even probable that the barrier thus opposed to commerce entailed on the states of Northern and Western Europe cen­turies of comparative barbarism. Yet this was effected for a wise purpose, by one of the greatest ornaments of the middle ages, Alfred the Great.

Alfred was the first ruler of England who clearly under­stood that the policy of Britain was rather to prevent than to resist invasion ; and the by-gone history of his country told him plainly that its military strength was not only in­sufficient to awe invaders from its shores, but that all the military resources at his command were inadequate to pre­serve the liberties of his people. He therefore turned the energies of his mighty mind to the task of creating a naval force, which should be more powerful than that of his untiring persecutors the Danes. In this we find that he succeeded ; and at length, under the protection of the fleets which his genius had created, he was enabled to estab­lish that frame-work of internal policy and government, from the wisdom of which England has even to this day benefited. It is historically certain that Alfred himself superintended the formation of his fleet, and that he gave the design of vessels to be superior to those of the Danes.

We find that these vessels were galleys, generally row­ed with forty oars, some even with sixty, on each side ; and that they were twice as long, deeper, nimbler, and less “ wavy” or rolling, than the ships of the Danes. The in­formation on this subject is obtained by Selden, from a Saxon chronicle of the time of Alfred, which is in the Cot­tonian Library.

It should be remembered, that when Alfred thus intro­duced the Mediterranean galley into these northern seas, his object was not so much to form a vessel adapted for the purpose of navigating those seas, as to obtain one which would afford space for a large force of fighting men. For this the galley was admirably qualified ; and indeed it main­tained its place as the appropriate ship for the purposes of war, until the invention of cannon rendered other arrange­ments necessary·.

The immunity which it insured from the attacks of the Danish marauders, caused its general adoption along the coasts hitherto open to their incursions, on all of which it thus superseded the sailing vessels that we have already described ; and we shall find that voyages which, until its introduction, were boldly and successfully achieved, be­came of rare occurrence and of hazardous issue during the subsequent ages, until the galleys once again gave place to sailing vessels. It also gradually checked the enterprise of the Northmen, by the curb which it placed upon their successes.

It is not our purpose to give more than a slight sketch of the naval history of Britain through the line of her Saxon princes ; for we can discover little data on which to found any speculation even, as to the progress of naval architec­ture during these ages. We know that the galley of the Mediterranean continued to be used for the defence of the coasts ; and the policy of Alfred appears to have been well understood by many of his successors,—that England only enjoyed peace from invasion when her fleets were power­ful enough to repel it from her shores. We are also led to suppose that the use of sailing vessels was not wholly abandoned ; for in the reign of Athelstan, the third in de­scent from Alfred, as we read in Hackluyt, it was decreed, that “ if a marchant so thrived, that he passed thrise over the wide seas of his owne craft, he was thenceforth a Theins’ right worthie.”

This establishes two rather interesting facts ; one is, that at so early a period of our history there were merchants of importance enough to engage in such a traffic ; and the other is, that from the richness of the reward held out to success­ful enterprise, we are enabled to estimate the difficulty of the task assigned. We may assume that these long voy­

ages were made in ships more adapted for the purpose than galleys ; in fact, in the vessels which the galleys had been intended to supersede. But the spirit of maritime enter­prise had, as we have said, evidently received a check, since we see that one of the highest rewards in the power of the monarch to bestow was held out to the merchant, as an in­citement to an adventure, which the vague hope of plunder would alone have been sufficient to induce that merchant’s progenitors to attempt, and successfully perform. How­ever, it is probable that at no time was the art of navigat­ing vessels, which depended principally, although perhaps not wholly, upon their sails, lost in the northern seas. Gibbon says, that at the early crusades the vessels of the “ Northmanni et Gothi” (the Norwegians and Danes) dif­fered from those of the other powers, among all of whom the ships partook of the character of the Mediterranean galley. These northern crusaders are described by him as navigating “ *navibus rotundis,* that is to say, ships infinitely shorter in proportion to their length than galleys.” This was not later than the beginning of the twelfth century, and therefore not so far removed from the periodis in ques­tion as to render the inference we wish to deduce from it erroneous, particularly when referring to times of such slow improvement as the middle ages.

The “ mighty” fleets maintained by Edgar afford no in­formation on the subject of this article, excepting that the facts connected with that monarch’s annual circumnaviga­tion of his territories prove them to have consisted of row- galleys. They must however have formed comparatively a “ mighty” fleet ; for, from a grant of land made by Edgar to Worcester cathedral, we find that he assumed to himself the title of “ Supreme Lord and Governor of the Ocean ly­ing round about Britain.” That they were but of slight construction, we may infer from the low state of the navy so shortly after the death of Edgar as the reign of Ethelred, who, in order to re-establish it, instituted a regular tax for providing and maintaining a navy. It was enacted, ac­cording to Selden, that whoever possessed “ 310 hides of land, was charged with the building of one ship or galleys and owners of more or less hides, or part of one hide, were rated proportionately the hide being, according to the best authorities, as much ground as a man could turn up with one plough in a year. But this tax appears to have been inadequate to the purpose of providing a sufficient fleet, for all the exertions of Ethelred could not preserve Britain from again being ravaged by the Danes ; and we find, that after the short reign of his son Edmund Ironsides, England was ruled by Danish monarchs. From the known talent of Canute, the first of these princes, and from the crowns of Denmark, Norway, and Britain being united in his person, we may presume that the naval affairs of Eng­land were not suffered to retrograde. We have indeed a re­cord of their advance during this second Danish rule. We may also infer it from the present which was made by Earl Godwin to Hardicanute, the third Danish sovereign, of a galley, sumptuously gilt, and rowed by fourscore men, each of whom wore on his arm a bracelet of gold weighing six­teen ounces ; not that the mere gorgeousness of the gift would prove any advance in the art of ship-building, but we may suppose, from its nature, that naval affairs found favour in the sight of this monarch. Of this we have also other historical evidence, as Hardicanute raised eleven thousand and forty-eight pounds, in the first two years **of** his reign, for the purpose of building thirty-two ships ; and the taxes he levied for the support of his navy were so grievous that, Florentius says, scarcely any man was able to pay them.

The marine of England seems to have been maintained on a comparatively powerful footing up to the period of the Norman conquest ; and from the naval resources at the command of Harold the Saxon, in comparison with the in­significance of the. shipping which brought William and his