
A personal force that doth not pass away.

William Allingham

Robin Redbreast

Good-bye, good-bye to Summer!
For Summer's nearly done;
The garden smiling faintly,
Cool breezes in the sun;
Our Thrushes now are silent,
Our Swallows flown away, --
But Robin's here, in coat of brown,
With ruddy breast-knot gay.
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear!
Robin singing sweetly
In the falling of the year.

Bright yellow, red, and orange,
The leaves come down in hosts;
The trees are Indian Princes,
But soon they'll turn to Ghosts;
The scanty pears and apples
Hang russet on the bough,
It's Autumn, Autumn, Autumn late,
'Twill soon be Winter now.
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear!
And welaway! my Robin,
For pinching times are near.

The fireside for the Cricket,
The wheatstack for the Mouse,
When trembling night-winds whistle
And moan all round the house;
The frosty ways like iron,
The branches plumed with snow, --
Alas! in Winter, dead and dark,
Where can poor Robin go?
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear!
And a crumb of bread for Robin,
His little heart to cheer.

William Allingham

Song

O Spirit of the Summertime !
Bring back the roses to the dells ;
The swallow from her distant clime,
The honey-bee from drowsy cells.

Bring back the friendship of the sun ;
The gilded evenings, calm and late,
When merry children homeward run,
And peeping stars bid lovers wait.

Bring back the singing; and the scent
Of meadowlands at dewy prime;—
Oh, bring again my heart's content,
Thou Spirit of the Summertime !

William Allingham

Song. O Spirit Of The Summer-Time!

O spirit of the Summer-time!
Bring back the roses to the dells;
The swallow from her distant clime,
The honey-bee from drowsy cells.

Bring back the friendship of the sun;
The gilded evenings calm and late,
When weary children homeward run,
And peeping stars bid lovers wait.

Bring back the singing; and the scent
Of meadow-lands at dewy prime;
Oh, bring again my heart's content,
Thou Spirit of the Summer-time!

William Allingham

St. Margaret's Eve

Saint Margaret's Eve it did befall,
The waves roll so gayly O,
The tide came creeping up the wall,
Love me true!

I opened my gate; who there should stand--
The waves roll so gayly O,
But a fair lady, with a cup in her hand,
Love me true!

The cup was gold, and full of wine,
The waves roll so gayly O,
'Drink,' said the lady, 'and I will be thine,'
Love me true!

'Enter my castle, lady fair,'
The waves roll so gayly O,
'You shall be queen of all that's there,'
Love me true!

A gray old harper sang to me,
The waves roll so gayly O,
'Beware of the Damsel of the Sea!'
Love me true!

In hall he harpeth many a year,
The waves roll so gayly O,
And we will sit his song to hear,
Love me true!

'I love thee deep, I love thee true,'
The waves roll so gayly O,
'But ah! I know not how to woo,'
Love me true!

Down dashed the cup, with a sudden shock,
The waves roll so gayly O,
The wine like blood ran over the rock,
Love me true!

She said no word, but shrieked aloud,
The waves roll so gayly O,
And vanished away from where she stood,
Love me true!

I locked and barred my castle door,
The waves roll so gayly O,
Three summer days I grieved sore,
Love me true!

For myself a day, a night,
The waves roll so gayly O,
And two to moan that lady bright,
Love me true!

William Allingham

The Abbot Of Innisfallen

The Abbot of Innisfallen
awoke ere dawn of day;
Under the dewy green leaves
went he forth to pray.
The lake around his island
lay smooth and dark and deep,
And wrapt in a misty stillness
the mountains were all asleep.
Low kneel'd the Abbot Cormac
when the dawn was dim and gray;
The prayers of his holy office
he faithfully 'gan say.
Low kneel'd the Abbot Cormac
while the dawn was waxing red;
And for his sins' forgiveness
a solemn prayer he said:
Low kneel'd that holy Abbot
while the dawn was waxing clear;
And he pray'd with loving-kindness
for his convent-brethren dear.
Low kneel'd that blessed Abbot
while the dawn was waxing bright;
He pray'd a great prayer for Ireland,
he pray'd with all his might.
Low kneel'd that good old Father
while the sun began to dart;
He pray'd a prayer for all men,
he pray'd it from his heart.
His blissful soul was in Heaven,
tho' a breathing man was he;
He was out of time's dominion,
so far as the living may be.

