

Missionary Cabinet.

THOMAS GUTHRIE.*—THE PICTORIAL PREACHER.

DR. GUTHRIE surpassed all the preachers of his time in word-painting. It is alleged, indeed, that he cultivated the pictorial and illustrative style almost to the exclusion of that which was doctrinal; hence his reputation was rather that of a pulpit orator than a theologian. He will be best known by posterity as the large-hearted, sympathetic philanthropist who was never more in his element than when lifting the fallen out of their misery and setting them among princes.

Dr. Guthrie was proud of his lineage, and traced his descent from that Rev. James Guthrie, of Covenanting fame, who was executed at Edinburgh in 1661. He was born in Brechin, 12th July, 1803. His father was a leading merchant and the provost of that ancient town in Forfarshire which is said to have been the capital of the Pictish kings. His mother, who worshipped with the Seceders in the *Maison Dieu*—an old R. C. chapel, founded by William de Brechin in 1256—was an eminently pious woman, which led Guthrie to say that “he drank in the gospel with his mother’s milk.” Both his parents desired from his childhood that he should be a minister, a choice in which he readily acquiesced. At the preposterously early age of twelve he was sent to Edinburgh University where he was rather conspicuous for fun and fighting than for scholarship. He completed his eight years’ curriculum, however, creditably enough, two years before he could be taken on his “trials” for license, which ordeal he passed satisfactorily in 1825, in the old cathedral of Brechin, where he delivered his “popular discourse” in the presence of a large congregation. His first “sermon,” technically so called, was preached in the neighbouring parish of Dun, where he acquitted himself much better than he had anticipated. Disappointed in immediately getting a parish, he took a trip to the Continent, and on his

return, meeting with no better success, he accepted a situation in a Brechin bank, where he spent two busy years not unprofitably. On the 13th of May, 1830, he was inducted as minister of Arbirlot, at a cost to himself, he says, of some sixty pounds—one half of which went for fees to the Crown, and the other to defray the cost of the inevitable “Presbytery dinner”—now happily a thing of the past, so far as unseemly excesses are concerned. He threw himself heartily into his work as a parish minister, and immediately became popular. He carefully noted the effect of the simple stories and sketches from every-day life which he introduced into his sermons, and cultivated what seemed to *take best*, at the same time that he studied elocution, until he became a thorough proficient in the histrionic art. Too poor to keep a gig and too wise to get into debt, he extemporized a carriage somewhat after the fashion of a Canadian *caleche* in which he went from place to place to take part in public meetings, where he was always “a host in himself.” In a short time he had already made his mark as a platform speaker. This led to his appointment, by the Town Council of Edinburgh, as colleague with Mr. Sym in the old Greyfriars’ church. A more congenial sphere could not have been found for Guthrie. The church and church-yard were both invested with hallowed memories. Among the ministers of this church there had been Alexander Henderson, Robert Rollock, Principal Carstairs, Robertson the historian, Dr. John Erskine, Dr. John Inglis, and many other illustrious men. In the graveyard was the flat tombstone on which the Covenanters had spread out the Solemn League and Covenant which they signed with blood drawn from their own veins, and the martyrs’ monument, marking the spot where hundreds of the Covenanters lie buried. In his new sphere, Guthrie found ample scope for his versatile talents. He soon became immensely popular. But he cared less for the applause of men than for the souls of the neglected masses in the old town. For their benefit he instituted a service in the old Magdalene chapel in the Cowgate, where he continued the pictorial style of preaching that had proved so successful in Arbirlot. Though he preached *extempore*, he never neglected careful preparation. His

* AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS GUTHRIE, D.D., AND MEMOIR, BY HIS SONS REV. D. K. AND C. A. GUTHRIE, M.A., EDIN., 1878.

CORRECTION.—In the biographical sketch of Dr. Andrew Thomson given last month, by a slip of the pen it was stated that “Dr. Thomson was born in 1789.” He was born July 11th, 1779.