

that he had broken his heart, relating to him at the same time that they had found in his private journal under date of April 1, 1820: "To-day was born to me a son, the child of my old age," followed by a most beautiful consecration of him to God, beseeching the Almighty that above all things he might be holy.

James McMaster's character was deeply tinged with melancholy even as a little child, owing to the sternness of the Presbyterian creed. He was so impressed by the doctrine of predestination—misinterpreted by many of this sect—that on one occasion, about the age of six, he left his sisters and little companions with whom he was playing and running into an adjoining room threw himself on the bed and cried bitterly. On being pressed to make known the cause of his grief, he told them he was thinking of the time when they would all be happy together in heaven, and he would be lost forever. On his fifth birthday his father presented him with a Latin grammar, and at the age of eight he began the study of Greek. When he was ten years old he was making earnest studies in both these languages, under the direction of his father and with the assistance of his sister Helen, then fifteen, who, in addition to the above, was studying French, Hebrew and Sanscrit.

Several years later James A. McMaster's youthful heart was stirred with the ambition to rival Herschel, whose fame was spread abroad at that time. He accordingly plunged deeply into astronomy, but soon turned from it in disgust. It was not in keeping with his nature and the yearning of his soul for truth. A science founded on supposition could not satisfy him. His motto for the *Freeman's Journal* in after years, "*Veritas liberabit vos!*"—The truth will make you free," was but the echo of his whole life. He was as a captive bound in fetters, until he concentrated the whole force of his great mind and heart on the attainment of the knowledge of Him who not only contains within Him all truth, but is Himself the eternal and unchangeable truth.

The following incident shows the extensive knowledge he possessed of the Sacred Scriptures. When somewhere about the age of twelve he boasted one day to his sister Helen, in boylike fashion, that there was not a passage worth quoting in the

whole of Shakespeare's works that he could not tell her the place where it belonged, the Act and Scene; and that he could open the volume with his eyes shut and put his finger on the page. She reproved him energetically, saying: "It is a shame that it is not the Bible you know so well." But he rejoined: "There is not a passage in the Bible from cover to cover that you can quote to me that I cannot tell you whence, what book and chapter, it is taken." She accordingly put him to the test, and he came off victorious. Later on he read Scott's Waverley novels by the page, (as he called it; that is, without pausing for reflection, and yet he never forgot them. He could also recite from memory page after page of poetry after one reading.

He excelled in playing chess and riding horseback, but cared little for the other sports of youth. He was a hard student, and for some time previous to his entrance into Union College in his seventeenth year employed frequently eighteen hours a day in study.

The strength of his character at that period is shown by the following: He sometimes regretted that he had never been "a boy." He studied Latin and Greek when other children were learning the alphabet. At the age of ten he had begun to read Xenophon in the original. And, when he entered Union College he was more fitted to teach than to study. Among the students of the college there was one who, in order to pay for his own education, taught a country school in the neighborhood. He fell sick and was very much distressed, fearing the loss of his position. James McMaster, touched with pity, supplied his place for several weeks until his recovery. The school was composed of big burly farmers' sons, many of them over twenty years of age. Hearing of the change they did not appreciate having this "fine youngster" (McMaster who was very nice in his dress at that period) coming to lord it over them. They accordingly planned among themselves that several of the strongest of them would flog him and then put him out of the window. By some means the new teacher became aware of the plot. On entering the school-room the first morning, he quietly walked up to the teacher's desk, laid his revolver upon it and began: "I hear there is a plot among you