Heroes and Martyrs
of
Freethought
by
G.W. Foote and Charles Watts

This delightful little book has no Table of Contents so we will create one to make it more useful to the Reader.

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HEROES & MARTYRS

OF

FREETHOUGHT.

BY

G. W. FOOTE & CHARLES WATTS.

Have we not men with us royal,
Men the masters of things?
In the days when our life is made new,
All souls perfect and true
Shall adore whom their forefathers slew;
And these indeed shall be loyal,
And those indeed shall be kings.
—*A. C. Swinburne.*

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PREFACE.

THE need of a Freethinker's Plutarch has long been seriously felt. Too often the lives of Freethought worthies have been left to the manipulation of lying partisans of an opposite faith, who have seen in them only so many opportunities of confounding the Infidel, or of perpetrating pious frauds which shall redound to the glory of God and the Church. Thus the world is grossly deluded from the truth, and the sacred dead are defrauded of their just meed of admiration and gratitude. It seems, therefore, desirable—nay, necessary—that some account, however brief, of the lives and teachings, the doings and sayings, of great historic Freethinkers, should be given in a spirit of charity and appreciation. Accordingly, we have decided to issue, in fortnightly parts, a work entitled "Heroes and Martyrs of Freethought," the words being used in their generic sense, so as to include both men and women. This work, of which the present is the first number, will comprise biographies of all the chief luminaries of past ages, who have toiled or suffered in the cause of human progress and freedom of thought, together with as full an account as its limits will permit of their writings and teachings.

Amongst Christians no literature is more eagerly and attentively read than the lives of saints and martyrs, chiefly because of the keen and intense interest which the perusal of such works excites, the barriers of time being always broken down when human heart throbs to human heart, and hopes and fears shoot forth to meet with fellowship. The present work will constitute a trustworthy register of the great uncanonised saints whom all the Churches omit from their calendars; an authentic record of the noble army who, in the face of obloquy, adversity, persecution, and even death itself, have bravely striven to redeem mankind from the thraldom of ignorance and error.

G. W. FOOTE.
CHARLES WATTS.

HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

FREETHOUGHT.

1.—VOLTAIRE.

THE eighteenth century was the battle-ground where progress and retrogression engaged in a final struggle for the possession of the human mind It opened with a religious persecution, and closed with an invocation to the God of peace and tolerance; it commenced by enthroning Catholicism as the dominant power, and ended by declaring the perfect equality of all religions. The history of the eighteenth century is an epitomised history of civilisation itself. The road was long from the starting-point to the goal; it was sown with blood and tears, like all the ways which lead to human enfranchisement; and sometimes the sublime adventurers who gave us a new world halted and hesitated, oppressed with an agony of doubt. But their falterings were but seldom and temporary; justice was on their side, and the sacred standard of progress rendered them invincible. What a battle were they engaged in! It was the Thermopylæ of civilisation. On the one side was ranged everything powerful and respected; the Monarchy with its parliaments, its nobility, its laws, and its prisons; the Church with its clergy, innumerable and disciplined, its monks, its missionaries, its authority, and its wealth. On the other, a handful of feeble men, poor, isolated, proscribed, exiled, imprisoned. Between these hostile camps, unequal and desperate battles were waged; the victors enfeebled by every triumph, the vanquished strengthened by every defeat. At last the seemingly insignificant army of heroes were victorious. The tyranny of the altar and the throne was prostrated in the dust, and humanity was free to march into the promised land of aspiration and hope. Was there ever before such a magnificent triumph of ideas over force? All the organised forces of society, religious, political, and social, yielded to the persistent pressure of the little band of warriors, as the morning mist melts away before the re-arisen sun.

This portentous struggle centred itself in France. The French Church was *the* Church, the French throne Monarchy

itself. Feudalism and Catholicism received their death-blow at the Revolution, and, although the loathsome bodies writhe threateningly before yielding up the ghost, their present energy is but the desperate convulsion preceding death. When the sense of historical proportion is fitly developed, this contest in France, and through France in Europe, will rank with the other great decisive movements of progress, with the Revival of Learning and the Reformation. Nay, it will take precedence above all others, for it was the final war-embrace between old and new, which, culminating in the Revolution, decided the fate of Europe.

By the general consent of either side, Voltaire has been acclaimed as the representative of eighteenth-century Freethought, as the leader of the resolute phalanx of reformers who assailed Christianity and Ecclesiasticism in the name of freedom and humanity. During his lifetime the assailants of superstition and persecution instinctively ranged themselves under his banner, and since his death their successors have equally acknowledged his supremacy. The Freethought of last century was essentially militant and destructive, because it had to win mental breathing-room from those who claimed to intercept the light and air of heaven. Voltaire was, above all other men, qualified to head the revolt, by reason of his indomitable courage, unconquerable pertinacity, and invincible love of aggression. Eighteenth-century Freethought was essentially derisive, because of the preposterous claims, incredible absurdities, and debasing superstitions of its enemy; and Voltaire was Irony incarnated for the salvation of mankind.

François Marie Arouet, generally known as Voltaire, was born at Chatenay, on the 20th of February, 1694, and was baptised at Paris, in the Church of St. André-des-Arcs, on the 22nd of November in the same year. Excessive weakness was the cause of this delay. Indeed throughout his whole life, long as it was, this vivacious heretic suffered from a weakly constitution, which had to be carefully nursed. The elder Arouet exercised the office of Treasurer to the Chamber of Accounts, and enjoyed besides a lucrative practice as a notary. These advantages of fortune enabled him to provide his son with a good education. At the age of twelve the young Arouet was sent to the Jesuit College, Louis-le-Grand, where his hardihood of temper and his sceptical intellect soon manifested themselves. His instructors quickly perceived in him the elements of greatness, and one of them, Father Jay, took an early opportunity of pointing him out as the future Coryphœus of Deism in France; a prophecy which was verified by time. Though but a lad, his poetical and satirical proclivities were thoroughly marked. He recited the Moïsade of Rousseau, in which so important a hero as Moses figured as an impostor, and launched infidel epigrams at "his Jansenist of a brother."

At an early age Voltaire (as we shall henceforth call him) was

introduced into Parisian society by his godfather, the Abbé de Châteauneuf. Here he speedily became a general favourite on account of his natural vivacity and wit, and his facility in turning verses. His circle of acquaintance included princes, nobles, literary celebrities, and women of fashion. The good, respectable notary, his father, grew anxious and alarmed on hearing of his son's brilliant career at Paris; he wished to make the boy a lawyer, and found him writing tragedies. A quarrel ensued, which ended in sending the young Voltaire away to the Marquis de Châteauneuf, the French Ambassador in Holland. His exile was not, however, of long duration. As is the wont of young gentlemen of his age, he became desperately enamoured of a Mademoiselle du Noyer; but the maternal severity and caution of Madame du Noyer frowned unpropitiously on the lovers, and Voltaire returned to Paris, where he soon forgot his amorous flame. By this time his father had become peremptory; he had determined that his son should give up poetry and living at large, and bind himself to an attorney. Fortunately for mankind, the Bohemian tendencies and literary aspirations of Voltaire proved too strong to yield to the worldly prudence and respectability of the old notary. What a loss to the world it would have been if the bold, vivacious, imaginative iconoclast had settled down in a distant province as a plodding notary, whose wildest dreams of ambition could never soar above the attainment of material competence.

In the autumn of 1715, Louis XIV. died, and the profligate Regent, D'Orleans, reigned in his stead. The death of the "great monarch" was signalised by the publication of a poem, the pungent lines of which recounted a number of the horrors that resulted from the united tyranny of kings and priests; prisons crowded with brave citizens, and every one harassed with burdensome taxes and unrighteous edicts. The anonymous writer declared himself in one of his lines to be under twenty years of age: Voltaire was upwards of three and twenty; yet it suited the authorities to suspect him, and he was accordingly cast into prison. In the Bastille he sketched his poem of the "League," and corrected his tragedy of "Œdipus," which had been begun long before. However, his incarceration was brief; for the Regent discovered his innocence, and restored him to freedom. "I thank your royal highness," said Voltaire, "for having provided me with food; but I hope you will not hereafter trouble yourself concerning my lodging."

The next six years were employed in the assiduous composition of new plays, and the completion of the "Henriade." His fibre was strengthened by study and reflection; and the recklessness of youth which the gay society of Paris had stimulated, subsided into the courage of manhood. Voltaire got to hate the frivolous pleasures of fashionable society, and to love a country life. "I was born," he says, "to be a fawn or creature of the woods; I am not made to live in a town;" "I fancy

myself in hell when I am in the accursed city of Paris." The light of a new life was dawning on his mind, the consciousness of a great future work was becoming more and more intense. At last he had to excuse himself even from the country seats of noblemen, with their exacting throng of company, preferring the quiet and delightfulness of solitude. "If I went to Fontainebleau, or Villars, or Sully," he wrote, "I should do no work, I should over-eat, and I should lose in pleasures and complaisance to others an amount of precious time that I ought to be using for a necessary and creditable task." Noble words for a frivolous, pleasure-loving age! Here is struck the keynote of the great life which Voltaire subsequently led.

Industrious as he was, he loved social intercourse, and often was to be found relaxing himself at the gay supper-table of his wealthy friends. One night, supping with the Duke of Sully, Voltaire was enlivening and delighting the company with his sprightly sallies of wit, when a fatuous young aristocrat, the Duke of Rohan, piqued at the poet's manifest superiority of intellect, cried out, "Who is the young man who talks so loud?" "My lord," replied Voltaire, with characteristic readiness, "he is one who does not carry about a great name, but wins respect for the name he has." This brilliant answering of an aristocratic fool according to his folly resulted, however, in painful consequences to the plebeian. A few days afterwards the high-spirited duke commanded his lackeys to cane the obnoxious wit in the public streets. Smarting under the insult, Voltaire sent a challenge to the duke, who was too pusillanimous to accept it. The only reply vouchsafed was imprisonment for six months in the Bastille, and an order to quit Paris on being released. What tyranny the French people then suffered under! It was the custom for the King to issue *lettres de cachet*, which, on presentation to the Governor of the Bastille, commanded him to seize and incarcerate the persons therein designated. Often these orders were signed by the King, and sold for money or for female favours, with a blank left, which the possessor might fill up with whatsoever name he pleased. That great, gloomy, frowning Bastille stood there in Paris for centuries as the symbol of national degradation and oppression. Within its chill, reeking dungeons had languished at one time or another nearly every great man esteemed by his fellows for splendid natural gifts, intrepid honesty, or literary excellence. Was it any wonder that, when the people of Paris rose in tumultuous insurrection in 1789, they tore down stone by stone that black, sullen fortress, which was to them the tangible type of their servitude and dishonour?

Forbidden Paris, and fearful of renewed indignities, Voltaire sought refuge in England. Here he found himself amidst influences altogether foreign to his experience. Owing to the feudal system having been engrafted in England, and not an indigenous growth, there were always three estates in the con-

stitution, virtually as well as nominally. From every dispute or struggle between the monarch and the aristocracy there accrued to the people a larger measure of liberty; and as such altercations and contests were frequent, the English nation secured for itself, very early in its history, an unparalleled freedom. In the seventeenth century the third estate had become powerful enough to overthrow both the Monarchy and the Aristocracy; and, although the Commonwealth was but short-lived, and was succeeded by a restoration of kingship and nobility under the reign of that divine gentleman, Charles II., there has never since the execution of Charles I. been any doubt as to which element of the constitution is virtually predominant. Political liberty and religious liberty necessarily go together, for both are expressions of one and the same spirit; the people which bows to the spiritual authority of priests will also submit to the tyranny of secular rulers; and, on the other hand, the nation which repels the oppression of political powers will go on to claim equal freedom in theological matters. And such was the result in England. While Swift, Addison, Bolingbroke, and Steele, and a host of lesser lights, were vigorously, and often ferociously, attacking the government or its enemies, as the case might happen, the Deistical controversy was with equal freedom carried on by Woolston, Toland, Collins, Chubb, and Morgan. The atmosphere of the literary world was free also from the crawling, fulsome sycophancy which had previously disgraced English authorship, and which even the manly strength of sturdy John Dryden was unable successfully to resist. Men of letters were more honoured in the Augustan age of English literature, and held in higher repute, than the most powerful and distinguished statesmen. The sovereignty was passing away from politicians, and gravitating towards the thinkers and writers who shape opinions, and mould with their subtle, persistent influence the outward forms of society.

Voltaire, always quick and apprehensive, speedily mastered the English language; indeed, so rapid was his progress that, after twelve months' study, he was able to translate into French verse so esoteric and difficult a work as Butler's Hudibras. He read Shakspere, Milton, Dryden, Addison, Rochester, Waller, Pope, Prior, Wycherly, Vanbrugh, Congreve, and Swift. In philosophy and religion he studied the writings of Lord Herbert, Hobbes, Cudworth, Berkeley, and, above all, John Locke, whose splendid annihilation of the doctrine of innate ideas powerfully impressed his mind, and persuaded him once for all of the truth of the experiential philosophy. He also mastered Newton's Principia, and subsequently popularised its principles for his own countrymen in France.

On returning to his native land, Voltaire's first task of importance was to give his countrymen some account of the politics, religion, philosophy, and science of their English neighbours. This he performed in his Letters on the English, which was the

first serious introduction of British thought into France. Those letters wrought a revolution in French thought, which had hitherto been vain and exclusive. Indeed, Buckle deems the junction of the French and English intellects which ensued, by far the most important fact in the history of the eighteenth century. During the two generations which elapsed between the publication of Voltaire's letters and the outbreak of the Revolution there was hardly a Fenchman of eminence who did not either visit England or learn English. Amongst the remarkable persons who flocked to London were Buffon, Brissot, Lafayette, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Mirabeau, Roland, and his noble wife, and Helvetius. In fact, it may be said, without exaggeration, that Voltaire played the part of an intellectual Columbus, discovering to his countrymen scientific, poetical, and philosophic England. Voltaire left France a poet; he returned to it a sage.

