

Thomas Salusbury

Preface

FROM PREFACE TO GALILEO'S
DIALOGUE ON THE TWO GREAT WORLD SYSTEMS
(1661)

Reader,

Mathematical learning (to speak nothing touching the necessity and delight thereof) has been so sparingly imparted to our countrymen in their native English, especially the nobler and sublimer part, that in compliance with the solicitations of several of my noble and learned friends and the inclinations of such as are mathematically disposed, more especially those who either want time or patience to look into the vulgar and unstudied languages, I did adventure upon this work of collecting and translating from among the excellent pieces that are so abounding in the Italian and French tongues some of those that from my own observation and from the intimation of friends were most useful and desired and, withal, most wanting in their own.

I was, indeed, at first seriously conscious and am now, by experience, fully convinced how disproportionate the weight of the enterprise is to the weakness of the undertaker, but yet the passion I ever had to be subservient to my friends and compatriots in their inquisition after these sublime studies, and a patience which I owe to the phlegm that is predominant in my constitution, joined with a nine years' conversance in these language, as, also, an unhappy and long vacation that the persecutions of the late tyrants gave me from more advantageous employments, so prevailed with me, that I resolved to improve even my very confinement to serve those friends whom, as the time then stood, I could not see.

The book being for subject and desing intended chiefly for gentlemen, I have been as careless of using a studied pedantry in my style, as careful in contriving a pleasant and beautiful impression. And, when I had considered the hazard and computed the charge of the undertaking, I found it to exceed the ability of a private purse, especially of mine, that had been so lately emptied by the hand of violent enemies and perfidious friends, not to make mention here of the sums that a loyal reflection upon my Prince's affairs had at the same time drawn from me; and judged that the most safe, easy, and reasonable way was to invite

those persons who had appeared desirous of the book to be contributory to their own contentment by subscribing towards the charge of this publication.

To say nothing of the disadvantages of translations in general, this of mine, doubtless, is not without its error and oversights; but, those of the printed discounted, I hope the rest may be allowed me upon the score of human weakness. The truth is, I have assumed the liberty to note the mistakes in the florid version of Berneggerus in the margin, not so much to reproach him as to convince those who told me that they accounted my pains needless, having his Latin translation by them. The like they said of the whole two tomes; but they thereby caused me to question their understanding or veracity. For some of the books were yet never extant: as, for instance, the *Mechanics of Monsieur Des Cartes*, a manuscript which I found among the many other rarities that enrich the well-chosen library of my learned and worthy friend, Dr. Charles Scarburgh, the *Experiments of Gravity and the Life of Galileo*, both my own. Others were included in volumes of great price, or so dispersed that they were not to be purchased for any money, as those of Kepler, à Stunica, Archimedes, Tartaglia, and the *Mechanics of Galileo*; and the remainder, though easier to procure, were harder to be understood – as Tartaglia’s notes on Archimedes. Torricelli’s *Doctrice of Projects*, Galileo’s *Epistle to the Duchess of Tuscany*, and, above all, his *Dialogues de Motu* or *on Two New Sciences* (never till now done into any language) which were so intermixed of Latin and Italian that the difficulty of the style, joined with the intricacy of the subject, rendered them unpleasant, if not wholly unintelligible, to such as were not absolute masters of both the tongues.
