accomplishes in 28 days [27 days, 7 hours, 43 min., 11½ sec.] its revolution around it.

Such is the general system of the solar world. Such are the mutual relations of the stars which beam upon us with holy ray from their watch-towers in the silent skies of night. This system, admirably simple, satisfies the mind; it explains, even in their smallest details, all the phenomena which human investigation has discovered.

Our young readers, nevertheless, would deceive themselves greatly if they imagined that this noble conception had been received by the minds of men without opposition. At the outset, the self-sufficient pride of our species, led astray by a false philosophy, shrunk from the idea of placing the Earth in a secondary rank. Man could not bring himself to believe that everything here below was not subordinated to his little globe; or that the worlds which surround him had quite another mission to discharge than that of charming the eyes of men with the spectacle of a radiant, starlit firmament. Afterwards, an erroneous interpretation of the Bible (one is ashamed to confess it) so successfully arrested Truth in her moral progress, that the system of the world which we are about to explain has only been generally accepted within the last two centuries.

Although the theory of converting our globe into a simple satellite of the sun was always displeasing to the ancients, it is nevertheless worthy of remark, that several Greek philosophers enunciated it. The sublime PYTHAGORAS,* for example, who may almost be regarded as the father of European science, placed the Sun, or Fire, in the centre of the world. Another philosopher, the Pythagorean ARISTARCHUS,† of Samos, expresses himself as follows, in a fragment of his writings which has descended to posterity: "The Earth turns round on its

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* [Pythagoras was the son of a merchant named Mnesarchus, and born at Samos. He was a contemporary of Polycrates and Tarquinius Superbus (B.C. 540–510).—See GROTE, *History of Greece*, vol. iv.]

† [Aristarchus, of Samos, flourished about B.C. 280–264. None of his works remain, except a treatise on the Magnitudes and Distances of the Sun and Moon (περὶ μεγεθῶν καὶ ἀπούτημάτων ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης), of which there is a Latin translation in Willis's Works, vol. iii., Oxford, 1688.]