The Letters on the English proved, however, too outspoken for the clergy of France. Voltaire had learnt in England to place Newton high above Cæsar, Alexander, Tamerlane, or Cromwell. "True greatness," he wrote, "consists in having received from heaven a powerful understanding, and in using it to enlighten oneself and all others. It is to him who masters our minds by the force of truth, not to those who enslave men by violence; it is to him who understands the universe, not to those who disfigure it, that we owe our reverence." "The example of England," says Condorcet, "showed him that truth is not made to remain a secret in the hands of a few philosophers, and a limited number of men of the world. From the moment of his return, Voltaire felt himself called to destroy the prejudices of every kind, of which his country was the slave." He had commented, he a mere layman, on the "Thoughts of Pascal," a pillar of the Church; and had also dared to assail the doctrine of innate ideas which the Church took under its protection. The clergy demanded that the Letters on the English should be suppressed; and they were so, by an *arrêt* of council, the book being publicly burnt, as was the fashion then in dealing with heretic productions. Voltaire himself had to flee, in order that the delicate attentions bestowed on his book might not be extended to himself also. Fortunately he knew where to find refuge. He was astute and adroit enough always to elude the search of his foes, and used often to say that a philosopher, like a hunted fox, should have plenty of holes to retreat to when the priests were on his track.

Wearied by so much persecution, Voltaire for awhile turned his attention to purely literary projects, and to the acquirement of wealth. He speculated in the public funds and other enterprises with success, and derived also much profit from the sale of his numerous and popular writings. Prudent, nay, close, in all business affairs, he was nevertheless ever ready to extend charity and assistance to the suffering and needy. Much of his acquired wealth was expended in aiding poor men of

letters, and in encouraging such young men as he thought discovered the seeds of genius. Hearing that a niece of the celebrated poet Corneille was suffering the privations of poverty, he gave her a home and provided for her education, remarking proudly (and yet how tenderly, so as to conceal or disguise the kindness) that the dependents of an old general ought not to be neglected by his officers. The silly, contemptible spendthrifts and envious scribes, who declaim against intellectual greatness for prudence in pecuniary transactions, may taunt Voltaire with avarice, but the contemporary writers whom he generously assisted would have treated such a trumpery and baseless accusation with disdain. Envy itself might be prevailed on to pardon the acquirement of riches by a man who employed them with such munificent liberality.

Having formed an ardent attachment to the Marchioness de Châtelet, Voltaire retired with her to Cirey, on the borders of Champaigne and Lorraine, where they led a life of study and retirement, interrupted and varied by an occasional quarrel. The Marchioness was not one of the gay, frivolous coquettes of the day; she was a woman of powerful understanding and great strength of character; was passionately enamoured of philosophy, and successfully cultivated the arts. Voltaire's relations with Madame de Châtelet have made him the object of unmeasured censure and most virulent abuse by persons who unconsciously or conveniently forget that the customs of France last century differed widely from those of England to-day. Pious and excessively *nice* people lift their eyes in horror at mention of La Pucelle, or of Voltaire's relations with women, and yet regard with a sweet contemplative gaze the odious vices of the tyrants who oppressed France; the manifold adulteries of Louis le Grand, who frequently went straight from confession or prayer to the embraces of a mistress; the unmentionable depravities of his successor, for whose disgusting gratification the Parc aux Cerfs was reserved; and the dissolute gallantries, amounting almost to promiscuous intercourse, of the entire body of the nobility. A man ought not to be severely censured for trifling delinquencies who dwells in the midst of Sodom and Gomorrah.

On the decease of Mde. de Châtelet, Voltaire accepted a diplomatic mission to the Court of Frederick the Great, at Berlin, where he was ostentatiously received by the king, who loved to patronise men of letters. Frederick was undoubtedly a sagacious monarch, but his literary tastes were superlatively barbarous; yet he always hankered after literary fame, and even aspired to become a poet. As might be expected, the diplomatic mission came to grief. "The great poet," says Macaulay, "would talk of nothing but treaties and guarantees, and the great king of nothing but metaphors and rhymes." They secretly laughed at each other, and Frederick subsequently declared the mission a mere farce. However, the poet remained at Berlin,

where he was hospitably treated, until at length he discovered that the king desired to employ him as a kind of literary hack to polish and embellish his own wretched productions in prose and verse. One day Frederick sent a large quantity of verses to Voltaire, requesting that they might be returned with marks and corrections. "See," exclaimed Voltaire, "what a quantity of his dirty linen the king has sent me to wash." Smaller minds might sell their independence for a bit of bread, but Voltaire was infinitely above that; he was willing to be the friend but not the servant of a king; he with his marvellous capacities and facile pen had a European kingdom greater than any king's. A quarrel soon ensued between the singular pair; and when Frederick demanded from Voltaire an abject apology for an excruciatingly satirical diatribe against Maupertuis, who had been selected by the king to fill the chair of his Academy, the witty heretic refused to comply, and sent back to the Prussian monarch his cross, his key, and the patent of his pension. The king and the poet parted with hearts big with resentment, although they had gone through the forms of cold civility. The king, however, meanly vented his spite on his old guest, and had Voltaire arrested at Frankfort, on his way back to France, with every mark of indignity; the pretence being that he had purloined a volume of poems written by the great king himself. A shallow pretence indeed! There was no fear that Voltaire would ever need to plagiarise from "*l'œuvre de poëshie de roi mon maître*," which was demanded in most barbarous French by the King's messenger, Freytag. The poet had his revenge, however, for he afterwards published the "Memories," in which he wrote the bitterest lampoon on his maltreater that ever proceeded from the pen of man.

In 1758 Voltaire retired to Ferney, where he spent the last twenty years of his life. He rebuilt the house on the estate he had purchased there, laid out the gardens, kept a good table, and received a crowd of visitors from all parts of Europe. He was, besides, an indefatigable correspondent, and even amidst the turmoil of a still active life maintained an epistolary intercourse with distant friends in every surrounding country. Here he might have led a serene, peaceful life had he been made of mere common stuff, or had the beagles of persecution relented. But the fates had ordained otherwise. The old patriarch was destined to die as he had lived, waging incessant war with the enemies of mankind.

At Ferney, until the new outbreak of persecution in 1762, Voltaire occupied himself with literary composition as well as the amenities of social intercourse. Amongst other ventures, he published a translation of "Ecclesiastes," and the "Song of Solomon," in the latter of which he had somewhat pruned the voluptuous, nay, often licentious, imagary of the original. These translations were *burnt* as *immoral* and *indecent*. What a sight! The Christians burning their own books as obscene. The old

heretic avenged himse'f by a satirical, humorous letter, in which he mocked at the general hypocrisy of morals in Europe, which had destroyed the energy of character for which the ancients were distinguished.

The great Encyclopedia, designed by Diderot and D'Alembert to convey to the public scientific and historical knowledge calculated to weaken superstition and eradicate prejudice, was now in course of publication. The work soon raised up bitter enemies amongst those who prefer ignorance to knowledge, and especially amongst the clergy and the most devout Churchmen. Voltaire, however, speedily came to the assistance of the Encyclopedists, and personally contributed several articles. From Ferney the old patriarch bade defiance to all the hireling priests of Europe. He flooded the reading world with innumerable satirical pamphlets, sending his keen arrows into the breasts of those who strove to darken the intellectual sky, and to increase, instead of lighten, the burdens of mankind. Whenever an act of theological persecution or secular tyranny startled the lovers of freedom in Europe, all eyes were instinctively turned towards Ferney, where dwelt the philosopher who wielded a pen mightier than the sceptres of kings. Bigots and tyrants, who had never been moved by the wailing and cursing of millions, turned pale at the sound of his name.

In 1762 a fresh outbreak of persecution occurred; the Catholic Church—Jesuits and Jansenists alike—seemed united in a desperate attempt to crush out every spark of intellectual freedom. In the south of France the son of a respectable man, named Calas, was found dead. Every fact seemed to indicate that he had committed suicide; he was admittedly of a melancholy temperament, and the kind of reading he had indulged in was calculated to induce suicidal thoughts. However, it suited the priesthood to pretend that Calas, an infirm old man, had murdered his son, who was young and vigorous, to prevent him joining the Catholic Church. A more ridiculous accusation it would be impossible to conceive. Not only was the elder Calas infirm and stricken in years, and thus physically incapable of perpetrating the crime laid to his charge, but there was also a thorough refutation of the motive which, it was alleged, led to its commission: for another son of Calas, already converted to the Catholic faith, enjoyed a pension from the bounty of this father, who was far from possessing affluence. Nevertheless, the Catholic population speedily became inflamed with religious zeal. The young man was declared a martyr, and the fraternity of penitents at Thoulouse performed a solemn mass for him. Preposterous rumours were circulated that the Protestant religion commanded fathers to assassinate their children when they desired to abjure it. The unfortunate Calas was tried and condemned to be tortured and broken on the wheel. The infamously atrocious sentence was executed, and even the wife and younger children were put to the torture to make them con-

fess the father's guilt. Calas died protesting his innocence, and no implicating words could be wrung from the lips of his tortured family. The wife and children fled to Geneva, where Voltaire saw them, and learnt the horrible details of their story. All Europe was startled, and yet none dared to raise a voice against the seemingly omnipotent clergy. But there was one old heretic, seventy years of age, whose heart still burned with the fire of its old loving-kindness; not one of those who prated about mercy, and protested generosity; rather one who was often cynical and sceptical of human nature; yet one who, when the occasion required, would march right up to the front of arbitrary power, and demand the victim it desired to immolate to its wrath or caprice. The compassion and indignation of Voltaire were aroused, and he at once set himself to obtain a reversal of the sentence passed on Calas. His fiery zeal animated the advocates who pleaded the cause of justice, his eloquence gave point and force to their vindication. He interested every powerful friend on his side, and animated by his untiring courage the hopes of all lovers of equity. At length he succeeded in obtaining a reversal of the sentence, and a compensation to the injured family of the murdered father. This occupied the brave old man during more than three years. "In all that time," said he, "a smile never escaped me for which I did not reproach myself as for a crime." When Voltaire went to Paris in 1778, for the last time, the public thronged to pay him homage; nobles disguised themselves as waiters to be in his company; and all Paris, high and low, rich and poor, united to do him honour. Yet of all the congratulations and marks of esteem bestowed on him there, none touched him so deeply as the remark of a poor woman on the Pont Royal, who, on being asked who the hero of the hour was, replied: "*Know you not that he is the Saviour of Calas?*"

Not long afterwards the daughter of a man named Sirven, who had been taken from her parents and shut up in a convent, was found drowned in a well. She had without doubt committed suicide to escape the ill-treatment to which she was subjected. Fanaticism again fastened on the innocent: Sirven and his family were accused; but fortunately they had time to flee. Sirven found shelter with the protector of Calas, but his poor wife died on the road thither, from cold and exhaustion. Again Voltaire interested himself on behalf of the helpless victims of persecution. He influenced judges, counsel, and all who could render any assistance; so that when Sirven appeared for trial he was acquitted, and the friends of truth were triumphant.

In the year 1776 another outburst of fanaticism astonished Europe. A crucifix of wood, fixed on a bridge at Abbeville, was thrown down in the night; and a young officer, the Chevalier de la Barre, and d'Ellatonde, his friend, were, for committing such sacrilege, sentenced to be beheaded, after having had their tongues cut out and having undergone the torture. There was

no proof whatever that the young de la Barre was guilty ; but the fanaticism of the mob was artfully raised by the priests, and the innocent young man, only seventeen years old, was cruelly put to death for this trifling offence, in a Christian country, his murder being accompanied with barbarous atrocities which might make even a savage shudder. D'Alembert wrote to Voltaire, giving an account of this new *auto-da-fé*, and ended his description with a mocking laugh—a laugh easily enough intelligible, and merely hiding the pain within, like the jest of a man under the surgeon's knife. The old patriarch, his soul all aflame with righteous indignation, replied to D'Alembert with noble impetuosity : " This is no longer a time for jesting ; witty things do not go well with massacres. What ! these Busirises in wigs destroy in the midst of horrible tortures children of sixteen !.....Here Calas broken on the wheel, there Sirven condemned to be hung, a fortnight after that five youths condemned to the flames. Is this the country of philosophy and pleasure ?.....What, you would be content to laugh ? No, once more, I cannot bear that you should finish your letter by saying, I mean to laugh. Ah ! my friend, is it a time for laughing ? Did men laugh when they saw Phalaris's bull being made red hot ?" Noble words these ! How imagination pictures the old man ; his eyes suffused with tears, yet shooting forth flashes of indignation ; his slight, fragile frame quivering with the emotion which can only find vent in broken utterances. Contemplate Voltaire thus, think of his noble daring, of his pertinacious efforts to rescue the oppressed from the clutches of the oppressor, and then fling dirt at his reputation if you can ! And O ye sweet-souled angels of light, ye delicate Pharisees of orthodoxy, of what worth is all your maundering praise of virtue, when weighed against the greatness of this humane heretic, whose scepticisms and transgressions so offend your dainty susceptibilities ? Carp no more at his faults and failings ; generously admire his native worth of heart and head ; reflect on his magnanimous endeavours to shelter the oppressed and comfort the afflicted, and go ye and do likewise.

The accession of Turgot to power stirred Voltaire's sympathies, and gave him new hopes for his country. In his poetical letter to the great minister he uses the expression, "*qui ne chercha le vrai que pour faire le bien*," which has lately been rendered into English by Professor Huxley as, " Learn what is true in order to do what is right," and declared by him to be the sum of the whole duty of man. Turgot, great as he was, was too impotent to resist the combination of all the Conservative interests of France ; his schemes were frustrated, and he had to retire. The Revolution, as Carlyle says, was necessary to destroy in a general conflagration the pestilent mass of sinister interests and iniquities. Voltaire sank into a despair from which he never arose. "My eyes see only death in front

of me now M. Turgot is gone," he wrote. "It has fallen like a thunderbolt on my heart and brain alike. The rest of my days can never be other than pure bitterness."

In 1778 the old man visited Paris, and was greeted with the acclamations of the people. He was publicly crowned with flowers at the theatre, and thousands followed him to his home. Voltaire and Franklin met on this occasion for the first and last time. The two veterans embraced, and the American philosopher presented his grandson to Voltaire, requesting that he would give him his benediction. "God and liberty!" said Voltaire; "it is the only benediction which can be given to the grandson of Franklin." Three months after, on the 30th May, 1778, the patriarch breathed his last; the greatest man in Europe was dead.

