

IRISH WORTHIES

EDITED BY

REV. THOMAS HAMILTON

IRISH WORTHIES

A SERIES OF

Original Biographical Sketches

OF EMINENT

MINISTERS AND MEMBERS

OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

EDITED BY

THE REV. THOMAS HAMILTON, M.A.,

BELFAST

Tentmaker Publications
Stoke-on-Trent



Tentmaker Publications
121 Hartshill Road
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 7LU

ISBN 1 899003 37 1

Originally published in 1875

This edition, completely re-typeset
© 2000 Newtownabbey Independent Christian School
Limited to a print run of 500 copies

The School Committee would like to acknowledge all the work undertaken by Mr. Alastair Bonar, who originated this project as a means of both supporting the work of the School and ensuring that this historic volume is republished. Mr. Bonar selected the title from his private library and we greatly appreciate his management of all the detailed aspects of the project.

This reprint has been produced
to support the work of the

Newtownabbey Independent



Christian School

Ballyclare Road, Glengormley

PREFACE

IT is long since Ireland was arraigned for being *incuriosa suorum*. Whatever answer the country at large may have to give to the accusation, one thing is certain – the Irish Presbyterian Church must plead guilty to it. Quite a number of eminent men within her pale, who, had they lived anywhere else, would have had their virtues celebrated and the story of their doings recorded, have from time to time passed away without any more lasting biographical memorial being accorded them than an obituary notice in a newspaper. The present series of sketches is an attempt at promoting a better state of things. It is believed that many will be glad to see permanently recorded the history of men who, by God's blessing, some of them in the quiet walks of pastoral life, and some in the stirring and stormy arena of controversy, helped to raise the Irish Presbyterian Church to the position it at present occupies.

The Editor desires very cordially to thank his *collaborateurs* for the invaluable help which they afforded in the preparation of the Sketches. Without their aid the work could not have been accomplished. He has also to express his acknowledgments to various kind friends who supplied him with anecdotes and other materials for the biographies of which he himself is the author.

FOREWORD TO NEW EDITION

By Dr. Ian R. K. Paisley, MP MEP MLA,
Moderator, General Presbytery of Ulster
of The Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster.

ALL lovers of Bible Protestantism in general, and orthodox Presbyterianism in particular, will rejoice in the republication of *Irish Worthies* – a series of original biographical sketches of eminent ministers and members – Edited by Rev. Thomas Hamilton, MA.

Dr. Hamilton was the son of the eminent Rev. David Hamilton, first minister of York Street Presbyterian Church. David Hamilton was the first convenor of the Assembly's Mission to the Jews and was also Convenor of the Church and Manse Fund. He was Moderator of the General Assembly in 1854.

Thomas Hamilton followed his father in York Street congregation as its third minister. He was ordained on 20th August 1865. He published a 'History of the Irish Presbyterian Church' and other important works. He became the first Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, Belfast.

This volume contains four contributions from Dr. Hamilton's pen and ten other sketches by other prominent ministers. Life-sketches of ministers of both the General Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod are united in this book.

The Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod united on 10th July 1840 to form the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The following resolution sealed the Union: "It is hereby resolved and agreed upon, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, by the said General Synod of Ulster, and the said Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, distinguished by the name of

Seceders, on this the 10th day of July, in the year of our Lord 1840, duly assembled together, that they do now, and in all times hereafter shall, constitute one united Church, professing the same common faith as set forth in the standards as aforesaid, and in all matters ecclesiastical exercising, and subject to, the same government and discipline...

“And it is hereby further resolved and agreed upon, that the said United Church shall henceforth bear the name and designation of ‘The Presbyterian Church in Ireland’; and that its Supreme Court shall be styled ‘The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland’.”

The book recalls the important events of the lives of the thirteen apprentice boys of Presbyterianism who kept the gates –

(1) **Stewart of Broughshane**, one of the most remarkable men of his age, of commanding intellect, clear judgment and unsurpassable acuteness. The story of his battle with the Roman Catholic priest of Ballymena makes good reading.

(2) **Cooke of Killyleagh and Belfast**, the greatest son of Ulster Presbyterianism, the cleanser of the church of Unitarianism, and the unchallengeable champion of Protestantism. The story of his many battles, religious and political, are graphically portrayed. A Presbyterian to the heart, but a Protestant to the back bone.

