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# PART I.

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MR. KINGSLEY'S METHOD OF DISPUTATION.

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## PART I.

### MR. KINGSLEY'S METHOD OF DISPUTATION.

I CANNOT be sorry to have forced Mr Kingsley to bring out in fulness his charges against me. It is far better that he should discharge his thoughts upon me in my lifetime, than after I am dead. Under the circumstances I am happy in having the opportunity of reading the worst that can be said of me by a writer who has taken pains with his work and is well satisfied with it. I account it a gain to be surveyed from without by one who hates the principles which are nearest to my heart, has no personal knowledge of me to set right his misconceptions of my doctrine, and who has some motive or other to be as severe with me as he can possibly be.

And first of all, I beg to compliment him on the motto in his Title-page; it is felicitous. A motto should contain, as in a nutshell, the contents, or the character, or the drift, or the

4 MR. KINGSLEY'S METHOD OF DISPUTATION.

*animus* of the writing to which it is prefixed. The words which he has taken from me are so apposite as to be almost prophetic. There cannot be a better illustration than he thereby affords of the aphorism which I intended them to convey. I said that it is not more than an hyperbolic expression to say that in certain cases a lie is the nearest approach to truth. Mr. Kingsley's pamphlet is emphatically one of such cases as are contemplated in that proposition. I really believe, that his view of me is about as near an approach to the truth about my writings and doings, as he is capable of taking. He has done his worst towards me; but he has also done his best. So far well; but, while I impute to him no malice, I unfeignedly think, on the other hand, that, in his invective against me, he as faithfully fulfils the other half of the proposition also.

This is not a mere sharp retort upon Mr. Kingsley, as will be seen, when I come to consider directly the subject, to which the words of his motto relate. I have enlarged on that subject in various passages of my publications; I have said that minds in different states and circumstances cannot understand one another, and that in all cases they must be instructed according to their capacity, and, if not taught step by step, they learn only so much the less; that children do not apprehend the thoughts of grown people, nor savages the instincts of civilization, nor blind men the perceptions of sight, nor pagans the doctrines of Christianity, nor

MR. KINGSLEY'S METHOD OF DISPUTATION. 5

men the experiences of Angels. In the same way, there are people of matter-of-fact, prosaic minds, who cannot take in the fancies of poets; and others of shallow, inaccurate minds, who cannot take in the ideas of philosophical inquirers. In a Lecture of mine I have illustrated this phenomenon by the supposed instance of a foreigner, who, after reading a commentary on the principles of English Law, does not get nearer to a real apprehension of them than to be led to accuse Englishmen of considering that the Queen is impeccable and infallible, and that the Parliament is omnipotent. Mr. Kingsley has read me from beginning to end in the fashion in which the hypothetical Russian read Blackstone; not, I repeat, from malice, but because of his intellectual build. He appears to be so constituted as to have no notion of what goes on in minds very different from his own, and moreover to be stone-blind to his ignorance. A modest man or a philosopher would have scrupled to treat with scorn and scoffing, as Mr. Kingsley does in my own instance, principles and convictions, even if he did not acquiesce in them himself, which had been held so widely and for so long,—the beliefs and devotions and customs which have been the religious life of millions upon millions of Christians for nearly twenty centuries,—for this in fact is the task on which he is spending his pains. Had he been a man of large or cautious mind, he would not have taken it for granted that cultivation must lead

6 MR. KINGSLEY'S METHOD OF DISPUTATION.

every one to see things precisely as he sees them himself. But the narrow-minded are the more prejudiced by very reason of their narrowness. The Apostle bids us "in malice be children, but in understanding be men." I am glad to recognize in Mr. Kingsley an illustration of the first half of this precept; but I should not be honest, if I ascribed to him any sort of fulfilment of the second.

I wish I could speak as favourably either of his drift or of his method of arguing, as I can of his convictions. As to his drift, I think its ultimate point is an attack upon the Catholic Religion. It is I indeed, whom he is immediately insulting,—still, he views me only as a representative, and on the whole a fair one, of a class or caste of men, to whom, conscious as I am of my own integrity, I ascribe an excellence superior to mine. He desires to impress upon the public mind the conviction that I am a crafty, scheming man, simply untrustworthy; that, in becoming a Catholic, I have just found my right place; that I do but justify and am properly interpreted by the common English notion of Roman casuists and confessors; that I was secretly a Catholic when I was openly professing to be a clergyman of the Established Church; that so far from bringing, by means of my conversion, when at length it openly took place, any strength to the Catholic cause, I am really a burden to it,—

MR. KINGSLEY'S METHOD OF DISPUTATION. 7

an additional evidence of the fact, that to be a pure, german, genuine Catholic, a man must be either a knave or a fool.

These last words bring me to Mr. Kingsley's method of disputation, which I must criticize with much severity;—in his drift he does but follow the ordinary beat of controversy, but in his mode of arguing he is actually dishonest.