Charitable Christians have gloated over a suppositious recantation, and parsons have often been known to edify their hearers with lugubrious exhortations to avoid the horrors of an Infidel death-bed. Fortunately, the grave of Voltaire is high and sacred enough above the abomination of their approach. We will present to our readers the truth, as we can ascertain it, respecting Voltaire's end.

The Abbé Gautier confessed Voltaire, and declared that he had made a full confession of faith. Were this true, it would be worth nothing. Voltaire was eighty-four years of age, and had been for days lying in bed in such a weak condition as to be almost incapable of understanding the words addressed to him; in fact, it was utterly impossible that he could sustain a conversation with his confessor. He could, therefore, merely have replied to questions, yes or no. After all, we have merely the Abbé's authority for the alleged confession, and subsequent events destroy all belief in its virtue. The curate of St. Sulpice, feeling that the Abbé Gautier had forestalled him, professed to be sceptical about the recantation. They therefore paid another visit to the dying Infidel, and the interview is thus described by Wagnière, Voltaire's Secretary.

"M. l'Abbé Mignot, his nephew, went to seek the curate of St. Sulpice, and the Abbé Gautier, and brought them into his uncle's sick-room, who, on being informed that the Abbé Gautier was there, 'Ah, well,' said he, 'give him my compliments and my thanks.' The Abbé spoke some words to him, exhorting him to patience. The curé of St. Sulpice then came forward, having announced himself, and asked of M. de Voltaire, elevating his voice, if he acknowledged the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ? The sick man pushed one of his hands against the curé's *calotte* (coif), shoving him back, and cried, turning abruptly to the other side, 'Let me die in peace!' (*Laissez-moi mourir en paix.*) The curé seemingly considered his person soiled, and his coif dishonoured by the touch of a philosopher. He made the sick-nurse give him a little brushing, and then went out with the Abbé Gautier."

So much for the charge of recantation, the invention of malice and hypocrisy. Surely Christians might be a little more charitable than to concoct these idle tales of dying horrors, remorse, and the like, or to draw aside the veil that should hide from curious eyes the dying agonies of a fellow man. As to those who believe in the value of death-bed recantations we reply in the words of Carlyle : " He who, after the imperturbable exit of so many Cartouches and Thurtells, in every age of the world, can continue to regard the manner of a man's death as a test of his religious orthodoxy, may boast himself impregnable to merely terrestrial logic."

Voltaire was not, as ignorant or lying parsons aver, an Atheist, but a Deist, although his Deism was not very clearly defined. He seems to have held a moderately strong belief in the existence of a supernatural power ; yet he was far too wise a man to dogmatise on so abstruse and perplexed a subject. His intellectual vision was also too keen to allow him to be deluded by the flimsy pretences put forward on behalf of the infinite benevolence of God. When the great earthquake at Lisbon occurred, he composed a philosophical poem, in which he finely dilated on the unjust disparities of fortune, and called upon the theologians to reconcile such catastrophes with their dogmas if they could. And in a letter to D'Alembert he wisely reprobates all dogmatism from either side, Theistic or Atheistic, and asks : " After all, what do we know about it ?" Voltaire's Deism was in reality more a kind of imaginative hope than an earnest, reasoned conviction. His intellect was more quick and penetrating than profound and subtle, and was far better adapted to deal with the contradictions and absurdities of Christianity than with more recondite questions in metaphysics. His assault on Christianity as a revealed religion was the principal work of his life, and his effective onslaught on its most cherished beliefs constitutes his chief glory. He detested and despised orthodox Christianity as a pestilent system of error and a most damnable superstition. He believed—and rightly—that in the name of Jesus of Nazareth more blood had been shed than in the name of any other man or religion which the world has ever produced. He was convinced that persecution and priestly thraldom must last while superstition compels men to prostrate their intelligence in the dust, and to eat of the bitter fruit of error. There was, he thought, no possible redemption for mankind save through the eradication of the banyan tree of superstition, under which mankind crouched in darkness and misery. He therefore set himself to destroy the Christianity which afflicted Europe in his day ; and never for a moment did he waver in the prosecution of his purpose. Every weapon that could be selected from the armoury of satire, humour, wit, poetry, history, philosophy, and science, he scrupled not to employ ; and the thoroughness of his assault may be inferred from the fact that to the mental vision of Catholics and Pro-

testants alike he presents an object more hateful than even the Devil himself. Men like Mr. Carlyle accuse him of being a mere sceptic and doubter, devoid of all faculty of reverence; but the reputation of Voltaire can easily clear itself from such a baseless charge. He was capable of admiration and reverence for admirable and reverend objects. The enthusiasm of humanity filled his heart as much perhaps as it did that of Jesus, only it was controlled and regulated by reason. There are some persons who cannot believe in conviction or enthusiasm unless a man possessed of them make a fool of himself, and a spectacle to gods and men. These persons admire fanaticism instead of reasonable earnestness, and therefore prefer Jesus to Voltaire. They are free to take their choice. As to Voltaire's scepticism, it was indeed his greatest virtue, instead of a defect. The monstrous absurdities of Christianity—its very Godhead forming an arithmetical puzzle, and its whole history replete with lying wonders and pretended miracles—awoke the burning scorn of his ardent nature. It seemed to him, as it must to all reflective minds, that error is the more dangerous in proportion as it concerns the holiest depths of man's nature. He did right in assailing superstition with every available weapon. In the heart of that horrid incubus he planted the iron which will vex it to utter death. And when we observe how Reason more powerfully asserts her sway now than of yore; how men are more disinclined to prostrate their intelligence before dogmatic absurdities; how Freethought is spreading day by day; we should reflect on our manifold obligations to the arch heretic, Voltaire, and bless his memory for his noble labours in the cause of Truth.

Our readers who care to pursue the subject further may consult the following works:—

Carlyle's Essay on Voltaire—Miscellanies, vol. ii.
„ Frederick the Great.
Memoires sur Voltaire et sur ses Ouvrages, par Longchamp et Wagnière, ses Secrétaires. 2 tomes. Paris, 1826.
Condorcet's Vie de Voltaire.
Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary. 2 vols. Truelove, London.
Œuvres de Voltaire. Bondonin, Paris. 75 tomes.
Morley, John, Essay on Voltaire. 1 vol.
Macaulay, Essay on Frederick the Great—Miscellanies, vol. ii.
Lanfrey, l'Eglise et les Philosophes au Dix-Huitième Siècle.
Buckle's History of Civilisation, vol. i.; Chapters on French Intellect, the Protective Spirit in France, and the Proximate Causes of the French Revolution.

P.S.—Various conjectures have been hazarded as to the origin of the pseudonyme Voltaire. The most plausible and favoured derives it from *Le Jeune Arouet;* the capitals *L* and *J* being united to the letters of the surname; and the *J* and *U* transformed into *I* and *V*, as was not unusual then.

END OF PART I.—PRICE TWOPENCE.

HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

FREETHOUGHT.

2.—GIORDANO BRUNO.

NO other century of modern history was marked by such stir and impulse, as that which immediately followed the invention of printing. As early as 1440 the typographic art was in use, but it was not until the end of the fifteenth century that the printers of Europe had succeeded in widely circulating their literature, despite the active opposition of the Church. Not only was that century marked by the invention of printing, it was distinguished also by the most important maritime discovery ever made. In 1492 Columbus sailed to America, and opened up to the ardent spirits of Europe a new field of enterprise. His example was rapidly followed by other daring adventurers, who displayed in their undertakings an almost superhuman resolution and power of endurance. In 1497 Vasco de Gama set sail with three ships and one hundred and sixty men, and after a voyage of nearly twelve months, succeeded in reaching India. On August 10, 1519, Magellan set sail from Seville. Striking away to the south-west he reached Patagonia, threaded the straits which still bear his name, and sailed out into the seemingly infinite Pacific Ocean. These great maritime discoveries laid the basis of modern commerce, deprived the Mediterranean States of their naval supremacy, and altered the balance of European power. Nay more; they inevitably suggested the rotundity of the earth, and prepared men's minds for the acceptance of the Copernican astronomy. For centuries the geocentric theory, which made the earth the centre of the universe, had been supported by the dogmatic authority of the Church; and so grossly ignorant were the people, learned and illiterate alike, of astronomical laws, that when Halley's comet appeared in 1456, it was fulminated against by the Pope, and all the bells in Europe were set ringing to scare it away. Copernicus, however, shattered the geocentric theory and supported the heliocentric, which makes the sun, instead of the earth, the centre of our system; attributing to the earth a

double motion, a daily rotation on her axis, and an annual motion round the sun. But besides this fatal blow at the theological astronomy of the Church, another destructive movement was also going on. The Latin tongue had been used by the Church as a sacred language, and had enabled her to maintain a general international relation ; a far greater source of power than her asserted celestial authority. But the great Italian poets, with Dante at their head, began a new intellectual movement by employing the vulgar dialect in the composition of their poems, a movement which rapidly extended itself over Europe, and ended in consolidating the modern languages and making the sacred Latin a dead tongue. This movement was aided by the revival of learning, consequent on the seizure of Constantinople by the Turks, which elevated Greek into the prominence formerly enjoyed by Latin. Greek manuscripts were scattered over Europe, and the printing press soon gave the treasures of ancient philosophy and poetry to all who could afford to purchase books. The revival of learning had its counterpart in the *renaissance* of art. Instead of the "dead limbs of gibbeted gods and ghastly glories of saints," which previously constituted the entire scope of Christian art, the treasures of Grecian statuary furnished the models of a new school, which resolutely turned away from the asceticism of Christianity, and dwelt with delight on the marvellous designs, skilful manipulation, and supreme beauty of the great masterpieces of antiquity. Philosophy was attracted also by the same wondrous influence ; Platonism was usurping the place of the Aristotelian philosophy ; the dogmatic reverence for the Stagirite was giving way to the adoration of the philosopher-poet of Athens. When the sixteenth century had fairly begun, Europe was prepared for two great movements—the one the Reformation which challenged the theological infallibility of the Church, and asserted by implication the right of private judgment ; the other the astronomical crusade carried on by the ardent spirits who accepted the Copernican theory, which challenged the claims of the Church in the name of science and human reason. That scientific movement was, after all, the more powerful. Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, were its mathematicians ; Giordano Bruno was its prophet, poet, and martyr.

Giordano Bruno, whose baptismal name was Filippo, was born at Nola, near Naples, in 1548 ; just ten years after the death of Copernicus, and ten years before the birth of Bacon. Nola had been extremely prolific in great men : Tansillo, the poet, Ambrogio Leone the friend of Erasmus, Albertino Gentile, and Pomponio Algeri, who suffered martyrdom just a few years before Bruno, were all Nolans. The soft climate of Nola, the beauty of its position, and luxuriant fertility of its soil, were always affectionately remembered by Bruno in his wanderings. His nature seemed to partake of the characteristics of his native

soil, being luxuriant in beauty, yet withal volcanic; and his Greek brilliance and acuteness of intellect seemed to point back to the time when Nola was one of the old cities of Magna Græcia. Bruno was educated partly at Nola, and partly at Naples. He attended the public classes of the college and the private lectures of the professors till the age of fifteen, when he became a novice in the monastery of San Domenico Maggiore, in Naples. He changed his baptismal name of Filippo for that of Giordano, and, after his year's noviciate had expired, took the monastic vows.

In the convent of San Domenico Maggiore, the great St. Thomas Aquinas had lectured and conceived his subtle system of religious philosophy; but the young novice differed widely from the angelic doctor. Despising gauds and badges, he mused deeply on the great problems of theology, and with such unpleasant results that the authorities, dreading his heretical tendencies, drew up an act of accusation against him, which, however, on account of his youth (he was only sixteen), was set aside. Eight years afterwards, four years after he had taken priest's orders, another trial for heresy was projected, but again set aside. The Dominicans were partial to intellectual greatness, and doubtless suspended proceedings against the heretical young priest, in the hope that, when the mental ebullience and sceptical daring of youth had subsided, his brilliant talents would minister to the grandeur and success of their order. His scepticisms, however, became too flagrant to be pardoned. Doubts filled his mind as to the truth of many doctrines taught by the Church, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. Above all, he discarded the Aristotelian theory as to the motion of the earth, and embraced the Copernican astronomy, believing in the plurality of worlds, and rejecting the received Scripture notions as to the origin of mankind. A third time the chiefs of his order commenced an investigation into his creed, and Bruno, fearing that this time no mercy would be shown, resolved on flight. In his twenty-eighth year he began his Odyssey, which ended only when the bloodthirsty Inquisition had him within its savage clutch.

At Rome, in a convent of his own order, our hero sought refuge; but hearing that his prosecutors were forwarding the act of accusation to Rome after him, he escaped from the Holy City after a sojourn of but a few days. He paused at Genoa for a while, and then pursued his flight to Noli, where he stayed five months, earning his living as a schoolmaster, teaching grammar to children and youths, and expounding learned works to the gentlemen. Finding this sphere too limited for him, he left Noli for Venice, passing through Turin on his way thither. Venice was just then overshadowed with gloom; a recent plague had decimated the population; fear, squalor, and wretchedness were depicted on every countenance. The city offered but few attractions to the ardent Neapolitan, and Bruno went to Padua,

in the university of which he taught both publicly and privately. Here he allowed himself to be persuaded into resuming the monkish garb which he had discarded on leaving Rome. Probably his imagination was still enchained by the traditional glory of the great Dominican order, notwithstanding that his intellect and heart alike disowned the religion which his robe symbolised. How long Bruno remained at Padua is uncertain; we know that on leaving the city he went to Milan, where he first made acquaintance with the chivalrous Sir Philip Sidney. It speaks highly for the wandering Italian that, when he came to England a little subsequently, the intimacy was renewed and strengthened between himself and Sidney—that Sidney for ever memorable as the consummate flower of noble chivalry; warrior, poet, and wit. It must have been no common qualities that recommended Bruno to the author of the "Arcadia," the chivalrous soldier of Zutphen, who sums up in himself the gallantry of the great Elizabethan age, just as Beau Brummel typified that of the tinsel generation which adored George IV.

