

CHAPTER IV.

ISLINGTON.

KITTO was highly gratified with the attention shown him by all the persons connected with the Institution at Islington, and he speaks very decidedly of the piety and zeal of the eighteen students resident in the house. He tells his friends in Plymouth of a great meeting, Lord Gambier in the chair, when fifteen missionaries received parting addresses. It was ‘the most grand and impressive occurrence’ he had ever beheld, and, he adds, ‘a finer delivery than that of some of those speeches I never *witnessed*.’ In Mr Watts’ printing-office he learned first to set Greek types, and he enjoyed much ‘delightful contemplation while working at his Greek cases. Then he tried Persic on Henry Martyn’s translation of the New Testament. This manual labour was fatiguing, but still he gave himself to reading. He enjoyed what he called ‘pocket-reading’—that is, taking one of his volumes and reading it as he walked to and from the place of business, and at every spare moment he could snatch during the day. The reader will remember how the boy, either in rags or in the dress of the work-house, prowled about the bookstalls in Plymouth and Devonport, and pored over their miscellaneous and tattered contents. Now, when he had come to London, this passion met with an ampler gratification. He revelled in the luxury, and philosophised upon its superior delights.

The paradox which he maintains is evidently a relic of his early vagrant life. He rejoiced in his perambulations, and seemed to prefer such half-hours of literary license to undisturbed and sedentary study. ‘Bookstalls,’ he writes, in high glee, to Mr Harvey,³³ ‘are very numerous in and about the town; bookstalls, the least of which will not admit any comparison with any provincial bookstall I have ever seen; and if I had formerly lived here, I might have had many hours of comfortable reading every day, merely by going from one bookstall to another, and spending half an hour or so at each; and by the time I might have visited the last in my circuit, I should have been long enough absent from that with which I had begun, to venture thither again, and so on, circuit after circuit. Now, if this state of things be compared with what I have already mentioned to have been the case in Devon, the advantages of a residence in London, to a person of literary habits, is sufficiently obvious in the instance I have selected. Few, on this plan, would be able to boast a larger library than myself. The advantages of such a library are obvious also. *First*, No money is paid for the privilege. *Secondly*, The usual effects of sedentary occupation are prevented, as

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

the student is obliged to stand while reading, and to walk both before and after. *Thirdly*, The opportunity of studying human character is one of peculiar importance; for the character of the book-man or book-woman, when they form the accompaniment of the stall, which happily is not always the ease in London, is a subject of such essential importance to ourselves, that we study them with an anxiety the most intense, and penetration can never be more strongly excited by circumstances than in such an instance. And, *Fourthly*, there are peculiar benefits attending this mode of reading. When we have books in abundance of our own, or have them in any way at our own disposal, we are apt to neglect them, knowing we can read them at any time we please; and when we do read them, we are apt to do it cursorily, knowing that we can turn to them again whenever we wish to do so. But at the bookstall we read for our lives. We know that no time is to be wasted. We know that it is not likely we shall ever see the book again. Stolen reading, too, is sweetest; and, upon the whole, there is probably nothing we ever read which is so impressed on the memory, and so treasured up in the mind, as that which is read at the bookstall. This is easily accounted for. We know that the only future benefit we can derive from the volume, is that which the memory may afford; and hence the effort of the mind is strong to retain that which it has taken in. The person likely to avail himself of such a system, has also so little else to read, that the little he does thus read is the more easily retained. *The best readers are not those who read most.* I read a great deal in the Plymouth library, but I remember less of that than of what I had previously read at my friend's bookstall, and in the windows of booksellers' shops. A person who has many books of his own, or who can get books to read without difficulty, will never understand the advantages of bookstalls as I have related them, because he will want that intense and powerful stimulus which the bookless student possesses.'