He says that I am either a knave or a fool, and (as we shall see by and by) he is not quite sure which, probably both. He tells his readers that on one occasion he said that he had fears I should “end in one or other of two misfortunes.” “He would either,” he continues, “destroy his own sense of honesty, i. e. conscious truthfulness—and become a dishonest person; or he would destroy his common sense, i. e. unconscious truthfulness, and become the slave and puppet seemingly of his own logic, really of his own fancy. . . . I thought for years past that he had become the former; I now see that he has become the latter.” p. 20. Again, “When I read these outrages upon common sense, what wonder if I said to myself, ‘This man cannot believe what he is saying?’” p. 26. Such has been Mr. Kingsley's state of mind till lately, but now he considers that I am possessed with a spirit of “almost boundless silliness,” of “simple credulity, the child of scepticism,” of “absurdity” (p. 41), of a “self-deception which has become a sort of frantic honesty” (p. 26). And as to his fundamental

8 MR. KINGSLEY'S METHOD OF DISPUTATION.

reason for this change, he tells us, he really does not know what it is (p. 44). However, let the reason be what it will, its upshot is intelligible enough. He is enabled at once, by this professed change of judgment about me, to put forward one of these alternatives, yet to keep the other in reserve;—and this he actually does. He need not commit himself to a definite accusation against me, such as requires definite proof and admits of definite refutation; for he has two strings to his bow;—when he is thrown off his balance on the one leg, he can recover himself by the use of the other. If I demonstrate that I am not a knave, he may exclaim, “Oh, but you are a fool!” and when I demonstrate that I am not a fool, he may turn round and retort, “Well, then, you are a knave.” I have no objection to reply to his arguments in behalf of either alternative, but I should have been better pleased to have been allowed to take them one at a time.

But I have not yet done full justice to the method of disputation, which Mr. Kingsley thinks it right to adopt. Observe this first:—He means by a man who is “silly” not a man who is to be pitied, but a man who is to be *abhorred*. He means a man who is not simply weak and incapable, but a moral leper; a man who, if not a knave, has every thing bad about him except knavery; nay, rather, has together with every other worst vice, a spice of knavery to boot. *His* simpleton is one who has become such, in judgment for his having once been

## MR. KINGSLEY'S METHOD OF DISPUTATION. 9

a knave. *His* simpleton is not a born fool, but a self-made idiot, one who has drugged and abused himself into a shameless depravity; one, who, without any misgiving or remorse, is guilty of drivelling superstition, of reckless violation of sacred things, of fanatical excesses, of passionate inanities, of unmanly audacious tyranny over the weak, meriting the wrath of fathers and brothers. This is that milder judgment, which he seems to pride himself upon as so much charity; and, as he expresses it, he “does not know” why. This is what he really meant in his letter to me of January 14, when he withdrew his charge of my being dishonest. He said, “The *tone* of your letters, even more than their language, makes me feel, *to my very deep pleasure*,”—what? that you have gambled away your reason, that you are an intellectual sot, that you are a fool in a frenzy. And in his Pamphlet, he gives us this explanation why he did not say this to my face, viz. that he had been told that I was “in weak health,” and was “averse to controversy,” pp. 6 and 8. He “felt some regret for having disturbed me.”

But I pass on from these multiform imputations, and confine myself to this one consideration, viz. that he has made any fresh imputation upon me at all. He gave up the charge of knavery; well and good: but where was the logical necessity of his bringing another? I am sitting at home without a thought of Mr. Kingsley; he wantonly breaks in upon

C



10 MR. KINGSLEY'S METHOD OF DISPUTATION.

me with the charge that I had "*informed*" the world "that Truth for its own sake *need not* and on the whole *ought not to be* a virtue with the Roman clergy." When challenged on the point he cannot bring a fragment of evidence in proof of his assertion, and he is convicted of false witness by the voice of the world. Well, I should have thought that he had now nothing whatever more to do. "Vain man!" he seems to make answer, "what simplicity in you to think so! If you have not broken one commandment, let us see whether we cannot convict you of the breach of another. If you are not a swindler or forger, you are guilty of arson or burglary. By hook or by crook you shall not escape. Are *you* to suffer or *I*? What does it matter to you who are going off the stage, to receive a slight additional daub upon a character so deeply stained already? But think of me, the immaculate lover of Truth, so observant (as I have told you p. 8) of '*hault courage* and strict honour,'—and (*aside*)—'*and not as this publican*'—do you think I can let you go scot free instead of myself? No; *noblesse oblige*. Go to the shades, old man, and boast that Achilles sent you thither."

But I have not even yet done with Mr. Kingsley's method of disputation. Observe secondly:—when a man is said to be a knave or a fool, it is commonly meant that he is *either* the one *or* the other; and that,—either in the sense that

MR. KINGSLEY'S METHOD OF DISPUTATION. 11

the hypothesis of his being a fool is too absurd to be entertained; or, again, as a sort of contemptuous acquittal of one, who after all has not wit enough to be wicked. But this is not at all what Mr. Kingsley proposes to himself in the antithesis which he suggests to his readers. Though he speaks of me as an utter dotard and fanatic, yet all along, from the beginning of his Pamphlet to the end, he insinuates, he proves from my writings, and at length in his last pages he openly pronounces, that after all he was right at first, in thinking me a conscious liar and deceiver.

Now I wish to dwell on this point. It cannot be doubted, I say, that, in spite of his professing to consider me as a dotard and driveller, on the ground of his having given up the notion of my being a knave, yet it is the very staple of his Pamphlet that a knave after all I must be. By insinuation, or by implication, or by question, or by irony, or by sneer, or by parable, he enforces again and again a conclusion which he does not categorically enunciate.

For instance (1) P. 14. "I know that men *used to suspect Dr. Newman*, I have been inclined to do so myself, of writing a whole sermon . . . . . for the sake of one single passing hint, one phrase, one epithet, one little barbed arrow which . . . . . he delivered unheeded, as with his finger tip, to the very heart of an initiated hearer, *never to be withdrawn again.*"