From Milan, Bruno went to Chambéry; but the ignorance and bigotry of the Savoyard monks proved too much for his patience, and he soon left Chambéry for Geneva, where he arrived in 1576. He was welcomed by an Italian refugee, also an outcast from his native land for conscience sake, who advised him earnestly to discard his monastic dress before publicly appearing. A difficulty, vast and apparently insuperable, arose; Bruno had no money wherewith to purchase a new dress. However, he contrived to make a pair of breeches out of his gown, and his countrymen presented him with a hat and cloak and other necessary equipments of a citizen. What a touching picture of the Odyssey of a scholar! Despised and rejected of the world, the brave man bent not his proud spirit to the yoke of authority or custom. He sought Truth, diligently searching if haply he might find her; compared with which pursuit all the petty ambitions and mean delights of life were but as dust in the balance.

Calvin had died about twelve years before Bruno's arrival; but his fierce, relentless spirit still remained. A catechism had been drawn up, which all were required to sign under penalty of persecution to the death. Servetus perished at the stake, recalcitrant and obstinate; slowly roasting for two hours, calling vainly on his callous tormentors to despatch him out of his pain. Ocheno took refuge in Poland; some went to Tübingen; some even to Turkey, right away from the intolerance of Christians to the more tender mercies of Infidel dogs. Valentino Gentile, after having been compelled to do penance in Geneva, was beheaded in Berne. Bruno soon found Geneva no safe abiding place. Beza, Calvin's faithful disciple and ally, detested the opinions of the daring, irreverent Italian; and Bruno discovered that flight alone could preserve him from the fate of Servetus.

From Geneva, Bruno proceeded to Lyons, where he remained but a short time, and then went on to Toulouse, which he reached about the middle of the year 1577. The fair city of the South, then in the zenith of prosperity, afforded an ample field for his labours. Its University numbered ten thousand scholars, mostly young and ardent, and desirous of learning more about the soul, its immortality, and the strange new astronomy of which rumour spoke. Bruno was elected to fill the office of Public Lecturer to the University, which office he filled for nearly two years with great success, lecturing on the soul and also on the Aristotelian philosophy; insinuating, we may be sure, grave doubts in the minds of his hearers as to the truth of many received doctrines. He held also public disputations at Toulouse, and composed there several of his works. Probably his success emboldened him to try a wider sphere, for we find him at Paris in the year 1579.

The streets of Paris were hardly yet cleared of the blood-stains of the Bartholomew massacres, and the cry had scarcely subsided, *La Messe ou la Mort* (the Mass or Death). Yet Bruno refused a professorship at the Sorbonne, accompanied by the condition of attending mass. Henry III., however, for some reason, bestowed on him the office of Lecturer Extraordinary to the University. Either the King wished to profit by Bruno's method of artificial memory, founded on the Lullian art, or he was intelligent enough, notwithstanding his voluptuous effeminacy, to appreciate Bruno's profound erudition and daring intellect. Our philosopher's first lectures were on the "Attributes of God;" and from the notes prepared for the delivery of these discourses he composed a work called *Dei Predicamenti di Dio;* but this being still in MS. at the time of his arrest at Venice, was forwarded to Rome with his other papers, and has never yet seen the light. This was, perhaps, the most active part of Bruno's career. He taught privately, as well as delivered his public lectures, and composed several works on Pantheism, and on the Lullian art of memory; also a play, "Il Candelaio," abounding in wit and buffoonery, from which Molière himself is said to have borrowed. His public lectures were numerously attended by the professors as well as the students of Paris; never since the days of Abelard had any other philosopher gathered around him such an enthusiastic following. He adopted every style of eloquence, grave, impassioned, controversial, fanciful, and humorous; startling all by his daring theories and wild speculations. His known contempt for the Aristotelian philosophy and belief in the Copernican astronomy, together with his flagrant heresies as to many cardinal doctrines of the Church, at last roused considerable opposition amongst the priestly professors of the Sorbonne; and although countenanced by the King, and admired by hundreds of students for his intellectual and rhetorical power, he found Paris becoming an unsafe residence. At the end of 1582, or early in 1583, he

came to England, bringing with him letters of introduction from Henry III. to the French Ambassador in London, Michel Castlenau de Mauvissière.

With the Mauvissières Bruno resided during his stay in England, enjoying comparative repose, and freed from the constant harassments of a struggle for bread. Mauvissière was a fine, noble character, gifted and cultured; his wife was a charming and accomplished woman; and their youngest child, a god-daughter of Mary Stuart, was as fascinating and as attractive as her namesake. She was Bruno's darling, and with her he used to play whenever he was at leisure; being, like all men of his bright temperament, extremely fond of children. His evenings were mostly spent with Sir Philip Sidney, Fulke Greville, Dyer, and Hervey, at his host's, discoursing with them on subjects dear to them all. This was the one bright oasis in the desert of his life, where he paused to drink of the pure waters of domestic felicity; the one peaceful resting-place in a journey otherwise full of arduous, unremitting toil.

So great was Bruno's fame that he was invited to read in the University of Oxford, then as now far behind the best thought of the age. He lectured on the indestructibility of matter, the nature of God, the plurality of worlds; and quite startled the big-wigged professors by his eloquent advocacy of such monstrous heresies as those involved in his theory about inhabitants in distant worlds. Bruno wittily called Oxford the *widow* of sound learning. Prince Albert Alasco of Poland visited Elizabeth in 1583, and instead of bull-fights or tournaments he was entertained with a wit-combat at the University, which Bruno ridiculed. The professors were admonished to furbish up their intellectual weapons, which, Mr. Lewes wittily says, meant to shake the dust off their volumes of Aristotle, and defend Ptolemy's system of astronomy against the new-fangled theory of Copernicus. It is really amusing to observe the deference paid to the Stagirite, whose philosophy had been fostered by the Church because it lent support to the Biblical astronomy. An anecdote recorded by Mr. Lewes forcibly exemplifies this submissive homage. A certain young student, having detected spots in the sun, communicated his discovery to a worthy priest, who replied: "My son, I have read Aristotle many times, and I assure you there is nothing of the kind mentioned by him. Go, rest in peace, and be certain that the spots which you have seen are in your eyes, and not in the sun." In 1624—a quarter of a century after Bruno's martyrdom—the Parliament of Paris issued a decree banishing all who publicly maintained theses against Aristotle; and in 1629, at the urgent remonstrance of the Sorbonne, decreed that to contradict the principles of Aristotle was to contradict the Church! At Oxford the statutes declared that the Bachelors and Masters of Arts who did not faithfully follow Aristotle were liable to a fine of five shillings for every point of divergence. Their very existence seemed to

depend on the invulnerability of Aristotle, and great must have been their dismay on hearing that the brilliant, aggressive Italian heretic was to step into the lists, and do battle against the Goliath of the Church. The details of the combat are unknown to us; but, according to Bruno, quite a sensation was created by his startling novelties. The professors, he declares, when silenced in argument, replied with abuse. Bruno calls them a "constellation of pedants, whose ignorance, presumption, and rustic rudeness would have exhausted the patience of Job."

Towards the end of 1584 Bruno left London for Paris, with the Mauvissières. Soon after his arrival there, burning with all the zeal natural to the prophet of a new faith, he challenged the Sorbonne to refute in discussion 120 propositions selected by himself from his works published in London against the Aristotelian doctrines. Singularly, the challenge was accepted; but private enmities, excited by these disputes, and public agitation, obliged Bruno once more to quit Paris.

We next find him at Marburg, where he was not allowed to lecture. From Marburg he went *viâ* Mayence to Wittenburg, where his simple declaration that he was a lover of wisdom was a sufficient introduction. He was instantly permitted to matriculate at the University, and enrolled among the academicians. The freedom of opinion allowed by the Lutherans excited his admiration, and evoked from him a splendid panegyric on Luther, "who had slain a monster more mighty and dangerous than all those conquered by Hercules, the vicar of the tyrant of hell, at once fox and lion, armed with the keys and the sword, with cunning and force, with subtleties and violence, with hypocrisy and ferocity, who had infected the earth with a faith superstitious and more than brutally ignorant, concealed under the title of divine wisdom, of simplicity dear to God." As for himself, he boldly declared that he was partisan neither of Wittenburg nor of Rome; he hoped for the day when the father should be adored neither on this mountain nor at Jerusalem; he revered in Luther the liberator of the human spirit, the moral renovator. At Wittenburg he taught nearly two years "with noisy popularity," says Mr. Lewes. "Your justice," he writes to the Senate, "has refused to listen to the insinuations circulated against my character and my opinions. You have, with admirable impartiality, permitted me to attack with vehemence that philosophy of Aristotle which you prize so highly." Here he might have remained probably for many years had not the death of the Elector Augustus caused a revolution in the religious world of Wittenburg; Casimir, the uncle of the weak and incapable Christian, being a stern and rigid Calvinist. Bruno had gained experience of Calvinism at Geneva; he knew that he should be silenced, probably persecuted. Therefore he left Wittenburg for Prague; from the centre of Protestantism right to the heart of Catholicism—a dangerous transition, yet highly characteristic of his superb audacity.

In Prague he was introduced to the Emperor Rudolph II., by the Spanish Ambassador, Mendoça, with whom Bruno had become acquainted in London. The Emperor was a lover of the black art, hoping for most marvellous results from magic and occult science, and naturally attached himself to the Italian philosopher, who was reputed to be so skilful in many things, and might be proficient in forbidden arts also. Bruno, however, scarcely reciprocated Rudolph's regard; there was no attraction for him at Prague, books being scarce, and the opportunities few for lecturing or teaching. He was too proud, and too deeply impressed with a sense of the greatness of his mission, to attach himself as a kind of necromantic charlatan to the court of an Emperor. Prague was soon left for Helenstadt, Bruno carrying with him letters of recommendation from Rudolph to the Duke of Brunswick. At Helenstadt he remained six or seven months, and published a Pantheistic work *De Monade*, which he dedicated to his protector. He also engaged in a deadly feud with the Protestants, Boëtius, as the pastor of the Evangelical Church, excommunicating him as the readiest way of settling the dispute. The trial for which he appealed was denied him, and so he had to depart to Frankfort. The stay at Frankfort was in many ways a bright spot in his life. First he was able to fulminate safely against the Brunswick theologians; secondly, he found congenial society among the scholars who flocked thither; and thirdly, he was in the midst of booksellers and printers ready to publish and circulate his writings. The typographical establishments of Frankfort, Basle, Venice, Lyons, Rome, and Florence were famous, and attracted the learned of all countries, who resorted to these literary centres at the time of their annual fairs, in order to collect books and exchange thought. At these fairs "philosophers, mathematicians, historians, met and argued and philosophised, surrounded by a crowd of listeners, as Socrates and Plato might have done in the groves and porticoes of Athens." Wechel, a Frankfort bookseller, with honourable liberality, maintained Bruno while he was preparing the works afterwards printed there; all of them written in Latin, and setting aside the Lullian theories for a greater concentration on metaphysical and scientific truths.

While at Frankfort he had made the acquaintance of Ciotti, a Venetian bookseller, who, on a visit to the annual fair, had lodged at the monastery where Bruno himself resided. On returning to Venice, Ciotti spread the fame of the wandering Italian philosopher amongst the young patricians who frequented his shop in ostentatious patronage of literature, as was then the fashion. Mocenigo, a Venetian nobleman, became so interested in Bruno from Ciotti's report that he wrote to him at Frankfort most urgent letters, inviting him to Venice, and entreating him to become his guide, philosopher, and friend. In ill hour Bruno listened favourably to these entreaties and accepted

the invitation. Probably his pilgrimage through alien lands in search of mental freedom, denied to him at home, had become unbearably wearisome; it may be that his heart was filled with an irresistable longing to gaze once more on the resplendent azure of his native sky, to touch, Antæus-like, his mother earth, and renew his strength, to drink again of the matchless beauty of his own Italy, the mother of nations. Or if we believed in portents we might conclude that his approaching fate loomed ominously before him, and that, like the wounded eagle struggling back to its native eyrie, he returned at last to the home of his youth, to resign the burden of life there, where he had first taken it up. Besides, Venice had many claims on his interest. Italy was the intellectual centre of Europe, and in Venice alone more books were published than in all the countries of Europe outside Italy. The masterpieces of Greek and Roman literature, the earliest translations of the Bible into modern languages, were all first printed there; and the famous University of Padua, where Galileo afterwards taught, was supported by it. All these attractions combined proved irresistible, and Bruno came to Venice; alas, right into the jaws of death. A sadness seemed to weigh heavily on his spirit, as if the impending tragedy were harbingered by premonitions. Yet he wrote undauntedly as ever: "Despite the injustices of fate, which have pursued me ever since infancy, I aspire unchanged, unwearied, to the goal of my career; I feel my sufferings, but I despise them; I shrink not from death, and my heart will never submit to mortal."

Mocenigo had invited Bruno for many reasons, all of which spoke a weak, mean, contemptible character. Wishing to be fashionable, he was of course desirous of becoming the patron of a man of genius; hankering after the wealth and marvels of alchemical pursuit, he was of course anxious to secure the services of a mind stored with knowledge. Never were two dispositions more dissimilar brought together. Instead of flattering the vanity of his patron by deferring to his desires and opinions, Bruno provoked his jealousy by showing a decided preference for other society. Instead of passing his time with Mocenigo, he attended the literary and scientific receptions which were held in the evening in many of the Venetian palaces, where he was always a welcome visitor. The Venetian nobleman actually believed the philosopher to be possessed; his shallow, deceitful, superstitious nature being readily alarmed by Bruno's passionate impetuosity, which often expressed itself in what seemed to Mocenigo heretical assertions and blasphemous jests. It is evident that Bruno loathed him. "I soon found," he says, "that misfortunes were gathering thickly around me, and that I had committed myself to a perilous destiny, having built up for myself the walls of my own prison, and delivered myself up to my own ruin."

Mocenigo conveyed to his confessor every witty sarcasm and

daring sally of his guest, all of which were naturally distorted by passing through such a medium. The confessor wrote to Rome. The answer soon came, identifying Bruno as the renegade Dominican monk against whom an act of accusation had been drawn up sixteen years before. Becoming suspicious of foul play, Bruno announced his intention to return to Frankfort. Every preparation was made for his departure; but Mocenigo, resolved not to let the hated philosopher slip through his fingers, decided to play the gaoler himself, in default of an order of detention from Rome. On the eve of Bruno's contemplated departure, he perpetrated a dastardly violation of every law of hospitality; committed in fact a deed which will secure for him an eternal, indelible infamy. At midnight he tapped at Bruno's door, which was unsuspectingly opened. The nobleman entered, accompanied by five gondoliers, his servant, and another man. Bruno vehemently protested against the intrusion, but on the pretext of explaining it, Mocenigo led him away to another room, at the door of which he hastily drew aside to let Bruno pass, and then without having crossed the threshold himself, turned round, closed the door, and locked it outside. Returning to the philosopher's room, he took possession of all his effects, books, and papers, and instantly sent them to the Inquisition. The next night at the same hour Bruno himself was transferred to the dungeons of the Inquisition.

