

THE RELATION BETWEEN
DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI AND WILLIAM ALLINGHAM:
SOME OBSERVATIONS ON POETIC STYLE

Many critics believe that the Anglo-Irish poet William Allingham (1824-1889) came under the influence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his circle during the former's early career as a poet.

In a biographical dictionary, *Celebrities of the Century* (1887), the writer of the short biography of Allingham asserts: "In his youth Mr. Allingham fell under the powerful influence of the 'Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood,' and their school of thought; and his poems have throughout preserved traces of the spiritual mystery, as well as of the careful and sometimes humorous realism of his masters."¹ M. L. Howe notes in Allingham's two poems, "The Maids of Elfen-Mere" and "St. Margaret's Eve", a Pre-Raphaelite accuracy, medieval interest and the deliberate use of refrain.² Ifor Evans regards the "sombre melody" and "twilit atmosphere" of Allingham's poetry as his "closest approach to the Pre-Raphaelite manner," but admits that "Pre-Raphaelite interest, though it entered into some of his lyrics, does not explain him fully as a poet."³ In his bibliography of the Pre-Raphaelites, W. Fredeman claims that Allingham published his first volume after his acquaintance with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and adds that his "most obvious Pre-Raphaelite quality is the melancholy mood which pervades his poetry, the sense of transiency and urgency that impels it." At the same time, Fredeman perceives that this "melancholy and use of mood-music are characteristic of the celtic traditions on which he drew."⁴ While acknowledging Allingham's early admiration of Pre-Raphaelite poetry, Lionel Stevenson declares that appreciation "never seduced him into sheer imitation"; his talent remained "individual."⁵

The above-named critics agree that Allingham was only partially affected by the Pre-Raphaelites, yet their assumptions remain too generalized. The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, it attempts to understand the true nature of the relationship between Allingham and D. G. Rossetti. Secondly, it tries to reveal the extent of Rossetti's influence on Allingham's early poetry.

To begin with, one could say that Allingham's friendship with Rossetti and other members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood stemmed from their shared interest in both poetry and the visual arts. The absence of any literary society in Ireland (where Allingham lived until 1863) drove the Irish poet to seek the friendship of literary and artistic figures in London; he became acquainted with D. G. Ros-