

and he prefixed to the *Dialogue* a Notice, *To the Discreet Reader*, in which, in a vein of transparent irony, he assigned his reasons for the publication. "Some years ago," he says, "a wholesome edict was promulgated at Rome, which, in order to check the perilous scandals of the present age, imposed silence upon the Pythagorean opinion of the motion of the earth. There were not wanting," he adds, "persons who rashly asserted that this decree was the result, not of a judicious inquiry, but of a passion ill-informed; and complaints were heard that counsellors, utterly unacquainted with astronomical observations, ought not to be allowed, with their undue prohibitions, to clip the wings of speculative intellects. At the hearing of rash lamentations like these, my zeal could not keep silence." And he then goes on to say that he wishes, by the publication of his *Dialogue*, to show that the subject had been fully examined at Rome. The result of this was that Galileo was condemned for his infraction of the injunction laid upon him in 1616; his *Dialogue* was prohibited; he himself was commanded to abjure on his knees the doctrine which he had taught; and this abjuration he performed.

This celebrated event must be looked upon rather as a question of decorum than a struggle in which the interests of truth and free inquiry were deeply concerned. The general acceptance of the Copernican System was no longer a matter of doubt. Several persons in the highest positions, including the Pope himself, looked upon the doctrine with favorable eyes; and had shown their interest in Galileo and his discoveries. They had tried to prevent his involving himself in trouble by discussing the question on scriptural grounds. It is probable that his knowledge of those favorable dispositions towards himself and his opinions led him to suppose that the slightest color of professed submission to the Church in his belief, would enable his arguments in favor of the system to pass unvisited: the notice which I have quoted, in which the irony is quite transparent and the sarcasm glaringly obvious, was deemed too flimsy a veil for the purpose of decency, and indeed must have aggravated the offence. But it is not to be supposed that the inquisitors believed Galileo's abjuration to be sincere, or even that they wished it to be so. It is stated that when Galileo had made his renunciation of the earth's motion, he rose from his knees, and stamping on the earth with his foot, said, *E pur si muove*—"And yet it *does* move." This is sometimes represented as the heroic soliloquy of a mind cherishing its conviction of the truth in spite of persecution: I think we may more naturally conceive it uttered as a playful epi-