The trial commenced. Bruno denied all the monstrous accusations of Mocenigo; but he gave the judges a list of all his works, and calmly discussed with them heretical tenets laid to his charge, with the air rather of a professor than of a man on trial for his life. Yet some of his confessions were irretrievably damning. He admitted doubts as to the Incarnation, regarding the second and third persons of the Trinity rather in the light of attributes of the great final cause than as distinct, independent existences. He confessed to a sufficiently obvious species of Pantheism, defining the first cause as: "A God not outside creation, but the soul of souls, the monarch of monarchs, living, eternal, infinite, immanent. In the part, as in the whole, is God." The definite charges preferred against him by Thomas Morosini, who came from Rome, to demand him of the *Savi* of Venice, were: "He is not only a heretic, but a heresiarch. He has written works in which he highly lauds the Queen of England, and other heretical monarchs. He has written divers things touching religion, which are contrary to the faith." The Venetian Council finally decided to transfer him to Rome, but with a recommendation to mercy. Bruno now felt that all indeed was over. No more books, reading, and teaching; no more sweet companionship with congenial minds; no more grateful, though arduous, pursuit of Truth. The prison doors shut upon him, and excluded for evermore all human fellowship. For seven years he languished in the dungeons of the Inquisition, and was tortured (who knows how

often?) to make him confess to what could not be proved from his works. Wondrous mercy, forsooth! Far better the swiftest, most agonising death, than this perpetual exclusion from the light of heaven, from all that makes life worth having. But nothing could bend his haughty spirit; his obdurate pride exasperated his persecutors; and at length (welcome deliverance!) the dungeon was exchanged for the stake. No more clemency could be extended to the obstinate heretic who had dared to promulgate such unorthodox doctrines as the plurality of worlds, the rotundity and motion of the earth, with its relative astronomical insignificance, and other dangerous heresies directly in contradiction to the teachings of Mother Church, then, as now, blessed with the gift of infallibility. On the 10th of February, 1600, sentence of death was pronounced on him, in the Church of Sta. Maria Sopra Minerva, by one of the most imposing tribunals ever assembled to pass judgment on a heretic. Supreme members of the Holy Office, commissioners, assessors, council, doctors of law and of divinity, and secular magistrates, were met together in this year of the jubilee, attracted by many magnificent spectacles, of which not the least was the impending execution. Long confinement and suffering had wasted his frame; his face was pale and thoughtful; but the eyes were still full of their old ardour, mingled with melancholy; and unmarred were the noble, regular features, marked at once by Greek grace and Neapolitan fire. But once was the haughty calmness of his demeanour broken. The sentence of death was pronounced, and Bruno was handed over to the secular authorities (Holy Church hypocritically washing her hands clean of his blood) with a recommendation of a "punishment as merciful as possible, and without effusion of blood;"—the atrocious formula for burning alive. Turning from his judges, bold and prophetic, he haughtily raised his head, and gave utterance to these words, which even now echo proudly on the ear: "You are more afraid to pronounce my sentence, than I to receive it."

A week's grace for recantation was given, but without avail; and on the 17th of February, Bruno was led out into the most open space in Rome, the Field of Flowers, and there burnt to death under the very shadow of the walls of the Vatican. To the last he was brave and defiant, contemptuously setting aside the crucifix presented to him to kiss. Not a groan, not a plaint, escapes him; only the victim writhes, and presently all that remains of the once great heart and noble head is a few handfuls of dust, which the winds blow around the pendant globe as a testimony against that faith which has been pre-eminent in the shedding of blood. They killed Bruno's body, but they could not touch the immortal part of him; they could not exterminate his influence on the world in which he had toiled and suffered. For a brief hour's space the martyr's head is brought low; then, behold! it is crowned with imperishable lustre;

death has no more any part in him, enthroned on the everlasting sun-smitten mountains of memory.

Before attempting an account, necessarily brief, of Bruno's writings, it will be as well to give some description of his personal presence. Prefixed to the life by Bartholomèss is a portrait, of which we give the following description by B.V., of the *National Reformer*, because it excels any possible delineation of ours: "A simple frock or shirt, with its loose collar rolled down, leaves the throat and neck bare; the head rises lofty and majestic. The forehead is magnificent, and magnificently backed and surmounted; large strong eyes, under broad-curved, ample, but not heavy brows; firm jaw, chin round and full; the upper lip with its short moustache swelling full of fight, but exquisitely curved in its contour as the bow of Apollo. Passion and power are there in repose; the expression is somewhat melancholy, with a mingling of strange subtle humour. It is a head full of grandeur and distinction, one of the very few supreme types in which immense passion and power are moulded in perfect harmony."

Bruno was certainly not a Christian, although Janus-faced Brewin Grant audaciously claims him as such. In the Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfante (the Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast) he arraigns superstition before the bar of reason, and pronounces sentence on the asserted miracles of every faith alike. The pagan deities are mercilessly satirised, above all Orion, "who could walk on the waves without wetting his feet, and do many other pretty tricks." This passage, standing where it does, irresistibly suggests another than Orion, who is reputed to have performed the same wonderful feat on the Sea of Galilee. It is in the Spaccio, too, that he aims another blow at the most characteristic doctrine of Christianity. Bruno draws a pretty poetical picture of the expulsion of the beasts of ancient theology from the constellations, and of the substitution of the cardinal virtues; Truth being, with fine poetical insight, located in the polar star. These changes will, he declares, prove agreeable to all "save the dastardly sect of pedants, who say that not doing good is acceptable to God, but believing in the catechism." Surely this is a direct thrust at the mischievous doctrine of salvation by faith, which is, perhaps, the only one distinctively belonging to Christianity, and promulgated by Christ.

Bruno was in fact a Pantheist, although the designation itself was not then invented. He is, perhaps, best described as the "poet of the theory of which Spinoza is the geometer." The efficient universal cause he declared was the universal Intellect, which is the primary and principal faculty of the soul of the world, the soul being, on the other hand, the universal form of this intellect. The universal soul was "as the pilot in the ship; which pilot, in so far forth as he is moved together with the ship, is part thereof; considered as the director and mover of

it, he is not a part of it, but is a distinct efficient." Human and animal souls were manifestations of the universal soul, differing in degree only, not in kind. "Not only is life found in all things," he says in the treatise "De la Causa, Principio, et Uno" (On Cause, Beginning, Unity), "but the soul is that which is the substantial form of all things; it presides over the matter, it holds its lordship in those things that are compounded; it effectuates the composition and consistency of their parts..... Whatever changes, then, of place or shape anything may undergo, it cannot cease to be; the spiritual substance being not less present in it than the material. The exterior forms alone are altered and annulled, because they are not things, but only appertain to things—are not substances, but the accidents and circumstances of substances." Death and dissolution should be contemplated without terror, seeing that matter and form are constant principles; but Bruno has nothing definite to say concerning the continuance of personal identity, which is after all the immortality that superstitious men long for. Elsewhere he chaunts sublimely the Pantheism of which he felt himself the inspired teacher. To him the universe is infinite and changeless beneath all changes, as the sea, though fluctuant and billowy, is substantially stable; whatever causes difference or number is mere accident, mere figure, mere combination; all differences meet in one perfect unity, which is alone stable, and ever remaineth. This, if not sound philosophy, has at least the merit of being poetical; and, after all, great truths are conveyed in these rhapsodical utterances. Beneath the veil of appearance, which must for ever hide from us the inner causes, there is the noumenal matter, or force, or both, which undergoes no change, receives no addition, and suffers no detraction. Goethe embraced this Pantheism when he called the universe the garment of God; Browning is imbued with it when he asserts "The one face far from vanish rather grows;" and Shelley approximated to it when he said "The one remains, the many change and pass." But Pantheism, Theism, and Atheism are only different views by variously-constituted minds of the one great unfathomable mystery of being.

It will thus be seen that Bruno was the logical precursor of Spinoza, anticipating the latter's doctrine of immanence, and propounding, although rather poetically than with philosophical exactitude, that metaphysical theory which Spinoza afterwards elaborated and developed into a fortified system of thought. It is not clear that Spinoza ever read any of Bruno's works, and therefore the originality of the great Jewish metaphysician remains unquestioned; still the impartial historian of philosophy will always record the fact that the Italian philosopher legitimately demands chronological priority.

There is a conspicuous merit of Bruno which Mr. Lewes acknowledges, and which has more recently met with public recognition from one of the foremost modern teachers of science.

Occupied as the schoolmen of the middle ages were about entities and quiddities, they had missed the great truth that "man is the interpreter of nature." Bruno called them away from this vain pursuit, declared the impossibility of arriving at any knowledge by this absurd process of introspection and abstraction, and bade them come forth into the veritable light of day, and study *Nature* herself as the great storehouse of all facts. Matter to him was not the mere inert thing men had foolishly supposed, but the "universal mother who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb." To him matter was instinct with life co-eternal and co-equal with the universal soul itself, producing all phenomenal manifestations by the inexorable laws of its being. The earth itself was a huge animal, and so also were all the planets revolving in infinite space. Naturally, therefore, he embraced the Copernican astronomy, for was it not more consonant than the older theory with his exalted notions respecting the Universe and its informing Soul? Professor Tyndall, in his late Belfast address, paid a splendid tribute to the memory of Bruno, which it were an injustice to withhold. "The Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno was one of the earliest converts to the new astronomy. Taking Lucretius as his exemplar, he revived the notion of the infinity of worlds; and, combining with it the doctrine of Copernicus, reached the sublime generalisation that the fixed stars are suns, scattered numberless through space and accompanied by satellites, which bear the same relation to them that our earth does to our sun, or our moon to our earth. This was an expansion of transcendent import; but Bruno came closer than this to our present line of thought. Struck with the problem of the generation and maintenance of organisms, and duly pondering it, he came to the conclusion that Nature does not imitate the technic of man. The infinity of forms under which matter appears were not imposed upon it by an external artificer; by its own intrinsic force and virtue it brings these forms forth. Matter is not the mere naked empty *capacity* which philosophers have pictured her to be, but the universal mother who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb." Bruno was evidently one of those rare combinations of imagination and perspicacity, gifted with the supreme power of intuitively perceiving great principles long before the accumulated facts are sufficient for the purposes of scientific demonstration.

Bruno satirised mercilessly the vain ostentatious pedantry of his day. All the orthodox science of the time was mere erudition, and a dispute about a scientific theory meant a learned quarrel as to the legitimate derivation of the contested theory from Aristotle or some other recognised authority. This pedantry of a pedantic age was the frequent subject of Bruno's scorn. "If," says he, "the pedant laughs, he calls himself Democritus; if he weeps, it is with Heraclitus; when he argues,

he is Aristotle; when he combines chimeras, he is Plato; when he stutters, he is Demosthenes."

The philosophers he reproached with blind adherence to authority, and with slavish imitation of antiquity; the clergy with ignorance, avarice, hypocrisy, and intolerant bigotry. For awhile the revival of Platonism, while it lessened the adoration for Aristotle, rather increased than diminished the respect for antiquity, and the Platonists were quite as pedantic and slavishly submissive as the Aristotelians, although they worshipped another idol. But Bruno was free from this intellectual prostration; he did not so much decry Aristotle, as the worship of Aristotle, nor so much worship Plato as feel grateful for the truths enounced by him. "He studied the ancients," says Mr. Lewes, "to extract from them such eternal truths as were buried amidst a mass of error; they, the pedants, only studied how to deck themselves in borrowed plumes." To the independent mind of Bruno the truth which Bacon subsequently apprehended revealed itself, that it is we, and not the ancients, who live in the antiquity of the world, and that to bow down to the mere authority of predecessors is to abnegate the very reason which led them to discover the truths they have transmitted to us. The whole life of the wandering Italian was a long protest against the claims of authority; a protest which he ratified with his death. The living, bright-eyed Now was to him transcendently more interesting and important than the dead past, and Nature infinitely higher than human conceptions of her.

Very amusing is it to read Bruno's satire on the scholastics, with their abstractions spun out of their own internal conciousness, which they mistook for natural causes, thus making their conceptions the measure of Nature's operations, instead of shaping their own conceptions according to experience of her order. We laugh now at the suppositious meat-roasting powers of the meat-jack, dragged in as the necessary efficient cause to account for the roasting of the meat, but similar fallacies of abstraction then abounded, and while to-day any sane man can smile at such absurdities, it required then no common power and no common courage to expose and deride them. If, said Bruno, certain metaphysicians in cowls are asked, in what consists the essential being of Socrates? they reply, in Socrateity; when questioned about the substantial form of an inanimate thing, for instance wood, they can never get beyond "ligneity"; some logical intention being always put as the principle of natural things. Others since Bruno have hunted these metaphysical monstrosities to death, but none has more wittily and pithily exposed the weak points of scholasticism. "It was," says Maurice, "a succession of such blows as these that made the scholastics reel, and stagger, and fall."

But, after all, a man like Bruno is remarkable and memorable, not so much for his positive teachings—although they were

extremely valuable—as for the spirit which animated him; he is more distinguished as a noble warrior than as a teacher, and more admirable in his life than in his utterance. Some men write poems and some live them; Bruno did both, but the life poem was by far the grander, and commands imperiously our gratitude and reverence. The spirit which animated Bruno's teachings was the love of Truth, the goddess whom he exalted high over all other terrestrial or celestial things, the one object of a wise and noble man's reverence. The great aim of his heroic life was to diffuse this religion, to spread the worship of this goddess. In his endeavour he found himself confronted by the interested, the bigoted, the intolerant, who denied to him the right of intellectual freedom. Against them all, single-handed, he opposed himself, standing resolutely for the indefeasible right of a man to think for himself. Undaunted by adversity, undeterred by persecution, fearless of poverty, exile, or the certain miseries of a pariah's life, he persisted in the course which his conscience approved; and at last, when life could not be preserved, save at the cost of rectitude, he sacrificed it unhesitatingly, bearing proudly and without murmur the utmost malice of his foes. He fell battling for freedom of thought, the most precious heritage of mankind, upon which every possibility of progress depends. History records the names of more towering giants of thought, of grander poets who have bequeathed a more precious legacy of song; but nowhere shall we find a name with which nobler and more endearing qualities associate themselves. He stands unique, bold, intrepid, impassioned; dowered with spotless fame, radiant with matchless glory; his brows begirt with the ever-lustrous martyr's crown, richer than Royal or Imperial diadem.

