

CHAPTER XII.

GENERAL REVIEW OF CHARACTER AND CAREER.

MANY authors are remembered, not for their lives, but for their works. Their personality is lost, and they are known by what they have achieved, not by what they have been.

‘Not myself, but the truth that in life I have spoken;  
Not myself, but the seed that in life I have sown,  
Shall pass on to ages, all about me forgotten,  
Save the words I have written, the deeds I have done.’

But this silent separation of the author from his works cannot happen in the case of Dr Kitto, whose name is now immortally associated with biblical study and literature. For the measure of his success is not more amazing in its amount than in the means by which he reached it. His life is as instructive as are his labours; and the two combined, present an unequalled picture of triumph over obstacles which have been very rarely so surmounted, and over circumstances which few have ventured to encounter, and which fewer still have mastered to such advantage. He did not merely neutralise the adverse position of his earlier years, but he wrung from it the lessons and habits which slowly built up his fame, as they prepared him for his ultimate achievements. Truly has he realised the riddle of Samson—‘Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.’ What a contrast between the deaf and pauper boy of 1819, wheedled into a workhouse to keep him from ‘hunger and fasting, cold and nakedness,’ and the John Kitto of 1854, doctor of Divinity though a layman, member of the Society of Antiquaries, Editor of the Pictorial Bible and the Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature, and author of the Daily Bible Illustrations. The interval between the two extremes was long, and sometimes very gloomy; yet he bore bravely up, with earnest resolution and strong faith in God, often murmuring to himself

‘Be still, sad heart! and cease repining,  
Behind the clouds the sun is shining.’

We have already characterised, in the preceding pages, those numerous literary and biblical productions which occupied the last twenty years of Dr Kitto’s life. Suffice it now to say of them generally, that they work principally on the

outer aspects of Scripture, and seldom touch the deeper difficulties that lie beneath. Such labours have, however, their own value; for, though they do not interpret, they may conduct to the interpretation. They break the husk, though they do not bring out the kernel. Many of the topical descriptions so lavishly given in the quartos of Conybeare and Howson, contribute not a whit to a just exposition; but they wonderfully freshen our conceptions of the toil and travels of the great apostle. On the other hand, Smith's expository description of Paul's voyage<sup>140</sup> is true to the life; the nautical language—ropes, anchors, sails—is dexterously unravelled; the positions of the labouring ship, day after day, are laid down with a seaman's precision; and the wreck and the scene of it are delineated with such fullness and accuracy, that at once he sketches a picture and completes an exegesis.

Sometimes Dr Kitto's illustrations are too ingenious, and sometimes, though rarely, they are beside the mark. Thus, in the Pictorial Bible and in the Daily Bible Illustrations, he holds up Ephron the Hittite as utterly supple and dishonest in his transaction with Abraham about the cave of Machpelah, and denies him all generosity, if not integrity—a mode of representation unwarranted by the narrative, and which errs in interpreting the ancient and simple manners of Canaan by the ingenious flatteries and lying courtesies of modern Persia. In writing under Acts xix. 2, of the question which, properly rendered, is, 'Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?' and of the answer, 'We did not so much as hear whether there be any Holy Ghost,' he understands the language as referring to the existence or person of the Spirit; whereas the context makes it obvious that it is to the gift, or rather the extraordinary endowments of the Spirit, that the querist and his twelve respondents refer—for when they were baptized, 'the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied.' In his remarks upon the rapid increase of Israel in Egypt, he declares—'After all the learned and sagacious talk about the laws of population and of human increase, there is really no law of increase in any population but the will of God.' No one doubts this great truth, yet surely the will of God neither acts without law nor by miracle, but according to certain physiological principles, which may be detected and explained. Under Ezekiel xiii. 10, 11, he has a curious dissertation on 'cob-walls'—a species of rude buildings formed of mud, and found in the south-west of England. But he jumps at once to the conclusion, that the process had been carried, like his own name, from Phoenicia to Devonshire, from Canaan to Cornwall. But the same methods of clay-masonry are found in Scotland and elsewhere, and need not be traced to any other origin than poverty and necessity. Mr Urquhart and he are puzzled much about the syllable 'cob,' which certainly has a variety of meanings in compounded forms,

and they regard ‘cob-web’ as meaning the wall and the web; whereas the first syllable in *cobweb* is simply the last of the early name of the insect, called attercop still in Denmark, and in many parts of Scotland and England.

The late Hugh Miller, an immortal example of the successful pursuit of science under difficulties, which to the majority of men would have been insuperable, has, in his last work, ‘The Testimony of the Rocks,’ taken Dr Kitto as the exponent of the popular view of the universality of the Noachic deluge. In our opinion, his direct refutation of Dr Kitto fails on some points, turning the edge of the weapon without breaking it, and is greatly inferior in cogency and conclusiveness to the positive and very striking argument for his own hypothesis. Another recent author has taken up and rebuked both Dr Kitto and ourselves upon a point on which he possesses practical skill and experience.<sup>141</sup> The matter in dispute is the demolition of the golden calf by Moses. The conjecture may be untenable, that Moses dissolved the calf in some chemical fluid, and mixed the nauseous potion with the water which he compelled the Israelites to drink, though certainly a solvent sufficient for the purpose might easily be fixed upon, and might be known to Egyptian chemistry. The words of Moses are, ‘he burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water,’—‘he stamped it and ground it very small, even until it was small as dust.’ The text implies that the ‘burning’ in the fire was not fusion, as our opponent supposes, for surely burning is not melting, but some unknown process that prepared the metal for being ‘stamped’ and then ‘ground’ to powder—a process which Mr Napier, though he meditated a book on ‘the Chemistry of the Bible,’ has certainly not discovered, but has been obliged to leave unexplained.

Dr Kitto’s life was one of heroic daring and perseverance. With a dissipated father and a broken-hearted mother, afflicted with a deafness which a sad accident had brought upon him, left pretty much to himself, and prone to wander about the fields, or lie among the rocks, the lad might have grown up to lead a vagabond life, without settled aim or occupation. But the waif, tossed about on the billows, and in danger of being carried out to sea, was floated into the haven of the old Plymouth workhouse. And what was to be done with him there? In kindness, the overseer set him to shoemaking, and probably his relations thought him now provided for during life, and reckoned the use of awl and pincers a fitting occupation for a jobbing mason’s disabled apprentice. And had it not been for his mental elasticity, he would certainly have been a poor labourer all his days. By and by he is leased out to a brutal tyrant, who made the poor boy so utterly wretched, that he cherished to familiarity the idea of suicide. He ‘tried hard to be happy, but it would not do,’ and at length he longed

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

‘to be hurled  
Anywhere, anywhere, out of the world.’

Ah! little did Mr Bowden know, when he was so cruelly cuffing his helpless drudge, and dashing a tobacco-pipe or a shoe in his face, that the object of his contumely was faithfully committing to record. In his Journal, the whole of the brutal procedure, to be turned up thirty years afterwards to the gaze and reprobation of the world. The indenture must be cancelled, and the magistrates mercifully sent him back to the almshouse: but he did not sink into apathy, nor did his spirit prey upon itself, and become the nursery or the victim of dark and vengeful passions. Many, alas! in more propitious circumstances than his, have yielded to such temptation. Byron’s lameness was an evil incomparably less than Kitto’s deafness, and yet it so soured his Lordship’s temper, that he could not endure an unwitting allusion to his halt. It could be borne that his mother called him a brat, but that she called him ‘a lame brat,’ was ever a plague-spot on his memory. Shut out from intercourse with society, Kitto never learned to hate it—cheerless and homeless, a butt to the wilder boys, sometimes pitied and sometimes slighted, he maintained a calm and firm temper; and, at length, he could speak and write of his infirmity with the analytical precision of a physiologist, and the quiet resignation of a child of God, to whom all things ‘work together for good.’ It was, indeed, a rough training to which he had been subjected. But it was not without its benefits; for though he was not what he has himself called a ‘mother-bred youth,’ yet a good deal of his earliest days would have badly ‘fitted him to endure the sharp air and gusty winds of practical life.’ ‘The *hardening* of such a character is the most distressing moral process to which life is subject. Tender to touch as the mimosa, morbidly sensitive to every influence from without, even the kindness of *men* seems rough, while neglect wounds and unkindness kills. Apt to see offence where love is meant, mortified to be no longer the *first* object of thought and solicitude to all around,—such a young man, in his first adventure from home, cannot possibly find any society in which his self-esteem will not be deeply wounded.’<sup>142</sup> The distinctness of this picture shows that it was a sketch of himself, and the reminiscence is as sore as if the wounds had scarcely been healed.

