

Still, the recurrence of the appearances which suggest the notion of a Year is so obvious, that we can hardly conceive man without it. But though, in all climes and times, there would be a recurrence, and at the same interval in all, the recurring appearances would be extremely different in different countries; and the contrasts and resemblances of the seasons would be widely varied. In some places the winter utterly alters the face of the country, converting grassy hills, deep leafy woods of various hues of green, and running waters, into snowy and icy wastes, and bare snow-laden branches; while in others, the field retains its herbage, and the tree its leaves, all the year; and the rains and the sunshine alone, or various agricultural employments quite different from ours, mark the passing seasons. Yet in all parts of the world the yearly cycle of changes has been singled out from all others, and designated by a peculiar name. The inhabitant of the equatorial regions has the sun vertically over him at the end of every period of six months, and similar trains of celestial phenomena fill up each of these intervals, yet we do not find years of six months among such nations. The Arabs alone,<sup>1</sup> who practise neither agriculture nor navigation, have a year depending upon the moon only; and borrow the word from other languages, when they speak of the solar year.

In general, nations have marked this portion of time by some word which has a reference to the returning circle of seasons and employments. Thus the Latin *annus* signified a ring, as we see in the derivative *annulus*: the Greek term *ἐνιαυτός* implies something which *returns into itself*: and the word as it exists in Teutonic languages, of which our word *year* is an example, is said to have its origin in the word *yra*, which means a ring in Swedish, and is perhaps connected with the Latin *gyrus*.

#### *Sect. 2.—Fixation of the Civil Year.*

THE year, considered as a recurring cycle of seasons and of general appearances, must attract the notice of man as soon as his attention and memory suffice to bind together the parts of a succession of the length of several years. But to make the same term imply a certain fixed number of days, we must know how many days the cycle of the seasons occupies; a knowledge which requires faculties and artifices beyond what we have already mentioned. For instance, men cannot reckon as far as any number at all approaching the number of days in the year, without possessing a system of numeral terms, and methods

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<sup>1</sup> Ideler, *Berl. Trans.* 1818, p. 51.