In the meantime, his eye had not been idle, nor was his heart seared. The pain he had suffered in relinquishing his early attachment did not prevent him from forming another. His heart yearned for affection. He was continually striving, as he tells us, 'to win the affection of children, and was often disappointed in their caprices and fickleness.' Three months after coming to Islington, he had seen a lady at church, who invited him to the joint use of her hymn-book, and he had been pleased by her appearance.³⁴ He could tell nothing about her. Neither her name nor residence was known to him: nor does he seem to have made any anxious inquiry about them. But one of his periodical illnesses overtook him. He had been leeches on the temples, and during his convalescence he went out and walked one afternoon in Barnsbury Park. As he was returning to the college, he happened to enter a shop and engage in con-

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

versation with the lady who kept it, and who was a ‘respectable and serious-looking woman.’ The talk was about Sunday Schools, and ‘she supported her part of the discourse on a slate.’ She invited her customer into the parlour, which was ‘hung round with prints of eminent ministers, framed and glazed.’ She showed him the prize-books which her children, six in all, had got at a neighbouring Sabbath seminary, and he naturally wished to see the family. The reply was, that they were all at school but one, and when that one obeyed the maternal summons to appear, Kitto was agreeably surprised to recognise in her the object of his previous admiration. She did not, however, recollect him. A courtship naturally began, and proceeded, on successive visits, to his great satisfaction. A matrimonial union was ultimately agreed on. Mr Groves did not now attempt to reason down his passion, but approved of the project, and Mr Bickersteth, the secretary, gave also his formal consent. He lost no time in informing Mr Burnard of his choice, for ‘he who has rejoiced in my joy, and sympathized in my distress, will assuredly rejoice with me in this; and great will be my pleasure, my dear sir, in introducing to you no common character a Christian wife, a Christian daughter, a Christian woman.’ Marriage was no new idea to him. Even when he was the immediate protégé of charitable friends in Plymouth, and before any door was opened to him, he avows, if he should get a curacy—‘Then I shall marry, and shall enjoy domestic comfort and my favourite pursuits at the same time.’

Kitto’s spirit glowed into poetry when it felt the new sense, ‘or laboured under the ‘madness’ which he ascribes to his love, and he sent the following meditation to Mr Burnard. The prelude is—‘My dear Sir,—Though you know that John Kitto is no poet, still I hope that, at a leisure minute, this may give you pleasure:—

A REVERIE ON MARRIAGE.

COMPOSED WHILE SITTING TO A PORTRAIT-PAINTER.

Full many a man has sunk to rest
With social kind affections blest—
A heart to cherish and enjoy
The tender, soft connubial tie.

And yet these men have seldom known
The social happiness *of home*;
But, served by menial hands and rude,
Have mourned in cheerless solitude.

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

Say, such be I, then. Shall I sigh,
And sunken and dejected die,
Because to human joy unknown,
Gently to soothe me there is none?

None to sympathize in glee,
And, when I weep, to weep with me;
None to ease life's weary load,
And walk with me the narrow road;

None near me in the trying hour,
Soft balm into my wounds to pour;
None in pain to hold my head;
None to mourn me when I'm dead.

His hand shall soothe me when in pain;
That hand can make me whole again.
In death my God will still be nigh;
Yes; He'll be with me when I die.

Domestic sweets—the social band—
Are doubtless present; but the hand,
Which them and other blessings lends,
Can give a bliss that never ends.

Why, then, should I complain and moan,
As one quite cheerless and alone?
When, having God, in Him I've all
We justly happiness can call.

Human delights, I ask them not;
Be Thou the guardian of my lot;
And give a heart to count but loss
All, all things for the Christian Cross.

Give, Lord, a heart of warm desire,
Touch it with coals of living fire,
And kindle there a radiant flame
To burn for ever to Thy name.

And Thou, O Man of Galilee,
Who bled and agonized for me,
Through the strength that's only Thine,
Be victory and triumph mine.'

'December 30, 1825.'