The Abbot of Innisfallen
arose upon his feet;
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.
Till at last he well bethought him;
he might no longer stay;
So he bless'd the little white singing-bird,
and gladly went his way.

But, when he came to his Abbey,
he found a wondrous change;
He saw no friendly faces there,
for every face was strange.
The strange men spoke unto him;
and he heard from all and each
The foreign tongue of the Sassenach,
not wholesome Irish speech.
Then the oldest monk came forward,
in Irish tongue spake he:
'Thou wearest the holy Augustine's dress,
and who hath given it to thee?'
'I wear the Augustine's dress,
and Cormac is my name,
The Abbot of this good Abbey
by grace of God I am.
I went forth to pray, at the dawn of day;
and when my prayers were said,
I hearken'd awhile to a little bird,
that sung above my head.'
The monks to him made answer,
'Two hundred years have gone o'er,
Since our Abbot Cormac went through the gate,
and never was heard of more.
Matthias now is our Abbot,
and twenty have pass'd away.
The stranger is lord of Ireland;

we live in an evil day.'
'Days will come and go,' he said,
'and the world will pass away,
In Heaven a day is a thousand years,
a thousand years are a day.'
'Now give me absolution;
for my time is come,' said he.
And they gave him absolution,
as speedily as might be.
Then, close outside the window,
the sweetest song they heard
That ever yet since the world began
was utter'd by any bird.
The monks look'd out and saw the bird,
its feathers all white and clean;
And there in a moment, beside it,
another white bird was seen.
Those two they sang together,
waved their white wings, and fled;
Flew aloft, and vanish'd;
but the good old man was dead.
They buried his blessed body
where lake and green-sward meet;
A carven cross above his head,
a holly-bush at his feet;
Where spreads the beautiful water
to gay or cloudy skies,
And the purple peaks of Killarney
from ancient woods arise.

William Allingham

The Boy

The Boy from his bedroom-window
Look'd over the little town,
And away to the bleak black upland
Under a clouded moon.

The moon came forth from her cavern,
He saw the sudden gleam
Of a tarn in the swarthy moorland;
Or perhaps the whole was a dream.

For I never could find that water
In all my walks and rides:
Far-off, in the Land of Memory,
That midnight pool abides.

Many fine things had I glimpse of,
And said, 'I 'em one day.'
Whether within or without me
They were, I cannot say.

William Allingham

The Bubble

See the pretty planet!
Floating sphere!
Faintest breeze will fan it
Far or near;

World as light as feather;
Moonshine rays,
Rainbow tints together,
As it plays.

Drooping, sinking, failing,
Nigh to earth,
Mounting, whirling, sailing,
Full of mirth;

Life there, welling, flowing,
Waving round;
Pictures coming, going,
Without sound.

Quick now, be this airy
Globe repelled!
Never can the fairy
Star be held.

Touched--it in a twinkle
Disappears!
Leaving but a sprinkle,
As of tears.

William Allingham

The Elf Singing

An Elf sat on a twig,
He was not very big,
He sang a little song,
He did not think it wrong;
But he was on a Wizard's ground,
Who hated all sweet sound.

Elf, Elf,
Take care of yourself.
He's coming behind you,
To seize you and bind you
And stifle you song.
The Wizard! The Wizard!
He changes his shape
In crawling along--
An ugly old ape,
A poisonous lizard,
A spotted spider,
A wormy glider
The Wizard! The Wizard!
He's up on the bough
He'll bite through your gizzard,
He's close to you now!

The Elf went on with his song,
It grew more clear and strong;
It lifted him into air,
He floated singing away,
With rainbows in his hair;

While the Wizard-Worm from his creep
Mad a sudden leap,
Fell down into a hole,
And, are his magic word he could say,
Was eaten up by a Mole.

William Allingham

The Eviction

In early morning twilight, raw and chill,
Damp vapours brooding on the barren hill,
Through miles of mire in steady grave array
Threescore well-arm'd police pursue their way;
Each tall and bearded man a rifle swings,
And under each greatcoat a bayonet clings:
The Sheriff on his sturdy cob astride
Talks with the chief, who marches by their side,
And, creeping on behind them, Paudeen Dhu
Pretends his needful duty much to rue.
Six big-boned labourers, clad in common freize,
Walk in the midst, the Sheriff's staunch allies;
Six crowbar men, from distant county brought, -
Orange, and glorying in their work, 'tis thought,
But wrongly,- churls of Catholics are they,
And merely hired at half a crown a day.