Readers desirous of pursuing the subject further may consult the following works: –

Jordano Bruno, par M. Bartholmèss. 2 vols.

Tyndall, Professor, Belfast Address before the British Association, 1874.

Draper, J. W., History of the Intellectual Development of Europe. Chapters xix., xx., xxii.

Maurice, F. D., Modern Philosophy. Chapter v., sections 35 to 57 inclusive.

Lewes, G. H., Biographical History of Philosophy. Part ii., sections 4 and 5.

Macmillan's Magazine, February, 1871. Article on Giordano Bruno, by Andrew Lang.

Fraser's Magazine, March, 1871. Article on Giordano Bruno.

END OF PART II.—PRICE TWOPENCE.

HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

FREETHOUGHT.

3.—HYPATIA.

STANDING on an eminence commanding a full view of Alexandria, the spectator, fourteen centuries and a half ago, would behold a marvellous and imposing scene. Below him lay extended the great emporium of the world, the intellectual and commercial centre of civilisation; full of bustle and animation, throbbing with the pulsation of a quick and eager life. Its two great streets crossed each other at right angles, the one three miles long and the other one; and through these, and other wide streets of less length, poured the multitudinous life of the city. Long trains of camels and innumerable boats brought in the abundant harvests of the Nile for the consumption of the many-mouthed multitude within its walls, numbering hundreds of thousands. On all sides rose lofty buildings, temple, palace, church, synagogue, theatre, gymnasium, or exchange, their gilded roofs glittering in the sun. Wealth and poverty existed side by side then, just as now, and while crouching beggars solicited alms from the passers-by, gorgeously or fantastically arrayed Christian ladies swept by, in chariot or on foot, with mincing gait and dainty air, their dresses embroidered with Scripture parables, the Gospels hanging from their necks by golden chains, themselves accompanied by troops of slaves with fans and parasols to mitigate the terrible sunshine heat. All nationalities met in this cosmopolitan city. The thrifty, thriving Jew trader, concocting loans or cheapening in the market with some scarcely less astute Greek merchant; the Oriental with the changeless flowing robe of immemorial date, his dark lustrous eyes deep with the brooding light of antique civilisation; the native Egyptian, lowest of all, the servile slave or servant of foreign power, yet conscious of a nationality whose prestige and antiquity dwarfed all others; the Roman governor or consul whose proud step and haughty demeanour bespoke the representative of the mistress of the world; the pensive, bowed philosopher in simple garb cogitating on the profoundest mysteries of mind; and last, though not least, the cowled and

shaven monk, to whom all this wealth, commerce, and learning were as nothing to the greatness of that Holy Church whose interests he had sworn to maintain, for whom the sweetest sound, far excelling the bell of the merchant's camel, or the profane music of the theatres, was the midnight prayer of the hermit, or the chaunting of holy strains to the God of his faith.

Alexandria had been founded seven centuries before by Alexander the Great of Macedon, who, with consummate sagacity, selected it as the centre of communication between east and west. On his decease his great empire fell into the hands of his captains who divided it between them ; Egypt with Alexandria falling to the share of Ptolemy, the founder of that royal race of Ptolemies, the most illustrious in all history, and of the long glories of the great city with which their names will be for ever associated. Ptolemy's first act towards settling the problem of reconciling the discordant elements of his metropolis was to reinstitute the worship of the Pantheistic god Serapis, for whom a magnificent temple was built, and adorned with all that Grecian art could lavish upon it. The worship of the goddess Isis soon followed in deference to the perpetual hankering of mankind after female divinity. But the great Museum was the most splendid monument of royal munificence, and in time became the favoured seat of science and learning, to which flocked philosophers from all parts of the world. Not mere reading and rhetoric were the pursuits of these men, their minds turned to questions of science, and their researches subsequently resulted in marvellous inventions. Botanical gardens, zoological menageries, anatomical and astronomical schools, and chemical laboratories, furnished ample provision for scientific pursuit. In addition there were two splendid libraries containing 700,000 volumes, which were collected at immense labour and expense; and the university is said at one time to have contained fourteen thousand students.

With these fostering conditions science rapidly and vigorously flourished into stately strength. The Alexandrine school produced some of the most memorable and distinguished men in the history of science. Here Euclid taught and wrote the immortal work on Geometry which still bears his name, and which has extorted admiration from all posterity as the model of correct reasoning and perspicuous exposition. Here the great Archimedes discovered the principle of the lever, invented the method of determining specific gravity, the endless screw, the screw pump, and burning mirrors ; his magnificent sense of mastery and of trust in the universality of natural law being conveyed in the saying, "Give me whereon to stand and I will move the world." Here Eratosthenes, who invented a number of astronomical instruments, was able to demonstrate the rotundity of the earth by arguments which, after being submerged in the night of the Dark Ages, had to be painfully recovered by countless seekers after truth. Here Apollonius is said to have

invented the first clock, and Hero even the first steam engine; and here also flourished the great Hippocrates, justly called the father of medicine. Yet all this brilliant outcome of essentially Greek genius was doomed to destruction, for two potent influences were at the work of annihilation; one the political mastery of Rome, which ended in the total suppression of the Greek intellect, and the other the rising Christianity, which ended in the suppression of all intellect whatever.

Under the pressure of Roman power and fashion the Greek intellect abated its brilliant manifestations and became merely passive, rather dwelling on the interpretation of past teaching than endeavouring to discover new truths. There grew up a mystical school of theologians, which contrived to blend Oriental Pantheism with the old and almost universal triune divinities, and which may be said to have avenged the wrongs of Greece; for the Alexandrine philosophy which they developed leavened Christianity more than any other influence, and so vindicated the irrepressible power of Grecian thought on the progress of mankind. Roman despotism had done its part; it now remained for Christian intolerance to complete the work of destruction, and extinguish the last remaining spark of intellectual independence.

In the beginning of the fifth century Christianity had fully entered upon its career of temporal conquest and persecution, inaugurating, as it were, a fit prelude to the Dark Ages which soon after followed. The simple Christianity of primitive times was completely lost in the swelling glories of a Church, universal in aim and pretension; the Bishop of Rome had become more powerful than even the Emperor himself, and the prelate of Alexandria was scarcely reckoned much inferior to his metropolitan brother. The Church was now virtually the predominant force—social and political, as well as religious, controlling the Imperial power by artful threats or well-timed service, or by means of the females and eunuchs of the palace. All the splendour of outworn Paganism seemed to be attaching itself to the triumphant new faith, and Christian bishops and priests were beginning to vie with the antique religion in magnificence of ceremony and dress. To further the power of the Church was the engrossing object of priestly ambition, and to this end, every contemptible prostitute device was resorted to. The rites of Paganism were imported wholesale into the practise of Christian worship; the adoration of saints and relics took the place of the old worship of a multiplicity of gods; priestly vestments were conformed as strictly as might be to the habiliments of Pagan ceremonial; incense was burnt in the churches; prayers were offered to an innumerable horde of newly-discovered or invented saints; pilgrimages became again fashionable; and lying wonders and pretended miracles abounded to meet the craving demand of the all-credulous multitude. The discovery of long buried saints and martyrs would alone form a subject

of infinite amusement, and the dissemination of precious relics kept pace with it. Amongst other relics the very crosses on which Christ and the two thieves were crucified were discovered under a temple of Venus, formerly erected on the site of the Holy Sepulchre, and upon the centre of these still remained the inscription written by Pilate. Singular to relate the Saviour's cross displayed a marvellous power of growth or reproduction, for within a few years there were enough specimens of it scattered over Europe to have constructed many hundred crosses. After this we need be surprised at nothing, however absurd. Christianity had become a mere pandering to popular superstition for the securing of power, and already had entered upon that evil and infamous career which stands as one of the foulest blots on the page of history.

Intolerance was the natural accompaniment of ignorance, superstition, and bigotry. To answer the philosophers by argument was tedious and difficult; to silence them by rigorous suppression was pleasant and easy. Ancient learning was therefore decried as magic, evidently proceeding from the Devil, and philosophy was denounced as a vain pursuit which aimed at making men wiser than the God of revelation had intended. In the Holy Scriptures was to be found all knowledge necessary to man's guidance, and all besides was to be stigmatised, and, if possible, extirpated as profitless and unholy. Paganism itself was not at first directly persecuted, but indirectly it certainly was the object of attack, for the persecution of philosophers strengthened the hands of the Church and rendered quite easy the task of dealing with the deluded masses. As an instance of the mode in which philosophy was trampled down, the case of Sopater, a philosopher and friend of Constantine, may be cited. He was accused of binding the winds in an adverse quarter by the influence of magic, so that the corn-ships could not reach Constantinople. In obedience to popular and ecclesiastical clamour, the Emperor was obliged to give orders for his decapitation, to appease the general fury. The works of philosophers who wrote against Christianity, such as Porphyry and Celsus, were refuted by the quick and effective agency of fire. Under Theodosius sacrifices, and even the entering of Pagan temples, were prohibited, the ancient rite of inspecting the sacrificial entrails was made a capital offence, the revenues of many temples were alienated, and some were entirely demolished. All this was the work of the gentle and amiable Christian clergy, who had been enjoined by their great master to unite the harmlessness of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent. The Early Fathers expressed their utter contempt for the philosophy which they could not refute. Eusebius called it a vain and useless labour, diverting the soul from the exercise of better things. Lactantius deemed it "empty and vain," and derided the heretical notion of the globular form of the earth on the ground of the absurdity of trees on the other

side of the world hanging with their tops downwards; and St. Augustine asserted the impossibility of inhabitants on the opposite side of the earth, since no such race was recorded by Scripture as the descendants of Adam. Thus the Bible was erected into the position legitimately belonging to reason; it was made the sovereign arbiter of all disputes; and was declared to contain the beginning and the end of sound science and sound philosophy.

The Archbishopric of Alexandria was held by one, Theophilus, a bold, unscrupulous man, formerly a monk of Nitria. About the year 390, the great Trinitarian conflict was composed, the Unitarian party having been worsted; and the quarrel within the Church being settled there was ample time to deal with the common Pagan enemy; as for opportunities, they were to be created as occasion required. Against the Temple of Serapis the popular fury was directed, the temple being hateful to Theophilus and his monks for two reasons: first, because of the Pantheism which its worship shadowed forth, and secondly, because dealings with the Devil had been going on for ages within its walls. The Serapion comprised a magnificent library containing 400,000 volumes, and there also were treasured the astronomical and geometrical instruments which had once been assiduously employed by Euclid, Eratosthenes, and others, but which were now regarded by Christian ignorance and bigotry as devices of magic and fortune-telling. It happened that in digging the foundation for a new church to be built upon the site of an ancient temple of Osiris, obscene symbols of Phallic worship were discovered. These being exhibited for the derision of the rabble in the market-place, a riot ensued, the Pagans making the Serapion their head-quarters. The rescript from the Emperor Theodosius enjoined that the building should forthwith be destroyed, the task being entrusted to the ready and willing hands of Theophilus. First the library was pillaged, its treasures were dispersed or destroyed, and then the image of Serapis himself was shivered to fragments by the blow of a battle-axe; the whole structure being afterwards razed to the ground, and a church built in its precincts. Other Egyptian temples speedily shared the same fate; the cowled monk tyrannised over the philosophy and piety of the old faith, and substituted the worship of his own precious relics for that of Pagan folly. Archbishop Theophilus went to his account, and was succeeded by his nephew St. Cyril, who had been expressly prepared to fill the holy office, and who was in all respects a fit successor of so worthy a man as the departed prelate. Soon after his accession to office, a conflict arose between the Christians and the Jews, the latter for awhile getting the upper hand, but only for awhile. The Christians soon aroused themselves under the inspiration of Cyril, and proceeded to sack the synagogues and pillage the houses of the Jews. The Roman Prefect endeavoured to suppress the riot,

but in vain. Five hundred monks swarmed in from the desert to assist in the labours of Christian love. The Prefect was himself wounded in the head by a stone thrown by the monk Ammonius, and affairs were assuming an ugly aspect, when the respectable inhabitants interfered and suppressed the disturbance. The monk Ammonius was seized and put to death. Cyril, however, had him buried with unusual honours, and directed that he should be canonised as Saint Thaumasius! This introduction to the imminent approaching tragedy will prepare our readers' minds for it, and obviate the probability of surprise at any barbarities, however atrocious.

Cyril was a fashionable preacher, above all desirous of popularity, and it grieved him sorely that a celebrated Pagan of Alexandria should be able to attract audiences far larger than his own. Amongst the surviving cultivators of philosophy there was one, Hypatia, the daughter of Theon, the mathematician, a young and beautiful woman, in the full flush of ardent life, and, if report speak true, as lovely as a poet's dream. She gently refused all her lovers, preferring to cultivate philosophy untrammelled by domestic ties, and devoted her time and ability to lecturing publicly on various philosophical and geometrical problems. Her lecture-room was crowded daily by audiences more numerous and fashionable than those of Cyril. The Archbishop had not philosophy, but he had power, and he was determined to stop the enchantments of this sorceress, who deluded men from the truth of God as expounded by his faithful servant, St. Cyril.

