

BOOK III.



CHAPTER I.

OF THE MERCHANT SHIPS OF MANZI THAT SAIL UPON THE INDIAN SEAS.

HAVING finished our discourse concerning those countries wherewith our Book hath been occupied thus far, we are now about to enter on the subject of INDIA, and to tell you of all the wonders thereof.

And first let us speak of the ships in which merchants go to and fro amongst the Isles of India.

These ships, you must know, are of fir timber.¹ They have but one deck, though each of them contains some 50 or 60 cabins, wherein the merchants abide greatly at their ease, every man having one to himself. The ship hath but one rudder, but it hath four masts; and sometimes they have two additional masts, which they ship and unship at pleasure.²

[Moreover the larger of their vessels have some thirteen compartments or severances in the interior, made with planking strongly framed, in case mayhap the ship should spring a leak, either by running on a rock or by the blow of a hungry whale (as shall betide oftentimes, for when the ship in her course by night sends a ripple back alongside of the whale, the creature seeing the foam fancies there is something to eat afloat, and makes a rush