

ably be expected we shall soon have an exact knowledge of the whole surface of the globe. The ancients knew only a small part of it, because they had not the mariner's compass. Some people have pretended that the Arabs invented the compass, and used it a long time before we did, to trade on the Indian sea, as far as China; but this opinion has always appeared destitute of all probability; for there is no word in the Arab, Turkish, or Persian languages, which signifies the compass; they make use of the Italian word *Bossola*; they do not even at present know how to make a compass, nor give the magnetical quality to the needle, but purchase them from the Europeans. Father Maritini says, that the Chinese have been acquainted with the compass for upwards of 3000 years; but if that was the case, how comes it that they have made so little use of it? Why did they, in their voyages to CochinChina, take a course much longer than was necessary? And why did they always confine themselves to the same voyages, the greatest of which were to Java and Sumatra? And why did not they discover, before the Europeans, an infinity of fertile islands, bordering on their own country, if they had possessed the art of navigating