

John Henry Cardinal Newman.

CARDINAL NEWMAN AND KINGSLEY.

We now come to a most important epoch in Cardinal Newman's life. Up to this time he had never been quite rightly understood by his Protestant fellow-countrymen. They had an undefined suspicion that he had somehow played them false. It remained for Canon Kingsley to give him the opportunity of putting on record such a defence of his conversion as satisfied his most bitter opponents of the thorough sincerity of every step he had taken. It came about in this wise. Mr. Kingsley, although a very honest and honorable clergyman, was not remarkable for controversial prudence, and now and then allowed his polemical zeal to betray him into exaggerated or incorrect statements. In a review of Mr. Froude's "History of England," in *Macmillan's Magazine* for January, 1861, speaking of Roman Catholics and the virtue of truth, he said, in his impetuous way, "Truth, for its own sake had never been a virtue with the Roman clergy. Father Newman informs us that it need not, and on the whole ought not to be; that cunning is the weapon that Heaven has given to the saints wherewith to withstand the brute male force of the wicked world which marries and is given in marriage. Whether his notion be doctrinally correct or not, it is at least historically so."

There was no justification for this amazing attack. As Mr. Froude says: "Kingsley, in truth, entirely misunderstood Newman's character. Newman's whole life had been a struggle for truth. He had neglected his own interests, he had never thought of them at all. He had brought to bear a most powerful and subtle intellect to support the convictions of a conscience which was superstitiously sensitive. His single object had been to discover what were the real relations between man and his Maker, and to shape his own conduct by the conclusions at which he arrived. To represent such a person as careless of truth was neither generous nor even reasonable." Dr. Newman, who felt wounded by this vicious accusation, at once wrote to the publishers pointing out that there was no reference at the foot of the page to any words of his, much less any quotation from his writings, in support of it. He did not write to expostulate or to seek reparation. He did but wish to draw the attention of Messrs. Macmillan, as gentlemen, to a grave and gratuitous slander, with which, he "felt confident, they would be sorry to find their name associated." The letter was shown to Mr. Kingsley who wrote Dr. Newman to the following effect:—"That my words were just, I believed, from many passages of your writings; but the document to which I expressly referred was one of your Sermons on 'Subjects of the Day,' No. XX., in the volume published 1844, and entitled 'Wisdom and Innocence.' I am most happy to hear from you that I mistook (as I understand from your letter) your meaning; and I shall be most happy, on your showing me that I have wronged you, to retract my accusation as publicly as I have made it." Dr. Newman acknowledged the receipt of this, and said, "when I received your letter, taking upon yourself the authorship (of the obnoxious review) I was amazed." He demanded an explanation, and an admission that the accusation in the review was without justification. Canon Kingsley submitted the draft of a paragraph which he proposed to insert in the next number of the Magazine. "Dr. Newman," it ran, "has, by letter, expressed in the strongest terms, his denial of the meaning which I had put upon his words. No man knows the use of words better than Dr. Newman; no man, therefore, has a better right to define what he does, or does not mean by them. It only remains, therefore, for me to express my hearty regret at having so seriously mistaken him; and my hearty pleasure at finding him on the side of Truth in this, or any other matter."

The reader will observe that these admissions were so worded as to induce an interpretation in the popular mind, not altogether favourable to Dr. Newman. This he clearly

saw, and withheld from the explanation the approbation he would fain have bestowed. Mr. Kingsley then offered to omit the expressions "no man knows the use of words better than Dr. Newman" and "my hearty pleasure at finding him on the side of Truth in this, or any other matter." He considered that having done this he "had done as much as one English gentleman could expect from another." It was not, however, sufficient for Dr. Newman, who contended that what was left "would be understood by the general reader as implying that he had been confronted with definite extracts from his works," and had laid before the publishers his own interpretation of them. Such a proceeding he had, he said, challenged, but had not been so fortunate as to bring about. Mr. Kingsley's proposed reparation was "decidedly not" sufficient. It was, however, inserted in the Magazine without any further material alteration, and elicited from Dr. Newman a crushing and ironical rejoinder. It is such a splendid specimen of his pitiless controversial skill and brilliancy of expression that we hope to publish it in a forthcoming number of this Review, along, perhaps, with a number of other specimens of the Cardinal's polemical power, and the matchless elegance of his literary style. Canon Kingsley was completely worsted; the weak spots in his armour had been found out, he was pierced through and through. He might have exclaimed, in the words, if not the spirit, of Sir Andrew Aquecheek, that had he known his adversary to be so "cunning of fence," he would never have challenged him. Newman's pitiless logic left him in a sorry plight. Yet he returned to the combat. He discussed the question in a pamphlet "What then does Dr. Newman Mean?"—a pamphlet not to be commended for its temper or for its taste. There was plenty of hard hitting in it, but the hitting, to use a sporting term, was somewhat wild: there were plenty of strong epithets and condemnatory terms, and insinuations of dishonesty, and the whole of Dr. Newman's career seemed to be distinctly challenged, and his sincerity impugned. It would be profitless now to go over the arguments in detail, or to examine the caustic and effective passages of Dr. Newman's reply. "That reply," writes Mr. Jennings, "was one of the most memorable episodes in literature—the *Apologia pro Vita sua*. In it he laid bare his soul to the whole world, and in spite of a natural sensitiveness which must have made him shrink from the task, gave a full and complete history of his religious opinions from childhood to the period of his entry into the Roman Communion."

It would be impossible to exaggerate the effect of the *Apologia* upon the public mind. It came out in parts, and each new part was looked forward to with eager interest. With the third part the work became purely autobiographical. The writer unveiled his life, his opinions, the influences which had operated upon him, the changes he had undergone, with a candour that carried conviction in every quarter. He traced his childish prejudices, his Oxford beliefs, and the progress of his conversion with minute and unreserved freedom. As a psychological study, as was said in an editorial article in the Review recently—as a remarkable example of searching introspection, the *Apologia* has taken its place among the English classics. No more acute self-analysis has ever been unreservedly communicated to the world. There is only one work to which it can be compared, and that is the "Confessions of St. Augustine." The effect of the volume, when it was finished, was to completely change the attitude of the public towards its author. Their suspicion melted away into thinness of thin air. His opponents were forced to the conclusion that they had hitherto misjudged him. People forgot all about the quarrel with Kingsley in the presence of a larger interest. Newman himself felt the same thing. "And now," he says, at the end of the first part, "I am in a train of thought higher and more serene than any which slanders can disturb. Away with you, Mr. Kingsley, and fly into space."