

tions, and in baseless theories. Convinced of the folly of their course, they began to turn their eyes in another direction, to yearn for more inviting fields, to seek a surer road to knowledge. They found it in the investigation of nature around them. But how dare they open that sealed book, or unlock her hidden mysteries? Had not the word gone forth from the Papal chair in tones of thunder, "the Church is the infallible depository of all spiritual truth; Aristotle, of all physical truth. The tenets of both are to be received in implicit faith. You doubt or deny at the peril of your life." A few were found brave enough to avow their convictions, to doubt the tenets of Aristotle, to open the book of Nature and read her ample page. It was at the peril of their lives, at the risk of enduring the tortures of the rack or the chains of the dungeon. But they did so, and suffered the penalty. Brave men were they. With heart inspired by love of truth, which no flame of persecution could quench, they dared to be true to themselves and to truth, and rather than prove recreant, would wear the clanking chain or die a martyr's death. Among such men may be ranked Roger Bacon (who must not be confounded with his more illustrious successor, Francis), Copernicus, and Galileo. These were men of whom the age was not worthy. They shine as brilliant stars in the intellectual firmament of an age when thick darkness brooded over the land. They were the heralds of a brighter day, the forerunners of the intellectual Reformation which was completed under Francis Bacon, and which has bequeathed to us such inestimable blessings. The hoarse thunderings of the Vatican intimidated them not; the tortures of the rack, or the chains of the dungeon, chilled not their courage or quenched their loyalty to truth. The spirit of liberty was too strong in

them to be repressed; their love of truth too deep to be extinguished. They felt the barrenness of the field they had been tilling and in which they had been toiling, and resolved to enter a new one, where their toiling would be rewarded, and where their tilling would bear fruit.

Roger Bacon in his lonely cloister was helping in the good work. His eyes were opened to the folly of the course which men had, for the past centuries, been pursuing, and he looked with a longing gaze, towards the more inviting field which nature offered. He actually began to observe, to experiment, to investigate. Success crowned his feeble efforts, and spurred him on. He made some useful discoveries in physics, invented the magnifying glass and gunpowder, and made other important discoveries in chemistry and optics. But he must go no further; the thunders of the Vatican began to rumble in his ears, and its lightnings to scorch his pathway. Alas! he must desist, and abandon his noble work. His discoveries were looked upon as the work of hellish magic, and he was cast into the dungeon, there to wear the clanking chain for ten long years! In vain did he expostulate, in vain did he vindicate the blamelessness of his conduct, the purity of his motives, the utility of his labours. What cared the Pope for the purity of his motives or the utility of his labours, when his authority was questioned, Aristotle doubted, and the book of Nature opened? At length, through the intercession of some friends, pity was bestowed upon him, and broken down by long confinement and work, and worn with care and age, the old philosopher was released, and tottered forth from his dungeon-home—to die!

Copernicus trod the same pathway, carried on the same good work, and laboured in the same field. It was in the silence of his quiet home