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

The lines that succeed were addressed to the object of his devoted attachment. It is now the betrayal of no secret, that if Hannah were substituted for Mary, the poem would stand as originally composed. Kitto himself published it in the 'Lost Senses,' with the fictitious name:—

In silence I have walked full long
 Adown life's narrow, thorny vale,
Deaf to the melody of song,
And all music to me mute,
 From the organ's rolling peal
 To the gay burst or mournful wail
Of harp, and psaltery, and lute.
Heaven's dread answer I have heard
 In thunder to old ocean's roar,
As while the elements conferred,
 Their voices shook the rock-bound shore:—
I've listened to the murmuring streams,
Which lulled my spirit into dreams,
Bright hopes, and fair imaginings;
But false as all that fancy flings
Upon a page, where pain and strife
Make up the history of life:
And so, beneath o'ershadowing trees,
I've heard leaves rustle in the breeze,
Which brought me the melodious tale
Of the all vocal nightingale,
Or else the cushat's coo of pride,
O'er his own new-mated bride.
Yes: I have heard thee—Nature, thee
 In all thy thousand voices speak,
Which *now* are silent all to me.
 Ah, when shall this long silence break,
And all thy tides of gladness roll
In their full torrent on my soul?

But as the snows which long have lain
 On the cold tops of Lebanon,
 Melt in the glances of the sun,
And, with wild rush, into the plain
Haste down, with blessings in their train:
So, Mary, gilded by thine eye,
 Griefs melt away, and fall in streams
 Of hope into the land of dreams,
And life's inanities pass by
Unheeded, without tear or sigh.

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

True, that the human voice divine
Falls not on this cold sense of mine;
And that brisk commercing of thought
Which brings home rich returns, all fraught
With ripe ideas—points of view
Varied, and beautiful, and new,
Is lost, is dead, in this lone state,
Where feelings sicken, thoughts stagnate,
And good and evil knowledge grows
Unguided and unpruned, and throws
Too often a dull sickening shade,
Like that by trees of Java made,
O'er hopes and o'er desires which might
Have lived in glory and delight,
Blessed and blessing others, till
The gaspings of this life were still.

But, Mary, when I look on thee,
All things beside neglected lie:
There is deep eloquence to me
In the bright sparkle of thine eye.
How sweetly can their beaming roll
Volumes of meaning to my soul,
How long how vainly all—might words
Express what one quick glance affords.
So spirits talk, perhaps, when they
Their feelings and their thoughts convey,
Till heart to heart, and soul to soul,
Is in one moment opened all.

Mary, one sparkle of thine eye
I'd not exchange for all the gems
That shine in kingly diadems,
Or spices of rich Araby.
My heart would count th' refined gold,
Which Eastern kings have left untold,
But as a beggar's price, to buy
One sparkle of my Mary's eye.'

What Kitto had already avowed, was still true of him—'I cannot accuse myself of having wasted or misemployed a moment of my time since I left the workhouse.' All his hours were carefully spent. The frugal youth usually had for his dinner, on the days he did not fast, a roll and a sausage, which he bought at a shop in the vicinity of Temple Bar. From a brief journal, in which he wrote occasionally during his residence at Islington, we learn some other particulars

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

of interest.

‘*April* 4, 1826.—At the outset I had best make such an arrangement of my time, and form such resolutions, as I have, for a considerable time, had in contemplation, and I pray God that if it be for His glory, I may be enabled to adhere to this arrangement and keep these resolutions. I am sure that it is more than I should be able to do in any strength of my own.

‘WORK.

‘1. When business is regular, I purpose to leave Islington for town before breakfast, and leave the office directly after tea.

‘2. Stay at home every alternate Wednesday, and the forenoon of the other Wednesday—when not practicable, the earliest opportunity occurring subsequently.

‘HOME.

‘3. When at home from any cause, to spend the morning in writing till dinner. After dinner call on Miss A.,ⁱ and spend the evening as occasion may require—reading if possible.’

He then specifies the days of the week, with their peculiar duties. Thus, as a sample:—

‘*Wednesday*.—I have for some time observed this as a day of abstinence and humiliation. But finding that it is very injurious to my head to go without breakfast, I hardly think myself justified in abstaining from it. I shall therefore take breakfast, and content myself with the omission of dinner and tea.’ It may be added, that Friday was observed, like Wednesday, as a fast-day.

‘HOURS OF REST.

‘My hours of rest have been very irregular since I left Mr Groves. Sometimes I have gone to bed early—sometimes late, but generally very late, so late that I have not thought it worth while to put off my clothes, but have lain down in them, and on an average I have seldom risen earlier than six. I propose, therefore, to go to bed from eleven to half-past, and to endeavour to get into the habit of rising at five. Thus I allow one-fourth of my time, six hours, for sleep, rather more than I can afford.