And that terrible fall was a prime means of his elevation. But for this accident, the Cornish miner’s grandson might have been a decent tradesman, superior to his class in intelligence and moral worth, an active member of a Mechanics’ Institute, or a leading spirit in the committee of a public library. Men might have said, that the younger Kitto had retrieved the good name which his father had lost. The boy had always a fondness for books; but his deafness, shutting

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

him out of the world, forced him, by an irresistible instinct, to hold converse with himself and others upon paper. There was in him a yearning for interchange of thought, and therefore, as he had few friends, he wrote letters to himself, and communed with himself through his 'Journal.' Had he been born a deaf mute, the same result and tendency would not have been so strongly felt. But twelve years of boy-life, formed an experience not easily forgotten. Through that mysterious and instinctive necessity which exists between thoughts and language, what he had been accustomed to put into words, he longed to put into words still. As he could not hear his own words, so he compensated himself with seeing them, and the eye became the natural substitute for the ear. In the meanwhile, his spirit was sustained by such nutriment and solace; and literature, of the humblest sort, was a welcome luxury. The native vigour of his mind achieved for him a good self-education. Kind friends noticed him, and took him out of the Workhouse—'O happy hour!'<sup>143</sup> But few of them guessed what was in him. They could not see what fire was in the flint, for it had not been struck. He was at this period not unlike Beattie's Minstrel, the object of most opposite opinions—

'Silent when glad—affectionate, though shy;  
And now his look was most demurely sad;  
And now he laughed aloud, yet none knew why;  
The neighbours stared and sighed, and blessed the lad;  
Some deemed him wondrous wise, and some believed him mad.'

He was, in fact, not fully aware of his own capabilities, and, step by step, was he unconsciously led on to celebrity and usefulness. Had there not been a deeper power in him than was surmised, he might have remained in charge of bookshelves in Plymouth or in Exeter—might, perhaps, have written a few miscellanies, or done work for some of the London publishers. But he would have come short of that high excellence to which he ultimately attained—an excellence, based as much on the nature of his studies as on the success with which they were pursued. As he has said in one of his Journals, 'Talent is common, but the art of unfolding talent is not so common. Those whom we call men of talent had, perhaps, ten thousand contemporaries of equal talent, but who had not equal art and facility in unfolding the gifts they possessed.'

His romantic connection with Mr Groves was the turning point of his life. It opened up a new path of labour in connection with the Church of England Missionary Society. Manual toil it was, but it awoke novel ideas and prospects. At length his journey to Baghdad fulfilled one of his first dreams, and revealed to his quick eye the very dress and manners of early times. He saw the East, and

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

soon learned to perceive what biblical illustrations might be gleaned from it. The seeds of piety had been sown in his heart by his kind and loving grandmother, but they were quickened by the conversation and example of Mr Groves; so that, when the time came, he took to biblical work as a congenial task, and therefore he rose in it to signal eminence. Again, his deafness aided him. It threw him ever on his own mental resources; led him to retire into his own heart, and commune with his Maker; and gave his mind that special liking for Scripture, and all about it, which fitted him so well to illustrate it. The mere love of fame, so natural to youth, gradually subsided, though the natural desire of appreciation still remained. 'I did,' he avows, 'earnestly desire to leave to the age beyond some record of my past existence, and thereby establish a point of communication between my own mind and the unborn generations.'<sup>144</sup> He has recorded his obligation to a member of the Society of Friends, who showed him great kindness when few thought of him, and especially impressed upon him this idea, 'that it was the duty of every rational creature to devote whatever talents God had given him to useful purposes.'<sup>145</sup> The counsel took effect, and, as 'a word spoken in season,' aided in producing large results.

Had Dr Kitto been born in such affluence as to receive a good education, and to have been enabled to live among books, and occasionally to compose a biblical paper for amusement, he would have been regarded as a literary phenomenon. Had he done even a tithe of what he has done, without any such disadvantages as he had to contend with, he would still have been entitled to no little thanks. But he had to fight for life as well as for learning, had to work sore and hard for food and raiment, while slowly acquiring the elements of knowledge. His question was not what shall I eat, but how shall I get it—not what shall I put on, but how shall I contrive to provide it. Such a conflict might have absorbed all his energies, but the battle for bread only hardened him for the struggle after knowledge. The late Duke of Sussex possessed a magnificent biblical library, comprising many thousand volumes, and he could occasionally talk of better versions and happier renderings. Many gentlemen who have similar tastes, and are not without extensive information in the literature of Scripture, can propose various readings, and defend ingenious translations. But study is to these dilettanti a matter of luxury and pastime, and rarely do they produce much of permanent merit or utility. Kitto, on the other hand, had to educate himself while wearied out with manual toil. He had to gather his library with the fragments of his scanty earnings, the crumbs that fell from his frugal table—had, in fact, both to create his instruments, and teach himself how to use them. He had to collect the clay and glean the straw; and not only has he made the bricks, but he has built them into structures, stored with richer treasures than were Pithom

and Raamses.

There can be little doubt that Dr Kitto's infirmity increased his natural love of books. His own account is, 'Whatever acquirements I have been able to make, have been built up in solitude upon the foundation of the taste for and habit of reading, which I had acquired at an early age, *before* I had lost my hearing. How it would have fared with me had not this taste been previously formed, I am afraid to conjecture.'<sup>146</sup> Books became his companions. He did not simply handle them, he fondled them. A book was a thing of life and fellowship to him. It spoke to his heart in frank companionship. What a wistful eye he cast on some favourite lying on a bookstall, when he painfully knew the purchase to be beyond his means! He seemed to feel that the book instinctively understood his yearning towards it, and sympathised with him. Day by day, as he passed the spot, the book and he exchanged lovers' glances; and this coquetry would last for months. When speaking of Kirjath-Sepher, as meaning 'Book-city,' and therefore probably having some library within it, he says, with true zest, 'By the dear love we bear to books, which place within our grasp the thought and knowledge of all ages and of all climes, we exult in this inevitable conclusion.' Referring to the Pictorial Bible, he tells Mr Knight, 'Never was there any commentary that required more help from books, and yet perhaps no work of the kind was ever undertaken by a person with a more scanty library. It was my peculiar disadvantage, to have no books at all when I came to England. I had a very decent collection for a person in my circumstances; but I have never heard of it since I left it at Baghdad, to be sent home by way of India.'<sup>147</sup> Books, however, were gradually accumulated by him at no small expense, till he could boast of a library 'three thousand five hundred strong.'

The books common in his younger days were of a far inferior class to those in circulation in his riper years, and were also considerably dearer in price. 'To bring this home,' he calculates, 'let us see how I might now employ a weekly sixpence, which in those times would only have furnished me with about thirty-two loosely printed octavo pages, sixteen of quarto, or eight of folio, being a portion of a work to be completed in from thirty to a hundred numbers, and perhaps containing a cut in every fourth number. The same sum would now enable me to obtain regularly the Penny Magazine, one number; the Penny Cyclopaedia, two numbers; the Saturday Magazine, one number; and Chambers' Edinburgh Journal, one number; leaving me, besides, an overplus of a weekly halfpenny, which, at the end of the month, would more than enable me to obtain Chambers' Information for the People. Thus, for my weekly sixpence, I should have five distinct publications, containing a large body of interesting information, and comprehending about eight times the quantity of printed matter

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

which my sixpence would formerly have purchased. Besides this, instead of one engraving for every third or fourth sixpence which I expended, I should now have from eight to twelve neat and instructive cuts included with my printed matter; and, at the end of the year, I should be the possessor of six large volumes, containing altogether upwards of 2000 closely printed pages, and comprehending from 400 to 500 engravings.’<sup>148</sup>

Few men have made better use of books than Dr Kitto. All his productions teem with the results of his multifarious reading. Not that he multiplies extracts unnecessarily, either with slovenly profusion or with the parade of learning; for his selections tell at once upon the case in hand, and in their aptness lies their force. So appropriate are many of them, so exactly do they hit the precise point, that one is apt to compare him to the left-handed warriors of Benjamin, who could sling at a hairbreadth and not miss.’ The awful stillness in which he lived, gave him special facility in consulting books, and his undisturbed attention enabled him to turn all that he read to the best advantage.

