

NEWMAN AND THE TRACTARIAN MOVEMENT.



FROM the anniversary of Newman's birth cannot be dissociated the recollection of one of the most important crises in the ecclesiastical annals of the English speaking world, a crisis so mighty in its results that not only has it been the means of snatching from Anglicanism many of her choicest sons, but its pulsation is felt to this very time and is daily drawing thousands to the one true fold of Christ.

To trace the life of John Henry Newman from his thirty-second to his forty-fifth year, is but to narrate the history of this crisis, the great Tractarian Movement; for though it is true that the Movement was a principle of action breaking out in different places and attracting to itself minds of widely different character, rather than a regularly organized party, still it must be admitted that in Newman was recognized its great chieftain guiding spirit.

A brief glance at the condition of religion in England during the first two decades of the late century will not fail to reveal the real cause of this remarkable movement. Anglicanism had reached the lowest ebb to which it had ever been its lot to sink. Attacked by corruption within and a host of enemies without, its total ruin seemed inevitable. The absence of religious belief among the bishops, the neglect of duty by the clergy, its treatment by the government as a mere creature of the state, the progress of secularism in the suppression of religious thought, all these were but a few of the circumstances that pointed to the certain conquest of Anglicanism by infidelity. Hence it is that Arnold was led to say, "The Church, as it now stands, no human power can save."

But at Oxford was a number of men of eminent abilities and deep piety who were endued with the desire of averting this ruin and restoring the church of their country to the position she held during the 17th century when they believed her to have taught the doctrines of the primitive church.

Among the many causes that conduced to this notion of a reformation within the Establishment was the peculiar mould of education at Oxford together with the revival of Catholic teaching