‘SCRIPTURES.

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

‘My method has been to divide my Bible into four parts —from Genesis to Job, from Psalms to Malachi, from Matthew to Acts, from Romans to Revelation; and it has been my general rule to read in two of these parts, one of the Old and one of the New Testament, daily, in alternation, so that if I read in the historical part of the New Testament on one day, I read on the same day in the didactic and prophetic part of the Old; and if I read on another day in the epistolary part of the New Testament, I the same day read in the historical part of the Old. I have found this method more useful and pleasant than any other, and therefore I shall continue to pursue it.

‘I appropriate the first half-hour after rising to my Bible, that is, till half-past five, when I am dressed by five, and another half hour in the evening is to be employed in the same way. . . The Bible will be read of course at other times, particularly on Sundays.

‘DEVOTIONS.

‘The half-hour succeeding those appropriated to the Scriptures, I propose to apply to the purpose of prayer, prefaced generally by the reading of a few hymns; and I have thought it would be very desirable to apportion the different objects which intercessory prayer should embrace on the different days of the week—a plan which I consider as presenting many advantages and great facilities for the due discharge of this important duty. I adopt, therefore, the following arrangement:—

SUNDAY. *Morning*.—For clergymen, and ministers, and their congregations—a blessing on the preached Gospel.

One o'clock.—At this time, on the two first, or when there are five in the month, the three first Sundays in the month, my dear H— and myself will be engaged in simultaneous prayer for each other.

Evening.—Church of England, and the Christian Churches in general—a catholic spirit among the different denominations.

MONDAY. *Morning*.—England and its authorities.

Evening.—The States called Christian.

TUESDAY. *Morning*.—Religious Societies.

Evening.—Children—Sunday Schools.

WEDNESDAY. *Morning*.—Parents and Relatives.

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

Evening.—Friends and Enemies.

THURSDAY. *Morning.*—Jews.

Evening.—Turks, Infidels, and Heretics.

FRIDAY. *Morning.*—Missionary Societies and Missions.

Evening.—Simultaneous Prayer.

SATURDAY. *Morning.*—Missionaries and Students. *Evening.*—
Outpouring of the Holy Spirit on ALL flesh.’

A few disclosures from his Diary at this period, will throw light on several interesting points of his experience and character:—

‘10.—On the sixth I was so very ill when I came home, that I was obliged to lie down immediately, and the next morning continued so unwell, that Mr Yates thought it necessary to send for the medical gentleman who attends the house. He directed that twelve or fourteen ounces of blood should be taken from the back of my neck, by cupping, and furnished me with some medicines. I have not been to town since, but I think I feel better today than I have done since Thursday. I have often, during this time, experienced excruciating pains in the head and breast. But I do not repine. I have no cause to do so. I feel and am persuaded that it is sent me for good and not evil, and most truly can I, from experience, say that those periods of indisposition to which I am subjected, have been, and are, visits of mercy, seasons of refreshing to me, from the presence of the Lord. The retirement of a sick chamber, too, is pleasant to me, if only from the contrast with the bustling nature of general engagements. Here I can commune with my own heart—here I can read, and write, and pray, and, when pained and weary, can lie down in my bed unmolested, and unseen by any but by Him whose presence I seem almost sensibly to enjoy. Oh may these seasons be more and more sanctified to me! May my Master, my crucified Master, appear thus to me more and more the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely! May I more and more enter into the *chambers of imagery* in my own mind, and be more and more strengthened by the Holy Spirit, in tearing down and demolishing *every* idol, whatsoever it be, which has there exalted itself against the knowledge and the love of God my Saviour.

