

The Life and Catholic Journalism

OF THE LATE

JAMES A. McMASTER.

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

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For the Carmelite Review.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIRTH OF JAMES A. McMASTER.—HIS CHILDHOOD AND EARLY MANHOOD.—HIS SCHOLARLY ATTAINMENTS, HIS ENTRANCE INTO THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND SEMINARY.—HIS VENERATION FOR THE BLESSED VIRGIN.—HIS CONVERSION TO CATHOLICITY, 1845.—HE IS DISCARDED BY HIS FAMILY AND WORLDLY FRIENDS.

CONTINUED.

IT could be easily foreseen that a Protestant who could write so beautifully of the Holy Mother of God, would ere long become a Catholic. And, indeed, McMaster soon discovered in the Episcopal church a certain spirit which displeased him very much. He criticised it in the following words, which precede his little treatise on the blessedness of the Holy Mother of God,

"It was a rule of the Church in the days when she was 'lusty and strong,' and her 'children were about her,' when her sons married her, even as a young man marrieth a maid, and her God rejoiced over her as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride. In those days, I say, it was the custom of the Church when any error of doctrine was rife, to direct against it the whole drift of her teaching, and when any truth was likely to be lost sight of, to enforce it day by day till its importance was acknowledged. I know the policy of the present day is different; when any truth has become unpalatable, we refrain from it, lest through dislike its enemies should be driven from the Church of God, or rather should desert ourselves personally, and thus it was prophesied, 'When thou wast young,' said our Lord to him who was the type of the Church on earth, 'thou didst gird thyself and walkest whither thou wouldst. But

when thou shalt be old, another shall bind thee whither thou wouldst not.' And the looseness with which distinctive truth is taught, is a note, that that other, even the lawless anti-Christ is shortly to be revealed. For we see, almost on every hand, truth asserted with diffidence, in proportion to the violence and obstinacy with which error opposes itself.

"But, that God may avert from us that day of His wrath, and give peace in our time, or else give us grace to witness a good profession; let us receive with all readiness of mind, the whole of His sacred truths as revealed in the Book of Life and taught in the Holy Church."

In these words, McMaster has revealed his great love for truth.

"Indeed, our intellect," says St. Thomas, "is formed for truth and cannot help thinking according to truth. The intellect is not a faculty or power which is, in itself, free, as the will is. Whersoever it sees the truth it cannot help embracing it. It is not free to accept or reject it, except when ignorance puts the mind in such a state as to render it unable to see the truth. Whenever the mind sees the truth, it is forced to accept it. When the mind does not see the truth it is inactive—it does nothing. If, in this case, it asserts one proposition rather than another, such assertion is merely an act of the will, and not an act of the intellect. For instance, if I am asked whether the moon is inhabited, I can assert that it is, merely because I choose to do so. But I am not compelled to make this assertion by any evidence, for I do not *know*. But if I am asked, to how much two and two amount, I cannot choose my answer, I am forced to say 'four.' The intellect, then, is bound to acknowledge the truth when it sees the truth. But the will may deny it. The intellect of any man cannot help acknowledging the existence of God, and of the first principles of right and wrong. But a perverse will may deny these truths."

"Of all things that are good for men, truth is, without doubt, the greatest good. Truth is the good thing for the intellect. As the eye was made to receive light, and the ear to receive sounds, and the hand to do all kinds of work, so the intellect was made to see and embrace the truth, to unite itself with the truth, and to find its repose in truth alone.

"Truth is a good thing for the heart. The heart is bound to love something. Now, when the intellect does not show it a true, honest object of love, the heart is sure to soil itself in a sordid love.

"Truth is the good thing for society. If truth does not guide its steps, society must fall into misery, and setting itself against