

lished in *Hogg's Weekly Instructor* part of Blake's 'King Edward the Third' and a 'sympathetic and understanding but not very original' essay entitled 'Some Chat about William Blake'.⁵

For the next few years Allingham continued to show interest in Blake's writings and compiled the autograph notebook here described. It was clearly made up cumulatively, in sections, the blank leaves being added some time in or after 1856 and presumably when all the sheets were bound. On the first leaf of the section drawn from the *Poetical Sketches* Allingham wrote 'Copied May '54 W A'. I have the impression that the one containing extracts from the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* is earlier than this, and that containing excerpts from Blake's notebook is definitely so. On the first leaf of this section Allingham has written: '(Purchased by Mr D. G. Rossetti from Palmer an attendant in the British Museum, who knew Blake personally, and was given the M.S. by Mrs Blake. It is a rough note-book, containing draughts of many of his published poems and numerous sketches with pen and pencil along with a crowd of strange jottings and memoranda. Blake seems to have possessed almost all the high qualities of the human mind — unstrung, as it were.) W.A.'

Allingham must have borrowed the notebook from Rossetti and made his transcript well before 1851, for on 17 January that year Rossetti wrote to him as follows: 'I think I heard you say lately (or somebody else say of you) that you thought of writing a paper on Blake. I was looking the other day over my Blake M.S., and it struck me more forcibly than ever as affording good materials for an article, which I resolved I would do as soon as leisure permitted. May I therefore beg, that, should you in fact fulfil your intention, you will not make use of any of those extracts which you took from my book at the time I lent it to you?'⁶

In the event Allingham did not proceed with his plans to publish material from the notebook. Rossetti eventually lent the volume to Gilchrist in 1861 and when Gilchrist died later that year he himself edited a selection from the manuscript which was printed in the second volume of Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* (1863).

There has been some suspicion that Blake's manuscript may originally have included many loose sheets that 'contained verses which were so bad that Rossetti threw them into his waste-paper basket, from which Swinburne rescued a few fragments not quite so worthless as the rest.'⁷ To judge by his many conjectural readings Allingham evidently had more trouble than Sir Geoffrey Keynes (or, at least, less success) in deciphering Blake's handwriting. But it is reassuring to be able to say that Allingham's early transcript, made so long before Rossetti's own editorial labours, includes nothing which is not in Sir Geoffrey's facsimile edition. And Allingham's own volume is not with-