The hamlet clustering on its hill is seen,
A score of petty homesteads, dark and mean;
Poor always, not despairing until now;
Long used, as well as poverty knows how,
With life's oppressive trifles to contend.
This day will bring its history to an end.
Moveless and grim against the cottage walls
Lean a few silent men: but someone calls
Far off; and then a child 'without a stitch'
Runs out of doors, flies back with piercing screech,
And soon from house to house is heard the cry
Of female sorrow, swelling loud and high,
Which makes the men blaspheme between their teeth.
Meanwhile, o'er fence and watery field beneath,
The little army moves through drizzling rain;
A 'Crowbar' leads the Sheriff's nag; the lane
Is enter'd, and their plashing tramp draws near,
One instant, outcry holds its breath to hear
'Halt! ' - at the doors they form in double line,
And ranks of polish'd rifles wetly shine.

The Sheriff's painful duty must be done;

He begs for quiet-and the work's begun.
The strong stand ready; now appear the rest,
Girl, matron, grandsire, baby on the breast,
And Rosy's thin face on a pallet borne;
A motley concourse, feeble and forlorn.
One old man, tears upon his wrinkled cheek,
Stands trembling on a threshold, tries to speak,
But, in defect of any word for this,
Mutely upon the doorpost prints a kiss,
Then passes out for ever. Through the crowd
The children run bewilder'd, wailing loud;
Where needed most, the men combine their aid;
And, last of all, is Oona forth convey'd,
Reclined in her accustom'd strawen chair,
Her aged eyelids closed, her thick white hair
Escaping from her cap; she feels the chill,
Looks round and murmurs, then again is still.
Now bring the remnants of each household fire;
On the wet ground the hissing coals expire;
And Paudeen Dhu, with meekly dismal face,
Receives the full possession of the place.

William Allingham

The Fairies

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

Down along the rocky shore
Some make their home,
They live on crispy pancakes
Of yellow tide-foam;
Some in the reeds
Of the black mountain lake,
With frogs for their watch-dogs,
All night awake.

High on the hill-top
The old King sits;
He is now so old and gray
He's nigh lost his wits.
With a bridge of white mist
Columbkil he crosses,
On his stately journeys
From Slieveleague to Rosses;
Or going up with music
On cold starry nights
To sup with the Queen
Of the gay Northern Lights.

They stole little Bridget
For seven years long;
When she came down again
Her friends were all gone.
They took her lightly back,
Between the night and morrow,
They thought that she was fast asleep,
But she was dead with sorrow.

They have kept her ever since
Deep within the lake,
On a bed of flag-leaves,
Watching till she wake.

By the craggy hill-side,
Through the mosses bare,
They have planted thorn-trees
For pleasure here and there.
If any man so daring
As dig them up in spite,
He shall find their sharpest thorns
In his bed at night.

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

William Allingham

The Girl's Lamentation

With grief and mourning I sit to spin;
My Love passed by, and he didn't come in;
He passes by me, both day and night,
And carries off my poor heart's delight.

There is a tavern in yonder town,
My Love goes there and he spends a crown;
He takes a strange girl upon his knee,
And never more gives a thought to me.

Says he, 'We'll wed without loss of time,
And sure our love's but a little crime;'-
My apron-string now it's wearing short,
And my Love he seeks other girls to court.

O with him I'd go if I had my will,
I'd follow him barefoot o'er rock and hill;
I'd never once speak of all my grief
If he'd give me a smile for my heart's relief.

In our wee garden the rose unfolds,
With bachelor's-buttons and marigolds;
I'll tie no posies for dance or fair,
A willow-twigg is for me to wear.

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.

As through the long lonesome night I lie,
I'd give the world if I might but cry;
But I mus'n't moan there or raise my voice,
And the tears run down without any noise.

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.

My sister's buried three years, come Lent;
But sure we made far too much lament.
Beside her grave they still say a prayer-
I wish to God 'twas myself was there!

The Candlemas crosses hang near my bed;
To look at them puts me much in dread,
They mark the good time that's gone and past:
It's like this year's one will prove the last.

The oldest cross it's a dusty brown,
But the winter winds didn't shake it down;
The newest cross keeps the colour bright;
When the straw was reaping my heart was light.