His deafness gave also peculiar power to his eye,—

‘For oft when one sense is suppressed,  
It but retires into the rest.’

This ocular discipline was, indeed, a natural necessity. But it imparts a vividness to his descriptions. He excels in word-painting. He tells you what he has seen so distinctly, that you see it too. Every scene that he beheld seemed to be photographed on his memory. Even when, as he quaintly describes it, he *saw* without *looking*, he could trust implicitly to his impressions. He adduces in proof, that his wife and he went to Woking to look out for a house, and that, when they began to talk about it afterwards—the day, indeed, before taking possession of it—she, who had been on a second visit to it, affirmed that the front was of plaster, while he maintained that it was ‘good red brick.’ He had merely seen, and not looked; but he was correct. ‘I confess,’ he adds, ‘that I allowed myself to exult at this, as it was a very strong proof of the *distinctness* of the faculty of minute observation.’ He had been in the habit of noting whatever he observed. At Baghdad, objects of natural history interested him; and his accounts, in his Journal, of the form, habits, and doings of certain species of wasps and spiders, have not a little of the quaint and amusing minuteness of Gilbert White of Selborne. In consequence of this faculty, one of his paragraphs is often equal to an engraving or a panoramic picture. The effect is the same, whether he describe a tree or a mob, a landscape or a portion of dress. His style is eminently pictorial, and, by a few masterly strokes, he paints what he has set

before you. In this power he resembles another, who has raised himself to imperishable renown in physical science. When the late Hugh Miller figures in words a fossil fish, its jaw, or fin, or general shape; or describes the attitude in which it was found, the species of rock in which it is imbedded, or the scene in which the discovery took place, his reader comprehends the object or place as clearly as if he beheld it, and the pencil is felt to be almost a superfluous aid.

Dr Kitto's eye was one peculiar source of enjoyment to him. It drank in a rich and unfailing pleasure from the landscape. He loved, therefore, to traverse the Hoe at Plymouth, to saunter on the baraccas or high terraces at Malta, and to gaze around him as he lounged on the housetop at Baghdad. A flower or tree was a special delight; nature, in all her visible forms, enchanted him. He liked to see the old trees swinging their great boughs in the storm, and 'to *fancy the sound.*' He could well comprehend the seductions of grove worship, from the sensation which he experienced among 'the endless fir woods of northern Europe, the magnificent plane trees of Media, and the splendid palm groves of the Tigris.' His study was usually selected, not so much for his convenience, as that it might enable 'his view to rest upon trees, whenever his eyes were raised from the book he read or the paper on which he wrote.'<sup>149</sup> He could describe, with astonishing vividness, not only what he looked on, but also any imaginary scene which appealed to the vision. What he saw in his mind's eye, he could tell as clearly, and with the same effect, as what he saw with those large and lustrous orbs. 'I can live again,' he assures us, 'at will, in the midst of any scenes or circumstances by which I have been once surrounded. By a voluntary act of mind, I can in a moment conjure up the whole of any one out of the innumerable scenes, in which the slightest interest has been at any time felt by me. If I wish to realise a scene, or to conjure up the view of a place, it comes before me, peopled with the very persons I saw in it.'<sup>150</sup> Paintings delighted him; but he could not endure such glaring improprieties as painters of Scripture scenes too often commit—'the Prodigal Son in trunk breeches, and king Joash as a half-naked mulatto;' or, we might add, the Jewish high-priest, in full pontifical costume, immolating Jephthah's daughter; blind Bartimeus with a violin on his arm; or the angelic choir over the common of Bethlehem, chanting with a music-book spread out on the clouds before them. His eye had also a special quickness, and its informing glance told him what question you were about to propose. The writer was struck with this peculiarity when he met with Dr Kitto. The moment he saw you looking at anything, he divined at once what you meant to ask, or what had attracted your attention. He read the thought as unerringly as if he had heard the question. Long practice had produced a facility, which had all the promptness and sureness of an instinct. The vigour, in short, of many of his de-

scriptive passages, is owing to the use which he was forced to make of his vision, to supply, as far as possible, the service of the organ which had been so utterly destroyed.

Yet there is no question that this defect told upon his composition in another form. His sentences sometimes want rhythm, the clauses are occasionally rugged, and his manuscripts exhibit a word or an epithet recurring in contiguous members of the same sentence. He had lost so far the feeling of sound, and his eyesight could not guide him. His poetry exhibits this aural defect of ‘halting, hopping feet;’ and he admits that he could not recognise or rectify it, and that he had always a misgiving on the subject. The effect of such verbal repetition could be learned only from reading, for though he might read aloud himself, he heard no syllable. A strange mystery—to use what were sounds to others, but none to himself; to speak, with what tones he could not tell; and to articulate, with what results he could only faintly remember or dimly imagine. He was sensible of this defect, and sought sometimes to prove his MSS. by fancying the effect of reading them. Still he had sensations which appeared like those of sound. Perceiving, on one occasion, that I did not fully comprehend his deep guttural speech, he said at once, ‘*I feel* that I am not in good voice today.’ ‘I have often,’ he assures us, ‘calculated that above two-thirds of my vocabulary consist of words which I never heard pronounced.’ The words of his first vocabulary he continued to pronounce as he had done in boyhood, and he could not get over the provincial pronunciation of *tay* for *tea*, though he was perfectly aware of the error. Uneducated people are apt to write words according to their sounds; but he was liable to pronounce words as they are written, and as he generally brought out all the syllables, German strangers, having some acquaintance with English, usually understood him better than his own countrymen.<sup>151</sup>

But while we ascribe so much to the disaster which befell him, we must not forget his extraordinary diligence and perseverance. What he did, he did with his might. It was not a feat, and done with it, but patient and protracted industry. He did not spring to his prey like the lion, but he performed his daily task like the ox. He did his work with considerable ease, but he was always at his work. He was either fishing or mending his nets, either composing or preparing for composition. From his earliest days he could not be idle; his repose was in activity—not unlike the swallow, which feeds and rests on the wing. He wrote to Mr Woollcombe, in 1827:—‘I have no peculiar talent; I do not want it; it would do me more harm than good. I only think that I have a certain degree of industry, which, *applied to its proper object*, may make me an instrument of usefulness—of greater usefulness, perhaps, than *mere talent* can enable any

man to effect.’ He declares also to the same friend from Baghdad:—‘All the fine stories we hear about *natural ability* are mere *rigmarole*; every man may, according to his opportunities and industry, render himself almost anything he wishes to become.’ At a later period, in 1841, he asserts to Mr Knight, ‘I am quite sensible that I am in a condition to undertake what others would shrink from. I am fitted, by a variety of circumstances, for hard work. From my predilection for study and composition, it is not easy for work to become labour to me.’

Though under the pressure of a calamity which would have broken the fortitude of many, he resolved, not so much to be famous as to be useful; and, though numerous providences seemed conspiring to thwart him, he boldly acted out his resolution. He often felt exhausted, and sometimes dispirited, on the rugged and uphill path. But though ‘faint,’ he was still ‘pursuing.’ Every time he fell, he rose with renewed vigour. His stout heart and indomitable perseverance carried him through. ‘Perhaps,’ said he toward the end of his career, ‘few men are more contented than I am. I have attained the object of youthful aspiration—I am satisfied with the position I have gained, and which I feel to be mine—I have to work, but, unlike very many men, my work is what I would do for pleasure, though I were not obliged to do it.’<sup>13</sup> Will any one blame him for feeling that he had achieved something, and done good service to his age? After the traveller has climbed the hill, may he not, as he gazes on the scenery beneath him, contrast his present elevation with the humbler position which he occupied at starting? We remember how amused and gratified he was, when we took a venerable friend, the Rev. Dr Beattie of Glasgow, with us to see him, and who paid him, through Mrs Kitto, such a compliment as this:—‘Madam, I am disappointed in your husband’s appearance exceedingly. I had thought, from the amount of information he possesses, that he must be double the age he is, and, from the quantity of labour he has gone through, that he must possess twice the physical vigour.’ Yet, in spite of many temptations which naturally sprang out of his singular career, he maintained his humility as deeply as when he said, in 1832, to Mr Woollcombe, I know perfectly well that many thought you and my earliest friends not justified in their original kindness toward me. What is more, I soon began to think so too myself.’ But he had won his position by toil, in season and out of season, toil such as no constitution could long sustain. ‘The working day of the Museum,’ he wrote to Mr Knight, ‘is six hours—mine is sixteen hours.’ What physical frame could long bear up under such continuous strain and pressure? ‘A merciful man regardeth the life of his beast;’ and Dr Kitto’s soul should have had compassion on its ‘earthen vessel,’ and not worn it to death.

