

52 *The RISE and FALL of the*

roduce any change on this occasion, till such time as they fought in Greece.

In the first Punic war, Regulus was defeated as soon as the Carthaginians made choice of plains for their cavalry to engage in; and in the second, (a) Hannibal owed his most glorious victories to the Numidians.

Scipio, by the conquest of Spain, and the alliance he made with Masinissa, deprived the Carthaginians of this superiority: the Numidian cavalry won the battle of Zama, and put an end to the war.

The Carthaginians had greater experience at sea, and were better skilled in the working of ships than the Romans: but this advantage seems to have been less in those ages than it would be in the present.

As the ancients had not the use of the sea-compass, they were confined almost to coasting; and indeed they had nothing but galleys, which were small and flat bottomed; most roads were to them as so many harbours; the knowledge of their pilots was very narrow and contracted, and their tackle extremely simple. Their art itself was so imperfect, that as much is now done with an hundred oars, as in those ages with a thousand.

Their larger vessels had a disadvantage in this, that being moved with difficulty by the crew of galley-slaves, it was impossible for them to make the necessary evolutions. Mark Antony experienced this, in the most fatal manner, at Actium; for his ships were not able to move about, when attacked on all sides by the lighter vessels of Augustus.

(a) The circumstance which gave the Romans an opportunity of taking a little breath in the second Punic war, was this, whole bodies of Numidian cavalry went over into Sicily and Italy, and there joined them.