The reapers rose with the blink of morn,
And gaily stook'd up the yellow corn;
To call them home to the field I'd run,
Through the blowing breeze and the summer sun.

When the straw was weaving my heart was glad,
For neither sin nor shame I had,
In the barn where oat-chaff was flying round,
And the thumping flails made a pleasant sound.

Now summer or winter to me it's one;
But oh! for a day like the time that's gone.
I'd little care was it storm or shine,
If I had but peace in this heart of mine.

Oh! light and false is a young man's kiss,
And a foolish girl gives her soul for this.
Oh! light and short is the young man's blame,
And a helpless girl has the grief and shame.

To the river-bank once I thought to go,
And cast myself in the stream below;
I thought 'twould carry us far out to sea,
Where they'd never find my poor babe and me.

Sweet Lord, forgive me that wicked mind!

You know I used to be well-inclined.
Oh, take compassion upon my state,
Because my trouble is so very great.

My head turns round with the spinning wheel,
And a heavy cloud on my eyes I feel.
But the worst of all is at my heart's core;
For my innocent days will come back no more.

William Allingham

The Lepracaun Or Fairy Shoemaker

Little Cowboy, what have you heard,
Up on the lonely rath's green mound?
Only the plaintive yellow bird
Sighing in sultry fields around,
Chary, chary, chary, chee-ee! -
Only the grasshopper and the bee? -
'Tip-tap, rip-rap,
Tick-a-tack-too!
Scarlet leather, sewn together,
This will make a shoe.
Left, right, pull it tight;
Summer days are warm;
Underground in winter,
Laughing at the storm! '
Lay your ear close to the hill.
Do you not catch the tiny clamour,
Busy click of an elfin hammer.
Voice of the Lepracaun singing shrill
As he merrily plies his trade?
He's a span
And a quarter in height,
Get him in sight, hold him tight,
And you're a made
Man!

You watch your cattle the summerday,
Sup on potatoes, sleep in the hay;
how would you like to roll in your carriage,
Look for a duchess's daughter in marriage?
Seize the shoemaker - then you may!
'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-a-tack too! '
Nine and ninety treasure crocks

This keen miser fairy hath,
Hid in the mountains, woods and rocks,
Ruin and round-tow'r, cave and rath,
And where cormorants build;
From times of old
Guarded by him;
Each of them fill'd
Full to the brim
With gold!

I caught him at work one day, myself,
In the castle ditch where fox-glove grows, -
A wrinkled, wizen'd and bearded Elf,
Spectacles stuck on his pointed nose,
Silver buckles to his hose,
Leather apron - shoe in his lap -
'Rip-rap, tip-tap,
Tick-tack-too!
(A grasshopper on my cap!
Away the moth flew!)
Buskins for a fairy prince,
Brogues for his son -
Pay me well, pay me well,
When the job is done! '
The rogue was mine, beyond a doubt.
I stared at him, he stared at me;
'Servant Sir! ' 'Humph' says he,
And pull'd a snuff-box out.
He took a long pinch, look'd better pleased,
The queer little Lepracaun;
Offer'd the box with a whimsical grace, -
Pouf! He flung the dust in my face,
And while I sneezed,
Was gone!

William Allingham

The Little Dell

Doleful was the land,
Dull on, every side,
Neither soft n'or grand,
Barren, bleak, and wide;
Nothing look'd with love;
All was dingy brown;
The very skies above
Seem'd to sulk and frown.

Plodding sick and sad,
Weary day on day;
Searching, never glad,
Many a miry way;
Poor existence lagg'd
In this barren place;
While the seasons dragg'd
Slowly o'er its face.

Spring, to sky and ground,
Came before I guess'd;
Then one day I found
A valley, like a nest!
Guarded with a spell
Sure it must have been,
This little fairy dell
Which I had never seen.

Open to the blue,
Green banks hemm'd it round
A rillet wander'd through
With a tinkling sound;
Briars among the rocks
Tangled arbours made;
Primroses in flocks
Grew beneath their shade.

Merry birds a few,
Creatures wildly tame,
Perch'd and sung and flew;

Timid field-mice came;
Beetles in the moss
Journey'd here and there;
Butterflies across
Danced through sunlit air.

There I often read,
Sung alone, or dream'd;
Blossoms overhead,
Where the west wind stream'd;
Small horizon-line,
Smoothly lifted up,
Held this world of mine
In a grassy cup.

