

Of the Origin of Navigation.

SEVERAL conjectures present themselves concerning the origin of navigation. Various accidents and events might have given birth to that art. The sea-coasts in many places are full of islands, at no great distance from the continent. Curiosity would naturally inspire men with an inclination to pass over into these islands. As this passage would not appear either very long, or very dangerous, they would attempt it. Success in one of these attempts would encourage to a second, Pliny relates, that anciently they sailed only among islands, & that on rafts.

Fishing, to which several nations applied themselves in the earliest ages, might also contribute to the origin of navigation. I am, however, much inclined to think, that the first ideas of this art was owing to those nations which were seated near the mouths of rivers, where they fell into the sea. As they sailed upon these rivers, they would sometimes be carried out to sea, either by the current, by a storm, or even by design. They would be terrified at first at the violence of the waves, and the dangers with which they threatened them. But when they had got over these first terrors, they would soon be sensible of the great advantages the sea might procure them, & of consequence would endeavour to find out the means of sailing upon it.

In whatever way mankind became familiar with that terrible element, it is certain, that the first essays in navigation were made in the most ancient times. Moses informs us, that the grandsons of Japhet passed over into the islands near the continent, and took possession of them. It is also an undoubted fact, that colonies very soon sailed from Egypt into Greece. Sanchoniatho ascribes the invention of the art of building ships, and the glory of undertaking sea-voyages, to the Caberites. The ancient traditions of the Phœnicians make the Caberites cotemporary with the Titans.

Experience soon convincing them, that ships designed for navigating the seas ought to be of a different construction from those intended for rivers, they would make it their study to give such a form and solidity to ships designed for the sea, as would enable them to resist the impetuosity of its waves. They would next endeavour to find out a method of guiding