

of the planetary economy, such as it has been established by evidence that can never be shaken. Had he shrunk from the exercise of his liberty of thought in deference to the schoolmen and ecclesiastics of his age, others would have subsequently discovered the truth, but his name would have had no place on the records of fame. This inherent freedom of mind asserted itself in most unpropitious circumstances in the case of Galileo. That polished, comprehensive, large-minded, original Italian, lived in an age of mental oppression; it being held as a crime to think in anywise differently from the ruling powers. But who of them could chain that soul of eagle-wing? "Galileo," says Professor Playfair, "is, in truth, one of those to whom human knowledge is under the greatest obligations. His discoveries in the theory of motion, in the laws of the descent of heavy bodies, and in the motion of projectiles, laid the foundation of all the improvements which have since been made by the application of mathematics to natural philosophy. If to this we add the invention of the telescope, the discoveries made by that instrument, the confirmations of the Copernican System which these discoveries afforded, and lastly, the wit and argument with which he combated, and exposed the prejudice and presumption of the Schools, we must admit that the history of human knowledge contains few greater names than that of Galileo." But in combating that "prejudice and presumption" to which Professor Playfair alludes, Galileo came into conflict with those who sought to curb the freedom of thought, and for ever to stereotype the human mind. Copernicus was dying as the sheets of *his* work were presented to him, so that he could not be brought to trial for heresy. Galileo employed the press again and again in putting forth his researches and discoveries, only however to draw down upon him the indignation of the Holy office. The sentence of the Inquisition after the imprisonment and examination of the philosopher was that he must recant "for 1st, (I quote from the sentence pronounced) The proposition that the sun is in the centre of the world (meaning the planetary system) and immoveable from its place, is absurd, philosophically false, and formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to Holy Scripture. 2nd, The proposition that the Earth is not the cen-