

Classic Poetry Series

William Allingham

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

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

Boy, The

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 shall find them one day."
Whether within or without me
They were, I cannot say.

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,
Hearkening the wind and the water's roar,
Till at last her tears begin.

William Allingham

Eviction, The

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

Fairies, The

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

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

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

Lepracaun or Fairy Shoemaker, The

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

Little Dell, The

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

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

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 shall find them one day."
Whether within or without me
They were, I cannot say.

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 frieze,
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
Columkill 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

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

Touchstone, The

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

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