Thus in the year 414, Greek philosophy and ecclesiastical ambition stand face to face; the former in the person of Hypatia, like a finely-tempered steel sword of reason, the latter in the person of Cyril, like the iron mace of despotic power, ready to shiver the bright steel to pieces by one tremendous swift blow. One day, as Hypatia comes forth to her Academy, she is assaulted by a mob of Cyril's monks, bare-legged, black-cowled fiends, from whom every spark of humanity has been driven by the cursed training of the Church. She is dragged from her chariot, and stripped naked in the public streets; then hauled into an adjacent church, and killed by a blow from the club of Peter the Reader, her cries ringing through the sacred edifice, scream on scream, the cries of helpless innocence in the hands of savage power. But death alone is not sufficient to glut the vengeance of these fiends. They dismember the naked corpse, and finish their infernal crime by scraping the flesh from the bones with oyster-shells, and casting the remnants into the fire. So perished this young and beautiful woman, a victim to the intolerance and bigotry of Christian monks; seeming to typify in her own sweet person the witchery and magic of Greece, her art, her poetry, her philosophy. With Hypatia philosophy itself expired in the intellectual metropolis of the world. No abiding place henceforth was to be found for

the lovers of wisdom; all lay prostrate at the feet of the Church; and the Dark Ages, swiftly approaching, buried almost every memory of what was once so noble and lovely in the antiquity of thought. Not till the Saracen broke the power of the Church, and wrested from oblivion some remnants of ancient science and philosophy, was there any hope of redemption. The redemption happily was destined to come, and Grecian intellect destined to avenge its wrongs on the Christianity which had trodden it under foot. The *renaissance* of art and the revival of learning were like the first joyful exercises of almost forgotten strength after a long night of sleep. One can, in presence of this dark history of crime, feel the full force of Mr. Swinburne's magnificent Hymn to Proserpine, depicting a young Pagan—calm, proud, and prophetic—foreseeing the same fate for the new gods as that which has overtaken the old :—

Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey at thy breath;
We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fulness of death.
O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods!
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,
I kneel not, neither adore you; but, standing, look to the end.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and our forefathers trod;
Though these that were gods are dead, and thou, being dead, art a god;
Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen, and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to the dead.

Of Hypatia's life little is known; only the tragic story of her death has been preserved. Yet, as her murder marks an epoch in the history of the struggle between Freethought and Intolerance, we have deemed it expedient to present our readers with a picture of the times at Alexandria, and an account of the general causes which led up to the crowning catastrophe of the foregoing sketch.

The reader may consult :—

Draper's History of the Intellectual Development of Europe, vol. i., chapters vi. and x.
Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chapter xlvii.

BERNARDINO TELESIO.

AMONG the great Italian heretics who in the 16th century represented the growing revolt against the infallibility of Aristotle, probably none exercised a wider or deeper influence than Bernardino Telesio, born at Cosenza, in Calabria, South Italy, in the year 1509. This distinguished man received his first education under his uncle at Milan, where he acquired great proficiency in the Greek and Latin languages. He was present at the Sack of Rome in 1527, and was for some reason imprisoned for two months, besides losing all he possessed. After his liberation he went to Padua, where he assiduously studied mathematics and philosophy, having refused, it is said, the office of tutor to the Infante Philip of Spain, and also the offer of an archbishopric made to him by Pius IV. In 1535 he was received as Doctor of Philosophy in Rome, where he passed some years in the society of the learned, and where he published his two chief works on "Nature," which met with unexpected applause. Induced by the importunity of his numerous friends and admirers, he opened a school of philosophy in Naples, which soon became famous, both for the number of its pupils and for a bold, uncompromising hostility to Plato and to Aristotle as authorities on scientific questions. Telesio and his assistant professors were highly esteemed by those who were desirous of studying nature rather than dialectics, and he was patronised by several great men, particularly by Ferdinand, Duke of Nuceri. But his popularity brought upon him the envy of the "long-necked geese of the world, who are ever hissing dispraise, because their natures are little;" and his pronounced independence of mind provoked violent opposition from the orthodox teachers, especially from the monks, who loaded him and his school with calumny. His latter days were much embittered by the rancorous malignity of his opponents, and in 1588 he expired from a bilious disorder, the severity of which was increased by great domestic affliction, the old man having lost his wife and two children, one of whom was stabbed. After his death, in 1596, his works were placed on the *Index Expurgatorius* by Pope Clement VIII., notwithstanding the friendship of his predecessor for the departed philosopher.

Telesio, in language almost as clear and emphatic as Lord Bacon's, reprobated as chimerical the old method of studying nature; and he is singularly enough honourably mentioned by our great English philosopher, who exempts him from the sweeping condemnation passed on previous students of nature. In his work on the "Nature of Things," published in Latin in the year 1565, he asserts "that the construction of the world,

and the magnitude and nature of the bodies contained in it, is not to be sought after by *reasoning*, as men in former times have done, but to be perceived by *sense*, and to be ascertained from the *things themselves*." He then passes a swift condemnation on those who have presumed, by mere ratiocination, to divine the principles and causes of the universe, and affirms that a slower wit and less vigorous spirit characterise the *true* lovers of wisdom, who prefer ascertained demonstrable truth to the vain and unfounded imaginings of their own minds. The right method of studying nature is, he declares, inductive, proceeding upon a basis of ascertained facts, whence we ascend to the principles of things; and this method may be pursued fearlessly by all alike, by the slow as well as by the quick-witted, for "if there should turn out to be nothing divine or admirable, or very acute in our studies, yet these will at all events never contradict the things or themselves, seeing that we only use our *sense* to follow Nature, which is *ever at harmony with herself, and is ever the same in her acts and operations*." Surely it is quite startling to find an old Italian philosopher preaching in such unmistakeable language the value, nay, indispensableness, of experiment at a time when our own Bacon had but just emerged from long clothes.

It cannot be said that Telesio's physical system, which he endeavoured to substitute for that of Aristotle, was worthy to supplant it, for it was extremely fanciful; he, like many another philosopher, having swerved from the faithful observance of the logical rules which his sober judgment approved. Probably the paucity of accumulated facts rendering scientific demonstration impossible, the rapid, eager mind of the Italian was forced to formulate some theory of things as a mental resting-place, however inadequately supported. But, amidst all his speculative vagaries, Telesio constantly remembers one great truth which forms, as it were, the base of his system, namely, that *matter* is indestructible and ever the same in quantity, incapable alike of increase or diminution. Matter he conceives to be inert and to be acted upon by the two contrary principles of heat and cold, from the perpetual operation of which incorporeal agents arise all the several forms in nature. Even here there is an element of truth, for certainly heat does play an important part in the theories of modern physics, and is recognised as an all-pervasive influence. Although Telesio's fanciful speculations are of little positive value, yet his persistent attack on dogmatic authority as represented by Aristotle, and his lucid exposition of the inductive method of physical research, entitle him to our gratitude and admiration. A bold thinker, an intrepid advocate of freedom of thought, and a staunch friend of science, he rightfully claims a place in our muster-roll of heroes.

The reader may consult:—

Maurice's Modern Philosophy, chap. v., sect. 34.

Enfield's History of Philosophy, book viii., chap. iii., sect. 4.

TOMMASO CAMPANELLA.

CAMPANELLA was a countryman of Telesio, being born at Stilo, in Calabria, in the year 1568. Like Bruno, he displayed a wonderful precocity of genius. At thirteen he was able to write verses with great facility, and at fourteen he took the Dominican habit, thus enrolling himself a member of that great ecclesiastical organisation to which Bruno also belonged. He assiduously studied theological subjects, his first ambition being to rival the fame of Albert and the great Thomas Aquinas. In the convent of San Giorgio his youthful mind was deeply exercised upon the great themes of theology and philosophy, until at length he discovered the sterility of the ancient method of philosophising. The fame of Telesio was then noised abroad, and Campanella, being attracted thereby, obtained and read the old philosopher's treatise, "On the Nature of Things," already described in our preceding biography. He was captivated by the bold spirit which animated the teachings of Telesio, and was induced thereby to leave the barren tracks of baseless speculation for the plainer but more fruitful paths of inductive research. With all a proselyte's ardour, he engaged in a defence of Telesio against the attempted refutation by Antoninus Marta.

In the life of Bruno the reader will find depicted the grovelling submission of the human mind to the authority of Aristotle, a subserviency partly due to the ancient prestige of the Stagirite, and partly to his having been for centuries backed by the almost omnipotent power of the Church. It was natural in such circumstances that Campanella's uncompromising hostility to Aristotle should raise a violent ferment, and bring upon him censure and persecution. His monastic brethren were least of all inclined to tolerance, and their hatred was still further increased by his decisive contradiction of many long cherished beliefs. Supported, however, by wealthy patrons, he continued, in face of all opposition, to persevere in his attempt to reform philosophy; but at length neither the power of his own genius nor the patronage of friends could further protect him from insult and persecution, and he was obliged to flee. For about ten years he wandered through Italy, visiting Rome, Florence, Venice, Padua, and Bologna. At Venice he saw Sarpi, and at Florence the great Galileo. At last he settled in his native country, where, probably to protect himself, he wrote a defence of the See of Rome; but in 1599 he was arrested and thrown into prison, as the leader of an alleged conspiracy against the King of Spain and the Neapolitan Government. The wildest charges were preferred against him, as that he was about

to announce himself as the Messiah, and to get himself crowned King of Calabria, and he was accused of the authorship of books he had never written. Notwithstanding the intercession of the Pope, Paul IV., and of his nuncio, Campanella was kept in prison twenty-seven years, during the greater part of which time he was denied the privilege of reading and writing. Seven times he was put to the torture, but his indomitable spirit would not bend, and no incriminatory words could be wrung from his lips. As soon as the indulgence of books and writing materials was granted he composed a work on the "Spanish Monarchy," and another on "Real Philosophy," both of which were sent into Germany to be published. In 1626 he was liberated in consequence of the express command of Pope Urban VIII. to Philip IV. of Spain. His flagrant heresies, however, made his residence in Italy unsafe. At Rome his preaching of the new philosophy caused intense excitement; his adversaries stirred up the mob against him, and he was obliged to escape in disguise to France, being assisted in his flight by the French Ambassador, the Count de Noailles.

At Paris he was favourably received by Cardinal Richelieu, the founder of the French Academy, a discriminating and powerful genius, whom his enemies openly accused of Atheism. The Cardinal procured from Louis XIII. a pension for the exiled philosopher, which enabled him to live comfortably at the Dominican Monastery, in the Rue St. Honoré, Paris, until his death in 1639. His last years were spent in the midst of learned society, and before he expired he paid a brief visit to Holland, where he met the celebrated Descartes.

Most of Campanella's works were written in prison, and it was while suffering incarceration that he bravely dared to champion the cause of Galileo, who was persecuted by the savage Inquisition, and compelled to recant his daring heresies about the position and movement of the earth. Numerous works proceeded from his fertile pen, amongst which the following, all written in Latin, may be cited: "A Precursor to the Restoration of Philosophy," "On the Rejection of Paganism," "On Astrology," "Rational Philosophy," "The City of the Sun," "Universal Philosophy," "On the Right Method of Studying," and "Atheism Subdued." The "City of the Sun" is a social romance, after the style of Plato's "Republic," Bacon's "New Atalantis," and More's "Utopia," in which community of women figures among other crudities. The "Atheism Subdued" ought, says a judicious critic, to have been entitled "Atheism Triumphant," as the author puts far stronger arguments into the mouth of the Atheist than into that of the Theist. Heretical opinions were in that persecuting age often thus concealed under an orthodox mask; while professing to be faithful Christians, philosophers would often adduce, and ineffectively answer, powerful arguments against the faith. When we come to the life of Vanini we shall find a conspicuous example of this. However much

we may deplore such weakness, we have no right to censure it, unless we are perfectly confident that we ourselves could have braved the anger and malice of the whole world.

Like many other minds of the age, Campanella was a strange compound of sense and absurdity. In his astrological writings he confesses to a belief in the cure of disease by the words of an old woman, and he appears to have believed that, like Socrates, when any danger threatened, he was warned by a demon, between sleeping and waking. Yet in other respects he evinces great boldness and soberness of thought. Most of his philosophy was borrowed from his master, Telesio ; he accepted the Telesian theory of matter, and of the perpetual action thereon of heat and cold, the two great active agents. Yet he was not a slavish follower of his master ; on the contrary, he often controverted many of his notions. All animal operations are, he thought, produced by one universal spirit, which acts in all sensoriums. All things in nature have a passive sense of feeling, and withal a consciousness of impressions, and a perception of the objects by which they are produced. The universal soul thus pervades all nature, our earth, like the planets in Bruno's philosophy, being sentient. His psychological notions were more plausible. Sense, the foundation of all knowledge, is the only trustworthy guide in philosophy, and this faculty he divides into present perception, and inference from things perceived to things not perceived. A simple classification of mental powers, and highly scientific for the age in which it appeared. Campanella, like Bruno, Telesio, and Vanini, is chiefly remarkable on account of the spirit of his philosophy, rather than for its positive value. Like them, he stands forth conspicuously as a champion of the cause of mental freedom against dogmatic authority, and his memory should be honoured as that of one who dared and suffered much persecution for Truth's sake.

The reader may consult :—

Enfield's History of Philosophy, book x., chap. ii., section 4. Other information can be obtained only piecemeal from various sources.

LUCILIO VANINI.

LUCILIO VANINI was born at Taurisano, near Naples, in 1584 or 1585. His father was steward to the Duke of Taurisano, Viceroy of Naples, and according to the son's statements a man of elevated character. Besides his natural prenomen of Lucilio, Vanini during his lifetime assumed others, such as Julius Cæsar and Pompey. This affectation of celebrated names brought upon him an accusation of pride, but he defended himself on the ground that a miserable theologian of Rome unfortunately bore the same names as himself, and shared his renown without partaking in his labours. His father sent him to Rome where he studied theology and philosophy, his first master in theology being Barthelmi Argotti, whom he highly praises, calling him the phœnix of preachers: in philosophy he had for master Jean Bacon, whom he styles the Prince of Averroists, and from whom he learnt to swear by Averroes. His favourite authors were Pomponatius, Cardan, Averroes, and Aristotle, but to none of them did he pin his faith. Each of them is occasionally severly handled by Vanini in his works, although he accords to them all praise when seemingly due. Besides theology and philosophy, he studied physics, astronomy, medicine, and civil and ecclesiastical law. He afterwards at Padua made theology his special study, became a doctor of canon and civil law, and was ordained a priest.

