

## CHAPTER XVII.

PUBLICATION OF THE "ANNIVERSARY"—EXTRACTS FROM THE VOLUME—CORRESPONDENCE ON THE SUBJECT WITH PROFESSOR WILSON AND MR. RITCHIE OF THE "SCOTSMAN."

THE work alluded to in the foregoing letter to his mother was the "Anniversary" for 1829, an Annual he had undertaken to edit, at the desire of the publishers, and also to procure the necessary matter from among his literary acquaintances and friends. He wrought hard to make it a success, as it was a new field for operation, and he admirably succeeded. Some of the ablest pens willingly supported him. There was then considerable rivalry in that class of "entertainment for the million," and he exerted himself the more that he might not fail in the undertaking. He was aspiring to fame, and here was an opportunity for "making a spoon or spoiling a horn." He had literary friends on whom he thought he could count for assistance, and his applications were responded to in the most kindly manner.

The volume appeared in due time, with green cloth boards and gilt edges. It consisted of 336 pages, contained 60 pieces of poetry and prose, and was illustrated with 20 steel engravings by some of the most eminent artists. Among the most notable of the contributors were, Southey the Poet-Laureate, Professor Wilson, Lockhart, Montgomery, Hogg, Pringle, Croker, "Barry

Cornwall," Edward Irving, and Miss Strickland. Cunningham himself furnished seven pieces. For want of space various articles of merit were omitted, and the names of the authors of several valuable contributions were withheld for reasons satisfactory to the editor.

Of the poetry in the volume the best was that contributed by Southey and Wilson. The former sent a long poetic epistle in eulogy of Cunningham, and three inscriptions for the Caledonian Canal. From the "Epistle" we quote the following passage as illustrative of its nature. The Laureate has been in London, and, sick of city life, leaves it and returns home, glad once more to breathe the pure air of heaven, and revel amidst the beauties of rural scenery. Like a bird escaped from its cage after long confinement, he seems as if he could not spread his wings widely enough, soar highly enough, and carol joyously enough:—

"EPISTLE TO ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

. . . . .  
 "Oh! not for all that London might bestow,  
 Would I renounce the genial influences  
 And thoughts, and feelings to be found where'er  
 We breathe beneath the open sky, and see  
 Earth's liberal bosom. Judge, then, from thyself,  
 Allan, true child of Scotland; thou who art  
 So oft in spirit on thy native hills,  
 And yonder Solway shores; a poet thou,  
 Judge from thyself how strong the ties which bind  
 A poet to his home, when, making thus  
 Large recompense for all that, haply, else  
 Might seem perversely or unkindly done,  
 Fortune hath set his happy habitacle  
 Among the ancient hills, near mountain streams

And lakes pellucid; in a land sublime  
 And lovely as those regions of romance,  
 Where his young fancy in its day-dreams roamed,  
 Expatiating in forests wild and wide,  
 Loegrian, or of dearest Fairy-land."

But the contribution above all, which Cunningham regarded as the gem of his book, was "Edderline's Dream," by Professor Wilson. The poem is too long to be extracted *in extenso*, though it was intended as only the first canto of a larger work; but no more of it was ever produced by the author. The following opening lines will convey some idea of the writer's style:—

"EDDERLINE'S DREAM.

"FIRST CANTO.

"Castle-Oban is lost in the darkness of night,  
 For the moon is swept from the starless heaven,  
 And the latest line of lowering light  
 That lingered on the stormy even,  
 A dim-seen line, half cloud, half wave,  
 Hath sunk into the weltering grave.  
 Castle-Oban is dark without and within,  
 And downwards to the fearful din,  
 Where Ocean, with his thunder-shoeks,  
 Stuns the green foundation rocks,  
 Through the grim abyss that mocks his eye  
 Oft hath the eerie watchman sent  
 A shuddering look, a shivering sigh,  
 From the edge of the howling battlement!

"Therein is a lonesome room,  
 Undisturbed as some old tomb  
 That, built within a forest glen,  
 Far from feet of living men,  
 And sheltered by its black pine-trees,

From sound of rivers, lochs, and seas,  
 Flings back its archèd gateway tall,  
 At times to some great funeral.  
 Noiscless as a central cell  
 In the bosom of a mountain,  
 Where the fairy people dwell,  
 By the cold and sunless fountain!