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

It is true that, in his latter years, there were great demands upon him. The cares of a numerous family summoned his pen into perpetual motion. He told me, when I saw him during the period of the Great Exhibition, that he had not been across his threshold for about six weeks. It was a manful struggle which he maintained in order to support a wife and ten children, by his literary labours. Such toils are not the most remunerating—very unlike the lighter works of fiction, which often draw a princely revenue. ‘They are of the world, therefore the world heareth them;’ but treatises like those of Dr Kitto, though they bear upon the highest interests of mankind, neither awaken the curiosity, nor gratify the relish, of the common circle of readers. They are set aside as serious productions, to be read perhaps by and by, but when or where the unwelcome study may be forced upon him, their rejecter does not know. There seems every reason to believe that Kitto’s head had sustained some serious internal injury, and there was, therefore, all the more need that every precaution should be taken that labour should not deepen into drudgery, and that, along with intervals of entire relaxation, the amount of study should be meted out with rigid regard to constitutional capability of endurance. The bow should have often been unbended, that the cord might not be speedily snapped, or become so flaccid as to be useless. Less work—longer work, should have been the motto of his life. His memory began to fail under those attacks which so prostrated him—first the memory of names, and then the scraps of poetry which had been so abundantly stored up, ‘leaked out.’ He was to some extent aware of this danger. ‘It may not,’ he is obliged to confess, ‘be always prudent or safe for a man to be constantly on the stretch, doing all he can.’ Yet with this conviction, we find him, during his residence at Woking, saying to Mr Tracy, ‘I fancy that I must soon trundle into town, notwithstanding the disinclination to motion which results from the corpulency engendered by my sedentary habits, which are so rooted that I can seldom bring myself to move beyond my garden once in three or four weeks.’ This reluctance to physical exercise had always made travelling a species of self-denial, even though he had enjoyed such benefit from it. ‘I would not,’ he says to Mr Burnard from Baghdad, ‘give *five para* to see the finest city in the universe, unless I could see *without going to see*.’

It is somewhat remarkable that one is able to trace in Kitto’s early boyhood the visible germs of those tastes and habits by which he was afterwards distinguished. Few lives are moulded by merely accidental circumstances. Childhood often supplies the key to the interpretation of ripened character. The soul has its ‘seed in itself,’ and its growth is the result of a thousand invisible influences. Kitto’s mind contained within it a strong formative principle, which was fostered and strengthened by causes apparently the most unpromising and disas-

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

trous that can well be imagined. His love of books was almost an infant passion. A cordwainer's recitation of juvenile stories set him to buy them. He tasted, and his thirst was never quenched. Mrs Barnicle's shop-window became the scene of daily and intense gaze and wonderment, finding, however, a more formidable rival in a bookstall in the market. The boy begged or borrowed volumes wherever he could find them. The money that other youths threw away on sweetmeats, he cheerfully spent on books. This book-love resisted every temptation—even that most tempting of luxuries to older palates, the clotted cream of Devonshire. And the passion was a lasting one. In his Workhouse Journal, he stated his highest ambition to be, to gain a livelihood by means of a circulating library. A very short period before his death, he said to a friend, who declared his relish for the country, because it afforded hunting, fishing, and shooting—'I like hunting too, but in London; I hunt books—*they* are my game.'

Not only so, but one who reads the story of his boyhood, may discover in it the foreshadow of his authorship; nay, the special form of literature which he should prefer was thus early indicated. Copies of the Pilgrim and Gulliver's Travels with illustrations, had been very attractive to him, and he daubed all the engravings with his mother's washing indigo. The story book he wrote on one occasion for his cousin, was decorated by *a pictorial* embellishment. Boys usually like pictures, and often amuse themselves with drawing. Kitto, however, not only painted, but he did it with energy, and to good practical purpose. Pictorial works were his subsequent masterpiece. His early shifts were also, as it were, typical of his later forms of industrious ingenuity. He wanted a penny, and he bargained to write a book to his cousin for it. Really, what else did he do during his life?—he still wanted a penny, and he still bargained to write a book for it. If he wished anything, he was seldom baffled in obtaining it. The deaf boy, unfit to work, and abandoned to himself, used to wade at low-water in Sutton-pool, to fish out pieces of rope or scraps of iron. Treading on a broken bottle, he was laid up; and then he resorted to painting, having expended twopence on paper to set himself up in business. When the first method of exposing his wares had lost its novelty, he next erected a stall at Plymouth Fair, and threw open to public gaze his Art exhibition. Then he fell upon the device of printing labels, and was so engaged, when, to keep him from utter misery, he was lodged in the 'Hospital of the Poor's Portion.' It was much the same with him afterwards. If one thing failed, he tried another: the conclusion of one labour was the beginning of another—either shoeing people's feet in Plymouth or repairing their mouths in Exeter; setting types in Malta or nursing and tutoring little children in Baghdad; writing for the Penny Magazine at Islington, editing the Cyclopaedia at Woking, or completing the cycle with the Daily Bible Illus-

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

trations at Camden Town. His letters to myself teemed with projects to occupy him when this last work should be concluded; and they were all more or less connected with Eastern life or biblical illustration. His industry was unceasing—from the period when his thrifty grandame taught her quiet and delicate charge to sew patchwork and kettle-holders, to the period when he felt the week by far too short to turn out in it the expected and necessary amount of copy. He liked to have his hands full, and they were sometimes too full; it puzzled him what to do first, though the indispensable ‘penny’ had often summarily to settle the question.

‘Thus from its nature will the tannen grow,  
Loftiest on loftiest and least sheltered rocks,  
Rooted in barrenness, where naught below  
Of soil supports it `gainst the Alpine shocks  
Of eddying streams; yet springs the trunk, and mocks  
The howling tempest, till its giant frame  
Is worthy of the mountains from whose blocks  
Of rude bleak granite into life it came  
And grew a giant tree: this life has proved the same.’

His literary projects were truly multifarious. In prospect of finishing one work, he generally sketched a score of successors. Before the Daily Bible Illustrations were concluded, he had in view a Bible for the young, with three volumes on Joseph, Ruth, and Esther, for the purpose of expounding at length the customs and institutions of the patriarchal age, the daily rural life of the Hebrew nation, and the connection of the exiled people with the court and kingdom of Persia. He proposed also a series of great dictionaries.—I. One of Ecclesiastical History, including not only sects, dogmas, ceremonies and usages, but ecclesiastical geography and chronology, antiquities and liturgies; II. Dictionary of Christian Biography, containing fathers, martyrs, heretics, missionaries, popes, and divines; III. British History and Biography of the Nineteenth Century. The two first works, had they been combined with the materials of the Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature, would have formed a work not unlike the great German work in course of publication—the Real-Encyclopaedie, edited by Professor Herzog, with the assistance of a numerous circle of famous scholars and critics. Kitto’s gigantic plans of literary labours seem to be equalled only by those of Antoine Court de Gebelin, one of the illustrious French Protestants who lived and suffered under Louis XIV.—one who not only read with astonishing voracity on all subjects, and who might be seen with the Complutensian Polyglott on one side of him, and a Treatise on Mathematical Infinitudes on the other, but

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

who sketched a prodigious repository, in twenty or thirty volumes, to be called the 'Primitive World Analysed and Compared with the Modern.' The first volume was to deal in Eastern allegories, the generating principle of the ancient religions; the second in universal grammar; the third in the natural history of speech; the fourth in the history of the Calendar, etc. etc.; the three next being etymological dictionaries of the French, Latin, and Greek languages. 'Why, it would take twenty men to do all that,' interrupted an astonished auditor, as he listened to a partial detail of the plan up to the tenth volume. 'Twenty men, you say?' replied the smiling projector, 'I begin to be reassured; Mons. d'Alembert asserted that it would require forty.'<sup>153</sup> Dr Kitto equalled De Gebelin in laying out plans, and, like him, thought of executing them too by unaided effort.

