

**FIFTY YEARS IN
"THE
IRISH MISSION"**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649120086

Fifty years in "The Irish mission" by Hamilton Magee

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Cover @ 2017

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HAMILTON MAGEE

**FIFTY YEARS IN
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FIFTY YEARS
IN
"THE IRISH MISSION."

BY THE
REV. HAMILTON MAGEE, D.D.,

*Late Superintendent of the
General Assembly's Dublin Mission.*



BELFAST: RELIGIOUS TRACT AND BOOK DEPOT
EDINBURGH: RELIGIOUS TRACT AND BOOK SOCIETY

PREFATORY NOTE.

I HAVE very gratefully to acknowledge the valuable assistance received from many Christian friends during the preparation of the following pages. I feel specially called on to mention the names of Rev. Samuel Prenter, D.D., Dublin; (the late) Rev. Matthew Kerr, Cork; Rev. George MacFarland, B.A., Belfast; Rev. F. S. Gardiner, M.A., Kingstown; Rev. Thomas Connellan, Dublin; Rev. Thomas Lyle, M.A., Dublin. Had it not been for important literary help generously rendered me by Rev. W. T. Latimer, B.A., Eglisk, Dungannon, and Rev. John A. Bain, M.A., Westport, I do not see how this little volume could have ever made its appearance.

PREFACE.

THE REV. HAMILTON MAGEE, D.D., was one of the most devoted and distinguished Missionaries the Presbyterian Church ever sent into the Irish Field. The following narrative from his own pen is of first-rate importance as a contribution to the general history of the Mission, and as a record of events which might very easily have become indistinct in the memory of the Church, or have passed altogether into oblivion. It is matter for thankfulness to God that though the author was not spared to see the sheets through the press, or to give to his work those finishing touches which his fastidious mind would have spared no pains to impart, he was, nevertheless, able to complete his narrative, and leave at the time of his lamented death his manuscript practically ready for publication.

It was not, however, as a mere contribution to history that in his declining days Dr. Magee undertook the duty of writing this book. His object was to

render a service to the Mission which he loved in the only way that was left to him ; to present its principles in a concrete form, and to illustrate its spirit in the outlines of a personal narrative. The beautiful story before us is at once an exposition, a vindication, and a plea. The Irish Mission of the Presbyterian Church, as it exists at present, bears the stamp of Dr. Magee's constructive genius, and in all its outstanding features it has been moulded into shape by his capable hand. Probably the very easiest way to understand the scope and design of the Mission is to read the following narrative. Certainly the best way to vindicate the Mission is to recount its achievements, and the best way to enkindle the sympathies of the Church on its behalf is to chronicle its vicissitudes. All through life Dr. Magee had laboured hard to set the whole subject in a clear and true light before the eye of the Church. As soon as he had been released from active service, in consequence of failing health, he set himself to devote whatever strength and time might be left to him to this cherished object. Often and often in the performance of this self-imposed task, through the recurrence of disease, the pen had to be laid aside. Then, when strength returned, he would take it up

again, and it was only amid the fluctuations and flickerings of life that the closing chapters were written. He hoped and yearned that he might be spared to see the volume published; but God decreed it otherwise, as the end came soon after the last sentences were written, and the volume now passes into the hands of the public, not merely as the memorial of the Mission, but as the touching and eloquent memorial of the deceased Missionary, one of the noblest, one of the most consecrated, and one of the most gifted that the Irish Presbyterian Church has ever produced.

And, after all, it is as the memorial of the man that we shall all most prize it. Its chief value and its preserving savour lie just in that element which its author never thought of, viz., in its unconscious and unpremeditated portraiture of the author himself. To those who knew him intimately there is no difficulty in recognising Dr. Magee in this little volume. His strongly marked individuality was such that it could not be hid. The compact sentences are his, and the style of limpid clearness. The generous discriminating estimate of others, and the shy references to himself, the pungency of spirit, the mirthfulness which is here and there allowed to peep out of the paragraphs, the

strong love of truth and fact, the warm heart and irrepressible hope, which pervade the book throughout, are strongly characteristic of the man, and are readily recognizable by those who knew him. To those who knew him not the portrait may appear dim, and may convey an inadequate impression. Certainly it falls far short of the original, and the book can present only a suggestion, and at best only a very imperfect image of its author. Far better than anything he ever wrote, or anything he ever did, was the man himself—that delightful personality whom it was a privilege to know, and with whom in the pressure of life's duties it was an inspiration to associate. His literary executor, so far as this volume is concerned, the Rev. John A. Bain, M.A., of Westport, was selected by himself. In the filial and sympathetic manner in which Mr. Bain has discharged the duty he has laid Dr. Magee's friends under a lasting debt of obligation.

Amongst Dr. Magee's papers was found after his death the modest epitaph, written with his own hand, which he wished to be inscribed on his tombstone, "HE LIVED FOR IRELAND." He loved Ireland and her people as few men have ever done. He had made a profound study of Irish history, and he was familiar, in