The barren land to-day
Hears my last adieu:
Not an hour I stay;
Earth is wide and new.
Yet, farewell, farewell!
May the sun and show'rs
Bless that Little Dell
Of safe and tranquil hours!

William Allingham

The Lover And Birds

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 bird
I listen'd, and replied as it behove.

Scream'd Chaffinch, 'Sweet, sweet, sweet!
Pretty lovey, come and meet me here!
'Chaffinch,' quoth I, 'be dumb awhile, in fear
Thy darling prove no better than a cheat,
And never come, or fly when wintry days appear.'
Yet from a twig,
With voice so big,
The little fowl his utterance did repeat.

Then I, 'The man forlorn
Hears Earth send up a foolish noise aloft.'
'And what'll he do? What'll he do?' scoff'd
The Blackbird, standing, in an ancient thorn,
Then spread his sooty wings and flitted to the croft
With cackling laugh;
Whom I, being half
Enraged, called after, giving back his scorn.

Worse mock'd the Thrush, 'Die! die!
Oh, 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!'
O Thrush, be still!
Or at thy will,
Seek some less sad interpreter than I.

'Air, air! blue air and white!
Whither I flee, whither, O whither, O whither I flee!
(Thus the Lark hurried, mounting from the lea)

'Hills, countries, many waters glittering bright,
Whither I see, whither I see! deeper, deeper, deeper, whither I see, see,
see!'
'Gay Lark,' I said,
'The song that's bred
In happy nest may well to heaven make flight.'

'There's something, something sad,
I half remember'-piped a broken strain.
Well sung, sweet Robin! Robin sung again.
'Spring's opening cheerily, cheerily! be we glad!'
Which moved, I wist not why, me melancholy mad,
Till now, grown meek,
With wetted cheek,
Most comforting and gentle thoughts I had.

William Allingham

The Maids Of Elfin-Mere

When the spinning-room was here
Came Three Damsels, clothed in white,
With their spindles every night;
One and Two 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.

Three white Lilies, calm and clear,
And they were loved by every one;
Most of all, the Pastor's Son,
Listening to their gentle singing,
Felt his heart go from him, clinging
Round these Maids of Elfin-Mere.
Sued each night to make them stay,
Sadden'd when they went away.
Years ago, and years ago;
And the tall reeds sigh as the wind doth blow.

Hands that shook with love and fear
Dared put back the village clock,-
Flew the spindle, turn'd the rock,
Flow'd the song with subtle rounding,
Till the false 'eleven' was sounding;
Then these Maids of Elfin-Mere
Swiftly, softly, left the room,
Like three doves on snowy plume.
Years ago, and years ago;
And the tall reeds sigh as the wind doth blow.

One that night who wander'd near
Heard lamentings by the shore,
Saw at dawn three stains of gore
In the waters fade and dwindle.
Never more with song and spindle
Saw we Maids of Elfin-Mere,

The Pastor's Son did pine and die;
Because true love should never lie.
Years ago, and years ago;
And the tall reeds sigh as the wind doth blow.

William Allingham

The Nobleman's Wedding

I once was a guest at a Nobleman's wedding;
Fair was the Bride, but she scarce had been kind,
And now in our mirth, she had tears nigh the shedding
Her former true lover still runs in her mind.

Attired like a minstrel, her former true lover
Takes up his harp, and runs over the strings;
And there among strangers, his grief to discover,
A fair maiden's falsehood he bitterly sings.

'Now here is the token of gold that was broken;
Seven long years it was kept for your sake;
You gave it to me as a true lover's token;
No longer I'll wear it, asleep or awake.'

She sat in her place by the head of the table,
The words of his ditty she mark'd them right well:
To sit any longer this bride was not able,
So down at the bridegroom's feet she fell.

'O one, one request, my lord, one and no other,
O this one request will you grant it to me?
To lie for this night in the arms of my mother,
And ever, and ever thereafter with thee.'

Her one, one request it was granted her fairly;
Pale were her cheeks as she went up to bed;
And the very next morning, early, early,
They rose and they found this young bride was dead.

The bridegroom ran quickly, he held her, he kiss'd her,
He spoke loud and low, and listen'd full fain;
He call'd on her waiting-maids round to assist her
But nothing could bring the lost breath back again.