12.—I am better today than I have been since taken ill; and, if I do not go to town this week, hope I shall not be detained longer. I have experienced much kind attention from Miss Hart. She has done everything to meet my wishes and render me comfortable, and the very servants, too, have laid me under much obligation, by their uniform manifestations of every little kindness that they may have had it in their power to exhibit. That it is the same with many of my dear fellow-servants, it is superfluous to say. All are very

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

very kind to me: thus, for instance:—Brown has come to my room every evening, to dress my neck while it needed dressing, and my dear Marsh has called up frequently to see me. When I came, I anticipated that I should be quite among strangers, and was prepared to find it so. But my kind and gracious Master has ordered things otherwise for me than I had expected. I feel that I am among brethren and friends, and that there are several within these walls who feel a most affectionate regard for me. What cause, then, have not I for thankfulness and gratitude to him who thus far has made crooked places straight, and rough places plain before me? Oh that this cold heart were more alive and open to all those thankful emotions and impressions which such a continued course of mercy and loving-kindness from my heavenly Father should communicate !

‘15.—Hoping my health would allow me to return to the discharge of my regular duties on Monday, I determined to terminate my keeping at home by a long walk and tract distribution. After breakfast, therefore, I stored my pockets with about eighty tracts, an equal number of handbills, and some fifteen little handbooks. This, with my Testament, pocket-book, and the last number of the “Register,” completely filled my pockets. I walked out about four miles from Islington, and returned by another road. I distributed tracts chiefly in returning, as my walk out was in a very retired direction—a road in which I had never been before. I have seldom had a more pleasing excursion than this. The weather was beautiful, and my mind had attained to that exquisite tone of feeling and of thought, of which it is indeed susceptible, but which it is so infrequently permitted to enjoy. Under a different modification of feeling, I might possibly have contemplated all the objects I beheld, without experiencing that interest they have now communicated; or without deriving any improvement from them. But before I went, my heart was prepared to respond to the language of the Psalmist, and to say, “Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone. Thou hast made heaven, the Heaven of heavens, with all their host, and all things that are therein; and Thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee. O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom Thou hast made them all! The earth is full of Thy riches.” And hence I was interested—hence I was instructed and improved. My walk out, as I have said, was retired. It was one also in which I had never before walked. It lay sometimes on the bank of the canal, sometimes beneath the shade of trees, sometimes through fields and pleasant lanes, and at others, over steep hills, from which I had extended and beautiful views before me, and could distinctly discern objects which lay at a very great distance from me. My Testament was a most valuable companion to me, and did not leave my hand till I turned my face towards Islington again,

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

and began to distribute tracts in good earnest. While I soared with the eagle-minded John, or rather with the Divine Master whose words he records, the various objects spread around me, and the blue skies above my head, seemed softly to speak to me a sweeter and more exalted language than that which the natural man can bear. The spirit seemed to enjoy a freedom it never had before—to breathe an air it never before imbibed—and, for a short and fleeting moment, to experience the fore-taste of another world's enjoyments, in holding communion with beings of a higher world; yea, with Him who, of all beings and all worlds, is the Cause and the Creator! I think that God, the Holy Ghost, has been graciously pleased more to enlighten my understanding in reference to many things in His sacred Word, which had not appeared to me before, than in any equal period of time within my recollection. Oh! it is most pleasant to feel and know that the self-same hand which wrote the beautiful and splendid volume of nature, wrote also the far more precious book of Revelation for us; that the High and Holy One, who called into being and arranged

“The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven,”

is not an abstract quality—an awful, unknown something, —but the very same Friend, Guide, and Father, who in mercy and in love has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus,—the very same whose loving-kindness and whose truth has followed us through all the devious and intricate paths of our pilgrimage, and has brought us hitherto, and who Himself has promised that He will be with us still—that He will never leave us nor forsake us, but bear and carry us even to the end. I am fully aware that a man, not duly impressed with a sense of the amazing value of the Christian verity, may yet be capable of contemplating the sublimities and beauties of nature, with exalted emotions of wonder and delight. But he cannot have the interest and kind of property in them which a Christian has—he cannot recognise in them the hand of his best and dearest Friend—he cannot, oh, he cannot experience that undefined and inexpressible emotion with which the Christian philosopher can look below, around, above him, and, laying his hand upon his breast, can say, “My Father made them all.” I had a very pleasing success in the distribution of my tracts—and I pray my dear Master to let His blessing rest on the seed which I have thus been enabled to sow by the way-side. I am looked up to as an authority on tract matters here.’

