

for thirty-three years on the completion of his work, entitled *De Revolutionibus Orbium Cælestium*.\* The first printed copy was brought to him when, shattered in mind and body, he was preparing himself for death. He saw it and touched it, but his thoughts were no longer fixed on earthly things, and he died—not, as Gassendi says, a few hours, but several days afterward (on the 24th of May, 1543†). Two years

\* Westphal, in his *Biographie des Copernicus* (1822, s. 33), dedicated to the great astronomer of Königsberg, Bessel, calls the Bishop of Ermland Lucas Watzelrodt von Allen, as does also Gassendi. According to explanations which I have very recently obtained, through the kindness of the learned historian of Prussia, Voigt, director of the Archives, “the family of the mother of Copernicus is called in original documents Weiselrodt, Weisselrot, Weisselrodt, and most commonly Waisselrode. His mother was undoubtedly of German descent, and the family of Waisselrode, who were originally distinct from that of Von Allen, which had flourished at Thorn from the beginning of the 15th century, probably took the latter name in addition to their own, through adoption, or from family connections.” Suiadecki and Czyski (*Kopernik et ses Travaux*, 1847, p. 26) call the mother of the great Copernicus Barbara Wasselrode, and state that she was married at Thorn, in 1464, to his father, whose family they believe to be of Bohemian origin. The name of the astronomer, which Gassendi writes Tornæus Borussus, Westphal and Czyski write Kopernik, and Krzyzianowski, Kopirnig. In a letter of the Bishop of Ermland, Martin Cromer of Heilsberg, dated Nov. 21, 1580, it is said, “Cum Jo. (Nicolaus) Copernicus vivens ornamento fuerit, atque etiam nunc post fata sit, non solum huic ecclesiæ, verum etiam toti Prusiæ patriæ suæ, iniquam esse puto, eum post obitum carere honor esepulchri sive monumenti.”

† Thus Gassendi, in *Nicolai Copernici Vita*, appended to his biography of Tycho (*Tychonis Braheii Vita*, 1655, Hagæ Comitum, p. 320): “eodem die et horis non multis priusquam animam efflaret.” It is only Schubert, in his *Astronomy*, th. i., s. 115, and Robert Small, in the very learned *Account of the Astronomical Discoveries of Kepler*, 1804, p. 92, who maintain that Copernicus died “a few days after the appearance of his work.” This is also the opinion of Voigt, the director of the Archives at Königsberg; because, in a letter which George Donner, canon of Ermland, wrote to the Duke of Prussia shortly after the death of Copernicus, it is said that “the estimable and worthy Doctor Nicolaus Koppernick sent forth his work, like the sweet song of the swan, a short time before his departure from this life of sorrows.” According to the ordinarily received opinion (Westphal, *Nikolaus Kopernikus*, 1822, s. 73 und s. 82), the work was begun in 1507, and was so far completed in 1530 that only a few corrections were subsequently added. The publication was hastened by a letter from Cardinal Schonberg, written from Rome in 1536. The cardinal wishes to have the manuscript copied and sent to him by Theodor von Reden. We learn from Copernicus himself, in his dedication to Pope Paul III., that the performance of the work has lingered on into the *quartum novennium*. If we remember how much time was required for printing a work of 400 pages, and that the great man died in May, 1543, it may be conjectured that the dedication was not written in the last-named year; which, reckoning backward thirty-six years, would not give us a later, but an earlier year