“ Breathless as the holy shrine  
 When the voice of psalms is shed!  
 And there upon her stately bed,  
 While her raven locks recline  
 O'er an arm more pure than snow,  
 Motionless beneath her head,—  
 And through her large, fair eyelids shine  
 Shadowy dreams that come and go,  
 By too deep bliss disquieted,—  
 There sleeps in love and beauty's glow,  
 The high-born Lady Edderline.

“ Lo! the lamp's wan fitful light,  
 Glide, gliding round the golden rim!  
 Restored to life, now glancing bright,  
 Now just expiring, faint and dim,  
 Like a spirit loth to die,  
 Contending with its destiny.  
 All dark! a momentary veil  
 Is o'er the sleeper! now a pale  
 Uncertain beauty glimmers faint,  
 And now the calm face of the saint  
 With every feature reappears,  
 Celestial in unconscious tears!  
 Another gleam! how sweet the while,  
 Those pictured faces on the wall  
 Through the midnight silence smile;  
 Shades of fair ones in the aisle,  
 Vaulted the castle cliffs below,  
 To nothing mouldered, one and all,  
 Ages long ago!

"From her pillow, as if driven  
 By an unseen demon's hand  
 Disturbing the repose of heaven,  
 Hath fallen her head! The long black hair,  
 From the fillet's silken band,  
 In dishevelled masses riven,  
 Is streaming downwards to the floor.

. . . . .

"Eager to speak—but in terror mute,  
 With chainèd breath and snow-soft foot,  
 The gentle maid whom that lady loves,  
 Like a gleam of light through the darkness moves,  
 And leaning o'er her rosy breath,  
 Listens in tears—for sleep—or death!  
 Then touches with a kiss her breast—  
 'O, Lady, this is ghastly rest!  
 Awake, awake! for Jesus' sake!  
 Far in her soul a thousand sighs  
 Are madly struggling to get free.

. . . . .

"So gently as a shepherd lifts,  
 From a wreath of drifted snow,  
 A lamb, that vainly on a rock,  
 Up among the mountain clefts,  
 Bleats unto the heedless flocks  
 Sunwards feeding far below,  
 Even so gently Edith takes  
 The sighing dreamer to her breast,  
 Loving kisses soft and meek  
 Breathing o'er bosom, brow, and cheek,  
 For their own fair, delightful sakes,  
 And lays her lovely limbs at rest;  
 When, stirring like the wondrous flower  
 That blossoms at the midnight hour,  
 And only then—the Lady wakes!"

. . . . .

The "Anniversary" succeeded beyond the expectations of its most sanguine friends, and surpassed in literary and artistic ability its formidable rival the "Keepsake," of which it had been so much in dread. Indeed, it had the reputation of excelling all its competitors in poetry, a compliment of which the editor was very proud. Six thousand copies were sold before the day of publication! Any man, even of the largest experience in this line of literature, might well be proud of such a public appreciation of his labours, and especially after such difficulties as he had to contend with. Accordingly, this success acted as a strong stimulus for the future, and we find him flirting with a new love ere he is off with the old. Next year's "Anniversary" is already before him, and he is determined to excel himself if possible. He has enlisted several writers of distinction, such as Lockhart, and Southey, and Edward Irving. He is not quite sure of Wordsworth, but he means to try him; and thus taking time by the forelock, he resolves to gain a march upon his rival the "Keepsake." There is one above all others he lays siege to, who has done him such eminent service in the present, with his delightful "Edderline's Dream," and so the following letter is despatched to Edinburgh to Professor Wilson:—

"27 Lower Belgrave Place, 11th September, 1828.

"My dear Friend,—I have cut and cleared away right and left, and opened a space for your very beautiful poem, and now it will appear at full length, as it rightly deserves. Will you have the goodness to say your will to the proof as



quickly as possible, and let me have it again, for the printer pushes me sorely.

“ You have indeed done me a great and lasting kindness. You have aided me, I trust effectually, in establishing my *Annual* book, and enabled me to create a little income for my family. My life has been one continued struggle to maintain my independence and support wife and children, and I have, when the labour of the day closed, endeavoured to use the little talent which my country allows me to possess as easily and as profitably as I can. The pen thus adds a little to the profit of the chisel, and I keep head above water, and on occasion take the middle of the causeway with an independent step.