It happened that there was not in the printing-office a sufficiency of Persic types, and Kitto, unwisely using his own discretion, sometimes stayed at home all day, and occasionally left the office before the appointed hour. These ab-

sences began to be marked, and to form the subject of suspicious comment. Kitto hastened to explain, but his explanation was not reckoned wholly satisfactory. He vindicates himself to Mr Watts thus:—

‘SIR,—I am sorry to be obliged again to intrude on you, but I feel it necessary to mention distinctly that, although I recollect to have said *once* that I did not think *setting up pie* was a useful employment of my time, or much calculated to promote my knowledge of the business, yet, I added, what your informant has seen proper to omit, “That if I could obtain nothing better I should do that of course.” I *never* did object to anything else, nor to this more than once. On this subject, however, I hope I shall be pardoned for saying that I think now as I did then. . . . As you are pleased to refer to your apprentices, I would just remark that it seems to me, that as I have so much to acquire in a period so much more limited than theirs, the same system of instruction cannot well apply to both. . .

‘In reference to the irregular attendance you mention, I must be contented with what I said yesterday, that it arose from insufficient employment. I have generally gone to the office every day, even when I expected to find no work. I have waited there, a longer or shorter period, frequently the best part of the day, and if I could get nothing to do, have returned home. I wish to state distinctly *now*, since I have been misunderstood before, that regular attendance may be expected from me when I have regular work.’

But the truth is, that Kitto and the Committee did not understand one another. He was never fond of control, and could scarce endure it in Exeter, where he laments, ‘I am less a free agent than formerly.’ He wished very much to be master of his time, conscious that he ever made a due and diligent improvement of it. The Committee thought that he was neglecting the main point for which they had engaged him, and that he was slighting the business for which they had hired him. The terms of agreement must have been somewhat loosely made, and Kitto’s deafness prevented him from entering into any minute inquiries or stipulations; for, certainly, had he known that he was expected to give up his entire time to mechanical labour, foregoing his precious and coveted hours of reading, he would rather have remained at Exeter, and cut the ‘tusks of certain foreign animals’ into the semblance of human teeth. His belief was, that he was bound to learn to print, but bound, in a higher sense, to prepare for writing something that might be printed. He aspired to be at least a translator. Authorship for men’s spiritual good was his aim; and every other vocation was, in his opinion, to occupy a subordinate place. The Committee, on the other hand, not knowing what was in him, and not, perhaps, fully acquainted with his habits and his ambition, resolved that he should simply be a printer, and that the set-

ting of types should be the one present employment, and the ultimate business of his life, at least in connection with their Society. On being challenged, he made an honest confession, telling how he thought and felt, praying not to be judged harshly, narrating his early experiences and hardships, and how the love of books grew so strongly upon him.

‘I should have been, perhaps, much gratified if my immediate duty to the Society could have been more identified with those habits and pursuits, or rather, that they be brought to bear more immediately upon that duty than it appears they can, in the line of employment now chalked out for me. As it is, however, I am very desirous of being informed whether it be indeed, as seems to be intimated, required of me that I should relinquish these pursuits *altogether*. If it be, I am sorry to say, that I cannot think myself called upon or justified in making any promise to that effect. As the Society could devise no line of service for me which would harmonise more fully with the peculiar bent and tone of my mind, is it therefore necessary that this should be wholly merged in the other? I do myself think not. I cannot believe, although I have tried to believe it, although I have earnestly prayed that the Lord’s thoughts for me, and my own thoughts for myself, might coincide, and although I know that a gift to the service of the Lord’s house, would not be estimated according to its intrinsic value, but according to the spirit in which it might be offered, yet I cannot believe that it is designed by Him, whose dispensations towards me have been so strongly marked, that the maximum of my service should depend upon that degree of manual exertion which another—a mere printer—might perform much better and more efficiently than myself.’³⁶

He was then distinctly told what was expected from him, and that he could not be sent abroad ‘till his altered conduct should show his cordial compliance with such regulations.’ This resolution unduly pressed the matter to a crisis; no sympathy was shown him; there was no appreciation of his peculiarities; nothing would be accepted but formal and unreserved submission. Aye or no—select the alternative at once, and abide by it. Kitto was irritated, and resigned his situation.

