

for his opinions with great bigotry and fury by a Dutch divine, Voet; —the favorite and teacher of two distinguished princesses, and, it is said, the lover of one of them. This was Elizabeth, the daughter of the Elector Frederick, and consequently grand-daughter of our James the First. His other royal disciple, the celebrated Christiana of Sweden, showed her zeal for his instructions by appointing the hour of five in the morning for their interviews. This, in the climate of Sweden, and in the winter, was too severe a trial for the constitution of the philosopher, born in the sunny valley of the Loire; and, after a short residence at Stockholm, he died of an inflammation of the chest in 1650. He always kept up an active correspondence with his friend Mersenne, who was called, by some of the Parisians, “the Resident of Descartes at Paris;” and who informed him of all that was done in the world of science. It is said that he at first sent to Mersenne an account of a system of the universe which he had devised, which went on the assumption of a vacuum; Mersenne informed him that the *vacuum* was no longer the fashion at Paris; upon which he proceeded to remodel his system, and to re-establish it on the principle of a *plenum*. Undoubtedly he tried to avoid promulgating opinions which might bring him into trouble. He, on all occasions, endeavored to explain away the doctrine of the motion of the earth, so as to evade the scruples to which the decrees of the pope had given rise; and, in stating the theory of vortices, he says,⁸ “There is no doubt that the world was created at first with all its perfection; nevertheless, it is well to consider how it might have arisen from certain principles, although we know that it did not.” Indeed, in the whole of his philosophy, he appears to deserve the character of being both rash and cowardly, “*pusillanimus simul et audax*,” far more than Aristotle, to whose physical speculations Bacon applies this description.⁹

Whatever the causes might be, his system was well received and rapidly adopted. Gassendi, indeed, says that he found nobody who had the courage to read the *Principia* through;¹⁰ but the system was soon embraced by the younger professors, who were eager to dispute in its favor. It is said¹¹ that the University of Paris was on the point of publishing an edict against these new doctrines, and was only prevented from doing so by a pasquinade which is worth mentioning. It was composed by the poet Boileau (about 1684), and professed to be a Request in favor of Aristotle, and an Edict issued from Mount Parnas-

⁸ *Prin.* p. 56.

¹⁰ *Del. A. M.* ii. 198.

⁹ Bacon, *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis*.

¹¹ *Enc. Brit.* art. *Cartesianism*.