“ There is another matter about which I know not how to speak; and now I think on't, I had better speak out bluntly at once. My means are but moderate; and having engaged to produce the literature of the volume for a certain sum, the variety of the articles has caused no small expenditure. I cannot, therefore, say that I can pay you for ‘Edderline’s Dream;’ but I beg you will allow me to lay twenty pounds aside by way of token or remembrance, to be paid in any way you may desire, into some friend’s hand here, or remitted by post to Edinburgh. I am ashamed to offer so small a sum for a work which I admire so much; but what Burns said to the Muse, I may with equal propriety say to you—

‘ Ye ken—ye ken  
That strong necessity supreme is  
‘Mang sons of men.’

“ Now, may I venture to look to you for eight or ten pages for my next volume on the same kind of terms? I shall, with half-a-dozen assurances of the aid of the leading men of genius, be able to negotiate more effectually with the

proprietor; for, when he sees that Sir Walter Scott, Professor Wilson, Mr. Southey, Mr. Lockhart, and one or two more, are resolved to support me, he will comprehend that the speculation will be profitable, and close with me accordingly. Do, I beg and entreat of you, agree to this, and say so when you write.

“Forgive all this forwardness and earnestness, and believe me to be your faithful servant and admirer,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.”

The following letter was also sent to Mr. Ritchie of the *Scotsman*:—

“27 Belgrave Place, 20th Oct., 1828.

“My dear Friend,—I send for your acceptance my little embellished book, the ‘Anniversary.’ It is externally gaudy enough; internally there are graver and better things, with some of which I hope you will be much pleased. On the whole, I believe the book will be a successful one, and opposed as I have been by superior talents and superior wealth, I may be thankful that I can hold my head up as high as I do. The ‘Keepsake’ purchased authors and bribed lords at a prodigious expense, and when I commenced my work I found many of the mighty of the realms of genius arrayed against me, and a large proportion of the peerage. I have lived forty-three years in the world, and wish to live longer, without the clap-of-hand of the great, and I shall be glad if my book proves that there are men who write well without the advantage of coronets. I must make one exception. Lord F. Leveson Gower was exceedingly kind. Should this thing succeed, I shall add by it £250 a-year to my little income. Help me with your approbation, my dear friend.



“Our friend Miss Mitford has been here, and much have we talked of you, and many kind compliments did she charge me to send you. My wife and she became as intimate as two breast bones, and both being frank and jolly, well-faured roundabout dames, they were well matched. Much they spoke and whispered about you and me. I wish we had had you with us, we should have

‘Gien ae nicht’s discharge to care.’

“I am also charged with an apology to you from James Montgomery for some abrupt interview he had with you. He seems very anxious to stand well with you, and I hope if aught happened unpleasant then it is forgotten now.

“I am busy with plans of new books, for my mind is never idle, and I have information upon many things which I wish to tell to the world. Can you inform me where I can find any satisfactory account of Jameson the painter, called the Scottish Vandyke, and any information respecting his works which can be depended on? What do you think of his portraits compared with his times? He is one of our earliest painters, island-born, and I wish to do him as much honour as he deserves, and no more. I remember a little about him in Stark’s ‘Picture of Edinburgh.’ I have some notion of writing the Lives of the British Painters, on the plan of Johnson’s ‘Lives of the Poets.’ I am full of information on the subject, have notions of my own in keeping with the nature of the art, and I think a couple of volumes would not be unwelcome from one who has no theory to support, and who will write with full freedom and spirit. I speak thus openly to you, my dear friend, because I know you wish me well, and rejoice in my success. Indeed, you have helped me not a little.

“I could say much more, but I have said enough to interest you, and more than enough, if my little book is not worthy of your friendly notice. Indeed, I have had hard measures dealt me by critics generally, the *Scotsman* and one or two others forming exceptions. They make no allowances for my want of time and skill, and seem to expect as clear and polished narratives from my pen as they receive from men of talent and education too. If they would try me as they have tried other rustic writers by their peers, I should not object. My wife joins me in esteem.—I am, my dear friend, yours most truly,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

“William Ritchie, Esq.,  
“59 George Square, Edinburgh.”

Here is another letter to the Professor:—

“27 Lower Belgrave Place, 7th November, 1828.