His friends were exceedingly angry at him, and some of his Plymouth patrons were prepared to cast him off. He was inundated with counsels, and cut to the quick by harsher words and rebukes. But he met with special sympathy from the students, whom he delighted to greet as ‘brethren and friends.’ On the second anniversary of the Institution, he had delivered an address to them, and they had tendered him their hearty thanks by a unanimous and unprecedented vote. Now he sold his books to them, and wrote them a farewell address, which winds up as follows:

‘ I am permitted to remain a short time at the Institution, till I have arranged matters for my departure to the place whither He, who has led others through the wilderness before, may lead me. I leave you, and I do most truly lament that I leave you in a manner so very different from any that I had foreseen or anticipated. Brethren, suffer me to hope that I shall be followed by your prayers. Permit me to believe that you will not consider the bond to be quite broken which bound me up together with you. Forbid it not, that I still look upon myself as a fellow-labourer with you; indeed, that I still shall hold the sickle of the reaper, to gather in the harvest of God, although I no longer have a reaper’s name.’

At this period, when so much was at stake, and he must find some employment for himself to live by, he applied to the London Missionary Society; but his deafness was held to be a barrier to his usefulness as a foreign evangelist.

That Kitto was conscious of no such breach of contract as was laid to his charge, may be learned from some incidental expressions in his letters. He had written to Mr Woollcombe in June—‘I scarcely recollect the time when I have read so little as I do now, certainly never since I left the workhouse.’

But he soon regretted the hasty step he had taken, and to Mr Burnard he poured out his spirit:—

‘I have essayed my own will and my own way, and I have found that will and that way to be bitter. I have therefore endeavoured to return to His way and His will for me. I have thrown myself upon Him again. I have said to him, “Thou seest I fall except Thou help me. I cannot walk by myself. I will no longer try to do so. Lead me and guide me.” I am satisfied that I sinned in relinquishing my connection with the Church Missionary Society. I did not, however, sin with my eyes open. It was the sin of blindness. I do not wish to extenuate. Most of my friends have been offended, chiefly because I gave up a good temporal provision. But that was not my sin, nor was it the real ground on which others should have been angry with me. It was the proud heart, the lofty mind. My offence had been chiefly spiritual, intellectual; chiefly against God, at least more against Him than against man.’

In the journal to which we have referred, he also put down these words of mingled bitterness and hope:—

‘*February 29, 1827.*—What am I now? What have I been doing? I awake as from a dream. In what difficulties am I not involved? Friends dropping away from me on every side, and stripped thus by degrees of human consolation, comfort, hope. Hope, yet I have hope—hope not fallacious and delusive, because it is built on the Rock Christ. How desolate now do all things earthly

seem to me! I look around; all things seem dark, and black, and gloomy — and what were I, could I look nowhere but around me! I look to Thee, O my God! I wait for Thee more than they that wait for the morning. Arise, arise, O light! and shine upon me, and enlighten the darkness of my way. I have dealt very treacherously against Thee from my youth up. Yet Thou wert long-suffering, and barest with me, and lo! Thou hast brought me hitherto, and now wilt Thou leave me—now? Thou wilt not. Thou hast promised that Thou wilt not, O my God! Look down upon me in pity, and let not the enemy triumph over me! Whom have I but Thee—to whom can I look but Thee. O, then, teach me to look to Thee indeed, to lean upon Thee indeed, to the end of my journey. I go forth, O my Lord, into the wilderness of this world, and know not whither I go. Thou art my hope. Go with me—lead me—guide me. Direct my steps and my wanderings by Thy providence. Watch over me for good; and when I have finished my appointed course, receive me to Thy bosom to live, and there be cherished for ever. Do not leave me; I throw myself upon Thee for guidance and protection; and when I am far away from those charities and ties with which men do surround themselves—when I have no home to shelter me, no pillow on which to lay my head, be Thou my Shelter, my Refuge; and when my wanderings are finished, do Thou plant me where I may grow, and live, and die to Thy glory,—where I may be fruitful as the vine, verdant as the fir, strong as the cedar.’