Vanini's father although a worthy man was not well to do, and had left his son no fortune. The young doctor and priest was therefore poor, but he supported his poverty with honour and courage. "All is warm," he writes, "for those who love; have we not braved the most piercing colds of winter at Padua, with wretchedly insufficient raiment, animated solely by the desire to learn?" When he had completed his studies in this city he found himself prepared to travel through Europe, to visit the academies, and to assist at the conferences of the learned. According to his own writings he must have travelled over the greater part of Europe, visiting not only the whole of Italy, but also France, England, Holland, and Germany. Fathers Mersenne and Garasse, the two principal authorities for the facts of his life, inform us that before his execution at Toulouse he confessed before the Parliament there assembled, that at Naples, before starting on his tour, he and a dozen of his friends had formed the project of journeying over Europe to promulgate Atheism, and that France fell to his share. M. Rousselot, however, the editor of Vanini, stigmatises this as a libellous detraction from Vanini's character, and declares that he was

obliged to quit Italy, where his lectures recalled those of Pomponatius, and seek refuge in France, where he published his two principal works: the *Amphitheatrum Æternæ Providentiæ, &c.*, at Lyons in 1615, and the *De Admirandis Naturæ Reginæ, &c.*, in 1616. Everywhere he went he discussed and expounded, arousing the opposition of the bigoted, and extorting the admiration of the independent. From Lyons he was compelled to flee to London to avoid being burnt, and even at the latter place he was imprisoned for forty-nine days by the zealous religionists of our own metropolis. This happened in 1614, five years before his death. Father Mersenne alleges that about this time he entered a convent of Guienne, where he made fervid professions of faith, but whence he was expelled for depraved conduct; but, as M. Rousselot observes, this is an allegation advanced without proof. If the holy Father deemed it his duty to cite the fact, he ought also to have recognised an obligation no less great to prove it. At Paris Vanini had for host and protector the Marshal de Bassompierre, whose almoner he became, and to whom he dedicated his second great work. Here also he enjoyed the friendship of the Papal Nuncio, Roberto Ubaldini, Bishop of Politio, whose rich library afforded him invaluable opportunity for study. But his naturally uneasy and adventurous spirit impelled him to wander like a knight-errant of philosophy, and he quitted Paris for Toulouse. There happened, however, just then a circumstance which fully justified his departure. The two works above cited had been examined and sanctioned by the censors of the Sorbonne; but as the latter in particular made a great noise, the Sorbonne examined it afresh and condemned it to the flames. The author was accused of reproducing the ideas of a book called "The Three Impostors," nay, even of reprinting the work itself; but as a matter of fact, this work, although much talked of, has never been seen by any one and probably never had existence. This charge of plagiarism is on a par with the statement of Father Mersenne that Vanini's preaching and writing had perverted so many young men, doctors and poets, that he had 50,000 Atheistic followers at Paris!

At Toulouse Vanini found his life overshadowed by this sentence of the Sorbonne, and before long the fate of his work became his own also. He was accustomed to hold conferences with his friends on matters of philosophy; by one of these, a respectability named Francon, he was denounced as an impious heretic. The following are the words of Father Garasse, which may serve as a specimen of the style in which the enemies of Vanini speak of him: "Lucilio Vanini was a Neapolitan nobody, who had roamed over all Italy in search of fresh food, and over great part of France as a pedant. This wicked rascal, having arrived at Gascogne, in the year 1617, endeavoured to disseminate his own madness, and to make a rich harvest of impiety, thinking to have found spirits susceptible to

his teachings ; he insinuated himself with effrontery amongst the nobles and gentry, as frankly as if he had been a domestic, and acquainted with all the humours of the great ; but he met with spirits more strong and resolute in the defence of truth than he had imagined. The first who discovered his horrible impieties was a gentleman named Francon, possessed of sound sense. It happened that towards the end of 1618, Francon having gone to Toulouse, as he was esteemed a brave gentleman and an agreeable companion, soon saw himself visited by an Italian, reported to be an excellent philosopher, and one who propounded many novel and startling curiosities. This man spoke such fine things, such novel propositions, and such agreeable witticisms, that he easily attached himself to Francon, by a sympathy of the supple and serviceable disposition of his hypocritical nature. Having made an opening, he commenced to insert e wedge ; little by little he hazarded maxims ambiguous, and every way dangerous, until no longer able to contain the venom of his malice, he discovered himself entirely." The worthy Father says that Francon's first impulse was to poniard Vanini, but after reflection he preferred to denounce him ; it was thus that Vanini, who perhaps had fallen into a trap, was delivered into the hands of the law. The President Gramond, author of "The History of France under Louis XIII.," gives an account of the trial which ensued, and of the wretched arguments for the existence of God which Vanini adduced in answer to interrogations concerning his belief in Deity. One cannot read these last without suspecting that the arraigned culprit, with infinite contempt, was expending his masterly irony on the judges who were trying him. Gramond himself thinks that he reasoned so, not from conviction, but from vanity and fear. His judges apparently took the same charitable view of the case, for they condemned him to have his tongue cut out, and then to be burnt alive. During the trial his courage seemed to fail him ; men with the indomitable heroism of Bruno are not abundant, but rare as the fabled phœnix. He confessed, took the communion, and professed a readiness to snbscribe to the tenets of the Church, which he certainly disbelieved and despised ; but when the sentence destroyed all hope, he flung away the Christian mask, and recovered his natural dignity. The fearful suspense was less bearable than the certainty of having to stand at the stake. Let us not hypocritically be harsh in our judgment on this man ; rather let us reprobate that bigotry and intolerance which could be the means of reducing a naturally proud spirit to such degradation.

Vanini was burnt at Toulouse, on the Place St. Etienne, February 19th, 1619. That he died bravely cannot be denied. Le Mercure Français, which cannot be suspected of any partiality towards him, reports "that he died with as much constancy, patience, and fortitude as any other man ever seen ; for

setting forth from the Conciergerie joyful and elate, he pronounced in Italian these words: 'Come, let us die cheerfully like a philosopher.'" There is a report that, on seeing the pile, he cried out, Ah, my God! On which one said, You believe in God then; and he retorted, No; it's a fashion of speaking. Father Garasse says that he uttered many other notable blasphemies, refused to ask forgiveness of God, or of the king, and died furious and defiant. So obstinate indeed was he that pincers had to be employed to pluck out his tongue, in order duly to execute the sentence of the law. The President Gramond writes: "I saw him in the tumbril, as they led him to execution, mocking the Cordelier who had been sent to exhort him to repentance, and insulting our Saviour by these impious words: '*He* sweated with fear and weakness, and I, I die undaunted.'" Thus perished Vanini, at the age of thirty-four, a victim to religious bigotry, to the last an obstinate heretic.

Vanini's Scepticism was of the most pronounced character, in fact, it is very doubtful whether he had any belief at all in the existence of God; certainly he was declared an Atheist by his persecutors, and put to death as such. In the Amphitheatre he undertakes to defend Providence against the malicious attacks of precedent Atheists, such as Diagoras, Protagoras, and others. But his replies to their arguments are wretchedly weak, and he constantly falls back upon Holy Scripture as an all-sufficient answer to objectors, admitting, however, that the Atheists are still unconvinced, seeing that they regard the Bible as he does Æsop's Fables or the dreams of old women. In the Dialogues on Nature he passes in review all beliefs, discussing them with the utmost verve and audacity, and forgetting not the impostures of priests, whose institutions are to him but pious frauds. The mask worn in the Amphitheatre is here lifted enough to show the features concealed. No wonder it brought upon him the judgment of death.

Vanini was one of the most hardy and enlightened spirits of his century. Mixed with graver matter, there are in his writings a number of superstitions and examples of false science, such as are to be found in every author of the time; but this in no way detracts from his great ess. He was one of the most sceptical in an age of intellectual revolt, a champion of reason against the power of authority. In the prime of his life he perished at the stake, bravely and defiantly, notwithstanding his previous moments of weakness. He, too, wears the crown of martyrdom, and is enrolled in the Freethought calendar of saints as a heroic warrior in the cause of human redemption.

The reader may consult:—

Rousselot, M.X., Œuvres Philosophiques de Vanini; avec une Notice sur sa Vie et ses Ouvrages. Paris, 1842.

HEROES AND MARTYRS

OF

FREETHOUGHT.

4.—BENEDICT SPINOZA.

WONDERFUL is the fate of greatness. The men destined to exercise potent sway over their kind through successive ages are too often misunderstood and misappreciated by their own generation; fortunate, indeed, if they have not to bear the weight of the world's malice besides. Such is necessarily the fortune of supreme genius; being immeasurably ahead of all others, the master minds are doomed to comparative solitude. The feet of clay mix with the multitude, and are accurately enough discerned by them; the lofty head is exalted into the clear sunlight, and the grovellers below cannot continuously gaze thereon because of the blinding glare which greatness alone can affront. But earth's generations increase in stature as the ages roll; the sublime altitude of creative genius can be contemplated with faces less upturned; and posterity at last, meting out tardy justice, reverses the verdict of its predecessors. Then indeed there sometimes supervenes an opposite excess. The despised and rejected of previous generations comes to be regarded as almost beyond criticism; his merits are exaggerated, and his defects ingeniously glossed. Such revulsion, however, is natural and by no means deplorable. Time will right all. Rational criticism succeeding pardonable idolatry will gauge the dimensions of the imperial thinkers, and assign to each his place in the intellectual development of humanity.

With respect to the subject of this biography the temper of public opinion has undergone a remarkable change. For many generations after his death Spinoza was the object of almost universal execration; Spinozism and Atheism were identical phrases; to express any sympathy with the spirit or admiration for the intellect and life of the outcast philosopher, was to incur the certainty of being regarded as a wilful child of the devil. Now, however, the poor Amsterdam Jew is elevated to the metaphysical throne, and before him loyal subjects bow. "The Systematic Atheist" of Bayle is the "God-intoxicated

man" of Novalis ; since the time of Lessing and Mendelssohn he has profoundly influenced Germany's noblest minds, in particular that of her greatest poet, Goethe ; in France he has extorted the homage of the subtlest thinkers ; and even in England, averse from ontological speculation as our best intellect is, his rigorous logic and supreme mental grasp and spiritual insight have won high and intense admiration. The grand simplicity of his life, too, has been fully recognised, and no longer are senseless accusations hurled at his memory. Even the most determined opponents acknowledge that his character was free from all meanness, egotism, baseness, and chicane ; nay, they are compelled to admit his claim to rank among the few combinations of sublime genius and heroic fortitude of which the human race can boast. Every one, agreeing or disagreeing intellectually, must feel when perusing his works that they are in the clear air of a great man's presence.

The Jewish people, from whom Spinoza derived his origin, has a remarkable history ;—the semi-barbarous tribes of Palestine eventually decided the religion of the civilised world. From them sprang the literature which Christianity adopts as the veritable Word of God, and in their midst was born the Nazarene destined to wield the religious sceptre over subject nations. For such gifts some feel no inexpressible gratitude, and yet they also can loyally thank this strange people for other deeds. In the long night of the Dark Ages, when Christian bigotry ruthlessly trampled under-foot all humanising and progressive influences, the Jews held tenaciously the torch of Science. Arabian learning was first imported by the Jewish merchant ; and the people against whom scornful tongues were thrust, whose gaberdine was the badge of outlawry, upon whose face the meanest Christian beggar might contemptuously and impunibly spit, actually for ages supplied the whole of Europe and the East with physicians, and furnished every important educational institution with the most skilful and erudite teachers. It were impossible to exaggerate the value of such devotion to intellectual pursuits. Religious persecution, protracted through centuries, stereotyped the Jewish nation ; now it is fast merging into the populations around it ; but never will the faithful historian forget the immeasurable debt of gratitude due to the long-despised people of Israel.

In the Spanish peninsula the industrious and enterprising Jews dwelt for many generations side by side with the noble Moors, as in a new land of promise. In every great city they furnished a contingent of population. But under Ferdinand and Isabella, in whose persons the crowns of Aragon and Castile became united, the war of races, hitherto partial and intermittent, burst into utter vehemence. The Moors were finally expelled, those spared from slaughter having to seek a new home in other lands. The spirit of religious persecution next violently raged. The establishment of the Inquisition was fol-

lowed by a long night of ignorance and repression, during which Spain was systematically and industriously weeded of Freethinking minds. The turn of the Jews soon came. An edict went forth commanding that they should all be gathered into the true Catholic fold. Suasion was at first adopted as means of regeneration, but the terrors of persecution were the ultimate menace. How could the monotheistic Jew bend the knee to a ghastly, crucified man, crowned with thorns, and sanguine from many wounds? Or how bow before a tawdry female figure, blasphemously supposed to symbolise the mother of God? The thing was spiritually impossible. Yet many attempted, by lip-service and outward profession, to illude the lynx-eyed Inquisitioners. In vain, however; the rack and stake were brought into play, and the dungeons of the Inquisition yawned to receive the obstinate heretics. In the reign of Philip III. the Jews began to leave Spain in multitudes; some going to Italy, some to the East, but most to the Netherlands, where the revolt against Spanish authority was succeeded by Republican Government, and where legal toleration was extended to all sects and schisms. There the Jews were welcomed, and allowed to build and worship in their synagogues. Well did they repay such hospitality; they extended the trade of Holland beyond that of any other nation, and set the printing-press to work at the production of literature. But the fact most interesting to us is, that amongst the Jewish fugitives from Spain was the father of our Spinoza, who settled at Amsterdam, residing in a detached house on the Burgwal, near the old Portuguese Synagogue.

Baruch Despinosa, or, to use the Latin equivalent, Benedictus, was born at Amsterdam, on the 24th of November, 1632. He was the eldest of three children—himself, and two sisters, Miriam and Rebecca. His father, already mentioned, was in comfortable, if not affluent circumstances, and derived his income probably from trade. He is reputed to have been a man of excellent understanding, and of this he gave evidence in the care he took to secure to his son the best education the Jewish schools of Amsterdam afforded. The classical languages of Greece and Rome had no place in the curriculum of the Jewish seminaries, but evidently the study of Latin was not interdicted, as Greek was by the Christian hierarchy, for amongst the Jews physicians and naturalists abounded. Arithmetic was taught, but geometry and mathematics were generally neglected. Beyond the commonest rudiments, the instruction given appears to have been entirely religious. The Law and the Prophets were expounded by the rabbis, and diligently studied by the scholars, and the pupils who evinced extraordinary aptitude were selected for study in higher branches of education, with a view to becoming teachers themselves. Young Baruch, a remarkably quick and inquisitive boy, found means to supply himself with Latin, by aid of a German teacher, and afterwards with Greek. The boys on the upper form had the use of a well-furnished