Though Kitto, in his youth, had seasons of melancholy, yet he was buoyed up by sanguine anticipations. 'The question was,' he says to Mr Knight (1837), 'whether I should hang a dead weight on society, or take a place among its active men. I have struggled for the latter alternative.' Even when he was seated on Mr Burnard's tripod, he displayed an innate vitality, and lived in the ideal regions of his own creation. Occasionally he pictured to himself what he might, by God's grace, become; and he laboured hard to realise his picture. He looked to the future, and lived in it.

'I slept and dreamed that life was beauty;  
I woke and found that life was duty:  
Was then thy dream an idle lie?  
Toil on, sad soul, courageously!  
And thou shalt find thy dream to be  
A noon-day light and strength to thee.'

Indeed, he revealed his own secret, when he said to a friend, in 1853—'If you dreamed, you should not have awoke; you should have striven to make your dreams realities. The very act of dreaming these aspirations and desires, shows that we possess the power to make them so.' He never wholly renounced faith in dreams, though his own recorded ones may be traced to an active imagination giving sphere and form to its waking thoughts and fancies. He dreamed, and then he dared. Nothing was too arduous for him. 'I am,' says he in his Eastern Journal, 'not myself a believer in impossibilities.' When he lived at Working, and wished to have some means of livelihood of a more permanent and regular kind than literary labour could secure, he had serious thoughts of applying for the wardenship or secretaryship of a new cemetery to be established in his vicinity. The writer remembers how he wished him to make interest with one of the directors, and especially what plans and contrivances he proposed to

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

ward off the objection about his deafness, and to meet the auricular demands which such an office *would* necessarily bring upon him.

The reader is not to suppose from these statements that Kitto was a mere bookworm—a dry creature speckled with dust, and living in the congenial brotherhood of moths. He was a recluse from necessity, not from choice. He valued society, and keenly felt the loss of being, as he has phrased it, ‘shut out from good men’s feasts.’ He did not condemn festivities, though he could not join in them; nay, he expressly vindicates them, as ‘one whose infirmity frees him from all misconception’ on the subject. In his Work-house Journal, the boy records that, on a visit to his aunt, she regaled him with ‘a baked pig’s ear,’ and the man was never an ascetic skeleton. Many who deem themselves the victims of circumstances, too often think that they owe society nothing but a grudge, and they make war on the world. But Kitto yearned for brotherhood, ay, and sisterhood too. He loved ‘children, especially girls.’ When in Exeter, he encouraged the girls to whom he gave tracts, and whom he otherwise laboured to instruct, to indict short essays and letters to him; and, as his Journal shows, he wrote them earnest, faithful, and beautiful replies. His heart was in no risk of ossification. Benevolence was a distinguishing feature in his nature. One of his last acts, before leaving London for Germany, was to take some wine and a few confections to a poor invalid incarcerated for debt, whom he had often before relieved, even when in pressing straits himself. This prisoner was the son of Mrs Barnicle, whose little books had enraptured him, and who had been kind to him in his boyhood. Out of tenpence which he gained when toiling as a shoemaker’s serf in 1821, he records that he gave ‘a halfpenny each to five little children’—a large proportion, for he expended only double the sum for paper and books, the idols of his soul. He was fond of his native country, and what he had seen abroad but endeared it to him the more. The account of what he suffered from the savage to whom he was given out as an apprentice, reveals also the depth of his emotion. There was no stoicism, real or affected, with him. He did not morosely retire into himself, though he was forced to spend so much time by himself. When she whom he had wooed and won broke her plighted troth, his letters referring to this sad disappointment reveal a crushed spirit overflowing with tenderness, moaning under an agony which refused to be comforted, and so smitten, as to be anxious to travel out of view into a dark and solitary future.<sup>154</sup> He felt that this condition of mind was morbid and ‘unhealthy,’ and he prayed God to revive him. And when the wound was healed, and time had brought him one who has proved a help-meet in so many respects, no one more enjoyed his home. His trials had taught him that ‘if we are wise, the fruit comes after the blossom has departed, and that, although less pleasant

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

to the eye than the blossom, is much more useful.’<sup>155</sup>

So far, then, from being, as some might imagine from his history and labours, an ink-stained recluse or a living mummy, Kitto was a man both of heart and humour. He enjoyed a good story, and could also tell one. So unexpectedly did his wit break out, that it lost nothing by his apparent gravity. When a friend quoted the lines of Pope as the motto of his desires—

‘Give me, again, a hollow tree,  
A crust of bread, and liberty,’

he archly replied—‘I would rather have a good dinner and a comfortable library.’ After he had felt what it was to be tried and crossed, he composed a specimen of a new Lexicon, to be called *Love’s Dictionary*, with illustrations in prose and verse. Three examples may suffice:—ADHERENCE—a word well-known to the ancients, practical meaning now forgotten; ADVICE—that which those who are in love never take; ACHE—indispensable in the idiosyncrasy of a lover’s heart, etc.

The eloquence of the following paragraph is equalled only by its pleasantry:—‘I have had but an indifferent taste for anything which travel offered (mountains and trees excepted), save man, and the circumstances by which he is surrounded; and even ruins have been interesting to me, chiefly as circumstances belonging to men of a past age, and I have cared for them only as I could read man in them. Oh, how it has delighted me to take a man, distinguished from his brother man by a thousand outward circumstances, which make him appear, at the first view, almost as another creature—and after knocking off his strange hat, his kullah, or his turban—after helping him off with his broadcloths, his furs, or his muslins—after clipping his beard, his pig-tail, or his long hair—after stripping away his white, black, brown, red, or yellow skin—to come at last to the very man, the very son of Adam, and to recognise, by one “touch of nature,” one tear, one laugh, one sigh, one upward or downward look—the same old, universal heart—the same emotions, feelings, passions, which have animated every human bosom, from the equator to the poles, ever since that day in which the first of men was sent forth from Paradise.’<sup>156</sup>

He was fond of poetry, and occasionally wrote it himself. A fine conception or a glowing image afforded him intense pleasure. He had met with the following verse from Longfellow, as a motto, in some book he had been reading—

Art is long, and life is fleeting,

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

And our hearts, though strong and brave,  
Still, like muffled drums, are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave.'

He committed the lines at once to memory, and advised his eldest daughter to do the same. 'I would,' added he, give f50 to be the author of that verse. He has done something for the world; he has given it a fine and beautiful idea.' A quaint humour, as we have already said, peeps out occasionally in his writings, and often in the Daily Bible Illustrations. 'Lamech had his troubles, as a man with two wives was likely to have, and always has had.' 'When Jacob kissed his fair cousin, he lifted up his voice and wept. . . Had the faults of Jacob been greater than they were, we could forgive them for these tears.' 'Laban's daughter was a match for her father, even in his own line.' 'In dreams, we not only see, but *hear*.' 'A razor is itself a good thing, especially if it be a good one'—a reminiscence of the earliest craft which he was sent to learn. Describing the frontal ornament of the women of Lebanon, he affirms, that the horn from its height and weight, 'needs as many fore-stays and back-stays to keep it in position as the mainmast of a seventy-four!'<sup>157</sup> In reference to Solomon's prayer for wisdom, he avers, that 'if twelve men were taken, whether from our colleges, or our streets, or our church-doors, not more than one would say, as the Hebrew king said, "Give me wisdom," most of them would think themselves as wise as Solomon. It has not occurred to us in all our life, not now scant of days, though, alas! scant in accomplished purposes, to have met with one man who avowed any lack of wisdom, or who therefore would have made the choice of Solomon, had that choice been offered to him.'<sup>158</sup>

