

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.

McMASTER'S JOURNAL AS EXERCISING A CENSORSHIP OVER ERROR IN ITS DEFENCE AND ADVOCACY OF TRUTH AND SOUND MORALITY.—HIS MISTAKES, AT TIMES.—HIS VEHEMENCE, FOR THE RIGHT.—DR. MCGLYNN.—ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH.—RT. REV. BISHOP LOOTENS.—THE ARCHDIOCESE OF OREGON.—THE VENERABLE PIONEER AND SAINTLY ARCHBISHOP BLANCHET.—THE INTERDICT OF THE FREEMAN'S JOURNAL BY THE RT. REV. BISHOP BALTES.



WHEN there was question of Catholic dogma, or morality or Church discipline, (on all which subjects McMaster was thoroughly informed) or even of sound political principles, the *Freeman's* advocacy and defence were commendably forcible, and excusably strong in expression, and call for no apology from his biographer. Over all these great subjects, McMaster claimed for truth and right's sake, the privileges of a free press, the privilege of criticism and censorship, which in this land of freedom no prelate, nor priest, nor layman of an American spirit may begrudge him. His motto was: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." A newspaper like the *Freeman's Journal* wielded a wholesome influence of fear, yet respectful regard from the American Catholic public.

Where, however, McMaster failed to receive full information on both sides of a disputed question, he was led at times into error, and permitted himself to express his opinion of persons and things in no commendable terms. He was strong in the opposition where, if fully informed, he

would have been otherwise equally strenuous in defence.

James A. McMaster, as a journalist, claimed the field of censorship over false principles in religion and in politics.

Consequently, such an editor, in his life of journalism of forty years, had many a hard contest. For the duty of public censorship, he had to be even a wounding writer, at times.

It is said of Oliver Cromwell, lord protector of the English commonwealth, that he once sat for his portrait. The artist produced on canvas a likeness of the famous leader, fair, smooth and flattering.

But Cromwell's face had in reality strong lines, and bore an ugly scar. The likeness was without this disfigurement especially.

"Paint me, as I am," exclaimed Cromwell, "and put on all the scars and roughness."

James A. McMaster was in character a typical Puritan, and could he speak, he would have his biographer picture him true to his public life—present him before the public as the public knew him—to gloss over none of the ruggedness of his character, nor hide the scars of his conflict in the career of a journalism as bold to announce truth as it was aggressive to expose, and to grapple with the false and pernicious. We are free to confess, McMaster had on him all the sharp points of his exceptional character—that in the use of invective, he may have seemed to some, at times, too bitter; that in rebuke out of the love of truth, he may have appeared too strong in his reproach, sometimes even unbecomingly severe and harsh in his expression; too personal, perhaps, apparently to some in the heat of argument amid the discussion of the great question that occupied his pen.

Again, McMaster dealt not in over-caution, nor ever adopted the side of compromising expediency. Our journalist at times made priests and bishops shake their heads and look grave. They doubted not the loyalty of his faith or the purity of his motives; but his boldness at times, to them at first sight was rashness, his arguments and terms tinged perhaps to them with the irreverent, and his canvas especially of Canon Law for the United States, too, un-circumscribed, and not altogether expedient.

At no period of his journalism did McMaster's writing excite more investigation