

BOOK
I.

IN proportion as the knowledge of the advantages derived from navigation and commerce continued to spread, the intercourse among nations extended. The ambition of conquest, or the necessity of procuring a new settlement, were no longer the sole motives of visiting distant lands. The desire of gain became a new incentive to activity, roused adventurers and sent them forth upon long voyages in search of countries, whose products or wants might increase that circulation, which nourishes and gives vigour to commerce. Trade proved a great source of discovery, it opened unknown seas, it penetrated into new regions, and contributed more than any other cause, to bring men acquainted with the situation, the nature, and commodities of the different parts of the globe. But even after a regular commerce was established in the world, after nations were considerably civilized, and the sciences and arts were cultivated with ardour and success, navigation continued to be so imperfect, that it can hardly be said to have advanced beyond the infancy of its improvement in the ancient world.

Imperfection
of navigation
among the
ancients.

AMONG all the nations of antiquity the structure of their vessels was extremely rude, and their method of working them no less defective. They were unacquainted with some of the great principles and operations in navigation, which are now considered as the first elements on which that science is founded. Though that property of the magnet, by which it attracts iron, was well known to the ancients, its most important and amazing virtue of pointing to the poles had entirely escaped their observation. Destitute of this faithful guide, which now conducts the pilot with so much certainty in the unbounded ocean, during the darkness of night, and when the heavens are covered with clouds, the ancients had no other method of regulating their
course