He went once up to the gallery at the top of the dome of St Paul's, and was exceedingly nervous in ascending, and especially in descending; but he accounts for his fears by saying, 'My old experience in falling may have had some effect in producing this trepidation.'<sup>159</sup> The attempt to explain away the miracle of the manna, by referring it to the gum of the Tamarisk falling round the camp six days, and intermitting the seventh day, is, says he, 'much harder of belief than the simple and naked miracle—much harder than it would be to believe that hot rolls fell every morning from the skies upon the camp of Israel.' Referring to a kind of rough and ready water-cure, applied to persons under fever in the East, he writes, with considerable naiveté—'We have ourselves received exactly this treatment, under the orders of a native physician, in a fever that seemed likely to be fatal, and we certainly recovered—though, whether by reason of this treatment, or in spite of it, we know not.' In the sublime contest between Elijah on the one hand, and the hundreds of Baal's priests on the other,

the conclusion agreed to was, 'the god that answereth by fire, let him be God.' The commentator argues that the Baalite priests could not, with a good grace, refuse to abide by such an ordeal, seeing that 'Baal was none other than the sun, whence it should have been very much *in his line* thus to supply them with the fire which they wanted for his service.' According to his own account, he was four feet eight in stature when a lad of sixteen—and certainly he never attained a much greater altitude. He is hard upon Samuel for admiring Saul on account of his being a head taller than any of the people, and he is rather satirical in the sentence which follows:—'Even we want not experience of this in the involuntary respect with which tallness of stature and powerful physical endowments are regarded among ourselves by the uncultivated—and, indeed, by persons not wholly uncultivated, if we may judge from the not infrequent sarcasms which we may meet with in the most "respectable" monthly, weekly, and daily publications, upon the shortness, by yard measure, of some of the most eminent and highly gifted public men of this and a neighbouring country.' He is witty on the ponderous folios of Caryl upon Job—a book so awfully large, that a clergyman's son, on going to India, left his father reading it, and found him by no means near the end of it when he returned. 'Life in sheep,' said he on one occasion, 'is merely salt to keep them fresh, till they are wanted for eating.' Describing the unearthly sort of noise he made when speaking in the open air, he represents people as starting and staring in astonishment; and adds, that, in the Burlington Arcade, 'the preternatural rumble of the voice is heard afar, and the wonder really is, that all the busy inmates of that industrious hive flock not forth from their cells to learn what calamity threatens their flimsy habitations.'

Allusions to himself are sometimes found in the Daily Bible Illustrations, and his loss is incidentally mentioned. Still he felt it, even in his resignation:—'Very cheerless was the lot that seemed to be before him.' Describing the peacocks imported by Solomon's fleet, he says of the original name, that it is probably imitated from the cry; and, as if he had ventured too far, he adds, 'but we do not know, for *we never heard* it.' Illustrating the phrase, 'the wheel broken at the cistern,' he introduces a machine which might be referred to by the royal sage—one which was at work every morning in front of a house he had dwelt in on the banks of the Tigris; and he adds, as if painfully reminded of his 'slain sense,' it is *said* to produce a creaking disagreeable noise.' In alluding to Zacharias as struck dumb, he at once puts in, as if it were an extraordinary alleviation of the judgment, but 'he was not deaf.' As if the sentiment did deeply gratify him, he announces:—'Some of the most eminent men of ancient times were subject to infirmities—Moses had a stammering tongue, Jacob was lame, Isaac was blind—yet they were not the less chiefs of the chosen race, and accepted of

God.’ And we might Venture to say, that the terseness of the following sentence has its edge from the pangs of boyish experience:—‘The sight of the pottage was pleasant, and the odour overpoweringly tempting to a man ravenously hungry.’ Esau knew that, if he did not get it, he must wait some time—‘an age to a famishing man.’ Such remarks might be indefinitely extended. The samples which we have given tend at least to show, that Dr Kitto was of no peevish or misanthropic nature, but was kind, social, frank, and generous—attached to domestic comfort, and well fitted to enjoy it. His hours in his parlour were as pleasant as those in his study; and when you saw him of an afternoon, with the festive cup in his hand, so happy and so much at ease, you could not have thought that that hand had held a pen for eight or ten hours previous to your pleasant interview.

It would be excess of eulogy to say, that Dr Kitto was a paragon of scholarship, though certainly his attainments were extraordinary in proportion to his opportunities. He had as much knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and the modern tongues, as sufficed for his purpose. His English style is pleasant, and, on the whole, correct. Occasionally, it has a tendency to diffuseness, and it has many sudden changes, as if the writer were holding a conversation with himself. He thought, however, that his style was ‘rather sententious than conversationally fluent,’ a style for which, in reading, he avows a decided preference. As his mind was somewhat poetical, many pathetic and beautiful fancies adorn his compositions. The reader is never at a loss for his meaning; whether you agree with him or not, you always understand him. He wrote with great ease—an ease not always consistent with vigour. Sheridan’s remark, that easy writing makes hard reading,’ does not, however, apply to him. His references to books and authorities are unusually accurate, and quite trustworthy.<sup>160</sup>

His mind was sagacious and well balanced, and he had one faculty in a very high degree—that of constant appropriation. Naturalists tell us, that though the zoophytes are fixed to one spot, yet they are for ever tossing their arms about them, and drawing in to themselves whatever minute nutriment floats within their reach. It was so with Dr Kitto. He was well aware that there wrought within him ‘a strong faculty of mental association, which enabled him to discover illustrative analogies where few would perceive them, and thus gain constant accession of materials not commonly thought of or usually available.’ ‘Recognition, recollection, and research,’ were his ‘threefold cord.’ In his Daily Bible Illustrations, there are many facts taken, not only from the class of works usually referred to, but also from current literature—from books he happened to read in the course of his labours. Not only have we Benjamin of Tudela, but we have also Beldam and Bartlett; verification is brought from Hollinshed, and likewise

from Lord Claud Hamilton; contribution is levied from Sir Charles Napier, the Indian commander, and from Emerson Tennent, the governor of Ceylon; Napoleon III. and Abd-el-Kader, the prince and the exile, are both pressed into his service; Marco Polo and Mayhew are alike at his command; the 'Fair Maid of Perth' and the Arabian romance of 'Antar' do him equal service; the 'school at the end of the street' gives one example, and the temple-palace of Karnak affords another; 'our own house' is put in contrast with 'the old lady in Thread-needle Street' and her nightly 'guard of bearskin-capped grenadiers;' sculptured slabs from Koyunjik at Nineveh figure by the side of sepulchral tablets from the catacombs at Rome; extracts are given from such passing publications as Notes and Queries, and the Missionary Record of the United Presbyterian Church; Sanchoniatho stands at the one extreme of reference, and the Times newspaper at the other. The same faculty was in active exercise, even to his latest days. When he was at Cannstatt, and smitten by bereavements, he loved to study the processes of the vintage going on around him, which, he says, 'have made clearer to me many of the allusions of Scripture on the subject—all being here conducted in a primitive style.' But he concludes, in mournful tone—'I find myself unable to enter into these matters with the eager zest of former days.' Yes, his work was over. He needed not to be detained by the cutting of the clusters, and the treading of them in the press, for he was so soon to drink of the fruit of the vine new in his Father's kingdom.

Sentiments both beautiful and striking sparkle in his pages. Had space permitted, we might have quoted the long eulogy which he has pronounced on Moses—'the greatest of woman born, with the exception of One only, and that One more than man.' Or we might have referred to the admirable summing up of the character of Joshua—'an Asiatic conqueror, without personal ambition, without any desire of aggrandisement.' Or we might have selected, for illustration, the concluding paper on the book of Esther, in which he refutes and tosses away the frivolous objection against this old historical fragment—that the name of God does not occur in it.

In fine, what point and truth are there not in the following paragraph?

