

GALILEO AND POPE URBAN.

I.

"Even so great a man as Bacon REJECTED the theory of Galileo with SCORN. Bacon had not all the means of arriving at a sound conclusion which are within our reach; and which secure people, who would not have been worthy to mend his pens, from falling into his mistakes."—MACALEY.

Such are the noble words in which the historian of our days vindicates the character of one of the greatest philosophers the world has produced, from the aspersions cast upon him, for his opposition to Galileo's theory. Bacon rejected the theory of Galileo with scorn. But Bacon had not the same means of arriving at a sound conclusion which are within our reach. This is very true and very just, but if true of Bacon why not of Urban? If Urban rejected the theory of Galileo with scorn, Urban had not all those means of arriving at a sound conclusion which are within our reach, and which secure people who would not be worthy to tie the latchet of his shoe, from falling into his mistakes.

It is not a little suggestive that a man of Bacon's undoubted grasp of mind, and keen powers of discrimination, should have refused to relinquish the old for the new philosophy. And if Bacon—why not much more Pope Urban? Urban was a theologian—Bacon a philosopher, and one of our greatest philosophers. The question at issue belonged to the realm of *philosophy*, not of *theology*. It was of *Bacon*, not of *Urban*. The preconceived ideas of the *theologian* all ran counter to the new system, the mind of the *philosopher* was trammelled with no such obstacles. If then Bacon the Philosopher with no very violent prejudices for or against the Sacred Scriptures rejected the theory of Galileo with scorn, how much more naturally must Urban the Theologian have rejected the new philosophy, when he saw or fancied he saw in it a blasphemy against his dear, his fondly cherished, his patiently studied, his deeply revered, his Sacred Scriptures.

But although we with our present lights may at first sight wonder at Bacon's and at Urban's refusal to admit the new theory, if we study the cir-

cumstances our astonishment will soon be considerably modified. They had the evidence of their senses to prove that *the sun moved and not the earth*. We see the sun move and must we call our sight a liar? And it was not the evidence of a thing only once occurring, a matter of extrinsic evidence; it was a matter of every day occurrence, and of every moment of the day. In fact everything in the world in those days went to prove that the sun revolved round the earth; and that if there was one thing in the universe that was stable and immovable, it was the earth. Nay, so great was the certainty in those days as to the Sun's motion that we even in this enlightened nineteenth century of ours have not got over it yet. We still say "the sun rises"—"the sun sets;" when in reality we know that it does no such thing. Are we not—we the wise men of this 19th century—are we not Bacons and Urbans still?

But the New Theory called on men to change all this. "It was all a mistake—the Sun which rose plainly and palpably in the East every morning, with unerring punctuality, and set in the West every evening with equal regularity—that Sun which had been recorded to have risen and set every day without one single disappointment from sore throat or the measles for no less than 5,600 years; this same Sun they were suddenly asked to believe on the slender authority of a few individuals "did no such thing." It was all a mistake; the eyes which everybody had hitherto trusted with implicit reliance were deceivers and had told *fib*s for upwards of 5,000 years. "It was the Earth that moved and not the Sun."

One would think that assertions such as these, running counter as they did to all preconceived ideas of solar propriety, and what is more, contradicting apparently those Sacred Scriptures which the men of those days so deeply revered, and so highly treasured, and so jealously watched, would need, in order to obtain credence to be sustained by arguments *the most profound and the most conclusive*. And yet, what were the arguments with which their advocates sought to sustain them? We have no hesitation in saying that they are the most frivolous and puerile which philosophy ever deigned