

Newman as a preacher is chiefly known to those of the present day through eight volumes of "Parochial and Plain Sermons" delivered by him, while still a minister in the Church of England. It is usual to speak of him as a great preacher, and if the greatness of the preacher is to be measured by the effect produced by his sermons, he must be held to be a very great one. It has been said of them by one well qualified to form a correct judgment, they "have done more than any one thing to mould and quicken and brace the religious temper of our time; they have acted with equal force on those who were nearest and on those who were furthest from him in theological opinion." It is certain they have entered as a quite appreciable force into the intellectual and spiritual life of the nation: They may be said even to have accomplished little less than a revolution in the prevailing style of preaching, making it much less conventional and much more direct and practical. And their influence has been confined to no one branch of the Christian church. It has probably been even more felt in the Non-conformist churches than in that body to which, as all Protestants will regret, their author deemed it dutiful to transfer his allegiance. Yet it is easy to read these sermons without having forced on one's attention any single excellence or any combination of excellences, so unusual as to account for this wide and deep influence. They do not often startle the reader by the boldness and originality of the thought, as do those of Frederick Robertson. They have not the tender pathos and exquisite beauty of the discourses of John Kerr, and they are still farther removed from the elaborate word-painting of Guthrie. Nor does the preacher, like Chalmers, carry his audience along on a flood of impassioned speech. All these legitimate and natural means of impression, Newman seems as if on set purpose to avoid. He does not once step aside from the direct path in which his theme leads him to lay hold of a striking thought or to cull a flower of rhetoric. His imagery is throughout of the simplest kind and is such as serves, merely to display the thought, never to attract attention to itself. He shuns sedulously not only exaggeration, but even vehement emotion, as if it were not a strength but a weakness. His speech is for the most part as calm and unimpassioned, as it is precise and clear. The usual qualities of the orator are conspicuously absent, and indeed his warmest admirer declares "he was utterly unlike an orator in all outward ways." What then was the secret of his great power?