

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 IV.

CONTINUED.



R. McMASTER did not usually soften his words in writing on any subject in which a principle was involved that he strongly believed. He had freely exercised his privilege of criticising the military preparations of the War

Secretary, and hence he soon came in conflict with the Lincoln administration, and, in one of those arbitrary fits in which Secretary Seward used to indulge. Mr. McMaster was arrested by the United States marshal in 1861, and the publication of the *Freeman's Journal* was suppressed. The affair created a great sensation, not only in New York, but all over the country, which was intensified by his incarceration in Fort Lafayette, where he was kept confined for eleven months without any charge whatsoever. Many of the papers allowed to stand—for this journal was not the only one Mr. Seward suppressed—expressed themselves warmly in regard to this particular case, the unanimous sentiment being this generous utterance of a journal, in some sense this paper's rival then—the *Boston Pilot*:

"We can speak for the *Freeman's Journal*. And we can say, in all truth, that no journal of the North has denounced the treacherous doings of the South more sternly and more strongly than did Mr. McMaster's paper. Its language has not been ungentlemanly or abusive, but firm and dignified."

McMaster, after his release, spoke several times of his imprisonment in Fort Lafayette and described the horrible battle that raged within him at what he considered the outrageous treatment to which he had been subjected. For twenty-four hours, he declared, he had but one thought, one de-

sire—to escape by any possible means and fly to Washington and wreak a summary vengeance on the man responsible for it, and then calmly await the consequence. The reason of the strong, fierce man won the victory, and throwing himself on his knees he protested that he would not jeopardize his salvation by stealing the prerogative of the God of vengeance. For the sake of justice, for the sake of upholding the constitution and Union, McMaster suffered this unjust imprisonment.*

On his release the publication of the paper was resumed on April 19, 1862, and although its criticisms of the government were none the less outspoken, it was not again molested.

In August, 1863, occurred the famous draft riots in New York. We need not indulge in any extensive description of those terrible days and weeks, for the record of them can be found in the history books. What should be noted is the fact that the workingmen and Irish people were charged by the daily papers with being not only concerned with the riots, but also with the destruction of private property and the cold-blooded murders which disgraced the city. It was an undoubted fact that many of the honest people of the city were growing tired of the war, with its weary years of bloodshed, and, in view of the fact that President Lincoln was even then negotiating for a healing of the breach between the States, were disinclined to submit to what seemed an unnecessary drafting into the army. We can now see how wrong they were, but people then can be excused for short-sighted views. They protested and resisted the drafting officers, thus precipitating the riot. Upon this, as in all public troubles of a similar nature, the thieves and toughs emerged from their dens and began stealing and destroying private property in the general confusion. There was no clearer duty than that of putting down the mob at all costs, but the daily papers went too far when they charged the Irish and the workingmen with being thieves and murderers. This journal, true to its name and purpose, took up their cause and

*When McMaster was arrested the soldiers put manacles on his wrists. They hurried him into a carriage, but from its window McMaster thrust out his manacled hands to the public view of New York City as the conveyance hurried him to prison.