

**THE TWO ANGELS  
AND OTHER POEMS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649126415

The two angels and other poems by Alexander Anderson & George Gilfillan

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**ALEXANDER ANDERSON & GEORGE GILFILLAN**

**THE TWO ANGELS  
AND OTHER POEMS**



Alexander Anderson,  
"Sunbeam"  
THE TWO ANGELS

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

ALEXANDER ANDERSON,

*Author of "A Song of Labour, and other Poems,"*

KIRKCONNEL, DUMFRIES-SHIRE.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY SKETCH BY

REV. GEORGE GILFILLAN,

DUNDEE,

*Author of "The Bards of the Bible," &c., &c.*

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO.  
EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW: JOHN MENZIES & CO.

1875.

LOAN STACK

PRINTED BY  
JOHN LING & CO.,  
DUNDEE ADVERTISER OFFICE.

PR4007  
A3879

## INTRODUCTORY SKETCH.

---

THE appearance of a new volume of Poems from the pen of Mr Alexander Anderson, of Kirkconnel, so widely known by the *nom-de-plume* of "Surfaceman," seems to justify a short sketch of his life, and an appraisalment of his poetry. This account shall at least have the two merits of Sincerity and of Shortness. And first, of the events of his life. Mr Anderson was born on the 30th of April 1845, at Kirkconnel, a small village at the upper end of Dumfriesshire; his boyhood was spent at Crocketford, another small village in the lower end of Galloway. At a humble school he gained the rudiments of his early education. Here, he tells us himself, he was not remarkable for any particular cleverness or aptitude for learning. He was a good penman, however, took great delight in acquiring what Dominic Sampson calls "a firm, current, clear, and legible hand," and became a calligrapher. The notanda about himself, which he has kindly sent us, and his correspondence, prove that he can write in both senses of the term—not scrawl inscrutabilities, as too many of his kindred are in the habit of doing. He was a good sketcher, too, and enjoyed a local fame for colouring. He became the member of an improvised Academy of Youths, every

one of whom was bound to provide, at short stated periods, a sketch, or rather daub, to be criticised by the rest. The result was neither pleasant nor profitable, for he tells us "that our strictures were often of the most pungent kind, and violent disputes, that would last for days, were the invariable results of our love for Art." "Deep in colour, they were deficient in harmony." "Surfaceman" says—"I can still see myself trudging to school, satchel on back, and stopping now and then to see if my masterpiece was receiving any damage in its transit."

From these beginnings a great painter—a Harvey or a Wilkie—might have been looked for, but he soon turned from colours to word painting, and, like other juvenile bards,

"Lisped in numbers, for the numbers came."

And the first thing that struck his young eye was the common and even ludicrous incident of a man being hit by a snowball. There are elements in this very capable of treatment. The pompous strut of the venerable magistrate or divine who is the victim, striving to maintain his usual dignity while dipping his feet heavily into the thick slush—or three-foot snow—the look of surprise, blended with rage and confusion, with which he feels the sudden ball lighting on the nape of his neck and deranging the grand repose of his white choker, and turns round for vengeance—and the shy, timid, yet gleesome glance of the urchin, as he, with reverted head and hand still extended, speeds away like lightning across the street, while roars of young laughter attest the triumph felt at the abasement of the Rev. Pompous Turkeycock, and drown his fierce ejaculations of fury, which sound like half-formed and frost-bit *oaths* in the distance. We would liked to have seen "Surfaceman's" handling of such a scene, and regret that, though



much applauded by his companions, his poem has not been preserved by himself. He indulged at this period in doggerel rhymes; every sentiment that he deemed worth recording he put into verse, and he blames this for the stiff prose which he says he writes now, as if head and hand, so early accustomed to rhyming, disdained to descend to vulgar prose. He quotes Shenstone to shelter himself, who says somewhere "that Pegasus must not be yoked with a dray horse."