'There are many who pride themselves on their deep "knowledge of human nature,"—that is, being interpreted, on their keen appreciation of the dark things and the foul things of the human heart. The Lord preserve us from too much of this knowledge! He who has none of it is little better than a fool, and he who has most of it is much worse than a man. For we usually find among men the highest degree of this knowledge united to the lowest degree of appreciation of—a moral incapacity of apprehending—a total inability of feeling, that which, through the grace of God, is divine and spiritual, and therefore good

and holy, in the soul of man. . . The most perfect master of this learning is Satan, and he is at once the most consummate example, and the most egregious dupe of that ignorance. It were difficult to find the man in whose soul some faint glimmering of faith in God or man does not linger. But Satan has none. He is the most finished pattern of knowledge without faith. This is his character: HAS NO FAITH. This is his weakness and his shame. In this possession and in this want, he has reached heights and depths impossible to man.<sup>161</sup>

The power of religious principle was the mainstay of Dr Kitto's life. The reader will not have forgotten the sublime prayer which he wrote after his introduction to the workhouse, nor his great desire to be confirmed at the bishop's visitation. Early impressions were deepened by the Divine Spirit; and the Bible, which had been a sealed book, was then read by the guidance of a new sense, and welcomed with the aspirations of a new heart. The ardour of Mr Groves communicated fresh impulse, and the terrible visitations which crowded upon him at Baghdad—plague, famine, inundation, and blockade—threw him, unreservedly, into the arms of his heavenly Father. From Exeter he wrote, in 1824, to Mr Harvey:—'I did think of religion *now* and *then*, but I did not make it the constant subject of my thoughts.' In 1834, he said to the Rev. Mr Lampen:—'I never talked about religion less than I do now, but there is much about religion which I never felt so decidedly and deeply.' His faith in God ever helped him on. Rescued from any crisis, he 'thanked God, and took courage.' Assured that God had work for him, he never wholly lost the assurance that He would bring him to that work in the right place, and at the right time. He had long studied the Bible, for itself and its spiritual benefits, and not with any view to its public illustration. It had been to him the Book of Life before it became a text for pictorial comment. He had searched the Scriptures, and discovered the Christ which they reveal, before he invited others to ascend the hills or traverse the valleys, mark the manners or investigate the antiquities, of the Lands of the Morning. 'On coming home,' he humbly and thankfully states to Mr Tracy, in 1847, 'I was enabled to lay all that I had during long years of silent study acquired, and all that I had gathered together in foreign parts, upon God's altar; and I sometimes venture to think, that He has been pleased to accept and honour even that humble offering.' He had a firm faith in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, and he knew full well that mere truthfulness in those Oriental allusions, which he was so happy in illustrating, is not, of itself, as many have erroneously supposed, any proof of a Divine origin. Agreement with the 'form and pressure of the age' around it is demanded of any production, and the want of it in Scripture would certainly be fatal to any higher claim. But historical veracity is not identical with canonical authority, though essential to its evidence.

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

His trust in God was unwavering:—‘There is One,’ he solemnly writes, ‘higher than the highest, whose honour is not to be the second or the third, but the FIRST matter for consideration.’ It was very natural in him, who referred all things to God, to ask, on a review of the ‘sad passages’ of David’s life, ‘How is it that we hear no more of David’s asking counsel of the Lord?’ And he nobly records:—‘Thirty years ago, before “the Lord caused me to wander from my father’s house,” and from my native place, I put my mark upon this passage in Isaiah, “I am the Lord: they shall not be ashamed that wait on Me.” Of the many books I now possess, the Bible that bears this mark is the only one that belonged to me at that time. It now lies before me; and I find that, although the hair which was then dark as night, has meanwhile become “a sable silvered,” the ink which marked this text has grown into intensity of blackness as the time advanced, corresponding with, and, in fact, recording the growing intensity of the conviction, that “they shall not be ashamed that wait for Thee.” I believed it then, but I know it now; and I can write *Probatum est*, with my whole heart, over against the symbol, which that mark is to me, of my ancient faith. “They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.” Looking back through the long period which has passed since I set my mark to these words—a portion of human life, which forms the best and brightest, as well as the most trying and conflicting in all men’s experience—it is a joy to be able to say, “I have waited for Thee, and have not been ashamed. Under many perilous circumstances, in many most trying scenes, amidst faintings within and fears without, and under sorrows that rend the heart, and troubles that crush it down, I have waited for Thee; and, lo! I stand this day as one not ashamed.”<sup>162</sup>

During a period of great straits, in 1848, he penned these words to a friend:<sup>163</sup>—‘My sensations have become less acute, not because my burden is less heavy, but because I have become more accustomed to its weight. . . . It has not yet pleased God to relieve me from the great present distress, in which I have been so long plunged; yet I still wait day by day for this help, believing that He will not suffer one who has been enabled to trust so much in Him to be ultimately confounded. I shall learn one day the lesson He designs to teach me; and I know that, when the lesson I am to learn has reached my heart, He will stay His hand. My heart had fainted long since unless I had believed in that fatherly care, which has never yet failed me, and never will. None but those who have been tried in the furnace of affliction can tell or conceive the bitterness—greater than the bitterness of death—of the trials which one day after another brings to me, and under which I sit still in a depressed and sorrowful, but not in a despairing spirit. I have hope, but it is “hope deferred.”’

We present only another illustration, the sentiment of which has its source in

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

his own domestic experience, and the number of his ‘olive plants:’—‘There are tens of thousands among us, who would by no means be thankful for such an intimation as that which the angel of God brought to Manoah and his wife. How is this? Alas, for our faith! which will not trust God to pay for the board and lodging of all the little ones He has committed to our charge to bring up for Him. Good old Quarles, who was himself the father of eighteen children, enters feelingly into this matter:—

“Shall we repine,  
Great God, to foster any babe of Thine!  
But ‘tis the charge we fear; our stock’s but small:  
If heaven, with children, send us wherewithal  
To stop their craving stomachs, *then* we care not. Great God!  
How hast Thou crackt Thy credit, that we dare not  
Trust Thee for bread? How is’t we dare not venture  
To keep Thy babes, unless Thou please to enter  
In bond for payment? Art Thou grown so poor,  
To leave Thy famished infants at our door,  
And not allow them food? Canst Thou supply  
Thy empty ravens, and let Thy children die?”<sup>164</sup>

The last days of his life were clouded, as we have narrated, by successive family bereavements. In that land of strangers whither he had gone to die, his youngest child, and then his eldest one, the lovely and bright-eyed Shireen, preceded him to the tomb. The trial shook him with intense agony. But though he mourned, he did not murmur—looking to Him who ‘healeth the broken in heart,’ and wipes away the tears of the bereaved. There pressed upon him, too, the consciousness of physical disability; and the sad thought, that, at the end as at the beginning of his life, he was dependent on the bounty of others. He cannot, indeed, be classed among the *infanti perduti* authors noted for misfortune and sorrow. His works, as he says, had a steady, though not always an immediate sale; but his calamity lay in failing health and occasional want of employment. He was, however, no exception to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton’s statement—‘For the author there is nothing but his pen, till that and life are worn to the stump.’

Dr Kitto was in connection with the Church of England, but he was a man of catholic spirit. He was wont to say that he belonged to the Church Universal, meaning that he had no sectarian leanings, and that he was not, and could not be, a constant and visible worshipper in any sanctuary. But he punctually attended the Episcopal Church on communion Sabbaths, for this reason among others of higher moment, that with his prayer-book ‘he could follow the ser-

vice.’ He thought, too, that this absence of ecclesiastical bias tended to recommend his writings to all classes of the community. The example of Mr Groves was not in this respect lost upon him. ‘Talk,’ said this worthy man, ‘of loving me, while I agree with them. Give me men that will love me, when I differ from them and contradict them.’<sup>26</sup> Every Christian was a brother to Dr Kitto, and he loved the image of the Master wherever he saw it. On parting with Mr Pfander at Baghdad, he sets down this meditation in his Journal:—‘The personal separation of Christians, even in this life, is less complete than that of other people. There is a spiritual intercourse which still subsists when their bodies are widely separated. There is also the feeling of being children of one common Father, who Himself sees and loves all *His*, whilst they are unseen to one another; and who thus, so to speak, becomes a medium of intercourse with their spirits, which all centre in Him. *Him* whom I love, they love also; *Him* to whom they look every day, I also look to daily, and I see them in Him; and He who talks to my heart, talks with theirs also. No! thus members of one body, we cannot be completely separated.’ Nay, he had a strong desire to serve the Lord in what he justly reckoned the highest form of earthly service, that of an Evangelist to a heathen country. His want of hearing, indeed, disqualified him; but, even with this drawback, he felt the handling of types to be a sacred duty, from its connection with Bible circulation, and he looked on his journey to the East in the light of a missionary tour.