Kitto, four years afterwards, added a note to this extract:—

‘*March 21, 1831.*—When I wrote the above, I recollect it was my intention to set out on foot and travel in England, till I should find some way or other of subsistence. How little experience, how little knowledge of the world I had then! I was as a child in every respect. Most likely it would have ended in my being sent to the House of Correction as a vagrant. . . That prayer is better than I thought would be in my heart at *that* time. The Lord’s dealings with me have been wonderful from a child.’ It is probable that the example of Goldsmith suggested this desire to wander through the country—a desire which had already been keenly expressed by him when he was in the workhouse.

Mr Groves, the Rev. Mr Hatchard of Plymouth, and other friends, interfered for him, and the Society restored him to his place. But he gave a rash pledge, to abandon literary pursuits—a pledge which, unless his intellectual nature had been changed, he could not redeem. He praises Mr Hatchard highly, and Mr Groves very highly, for the pains they had taken to secure his reinstalment. He contrasts Mr Groves with others of his friends, whose coldness had keenly wounded him. ‘He did not say, like others, “Lie in the bed of your own making;” but, though himself the most aggrieved, has come forth repeatedly to my

help.’

It was deemed advisable that Kitto should be sent forthwith to a foreign station, and Malta was selected as his field of labour. When he was in suspense as to the decision of the Committee, we find him urging not only his own anxiety, but also that of another, as a reason why he should like to have speedy intelligence. He says to Mr Groves, ‘for *her* account, it is therefore my hope to find that the matter is to be decided, or will be soon.’ It was resolved, however, that he should go to Malta alone, but that the bans should be proclaimed prior to his departure. This preliminary step was taken, and Kitto expected to be followed in a few months by his betrothed.

It may be added, in conclusion, that, during his residence at Islington, and when he was worried so much about his own affairs, which at one time looked dismal, he busied himself in various efforts to find a comfortable situation for a young man, who had recently married Betsy, his eldest and favourite sister. This brother-in-law had come to London in quest of employment, but failed to find it. Kitto notes some of the counsels and comforts which he set before him at one of their interviews, and concludes:—

‘I spoke of the nature of trials and adversities, the blessed purposes they were calculated to answer; on trust in God, and casting all our care upon Him, knowing that He careth for us; on seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and having all other things necessary to us. I adverted to my own case. I had once nothing. The bread I ate, the water I drank, was bitter; and that bitter bread and water was procured with trouble and difficulty. I had not sought then the kingdom of God and His righteousness; but since I have been enabled to do so—since I have sought, in the first place, objects of pre-eminent and absorbing importance—the living water which cometh down from Heaven, the bread which perisheth, and the raiment which waxeth old, have been added to me, and I have lacked nothing. I recommended the seeking of this above all things, and could assure him that if he did so, He who arrays the lilies of the field, and feeds the fowls of the air when they cry, would not fail to take care of him, to feed and clothe him and his also. I went on, at considerable length, in the same strain. I was heard with attention, but not, I fear, with interest. Indeed, I have seen so little out of myself of the Holy Spirit’s operations in softening the hardness of the human heart, and I contemplate that heart as so deplorable, and everything but hopelessly bad, and disinclined to the things of God, that I labour under very great discouragement in speaking and acting, and exert myself, in either way, less from the hope of being instrumental in bringing a blessing to those whom I address, than from the conviction that it is my duty to declare the truth of God on such occasions, and speak and act for Him.’

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

Kitto left England on the 20th June 1827, rejoicing in the work that lay before him, and hoping that the bride he had left behind would soon come out to Malta and be his wife—the ornament and joy of his home. The Wilberforce (Captain Denck) was detained for some time at Torbay by contrary winds, and Kitto had the satisfaction of feeling that the last land he set his foot on was that of his native county of Devon.

LIFE OF JOHN KITTO

FOOTNOTES

33 Islington, January 19, 1827.

34 'The incidents are given by himself, somewhat minutely, in a paper entitled, 'A Memorial of Two Years and a half of the Life of J. K.'

35 The visits to Miss A. are set down as very frequent, almost daily, occurrences.

36 Letter to the Rev. J. N. Pearson, President of the Missionary College,—December 1826.