

course than by observing the sun and stars. Their navigation was of consequence uncertain and timid. They durst seldom quit sight of land, but crept along the coast, exposed to all the dangers, and retarded by all the obstructions, unavoidable in holding such an awkward course. An incredible length of time was requisite for performing voyages, which are now finished in a short space. Even in the mildest climates, and in seas the least tempestuous, it was only during the summer months that the ancients ventured out of their harbours. The remainder of the year was lost in inactivity. It would have been deemed most inconsiderate rashness to have braved the fury of the winds and waves during the winter ^a.

WHILE both the science and practice of navigation continued to be so defective, it was an undertaking of no small difficulty and danger to visit any remote region of the earth. Under every disadvantage, however, the active spirit of commerce exerted itself. The Egyptians, soon after the establishment of their monarchy, are said to have opened a trade between the Arabian Gulph or Red Sea, and the western coast of the great Indian continent. The commodities which they imported from the east, were carried by land from the Arabian Gulph to the banks of the Nile, and conveyed down that river to the Mediterranean. But if the Egyptians in early times applied themselves to commerce, their attention to it was of short duration. The fertile soil and mild climate of Egypt produced the necessaries and comforts of life with such profusion, as rendered its inhabitants so independent of other countries, that it became an established maxim among that people, whose ideas and

Navigation
and com-
merce of the
Egyptians.

^a Vegetius de Re milit. lib. iv.