

The Life and Catholic Journalism

OF THE LATE

JAMES A. McMASTER,*Editor of the New York Freeman's Journal and
Catholic Register.*

Edited by REV. MARK S. GROSS.

For the Carmelite Review.

CHAPTER III.

HENCE it is that the Most Rev. Archbishop Corrigan, of New York, could say of McMaster that "during all those forty years, on all religious topics of the day, for with other points we are not concerned here, on all matters affecting religious interests, the welfare of the church, his utterances were vigorous and unmistakable. Wherever the church put him by her supreme authority, there his word rang out sound and clear. There was no faltering, no wavering. The instincts of faith coming from that great gift of divine truth were strong and clear.

"The instincts of faith kept him true; and this because he had fully comprehended that great principle announced long ago by a servant of the church, St. Ambrose: 'Where Peter is, there is the church, and where the church is, there is the Holy Spirit.'

"It is difficult to over-estimate, it is extremely hard to gauge even, the power of the press. It controls public opinion, and so moves the world. Blessed, therefore, is he who uses this immense engine of power for good. We know that for forty years this work has been done faithfully, perseveringly, conscientiously, by James A. McMaster."

The Rev. Father Hecker, of the Paulists, who was one of the oldest and warmest friends of Mr. McMaster, alluded to the love and respect which he had always entertained for him. He said: "Mr. McMaster ought to be reckoned with the great men of the country. He belongs in the same grand category with Dr. Brownson. They were men who sought only the divine authority of truth, and they found it concentered in the Catholic church—the only place where it can be found—and when they found it they never deviated from it one iota. Such men cannot be made heretics. Heresy is to knowingly and wilfully deny the truth. This these men were never known to do at any moment of their lives. Man," he continued, "naturally has a repugnance to obey. He will not obey any authority that is merely human, but when he meets with divine authority that

commands him to obey, he does so without dishonor. These men were of this stuff, of which the martyrs were made. Great men! It is no dishonor to be conquered by divine grace, and they were so conquered until the very moment of death. Clergymen and laymen, even when they differed with Mr. McMaster, always respected his motives, which were ever disinterested and pure. He knew not what it was to be selfish. He was always regarded as the foremost Catholic journalist of the country, and whatever might have been the peculiarities of his views, they were always expressed forcibly in good, plain language. If I were asked what chiefly characterized Mr. McMaster's tone as a journalist, I should say his simplicity, fidelity to truth, and force of expression."

Father Hecker said he was only too sorry that he was not strong enough to speak at length on the subject, as he had known Mr. McMaster for very many years, and had nothing but the kindest recollections of the friendship that had existed between them. He related several interesting reminiscences illustrating the great charity that ruled Mr. McMaster's character, and said that few persons realized the wonderfully tender heart that beat under the rugged exterior of the scholarly and devout editor.

Mr. Maurice F. Egan says:

"That the Catholic press of America has lost in Mr. McMaster its chief and most powerful representative, a glance at the journals that compose it would convince the most casual observer, even if he were a stranger to that reputation founded upon twenty years of earnest, conscientious and successful labor in this sphere of duty. The prospects which Catholic journalism offer to the aspirant are by no means alluring, and hence if, unlike the veteran editor of the *Freeman's Journal*, he is not actuated by higher motives than mere professional or pecuniary advancement, he will naturally seek the more advantageous field of the secular press. It is due to this fact, in a great measure, that in Mr. McMaster's death the church of America is left without a champion in the field, who is in every way fitted to uphold her cause. This was a constant source of regret to him for several years. He often lamented the lack of this powerful adjunct in connection with the church in this country. He knew how great would be the assistance of well-equipped and well-directed religious papers in advancing the work of the church, and he strongly advocated the training of clever and intelligent young men for the profession. He detested the idea of 'organs,' however, and frequently observed that a diocese with an 'organ' was more apt to find it a hindrance than otherwise. He