

all the strength of argument was on the side of Copernicus; though he placed pretty fairly in the mouth of Simplicio, all that could be said in favour of the Ptolemaic creed. There were not wanting many enemies of the philosopher, who were ready to use this work to his prejudice; the report was industriously circulated that his Holiness, Urban, was intended by the conquered advocate of the old philosophy; this soon reached the Pope's ears, and filled him with burning indignation, and at his command Galileo was again summoned before the dreaded tribunal of the Inquisition. Again did physical weakness prevail over moral strength; again, in the presence of the officers of the Inquisition, and the dignitaries of the Church, who gloated on their triumph, did he abjure the noble truths he had so laboured to establish.

Says one of his biographers: "The ceremony of his abjuration was one of exciting interest, and awful formality. Clothed in the sackcloth of a repentant criminal, the venerable sage fell upon his knees before the assembled Cardinals, and laying his hands upon the Holy Evangelists, he invoked the divine aid in abjuring, and detesting, and vowing never again to teach the doctrine of the earth's motion, and the sun's stability. He pledged himself thus solemnly never again to propagate such heresies." It has been recorded, as a matter of tradition that when he rose from his knees, after this fearful ceremony, he turned to one of his friends, and stamping his foot upon the floor, whispered, "It does move, though." What a lesson of human weakness! Let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall; the power of Christianity alone can produce the true spirit of martyrdom. Galileo was a philosopher; but he wanted that self-sacrificing, self-forgetting spirit, which resigns all worldly good, and endures all physical suffering, rather than sully the bright spirit of truth.

Notwithstanding his retraction, Galileo was condemned to confinement in the Inquisition, and to repeat every week seven penitential psalms; but his health had become so enfeebled by the many exposures he had undergone, and he suffered so much from actual pain and debility, that much sympathy was excited for him, and the Pope was at last induced to obtain his release from the prison; but it was only to exchange one place of confinement for another. He was permitted to return to his Villa at Arcetri, near Florence; but he was forbidden to hold intercourse with any of his friends, or to go beyond the bounds of his estate. Indignant at the cruelty of his treatment, and the persecution he endured, he continued to occupy himself with his studies; and, although feeble, and almost worn out, he devoted whole nights, telescope in hand, to studying the heavens. This imprudent exposure had such an effect upon him that in 1639 he lost his sight.

What a touching picture does this present to us!

This poor old man, whose eyes had opened new worlds—he who had been the Columbus of Astronomy,—who had traced out the paths of the stars, and who had planted, as it were, the flag of Cosmo in the Satellite of Jupiter, was destined to have his own star set in darkness and clouds, unblessed by the sight of the sun, whose dark spots he had been the first to point out, and whose face was like that of a familiar friend. Uncheered by the sight of the moon, and the soft rays of the stars, a prisoner and alone—and to these many afflictions was added the loss of hearing, so that he could not even be charmed by the kind voices which would have whispered peace to his troubled spirit—he spent his days in restless wanderings around his garden, leaning upon his staff, and giving himself up to sad and melancholy musings. It was in this situation that Milton, then travelling in Italy, a "youth to fame unknown," found him. Little did the poet realize, as he gazed upon this wreck of former greatness, that he saw a type of what himself should be, as Rogers has beautifully expressed it:

"Little then

Did Galileo think whom he received;  
That in his hand he held the hand of one,  
Who could requite him—who could spread his name,  
O'er lands and seas, great as himself, nay greater—  
Milton as little that in him he saw,  
As in a glass, what he himself should be,  
Destined so soon to fall on evil days,  
And evil tongues; so soon, alas! to live  
In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,  
And solitude."

Seven years did he thus dwell a prisoner at the very gate of Florence, which was closed to him, till, worn out, his heart crushed, and his frame exhausted, he yielded up the Spirit to render its heavy account. Then, wrapped in the paraphernalia of the dead, his shrouded form was borne into that city which had witnessed his most brilliant triumphs. But even then the malice of the Inquisition pursued him; at first they refused to allow him to be buried in consecrated ground, but the Pope interfered, and obtained permission for him to be deposited in an obscure corner of the Church of Santa Croce, where for many years the place remained unmarked by even a tablet. But as time passed on, prejudice and persecution died away by degrees—the Galilean theory became established as articles of faith; and after the Pope and Cardinals who had condemned the noble Astronomer, had gone to give their account of the talents committed to them, after their names had been forgotten, or only recorded on the chronological tables, there arose a fitting monument to Galilei Galileo; it breathed no tale of recantation; no carving of the hall of Inquisition, where mental strength knelt to physical sickness, but Geometry and Astronomy crowned, with never fading garlands, the blind sage of Arcetri.