“My dear Friend,—My little Annual—thanks to your exquisite ‘Edderline,’ and your kind and seasonable words—has been very successful. It is not yet published, and cannot appear these eight days, yet we have sold 6000 copies. The booksellers all look kindly upon it; the proprietor is very much pleased with its success, and it is generally looked upon here as a work fairly rooted in public favour. The *first* large paper proof-copy ready shall be on its way to Gloucester Place before it is an hour finished. It is indeed outwardly a most splendid book.

“I must now speak of the future. The ‘Keepsake’ people last season bought up some of my friends, and imagined, because they had succeeded with one or two eminent ones, that my book was crushed, and would not be anything like a rival. They were too wily for me; and though I shall never be

able to meet them in their own way, still I must endeavour to gather all the friends round me that I can. I have been with our mutual friend Lockhart this morning, and we have made the following arrangement, which he permits me to mention to you, in the hope you will aid me on the same conditions. He has promised me a poem, and a piece of prose to the extent of from twenty to thirty pages, for £50, and engaged to write for no other Annual. Now, if you would help me on the same terms, and to the same extent, I shall consider myself fortunate. It is true you kindly promised to aid me with whatever I liked for next year, and desired me not to talk of money. My dear friend, we make money of you, and why not make some return? I beg you will, therefore, letting bygones be bygones in money matters, join with Mr. Lockhart in this. I could give you many reasons for doing it, all of which would influence you. It is enough to say, that my rivals will come next year into the field in all the strength of talent, and rank, and fashion, and strive to bear me down. The author of 'Edderline,' and many other things equally delightful, can prevent this, and to him I look for help.

"I shall try Wordsworth in the same way. I am sure of Southey, and of Edward Irving. I shall limit my list of contributors, and make a better book generally than I have done. I am to have a painting from Wilkie, and one from Newton, and they will be more carefully engraved too.

"I am glad that your poem has met with such applause here. I have now seen all the other Annuals, and I assure you that in the best of them there is nothing that approaches in beauty to 'Edderline.' This seems to be the general opinion, and proud I am of it.—I remain, my dear friend, yours ever faithfully,

"ALLAN CUNNINGHAM."

Again, there is another letter to Professor Wilson:—

“27 Lower Belgrave Place, Nov. 19th, 1828.

“My dear Friend,—I send for your acceptance a large paper copy of my Annual, with proofs of the plates, and I send it by the mail that you may have it on your table a few days before publication. You will be glad to hear that the book has been favourably received, and the general impression seems to be, that while the ‘Keepsake’ is a little below expectation, the ‘Anniversary’ is a little above it. I am told by one in whose judgment I can wholly confide, that *our* poetry is superior, and ‘Edderline’s Dream’ the noblest poem in *any* of the Annuals. This makes me happy; it puts us at the head of these publications.

“I took the liberty of writing a letter to you lately, and ventured to make you an offer, which I wish, in justice to my admiration of your talents, had been worthier of your merits. I hope and entreat you will think favourably of my request, and give me your aid, as powerfully as you can. If you but knew the opposition which I have to encounter, and could hear the high words of those who, with their exclusive poets, and their bands of bards, seek to bear me down, your own proud spirit and chivalrous feelings would send you quickly to my aid, and secure me from being put to shame by the highest of the island. One great poet, not a Scotch one, kindly advised me last season to think no more of literary competition with the ‘Keepsake,’ inasmuch as *he* dipt *his* pen exclusively for that publication. I know his poetic contributions, and fear them not when I think on ‘Edderline.’

“I hope you will not think me vain, or a dreamer of unattainable things, when I express my hope of being able, through the aid of my friends, to maintain the reputation of my book against the fame of others, though they be aided

by some who might have aided me. Should you decline—which I hope in God you will not—the offer which I lately made, I shall still depend upon your assistance, which you had the goodness to promise. Another such poem as ‘Edderline’ would make my fortune, and if I could obtain it by May or June it would be in excellent time.

“If you would wish a copy or two of the book to give away, I shall be happy to place them at your disposal.—I remain, my dear friend, your faithful servant,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.”

The following is despatched to Mr. Ritchie on the same subject:—

“27 Lower Belgrave Place, 22nd Nov., 1828.

