

INTRODUCTION.

Of Formal and Physical Astronomy.

WE have thus rapidly traced the causes of the almost complete blank which the history of physical science offers, from the decline of the Roman empire, for a thousand years. Along with the breaking up of the ancient forms of society, were broken up the ancient energy of thinking, the clearness of idea, and steadiness of intellectual action. This mental declension produced a servile admiration for the genius of the better periods, and thus, the spirit of Commentation : Christianity established the claim of truth to govern the world ; and this principle, misinterpreted and combined with the ignorance and servility of the times, gave rise to the Dogmatic System : and the love of speculation, finding no secure and permitted path on solid ground, went off into the regions of Mysticism.

The causes which produced the inertness and blindness of the stationary period of human knowledge, began at last to yield to the influence of the principles which tended to progression. The indistinctness of thought, which was the original feature in the decline of sound knowledge, was in a measure remedied by the steady cultivation of Pure Mathematics and Astronomy, and by the progress of inventions in the Arts, which call out and fix the distinctness of our conceptions of the relations of natural phenomena. As men's minds became clear, they became less servile : the perception of the nature of truth drew men away from controversies about mere opinion ; when they saw distinctly the relations of *things*, they ceased to give their whole attention to what had been *said* concerning them ; and thus, as science rose into view, the spirit of commentation lost its way. And when men came to feel what it was to think for themselves on subjects of science, they soon rebelled against the right of others to impose opinions upon them. When they threw off their blind admiration for the ancients, they were disposed to cast away also their passive obedience to the ancient system of doctrines. When they were no longer inspired by the spirit of commentation, they were no longer submissive to the dogmatism of the schools. When they began to feel that they could dis-