

and directing them with ease and safety. Sculls and oars were the only instruments that occurred to them for some time. It must have been long before they thought of adding the helm. The ancients imagined, that it was the fins of fishes which first suggested the idea of oars, and that the hint of the helm was taken from observing how birds direct their flight by their tails. The shape of ships, excepting the sails, seems to me to be copied from that of fishes. What the fins and tail are to fishes, that the oars and helm are to ships. But these are only conjectures more or less probable, and not worth examining to the bottom.

The action of the wind, whose effects are so sensible and so frequent, might soon suggest the use of sails. But the manner of adjusting and managing them was more difficult, and would not be so soon discovered. This, I am persuaded, was the very last part of the construction of ships which was found out. I am confirmed in this opinion, by the practice of the savages and other rude nations, who make use only of oars, but have no sails. It would be the same in the first ages. The first navigators only coasted, and cautiously avoided losing sight of land. In such circumstances, sails would be more dangerous than useful. It required the experience of several ages to teach navigators the art of employing the wind in the direction of ships.

If we believe, however, the ancient traditions of the Egyptians, this art of using the wind by means of masts and sails, was exceeding ancient. They give the honour of this discovery to Isis. But over and above the little credit which is due to the greatest part of the history of that Princess, we shall see by and by, that this discovery cannot be ascribed to the Egyptians.

Men must soon have endeavoured to find out some method of stopping ships at sea, and keeping them firm at their moorings. They would at first make use of various expedients for this purpose, such as large stones, hampers or sacks full of sand or other heavy bodies. These they fixed to ropes, and threw into the sea. These methods would be sufficient in the first ages, when the vessels they used were only small & light barks. But as navigation improved, and larger ships were built, some other machine became necessary. We know not at what time, or by whom the anchor, that machine at once so simple and so admirable, was invented. We find nothing certain on