THE WAYSIDE WELL.
O! THE pretty wayside well,
Wreathed about with roses,
Where, beguiled with soothing spell,
Weary foot repose.
With a welcome fresh and green,
Wave thy border grasses,
By the dusty traveller seen,
Sighing as he passes.
Treads the drover on thy sward,
Comes the beggar to thee,
Free as gentleman or lord
From his steed to woo thee.
Thou from parching lip dost earn
Many a murmured blessing;
And enjoyest in thy turn
Innocent caressing.
Fair the greeting face ascends,
Like a naiad daughter,
When the peasant lassie bends
To thy trembling water.
When she leans upon her pail,
Glancing o'er the meadow,—
Sweet shall fall the whispered tale,
Soft the double shadow!

Mortals love thy crystal cup;
Nature seems to pet thee,—
Seething Summer's fiery lip
Hath no power to fret thee.
Coolly sheltered, hid from smirch,
In thy cavelet shady,
O'er thee in a silver birch
Stoops a forest lady.
To thy glass the Star of Eve
Shyly dares to bend her;
Matron Moon thy depths receive,
Globed in mellow splendour.
—Bounteous Spring! for ever own
Undisturbed thy station,—
Not to thirsty lips alone
Serving mild donation.
Never come the newt or frog,
Pebble thrown in malice,
Mud, or withered leaves, to clog
Or defile thy chalice;
Heaven be still within thy ken,
Through the veil thou wearest,—
Glimpsing clearest, as with men,
When the boughs are barest!
"The Wayside Well" by William Allingham

*Household Words*, Volume I, Magazine No. 1, 30 March 1850, Page: 19

**Article:** "The Wayside Well" by William Allingham

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**Author(s):**

- William Allingham

Allingham, William I Mr. Allingham, Junr., Allingham, W. Allingham I, 1824-1889, poet and man of letters. Born in Ireland of an English family long settled there. Received limited schooling, but educated himself by study and wide reading. For some twenty years served intermittently as customs official in Ireland and England. Contributed to Howitt's Journal, Leigh Hunt's Journal, Athenaeum, Fraser's, and other periodicals. Appointed subeditor of Fraser's, 1870; editor, 1874-79. Published some fifteen volumes of poetry, many containing revised versions of poems earlier published; also edited anthologies of poems. Varieties in Prose, a collection of his prose writings prepared by him for publication shortly before his death, published by his widow, 1893. In 1864 granted Civil List pension of £60 a year "In consideration of the literary merit of his poetical works"; also a second pension, 1870 (Colles, *Literature and the Pension List*).

Allingham shared in the general admiration of Dickens. "It seems odd to me now that I never dreamed of the possibility of seeing the great man, much less of making his acquaintance," he wrote in 1870, of an early stay in London. "A glimpse of the author of Nicholas Nickleby would have been bliss too much almost for earth" (*Rambles of Patricius Walker*, in *Varieties in Prose*). He later became acquainted with Dickens, recording in *Rambles* some of his association with him. On the publication of his Lawrence Bloomfield in Ireland, Allingham presented a copy to Dickens with the author's "kind respects" (Stonehouse, *Catalogue*). Allingham held no high opinion of Dickens as a connoisseur of poetry. "No one admires and enjoys Dickens more than I do," he wrote in 1852 to Leigh Hunt, "but I don't believe he cares a rush for Poetry in the stricter sense." Though he became a contributor to *H.W.* with the first number, Allingham had little liking for Dickens's periodical (*Letters to William Allingham*, pp. 14-16). Allingham held that his "Lady Alice" [I, 84. April 20, 1850] had been mutilated in the *H.W.* editorial office (Champneys, *Memoirs ... of Coventry Patmore*, II, 174-75), but he recorded that payment for the poem was accompanied by "a compliment from Dickens" (*Diary*, p. 58). Dickens had praise for at least two other of Allingham's contributions: "The Dirty Old Man" [VI, 396-97. Jan. 8, 1853] he thought was "capital" (to Wills, Dec. 29, 1852); "George Levison" [XVI, 562-64. Dec. 12, 1857] he found "mournfully true," writing to Allingham (Nov. 9, 1857) that it had moved him "very much." Allingham saw a connection between the two poems and two of Dickens's novels: "The Dirty Old Man" and "The Schoolfellows" (i.e., "George Levison"), he wrote, "I believe had the honour of suggesting to the great novelists something in *Great Expectations* and in *A Tale of Two Cities* respectively" (*Songs, Ballads, and Stories*, p. 334). Dickens invited Allingham to write for the 1853 Christmas number. Whatever he might contribute, Dickens was sure, would "do something to enrich" the number (Sept. 8 [9], 1853). No contribution by Allingham appeared in the number. The *H.W.* article "Street Minstrelsy" referred to Allingham.
as a poet "whose muse has long been recognised by critics of the highest rank, for tenderness, grace, and polish," and quoted four stanzas from his "Lovely Mary Donnelly." *D.N.B. suppl.* 1901

Author: Anne Lohrli; © University of Toronto Press, 1971.

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

**Genre(s):**

- Poetry: Lyric
  
  Shorter poem (seldom more than 80 lines) 'expressing the speaker's emotions ... in stanzas or strophes' *(OED)*, cast in a form capable—at least theoretically—of musical performance.

**Subject(s):**

- Nature; Nature (Aesthetics); Nature in Literature; Landscapes

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