

We can hardly understand the extravagant laudations of his contemporaries from his printed sermons. But good preachers were rare in Italy, and the effect of popular oratory depends upon action as much as on diction. We must take into account the magnetism of his personality, the force of dramatic delivery, the lively gestures, the fame of his monastic sanctity, his emaciated face, his gleaming eyes, his tall stature and imposing figure. The portrait prefixed to his "Nine Sermons," published at Venice, 1539, shows him to us as he was at that time—a typical Capuchin monk, with the head bent, the gaze upturned, the eyes deeply sunk under the brow, the nose aquiline, the mouth half open, the head shaved on top, the beard reaching down to his breast.

Cardinal Sadolet compared him to the orators of antiquity. One of his hearers in Naples said: "This man could make the very stones weep." Cardinal Bembo secured him for Lent at Venice through Vittoria Colonna, and wrote to her (1539): "I have heard him all through Lent with such pleasure that I cannot praise him enough. I have never heard more useful and edifying sermons than his; and I no longer wonder that you esteem him so highly. He preaches in a far more Christian manner than other preachers, with more real sympathy and love, and utters more soothing and elevating thoughts. Every one is delighted with him." A few months later he remarks to the same lady: "Our Fra Bernardino is literally adored here. There is no one who does not praise him to the skies. How deeply his words penetrate; how elevating and comforting his discourses!" His abstinence was so excessive that he begged him to eat meat and not restrain himself, lest he should break down.

Even Pietro Aretino, the most frivolous and immoral poet of that age, was superficially converted for a brief season by his preaching, and wrote to Paul III.: "Bembo has won a thousand souls for Paradise in bringing to Venice Fra Bernardino, whose modesty is equal to his virtue. I have myself begun to believe in the exhortations trumpeted forth from the mouth of this apostolic monk."

Cardinal Commendone, afterward Bishop of Amelia, an enemy of Ochino, gives this description of him: "Everything about Ochino contributed to make the admiration of the multitude almost overstep all human bounds—the fame of his eloquence; his prepossessing, ingratiating manner; his advancing years; his mode of life; the rough Capuchin garb; the long beard reaching to his breast; the gray hair; the pale, thin face; the artificial aspect of bodily weakness; finally, the reputation of a holy life. Wherever he was to speak, the citizens might be seen in crowds; no church was large enough to contain the multitude of listeners. Men flocked as numerous as women. When he went elsewhere the crowd followed after to hear him. He was honored not only by the common people, but also by princes and kings. Wherever he came he was offered hospitality; he was met at his arrival and escorted at his departure by the dignitaries of the place. He himself knew how to increase the desire