

Missionary Cabinet.

HON. ION KEITH-FALCONER.*

SPEAKING generally, "not many mighty, not many noble" are called to be active agents in the evangelization of the world; but there are not a few conspicuous exceptions to the rule, among whom must be classed the subject of this brief sketch. He belonged to an illustrious family whose lineage is traced back to Sir William Keith, created Earl-Marischal of Scotland by James II in the year 1458. Sir John Keith, the third son of the sixth Earl-Marischal, was elevated to the peerage in 1677, as Baron Keith of Inverurie and Keith Hall and EARL of KINTORE in consideration of his services in preventing the regalia of Scotland from falling into the hands of Cromwell—he having had these emblems concealed beneath the church of Kinneff; and immediately sailing for France, it was supposed that he had carried them away with him, in consequence of which all further search was abandoned.

Ion was the third son of the eighth Earl of Kintore—a man distinguished for piety and the furtherance of every good work, for many years an elder in the Free Church of Scotland, who passed to his rest in 1880 in the 53rd year of his age. Nursed in the lap of luxury, young Keith's early years were uneventful, characterized chiefly by "innate love for truthfulness and his unvarying thoughtfulness for others." At the age of nine he studied under a tutor, and spent a year with the family in Naples and neighborhood. At thirteen he was sent to the famous grammar-school at Harrow, England, and, finally, to Cambridge University. By this time he had grown to be a tall, handsome young fellow, full of life and chivalry. As a student he was remarkable for application, and carried off a number of prizes. He showed a special aptitude for Hebrew and, later, for Syriac and other Semitic languages, which naturally imparted a taste for theology; and though he never graduated in that course, he was nevertheless thoroughly furnished for doing the work of an evangelist, and during his

residence in Cambridge devoted much of his spare time to missionary work in the town and neighborhood. Along with some of his friends he joined in the purchase of one of the theatres in Cambridge which became an active centre of evangelistic work. He also interested himself deeply in a similar work carried on in the east end of London by Mr. Charrington, and when he came to have the control of money he spent large sums in behalf of both these enterprises, besides giving much personal service. From home missions, he soon came to take an interest in foreign mission work and it was not long before he made up his mind to devote his life, his talents, his all to it. The reading of the life of Dr. John Wilson, the great Scotch missionary at Bombay, so graphically sketched by Dr. George Smith, confirmed him in his choice, and the resolution once taken, he never for a moment faltered as to carrying it out.

While faithfully pursuing his studies, he was one of the sprightliest and most companionable of young men—up to all sorts of fun and frolic. He became an enthusiastic bicyclist and attained such proficiency in the management of the wheel that he was for some years accounted the best bicyclist in England, and crowned his feats in that line by a journey from Land's End to John o' Groat's house—a distance of 994 miles which he accomplished in thirteen days. Another accomplishment, which he turned to good account, was that of short-hand-writing. He was passionately fond of it, and became very expert. But these were merely his recreations, and were never allowed to interfere with his work.

After spending some months at Leipzig, where he made friends with Dr. Delitzsch and other celebrated German scholars, young Keith paid a visit to Egypt with a view to familiarizing himself with the use of the modern Arabic language, but an attack of fever made it necessary for him to return speedily to Europe. In 1884 he was married to Miss Bevan of Hertfordshire. Next year he seemed to hear a call inviting him to Aden, in Arabia, where the waters of the Red Sea meet those of the Indian Ocean;—"a place than which there is probably no more utterly arid and dreary on the whole surface of the habitable globe." When the question was asked in "The

* Memorials of the Hon. ION KEITH-FALCONER, M.A., by Rev. Robert Sinker, D.D., Cambridge; 1890: 6th ed. pp. 246; W. DRYSDALE & Co., Montreal, price 90 cents.