

The Life and Catholic Journalism
OF THE LATE
JAMES A. McMASTER,

Editor of the New York Freeman's Journal and
Catholic Register.

Edited by VERY REV. MARK S. GROSS.
For the Carmelite Review.

CHAPTER VIII.—(CONTINUED.)



HERE are certain men, *viri Catholici*, as Pius IX. called them. "Their minds," says Cardinal Manning, "are weary of old truths, old terms, old phrases, old modes of teaching, old prayers, old devotions. They need the stimulus of novelty, new colors, new forms, new ways of stating old doctrines. It is with doctrines as with fashions; they must be always changing. Critics and authors, professors and preachers, often have a craving for originality. To be like their forefathers is to be commonplace; to strike out new lines, new ways of putting old truths, makes a reputation. It is only the Church that can revise the sacred terminology of faith. She alone 'can bring forth things old and new.' All other innovations are departures from the beaten path, which is safe because beaten, and beaten because it is the way of our forefathers in the faith. What is true in theology is more evidently true in the interpretation of the sacred Scripture. The love of novelty is always at work to find new meanings; and criticism is impatient of restraint. We live in an age of unlimited intellectual liberty. Those men read without scruple or hesitation books and writings which fall under the rules of the Index. The habit of intellectual independence is easily formed. We are surrounded by both Gnostics and Agnostics; by those who out of their own consciousness are wiser than the Church, and by others who measure what can be known by what they know. Catholics would not consciously listen to either of these schools

of error; and yet they are continually and unconsciously taking in their erroneous premises and principles, and assumptions in their daily contact with the world. As to false theology and false interpretation of Scripture, they would be upon their guard; but they are off their guard in philosophy, and readily open their ears and their intellect to the aberrations of modern metaphysics. They think that as in philosophy there is no heresy, so there need be no fear. But a false philosophy undermines faith, and one philosophical error, like a rotten beam, will loosen the whole superstructure of theology. These *viri Catholici* have, of all men, need to be upon their guard, for they are the guides and teachers of the faithful. It is dangerous to receive and to propagate the least intellectual error. We have need to live in great watchfulness against what is glorified as 'modern thought.' The thought of the modern world is setting steadily away from God. The love of novelty is one of its signs."

Such men do not enjoy true liberty of spirit. They are under the influence of the spirit of novelty. They suffer themselves to be guided by it. They are the dupes of human prudence. But McMaster was always afraid and suspicious of novelties in doctrine, or practice, or devotion. He knew that theology, or the science of God, is a divine tradition, running down from the beginning, ever expanding, and rising in its unity and symmetry to perfection. It is built up, indeed, of things old and new; but the new are, as Vincent of Lerins said, *non nova, sed nove*. The coins of the Roman, the Byzantine, the British Empire have new and various images and superscriptions, but the gold is all one. So the definitions of the truth may be new, but the truth is old. It is the restless sea of human intellect casting up mire and darkness that forces the Church to make new dykes and to guard the faith with new definitions.

Our journalist always remembered, that, whenever the interests of truth are involved, Catholicity is essentially intolerant. "*One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God.*" (Ephes. iv.)

He defended and adopted with perfect confidence every practice which the Church recommends, and obeyed her regulations with filial submission. He listened to no