On the other hand, there are others of a poetical temperament who regret that they did not in early youth learn to rhyme and write verse with as much facility as to indite prose, and who think that by this their prose would have been improved, and any poetical attempt would have cost them less mechanical labour, and allowed them more freedom and ease in the act of composition.

"Surfaceman," after writing a number of Satires, Epistles, and other Poems, submitted them all to a fiery baptism not long ago. He should, as did Pope or Thomson, we forget which, have first written an account of their various demerits, and suspended it like an ancient *scroll* of heresy around their necks! There is no doubt a savage luxury in such cremations, but we doubt on the whole their wisdom. Early productions, if not proofs of power, are marks of progress. As such they should be preserved. Even as to the question of pleasure, we are mistaken if to burn boyish poetry or prose gives such a thrilling tingling joy as to find after long years specimens of them which had gone astray, and be thus, as Foster has it, enabled to "resume the departed state of our souls." "Surfaceman" seems to have burned his productions when, we will suppose, he was about 25; had he waited till he was 50, or older, he would have been delighted had they been still extant. And we have

no doubt many of them would be excellent in themselves, as well as interesting from memory and associations.

He returned with his parents from Crocketford to his native village, and, coinciding with this in time, was his entire abandonment for a season of poetry. One reason was his growing conviction of the worthlessness of what he had written ; and he adds very naively as another, that the nature of his employment (working in a quarry) was probably not conducive to that kind of study.

He now began to extend his reading, but at first in a wrong direction. He revelled in what he calls "claptrap," by which we understand sensational literature—novels, plays, &c.—which, not to injure a reader, requires on his part a strong youthful appetite and digestion. The healthy boy, at a certain time of life, and who enjoys plenty of exercise, may be permitted to eat any amount of hips, haws, brambles, sloes, and will do so with impunity. And so with a strong-minded, intellectual boy. It little matters at a certain period what such a person reads. The boy will read, the youth will study, and the man will think and act. But he will not long, if of the right stamp, remain satisfied with such food, and will begin to hunger for better books. While devouring trash Mr Anderson's love and practice of poetry were kept in entire abeyance. The fountain of song was sealed, and slumbered under Circulating Library mud mountains, till at last "Strong Death" removed the incubus. A beloved brother, not older than 26, was taken away, and "To One in Eternity" was the result. Thus the spring was opened, and has never since been shut. Along with a love of poetry re-awakened, there arose in his mind a desire for studying languages. He began with French, procured a grammar, became his own master, and, by dint of persevering,

and utilizing every spare moment, cut out a royal road to learning; and after mastering French therewith, carried it on to the more difficult regions of German and Italian, and says proudly yet modestly, "Now I can appreciate in my own way in their own tongue the mighty voices of Goethe, Schiller, and Dante." Which among these great Spirits would not have been ready to cry, "This is true fame," had they known that their masterpieces—Werter, the Faust, the Robbers, and the Divina Comedia—were read and appreciated at the bottom of a Dumfriesshire quarry! "Surfaceman" grants that his knowledge of these authors was and is yet imperfect; but says that it is a great pleasure to him, and it must be a source of genuine inspiration.

His connection with the *People's Friend*—a journal which has occupied well a field which has been long unoccupied in Scotland, since, at least, the days of "Hogg's Instructor," and been an outlet to the overflowing young intellect and genius of our country, particularly amongst the uneducated but aspiring classes—began in 1870. Previous to this he had written a copy of verses in the *People's Journal* on Mr Ferguson's famous but now forgotten and forgiven escapade against Robert Burns. The first poem in the *Friend* was a poem on John Keats, which may be found third in his first volume of poems.\* After this he became a regular contributor, and was very highly appreciated by its readers, till at last, in the autumn of 1873, he was encouraged to publish his "Song of Labour and other Poems"—a book which met an instant and most generous reception both from the press and the public. Of it we wrote at the time—"Here is verily a Sign of the Times—a perfect

---

\* The poem referred to—the only one reprinted from the former volume—will be found at page 211.