

INTRODUCTION.

EUROPE AND AMERICA.

THE fifteenth century in Spain (the point from which the discovery of America emanated) was marked by the cessation of the Crusades, by treaties, made between the Moors and Christians of Spain and France, the Porte and Venice, of amity and commerce. Asiatic arts and luxury, Asiatic idols, and Asiatic valor, had made deep and sensible impressions upon Christendom. The schools of Cordova, the chivalry of Grenada, the galleys of Fez, the grandeur of the Soldan, exercised a moral despotism throughout Europe. What Russian power and Russian pretensions are to Europe to-day, the Ottoman empire was to the Christian Europe of Columbus' youth.

The exact sciences were, as yet, in a rude and chaotic state. Astrology, alchemy, and both magics had professors and postulants. Medicine was little better than herbal traditions, or a litany of incantations. Amulets blest by conjurers were worn, and the stars believed in by the highest intellects. It was then, — when star-gazers advised kings to peace or war, when brazen heads were fabricated by Albertus Magnus and Friar Bacon, when Aldrovandus had to dissect his own child, fearing to touch another human body, — with Fatalism enthroned in