Dr Kitto’s life was marked by gratitude to all his friends and patrons, and he rejoiced to make prompt and cordial declaration. His early epistles are full of his thanks; and, in his last letter, referring to the public subscription in process of being raised for him, he writes:—‘I am deeply thankful for what has been already done, and for the most kind attentions of which, under these circumstances, I have become the object.’<sup>166</sup> This dying testimony at Cannstatt is only the echo of his first acknowledgments in the Plymouth Workhouse. Mr Tracy, at the time one of the surgeons of the Public Dispensary, visited the boy who had fallen, and ‘his sympathetic and good-natured face’ being the first that met the poor patient’s gaze on a momentary return to consciousness, was never effaced from his recollection. ‘Are you Mr Tracy?’ scribbled the little cobbler on a slate, as that gentleman was afterwards passing through the wards of the Almshouse, for the questioner was anxious to recognise and honour him. In 1847 he wrote to him:—‘Thirty years ago—is it possible that it is thirty years ago?—I lay before you as one dead.’ ‘Ten years after, I saw you in London. I went and returned, and now we meet again.’

The only objection which can be brought against our statement is, that Dr Kitto does not, in any of his works, make allusion to Mr Groves: not only in

places where he refers to his journey to the East, but even in the *Lost Senses*, where many of the changing pursuits of his life are described. We believe that Mr Groves himself, on visiting Kitto in London, asked why his name had never been mentioned by him in any of his writings, and that Kitto replied, that the silence was in accordance with his own peremptory request before the separation at Baghdad. Mr Groves then made some explanation as to the meaning and purpose of his injunction, to the effect that it was not intended to forbid all mention of him, but only the mention of him in connection with his religious history and mission. This awkward misconception, if it were one on the part of the deaf author, is but another example of the loss sustained through his infirmity—which prevented, as we have said more than once, all supplemental talk with him; and, indeed, he confesses, in a note to Mr Blackader, that he ‘had always an unfortunate turn for taking people at their word.’ This same tendency led him to express his own opinions in a bold and unmodified style. We have referred to the foregone conclusion which he ascribed to Professor Robinson;<sup>167</sup> and he asserts with equal bluntness of Sir Gardner Wilkinson, in reference to the question of human sacrifice in Egypt, that, throughout his work, ‘he keeps the subject as much as possible out of view, for a very pardonable unwillingness to bring forward into broad light a matter so disparaging to the civilization of a people whom he has made it the business of his life to comprehend, and, from the influence of that devotedness to a single object, to extol and magnify?’<sup>168</sup>

Dr Kitto was, at the same time, of an honest and independent nature. Though he had been so much patronised, he had never learned to cringe. In July 1823, he began thus to Mr Woollcombe:—‘I commence my letter with telling you, that I have ever been accustomed to write my opinions with freedom, and that I should deem myself unworthy of your patronage if I could be so base as to sacrifice my intellectual and moral independence at the shrine of interest. Much of my future welfare depends, I believe, on you; yet, were I certain that you were my only friend, and that on you rested my every hope of earthly comfort, I would not seek the way to your continued favour by endeavouring to accommodate my opinions to yours.’ What the lad, who had just thrown off the poor-house livery, said so firmly, the man continued to assert and exemplify. He was too self-reliant to be servile. All he sought was opportunity to put forth his energies. He was noted for his uniform candour and truthfulness, and for his kindness to all his correspondents and coadjutors. He had no jealousies of others, and he loved to encourage promising talent. Perhaps, from his peculiar situation, he might imagine slights where none were intended; and that persistency which made him what he was, must have sometimes assumed, in the view of

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

others, the character of obstinacy.

In whatever aspect we view him, he is a wonder. It is a wonder that he rose in life at all; a wonder that he acquired so much, and that he wrote so much is yet a higher wonder. Many have excelled him in the amount of acquisition, but few in the patience and bravery which he displayed in laying up his stock of knowledge, in the perfect mastery he had over it, and in the freedom and facility with which he dispensed it in Magazine, Review, or Treatise. Most certainly he hit upon the moral of his life when he couched it in these vigorous terms:<sup>169</sup>—‘I perhaps have as much right as any man that lives, to bear witness, that there is no one so low but that he may rise; no condition so cast down as to be really hopeless; and no privation which need, of itself, shut out any man from the paths of honourable exertion, or from the hope of usefulness in life. I have sometimes thought that it was possibly my mission to affirm and establish these great truths.’ We do not mean to place him among those men, of whom the Italian poet sings—

‘Natura il fece, e poi ruppe is stampa;’

‘Nature made him, and then broke the die;’ but, take him all in all, he was a rare phenomenon—an honour also to his age and country. He struggled manfully, and gained the victory; nay, out of his misfortune he constructed the steps of his advancement. Neither poverty, nor deafness, nor hard usage, nor ominous warnings, nor sudden checks, nor unpropitious commencements, nor abandoned schemes, chilled the ardour of his sacred ambition. He lived not to a long age, but he had not lived in vain; and when death at length came, it was but the Master saying, as of old, to the deaf one, ‘Ephphatha—be opened!’ and his spirit, which had so long dwelt in distressing silence, burst away to join the hymning myriads whose song is—

‘Louder than the thunder’s roar,  
Or the fullness of the sea  
When it breaks upon the shore.’

**THE END.**

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

### FOOTNOTES

- 140 'The Voyage and Shipwreck of St Paul,' etc. By James Smith, Esq. of Jordanhill, F.R.S. London, 1848.
- 141 The Ancient Workers and Artificers in Metal, from References in the Old Testament and other Ancient Writings. By James Napier, F.C.S. 1856. This interesting and informing little work loses much of its value to the student, because, with the exception of quotations from Scripture, it does not note the sources of its extracts. It is, besides, far more profuse about modern than ancient metallurgy, and ingeniously misinterprets several passages of the Bible, by giving them a chemical allusion rather than a popular sense.
- 142 Daily Bible Illustrations, vol. viii., p. 271.
- 143 Letter to Mr Harvey, July 20, 1823.
- 144 Lost Senses—Deafness, p. 89.
- 145 Ibid., p. 91.
- 146 Letter to Mr Oliphant, March 30, 1850.
- 147 Letter to Mr Knight, Feb. 22, 1837.
- 148 Penny Magazine, vol. iv., p. 228.
- 149 Lost Senses—Deafness, pp. 56, 57.
- 150 Ibid., p. 63.
- 151 Lost Senses—Deafness, pp. 23, 24.
- 152 From a journal of some of his more remarkable sayings, kept by his eldest daughter.
- 153 See The Priest and the Huguenot, by Bungener, p. 215. Edinburgh: Nelson and Sons, 1854.
- 154 See page 147.
- 155 Letter to Rev. F. F. Tracy, June 1847.
- 156 Lost Senses—Deafness, pp. 150, 151.
- 157 Daily Bible Illustrations, vol. v., p. 165.
- 158 Ibid. vol. iv., p. 47.

## LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

159 Lost Senses—Deafness, p. 66.

160 But even ‘good Homer’ occasionally nodded. An amusing instance of oversight occurred in the paper on ‘God’s Retributions,’ in the first edition of the Bible Illustrations. Wishing to show that the Romish Church still maintains its ancient persecuting principles, he inserted a quotation, very pat to his purpose, from a recent pamphlet, purporting to be written by the Bishop of Bantry,’ and having much the appearance of a genuine Roman Catholic document. On his attention being called to it, and the pamphlet placed in his hands, with the intimation, ‘not by the Bishop of Bantry, but of *Banter*—the thing is a *fen d’esprit*’—leaning his cheek on his hand, as was his wont, he looked *amazed* for a moment or two, and then, as he turned over a few pages, its true nature flashed upon his mind, and he burst into a hearty laugh, exclaiming, ‘Well, this is the first time I ever fell into such an absurd mistake.’

161 Daily Bible Illustrations, vol. v., pp. 63, 64.

162 Daily Bible Illustrations, vol v., p. 203.

163 Rev. Mr Lewis.

164 Daily Bible Illustrations, vol. ii., pp. 425, 426.

165 Newman’s Phases of Faith, p. 37. Fourth Edition.

166 Letter to Mr Oliphant, Cannstatt, Oct. 27, 1854.

167 Page 322.

168 Pictorial History of Palestine, vol. i.. p. 584.

169 Lost Senses—Deafness, p. 73.