O carry her softly! the grave is made ready;
At head and at foot plant a laurel-bush green;
For she was a young and a sweet noble lady,
The fairest young bride that I ever have seen.

William Allingham

The Ruined Chapel

By the shore, a plot of ground
Clips a ruined chapel round,
Buttressed with a grassy mound;
Where Day and Night and Day go by
And bring no touch of human sound.

Washing of the lonely seas,
Shaking of the guardian trees,
Piping of the salted breeze;
Day and Night and Day go by
To the endless tune of these.

Or when, as winds and waters keep
A hush more dead than any sleep,
Still morns to stiller evenings creep,
And Day and Night and Day go by;
Here the silence is most deep.

The empty ruins, lapsed again
Into Nature's wide domain,
Sow themselves with seed and grain
As Day and Night and Day go by;
And hoard June's sun and April's rain.

Here fresh funeral tears were shed;
Now the graves are also dead;
And suckers from the ash-tree spread,
While Day and Night and Day go by;
And stars move calmly overhead.

William Allingham

The Touchstone

A man there came, whence none could tell,
Bearing a Touchstone in his hand;
And tested all things in the land
By its unerring spell.

Quick birth of transmutation smote
The fair to foul, the foul to fair;
Purple nor ermine did he spare,
Nor scorn the dusty coat.

Of heirloom jewels, prized so much,
Were many changed to chips and clods,
And even statues of the Gods
Crumbled beneath its touch.

Then angrily the people cried,
'The loss outweighs the profit far;
Our goods suffice us as they are
We will not have then tried.'

And since they could not so prevail
To check this unrelenting guest,
They seized him, saying - 'Let him test
How real it is, our jail! '

But, though they slew him with the sword,
And in a fire his Touchstone burn'd,
Its doings could not be o'erturned,
Its undoings restored.

And when to stop all future harm,
They strew'd its ashes on the breeze;
They little guess'd each grain of these
Convey'd the perfect charm.

North, south, in rings and amulets,
Throughout the crowded world 'tis borne;
Which, as a fashion long outworn,
In ancient mind forgets.

William Allingham

The Winding Banks Of Erne

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

No more on pleasant evenings
we'll saunter down the Mall,
When the trout is rising to the fly,
the salmon to the fall.
The boat comes straining on her net,
and heavily she creeps,
Cast off, cast off-she feels the oars,
and to her berth she sweeps;
Now fore and aft keep hauling,
and gathering up the clew,
Till a silver wave of salmon
rolls in among the crew.
Then they may sit, with pipes a-lit,
and many a joke and 'yarn';-
Adieu to Belashanny,
and the winding banks of Erne!

The music of the waterfall,
the mirror of the tide,
When all the green-hill'd harbour
is full from side to side,
From Portnasun to Bulliebawns,

and round the Abbey Bay,
From rocky Inis Saimer
to Coolnargit sandhills gray;
While far upon the southern line,
to guard it like a wall,
The Leitrim mountains clothed in blue
gaze calmly over all,
And watch the ship sail up or down,
the red flag at her stern;-
Adieu to these, adieu to all
the winding banks of Erne!

Farewell to you, Kildoney lads,
and them that pull an oar,
A lug-sail set, or haul a net,
from the Point to Mullaghmore;
From Killybegs to bold Slieve-League,
that ocean-mountain steep,
Six hundred yards in air aloft,
six hundred in the deep,
From Dooran to the Fairy Bridge,
and round by Tullen strand,
Level and long, and white with waves,
where gull and curlew stand;
Head out to sea when on your lee
the breakers you discern!-
Adieu to all the billowy coast,
and winding banks of Erne!

Farewell, Coolmore,-Bundoran! and
your summer crowds that run
From inland homes to see with joy
th' Atlantic-setting sun;
To breathe the buoyant salted air,
and sport among the waves;
To gather shells on sandy beach,
and tempt the gloomy caves;
To watch the flowing, ebbing tide,
the boats, the crabs, the fish;
Young men and maids to meet and smile,
and form a tender wish;
The sick and old in search of health,

for all things have their turn-
And I must quit my native shore,
and the winding banks of Erne!

Farewell to every white cascade
from the Harbour to Belleek,
And every pool where fins may rest,
and ivy-shaded creek;
The sloping fields, the lofty rocks,
where ash and holly grow,
The one split yew-tree gazing
on the curving flood below;
The Lough, that winds through islands
under Turaw mountain green;
And Castle Caldwell's stretching woods,
with tranquil bays between;
And Breesie Hill, and many a pond
among the heath and fern,-
For I must say adieu-adieu
to the winding banks of Erne!

