

was a thorough journalist, and, knowing that a sense of independence was absolutely necessary to an honest and just expression of opinion, it was difficult for him to conceive how an editor could attempt to discuss topics of importance in his journal while he was circumscribed in his views by the opinions and judgment of another."

In 1849 McMaster received and printed the following letter of commendation from the great and heroic Bishop Hughes:

"It gives me great pleasure to learn that the patronage extended to the New York *Freeman's Journal and Catholic Register* has encouraged and enabled its proprietor to increase its usefulness and improve its appearance at considerable expense to himself.... I have no hesitation in saying that a real independent Catholic journal in this city is more required for the interests of religion at the present time than at any previous period.... I regard it as a right hearty Catholic journal, and beg leave to recommend it most earnestly to the Catholic clergy and laity of the diocese of New York.

"JOHN HUGHES,  
Bishop of New York.

"July 3rd, 1849."

This unsolicited commendation from episcopal authority was the last ever printed in the paper's columns. Such have since been offered and respectfully refused. It was not that it did not appreciate the kindness of such offers, or that it had not the proper veneration for the authorities of the church. On the contrary, while such a commendation would have hampered its action, it would have laid upon episcopal authority a very grievous burden. The church claims a right of censorship of the press, and that right is most unquestionable. But to ask a bishop to place his *imprimatur* upon things not yet written has always seemed to it the height or the depth of absurdity. Accordingly, while this journal sincerely promised to be loyal, in letter and in spirit, to the doctrines and the morals and the discipline of the church—a loyalty which no man dare impeach—it claimed its freedom to think and to write as it thought best, and to be responsible itself for every word it said, or copied approvingly. It foresaw, in its young, lusty manhood, that a battle was to be fought, not only against the enemy without, but also against the wavering within—that it would be called upon to wound and bruise many persons that in themselves might be dear and cherished friends—and that it

would not be fair to ask another to share the responsibility.

How correct McMaster's view was on this subject is evident from the following declaration of Bishop Hughes. In the paper's issue of September 15th, 1849, we find a notification from Bishop Hughes declaring that, while he highly approved of the paper, he was not responsible for a single line in it except he signed it: This was called forth by the continued quoting of expressions from its columns, coupled with the statement that "Bishop Hughes' organ" says so and so; very good things in themselves, and thoroughly approved by Bishop Hughes, who, however, did not want to be called upon to explain and defend the words of another man.

McMaster believed firmly that it was essential for a writer to be deeply in earnest to effect good results, and it need hardly be said that his whole heart was given to the subject that engaged his pen.

But it is not merely as an editor that Mr. McMaster's loss will be deeply felt by Catholics in all parts of the country. His unshaking loyalty to the interests of the church, his ceaseless efforts in behalf of her rights and privileges, the docility with which he followed her teaching at all times, the true zeal he manifested even under the most adverse circumstances, and his great faith and love, which have grown stronger and stronger with advancing years, the valiant war he has waged for forty years against every description of oppression, the hard blows he has borne for his faith and for the cause of religion, and his untiring endeavors to make Christians appreciate and acknowledge the priceless gift which God has bestowed upon them, have made his name a household word in every true Catholic home, and will cause it to be cherished in the heart of every member of the church who values purity of life and motive, and a devotion to high ideals.

"Like Bishop Hughes," said the New York *Times*, Dec. 30th, "McMaster was aggressive. He had bold things to say and he said them without fear. He shrank from no adversary. He became the target of every opponent of his church, but he returned every shot they fired at him. His reputation spread until he was regarded throughout the land as chief in what thousands of good citizens thought was a bold scheme to make Rome the director of the United States."