

reading it in a loud and audible voice before the conclave of the Inquisition :—

“ Ego Galilæus, filius Vincentii Galilæi Florentinus, ætatis meæ annorum 70, constitutus personaliter in iudicio, et genuflexus coram vobis eminentissimis et reverendissimis Dominis cardinalibus, universæ Christianæ Reipublicæ contra hæreticam pravitatem generalibus inquisitoribus . . . corde sincero et fide non ficta, Abjuro, Maledico et Detestor supradictos Errores et Hæreses.”

[I, Galileo, son of Vincenzo Galilei, a Florentine, aged seventy years, brought personally into judgment, and now kneeling before you, most eminent and very reverend cardinals, inquisitors-general of the Christian commonwealth against the depravity of heretics . . . with a sincere heart and an unfeigned faith, I abjure, I curse, and I detest the afore-mentioned errors and heresies.]

[Happily for the welfare and honour of humanity, the verdicts of an unenlightened past are subjected by posterity to a stern revisal. To every schoolboy the illustrious name of Galileo is familiar ; how few even of the learned remember the names of his persecutors !

It is not well, however, that any fictions, though of the gracefulest and fairest character, should be suffered to grow parasitically about the plain and simple fact ; and of the story of Galileo it may justly be said that its intrinsic interest requires no romantic colouring. Nevertheless, it was long pretended that the philosopher, on rising from his knees, stamped the earth with his foot, and exclaimed, *E pur si muove* (And yet It Moves !), as if ashamed of his weakness, and resolved, in spite of all things, to do homage to the truth.* This is one of those historical legends which the searching analysis of modern criticism dismisses into the limbo of unreal things. It is, indeed, impossible that the aged and frail sufferer, who had just escaped the agony of the rack by his uncompromising abjuration, should have had the heart or the mind to give utterance to such a defiance. On the contrary, he retired in silence from the presence of his judges to conceal his sorrows and his shame in a secluded retreat, near Florence. †

But whether Galileo made, or did not make, this tardy protestation, in the face of his judges and would-be executioners, the celebrated phrase—

E PUR SI MUOVE—

has since been accepted by all the followers of science as the precious formula of

* [Drinkwater, “ Life of Galileo,” Lib. Useful Knowledge, Part ii. p. 63.]

† [See Philarète Chasles, “ Galileo Galilei : sa Vie, son Procès, et ses Contemporains ” (Paris, 1862).]