The thrush will call through Camlin groves
the live-long summer day;
The waters run by mossy cliff,
and banks with wild flowers gay;
The girls will bring their work and sing
beneath a twisted thorn,
Or stray with sweethearts down the path
among the growing corn;
Along the river-side they go,
where I have often been,
Oh, never shall I see again
the happy days I've seen!
A thousand chances are to one
I never may return,-
Adieu to Belashanny,
and the winding banks of Erne!

Adieu to evening dances,
when merry neighbours meet,
And the fiddle says to boys and girls,
'Get up and shake your feet!'

To 'seanachas' and wise old talk
of Erin's days gone by-
Who trench'd the rath on such a hill,
and where the bones may lie
Of saint, or king, or warrior chief;
with tales of fairy power,
And tender ditties sweetly sung
to pass the twilight hour.
The mournful song of exile
is now for me to learn-
Adieu, my dear companions
on the winding banks of Erne!

Now measure from the Commons down
to each end of the Purt,
Round the Abbey, Moy, and Knather,-
I wish no one any hurt;
The Main Street, Back Street, College Lane,
the Mall, and Portnasun,
If any foes of mine are there,
I pardon every one.
I hope that man and womankind
will do the same by me;
For my heart is sore and heavy
at voyaging the sea.
My loving friends I'll bear in mind,
and often fondly turn
To think of Belashanny,
and the winding banks of Erne.

If ever I'm a money'd man,
I mean, please God, to cast
My golden anchor in the place
where youthful years were pass'd;
Though heads that now are black and brown
must meanwhile gather gray,
New faces rise by every hearth,
and old ones drop away-
Yet dearer still that Irish hill
than all the world beside;
It's home, sweet home, where'er I roam
through lands and waters wide.

And if the Lord allows me,
I surely will return
To my native Belashanny,
and the winding banks of Erne.

William Allingham

The Winter Pear

Is always Age severe?
Is never Youth austere?
Spring-fruits are sour to eat;
Autumn's the mellow time.
Nay, very late in the year,
Short day and frosty rime,
Thought, like a winter pear,
Stone-cold in summer's prime,
May turn from harsh to sweet.

William Allingham

The Witch-Bride

A fair witch crept to a young man's side,
And he kiss'd her and took her for his bride.

But a Shape came in at the dead of night,
And fill'd the room with snowy light.

And he saw how in his arms there lay
A thing more frightful than mouth may say.

And he rose in haste, and follow'd the Shape
Till morning crown'd an eastern cape.

And he girded himself, and follow'd still,
When sunset sainted the western hill.

But, mocking and thwarting, clung to his side,
Weary day! - the foul Witch-Bride.

William Allingham

These Little Songs

These little Songs,
Found here and there,
Floating in air
By forest and lea,
Or hill-side heather,
In houses and throngs,
Or down by the sea -
Have come together,
How, I can't tell:
But I know full well
No witty goose-wing
On an inkstand begot 'em;
Remember each place
And moment of grace,
In summer or spring,
Winter or autumn
By sun, moon, stars,
Or a coal in the bars,
In market or church,
Graveyard or dance,
When they came without search,
Were found as by chance.
A word, a line,
You may say are mine;
But the best in the songs,
Whatever it be,
To you, and to me,
And to no one belongs.

William Allingham

To The Author Of 'Hesperides

Hayrick some do spell thy name,
And thy verse approves the same;
For 'tis like fresh-scented hay,--
With country lasses in't at play.

William Allingham

Wayside Flowers

Pluck not the wayside flower,
It is the traveller's dower;
A thousand passers-by
Its beauties may espy,
May win a touch of blessing
From Nature's mild caressing.
The sad of heart perceives
A violet under leaves
Like sonic fresh-budding hope;
The primrose on the slope
A spot of sunshine dwells,
And cheerful message tells
Of kind renewing power;
The nodding bluebell's dye
Is drawn from happy sky.
Then spare the wayside flower!
It is the traveller's dower.

William Allingham

Writing

A man who keeps a diary, pays
Due toll to many tedious days;
But life becomes eventful--then
His busy hand forgets the pen.
Most books, indeed, are records less
Of fulness than of emptiness.

William Allingham