(3) **Masterton of Connor**, another great contender, a Scot, served the Connor congregation from about 1704 for some eighteen years. The first and second congregations of Belfast having departed from the historic Christian faith, a third congregation was set up and Masterton became its first minister. The first and second congregations afterwards apostatised into full-blown Unitarianism. His story is well worth reading. He was a man apart.

(4) **James Young of Galgorm**, came of a well-known family. His brother William was the father of John Young Esq. DL. of Galgorm Castle and a most eloquent speaker. John was not so, but was a man of outstanding business ability, which brought him to high commercial eminence. He was converted through Dr. Henry Cooke. Here is the story of a dedicated businessman who became a great church elder and leader.

(5) **Carlile of Dublin**, a Scot, who in 1813 came to Dublin and began his ministry in Mary's Abbey, a church with a very elite congregation. Carlile was in no wealthy man's pocket, and offended many by his refusal to countenance in the pulpit those who were Unitarian in doctrine. Alas! he did not maintain this stand, and his life is a warning for the need to continue as at the first.

(6) **Toye of Belfast**, Toye, but no child's plaything — that best sums up Rev. Tommy Toye. Here is a man of peculiar character and unusual power, one of the great preachers of the 1859 Revival. This is an unusual story. You must read it.

(7) **Stewart of Downpatrick**, the first minister of Downpatrick in connection with the General Assembly. He had the briefest of ministries but his influence did not die. The writings of Thomas Chalmers, the great Scottish Presbyterian, were used to bring him to a saving interest in Christ. He came to Downpatrick notorious for its Unitarianism and became a swordsman for his God. He was called to higher service in the thirty-first year of his life and in the fifth of his ministry, the McCheyne of Irish Presbyterianism.

(8) **Edgar of Belfast**, the son of Samuel Edgar the famous Secession leader. He came to Belfast to pastor a new and small secession congregation, and laboured there for over forty years. Edgar was a character unique in his ways and ministry, with a prodigious memory. He was the Apostle of Temperance in Ireland and mightily used of God in the 1859 Revival.

(9) **Moffat of Saintfield**. At twelve years of age young Moffat took charge of a school to relieve his father, Rev. William Moffat of Moira, of the expense of his support. After deep conviction of sin he found peace through the redeeming blood of Christ. He threw himself earnestly into evangelistic activities and refusing to become Dr. Edgar's assistant, took a call to the very small and poor secession congregation of Saintfield. He was eminent in the cause of temperance. He experienced bouts of severe lung trouble, and died when just twenty-seven years of age. His good lived on to bless the coming generation in Saintfield where he laboured so earnestly.

(10) **Hunter of Coleraine.** He was minister of the Secession congregation of Coleraine, and was characterised by originality, bluntness and godliness. He feared nothing and nobody. For forty-two years he laboured in Coleraine. He excelled in prayer and his exploits in soul winning were remarkable. Faithfulness and fearlessness characterised his entire ministry.

(11) **Wilson of Belfast,** was the son of Rev. William Wilson of Crossgar, Coleraine. Wilson was a Londonderry man, like Dr. Cooke. He commenced his ministry in Berry Street, Belfast, and then in a new church in Linenhall Street. He became Professor of Biblical Literature in the Belfast Presbyterian College in 1842. He was an ardent defender of orthodoxy.

(12) **Macauley of Drumhillery,** was a great preacher of the excellencies of his glorious Lord. He had an excellent delivery and it was said that when the ear heard his preaching the heart loved it. He was a man full of zeal mingled with humour. He was Moderator of Synod in 1869, and died in his fifty-fourth year.

(13) **Thompson of Carnmoney.** Carnmoney was one of the largest churches in connection with the Synod of Ulster, and Thompson discharged his duties with diligence and faithfulness. He boldly proclaimed the whole counsel of God. He became the father of the Synod of Ulster and maintained orthodoxy until the end. He died in March 1828, in the sixty-second year of his ministry and the eighty-seventh of his life.

The publication of these sketches will, I believe, stir up both ministers and people to hear and obey the divine precept:

'This is the way; walk ye in it.'