“My dear Friend,—I thank you most sincerely for your friendly criticism and your friendly letter. I am sensible of the value of both, and I hope I shall ever retain your good opinion both as a man and an author. You will find our dear friend Miss Mitford at ‘Three-Mile-Cross, Reading.’ I have in some sort prepared her to expect a commencement of your chivalrous correspondence. She is indeed a most delightful lady, and I hope some time to have the pleasure of seeing you both under my roof.

“I am, you may be assured, much pleased with your niece’s good opinion. I always set down such things to the discernment of the fair party, and in this feeling I request the favour of her name, that I may think of it when I have my poetic pen in my hand, and a pleasant old Scotch air in my head. That we shall all meet in your *gude* town there can be no manner of doubt, for if I *be to the fore* Scotland shall see me before the harvest shoots over. This I have sworn as well as said.



“You will be glad to hear that my little Annual promises to be very successful, and that it has *now* the reputation of excelling all its competitors in poetry. This seems to be the universal opinion here, and I am very proud of it. In truth, the ‘Keepsake’ is below expectation, and mine is above it. Great names do not always produce great works, and so it has happened in this case. If the ‘Keepsake’ sells 25,000 copies, then it will have expended £11,000; if it sells 16,000 copies only, and that is the number printed, the expense cannot be near that sum. But round numbers sound well, and the public ear is gratified by swaggering accounts of lords hired, and large sums expended. For myself I go quietly on, minding no one’s boast, making the best book I am able to do.

“I am much pleased that you approve of my new undertaking, and equally pleased with your sound and sensible advice. There will be ten engravings, eight on wood, and two on steel, in each volume, examples of the genius of the various artists, and in the letterpress will be interwoven all the authentic anecdotes, and all the snatches of clever criticism which are the property of these gentlemen. I shall not neglect to mention of the authorities. I have made some progress in the first volume, and I hope to make a popular book. It is much wanted. Artists themselves are far too busied to write it. Besides, they would overwhelm the narrative with the jargon of the studio, and with the jaundiced notions of their own school of art. I shall do the best I can.

“Of our friend of Oxford I have not heard for some time. There is so much indolence coupled with so much talent in him that I sometimes fear for his success in life. To sit and indulge in delightful speculations is very well if you start up and carry them into instant practice; but our friend

is a splendid theorist; his practice is yet to come. He is certainly a right good fellow as ever trod the earth.

“My wife unites in good wishes for you and for Mrs. Ritchie, and all in whom you have an interest. I shall be most happy to hear from you when your inclination and leisure serve. I am, my dear friend, yours most truly,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

“William Ritchie, Esq.,  
“59 George Square, Edinburgh.”

The same subject draws forth another letter to the Professor:—

“27 Lower Belgrave Place, 12th Dec., 1828.

“My dear Friend,—I enclose you some lines for your friend’s paper, and am truly glad of any opportunity of obliging you. I like Mr. Bell’s *Journal* much. He understands, I see, what poetry is; a thing not common among critics. If there is anything else you wish me to do, say so. I have not the heart to refuse you anything.

“I was much pleased with your kind assurances respecting my next year’s volume. Mr. Lockhart said he would write to you, and I hope you will unite with him and Mr. Irving in contributing for me alone. As I have been disappointed in Wordsworth, I hope you will allow me to add £25 of his £50 to the £50 I already promised. The other I intend for Mr. Lockhart. This, after all, looks like picking your pocket, for such is the rage for Annuals at present that a poet so eminent as you are may command terms. I ought, perhaps, to be satisfied with the kind assurances you have given and not be over greedy.

“One word about Wordsworth. In his last letter to me he said that Alaric Watts had a prior claim. ‘Only,’ quoth he, ‘Watts says I go about depreciating other *Annals* out of regard for the “Keepsake.” This is untrue. I only said, ‘as the “Keepsake” paid poets best, it would be the best work.’ This is not depreciating! He advised me, before he knew who were to be my contributors, not to think of rivalry in literature with the ‘Keepsake.’ Enough of a little man and a great poet. His poetic sympathies are warm, but his heart, for any manly purpose, as cold as a December snail. I had to-day a very pleasant, witty contribution from Theodore Hook.—I remain, my dear friend, yours faithfully,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

“*P.S.*—I have got Mr. Bell’s letter and *Journals*, and shall thank him for his good opinion by sending *him* a trifle some time soon for the paper. If you think my name will do the least good to the good cause, pray insert it at either end of the poem you like.

“A. C.”