CONTENTS

	Page.
The Rev. Robert Stewart, D.D., Broughshane. By the Editor	15
The Rev. Henry Cooke, D.D., LL.D., Belfast. By the Editor	27
The Rev. Chas. Masterton, Connor, By the Rev. John Armstrong, Kingstown	89
James Young, Esq., Ballymena By the Editor	94
The Rev. James Carlile, D.D., Dublin. By his nephew, the Rev. Gavin Carlyle, M.A.	97
The Rev. Thomas Toye, Belfast. By the Editor	114
The Rev. Wm. Stewart, Downpatrick. By the Rev. John Armstrong, Kingstown	124
The Rev. John Edgar, D.D., Belfast. By the Rev. Thomas, Croskery, Londonderry	129
The Rev. Walter Moffat, Saintfield. By the Rev. John Armstrong, Kingstown	135
The Rev. James Hunter, Coleraine. By the Rev. Wm. Magill, Cork	142
The Rev. Robert Wilson, D.D., Belfast. By the Rev. Thomas Croskery, Londonderry	148
The Rev. James Macaulay, Drumhillery. By the Rev. Matthew Macaulay, M'Kelvey's Grove	161
The Rev. John Thomson, Carnmoney. By the late Rev. William M'Clure, Londonderry	165

**THE REV. ROBERT STEWART, D.D.,
BROUGHSHANE.**

BY THE REV. THOMAS HAMILTON, BELFAST.

ON a windy autumn day, towards the close of the year 1804, a group of youths might have been seen standing on the quay at Donaghadee, waiting for the Scotch packet to sail. They were six in number, and their appearance indicated beyond doubt that they had travelled far to reach the little northern port. It was even so. One had journeyed some sixty miles on foot, from beside where the river Moyola rushes impetuously down from the Dungiven mountains towards Lough Neagh; a second had made his way from near the town of Ballymena; and the others had all had longer or shorter distances to travel ere they reached the sea. As they stood on the wharf, it was a wintry scene on which they looked. The wind blew chill and strong in-shore, the waves rolled heavily on the strand from the tumbling plain of waters outside, and the little vessel, which afforded almost all the means of communication then existing between this country and Scotland, tossed uneasily up and down at her moorings as if impatient to be off. At length it was announced that, owing to the adverse wind, she could not sail that day, and the group of young students on their way to renew their winter studies at Glasgow College— for such were the six young men of whom we speak—had no other resource but to seek the best shelter they could for the night, in the hope that by the morrow the wind would have changed, so that his Majesty's mails and the alumni of St. Mungo's College might proceed without further delay to their destination.

Two of these young men especially deserve our attention. One was a lad of sixteen, pale, sharp-featured, but with an eye which at once arrested notice, bright, keen, and searching as an eagle's. The other, a young man of twenty or so, had nothing very attractive or

prepossessing about his appearance. His look was common, and his gait and manner uncultured; but those who knew him could tell how within that rough exterior there dwelt a mind of uncommon grasp and power, which could not but raise its possessor one day to a position of fame and eminence among his fellows. The name of the first was Henry Cooke, the second was Robert Stewart. On this occasion, and in this little port of the County Down, commenced an intimacy between them which death only was to terminate.

The six young collegians having, with considerable difficulty, procured a lodging for the night, set about devising means for whiling away the time till the morrow should release them from their captivity. After some discussion, it was proposed that they should there and then constitute themselves into a Society for Mutual Improvement. The suggestion was no sooner made than acted upon. Stewart, as one of the six afterwards related, proposed a series of subjects for study, and in the consideration of these the hours quickly and pleasantly passed away till a change of wind enabled the packet to leave the harbour and stand out to sea for Portpatrick, carrying the students to don the red gown once more.

Stewart was, as already stated, considerably the senior of Cooke. He was born in the month of April, 1783, at Tullybane, in the parish of Clough, County Antrim. His father was of Scottish extraction; his mother, a Gaston by her maiden name, belonged to a family said to have been of Continental origin. Robert was not at first destined for the ministry by his parents. His father had a considerable property, which he intended his son to inherit, and to the management of this he wished him to devote himself. But the youth's own predilections were all in favour of the pulpit. His father at length was prevailed on to give a reluctant consent to his request to be permitted to prepare himself for the holy office, and at eighteen years of age the lad began his studies for that purpose. Not a whole year did he remain at a classical school; but such good teaching did he enjoy, and so well did he employ his time, that, at the end of that period, he was ready for the university—readier than many a youth who has had the advantage of a much longer preliminary training.