Normans across the channel, there can be no doubt that had Harold relied upon bis naval strength, the conquest of England would never have been achieved. But, by some fatality, his fleet, which had been long stationed off the Isle of Wight, was dispersed, in consequence of a report that William had abandoned his enterprise.

The flotilla of William the Conqueror is variously stated ; by some at 900, by others at 3000 vessels. In either number we have a scale to estimate their insignificance, as the in­vading force consisted of about 60,000 troops, which would give in the one case about sixty-six men to each vessel, in the other twenty men only. Plate CCCCXLV. figs. 1 and 2.

The conquest of England being completed, the shores on either side of the narrow seas between England and Nor­mandy were under the same rule. William therefore claim­ed sovereignty over them, which right was maintained by his successors. There can be no doubt that the constant intercourse between the two portions of the empire, which continued throughout the Norman sway, and indeed for a period of upwards of three centuries, must have done much towards fostering a maritime spirit among the population of England, and accustoming it to consider that fame and for­tune were the rewards of nautical adventure.

We have but slight evidence as to the state of naval ar­chitecture during the early period subsequent to the con­quest. There are a few facts scattered among the records of these times, which may enable us to draw some vague conclusions as to the probable size and nature of the vessels used. When Prince William, son to Henry I., was drown­ed, by the loss of the vessel in which he was crossing from France to England, it is recorded that three hundred souls perished with him. As of this number a large portion, his­torians say one hundred and forty, were men of rank, and as there were many ladies, since the prince was accom­panied by his sister, the vessel must have been of consi­derable burthen. A similar event, namely, a shipwreck, that occurred during the reign of Henry II., by which near­ly the same number of persons perished, tends to prove that such was about the extent of the accommodation afforded by the shipping of this period. Galleys still continued to be used for the purposes of war; but as commerce began to be extended, it became necessary to recur to the use of sails, and we find that they were therefore gradually re­covering their importance, and superseding oars. Indeed it is difficult to conceive commerce to be profitably en­gaged in, attended with the immense expense of the crews necessary to propel the larger galleys. We should ima­gine that this had an important influence in the improve­ment of navigation and of naval architecture, for the com­mercial intercourse between the portions of the empire on either side of the channel must have been considerable. There is constant reference in the early chronicles to the great extent of the wine trade, and of the commerce in wool and woollen cloths.

The introduction of vessels propelled by sails for the pur­poses of commerce would necessarily cause a change in the constitution of the fleets assembled for the services of war ; and this we find to have been the case.

The expedition of Richard Coeur de Lion, in 1190, to join the crusade to the Holy Land, consisted of nine ships which are described as being of extraordinary size, 150 others of inferior dimensions, and only thirty-eight galleys. After the reduction of Cyprus, and the addition of the vessels captured there, with others which he had hired at Marseilles and in Sicily, his armament consisted of 254 “ tall shippes, and about three score galliots.” The increase was, therefore, almost wholly in the ships. This, together with the record­ed fact, that he captured a Saracenic vessel of such size as to be capable of containing 1500 Saracens, and a large quantity of military stores, destined for the relief of Achon, tends to prove that the progress of naval architecture un­

der the influence of the commercial powers of the Mediter­ranean, had been more rapid than in these northern seas, where the commerce was much more confined in its na­ture, and the nations bordering on which were in constant warfare with each other.

The Norman monarchs appear to have been very tena­cious of their claim to the sovereignty of the narrow seas ; and not only their claim, but their power to maintain their right, is admitted by the French historians. The Père Daniel sanctions the claim of Henry II. to this sovereignty.

In the reign of John we find that the fleets of England were of such importance that the claim was extended; for it was then enacted, that if the masters of foreign ships should refuse to strike their colours, and thus pay hom­age to the English flag, such ships should be considered as lawful prizes. This monarch most carefully fostered the naval power of England ; and it is in the records of the thirteenth year of this reign that we first read of any public naval establishment. There is in the close rolls published by the Record Commission, an order, which is dated the 29th of May 1212, from the king to the sheriff of the county of Southampton, in which he is directed with­out delay to cause the king’s docks at Portsmouth to be enclosed by a good and strong wall, in order to protect the king’s galleys and ships ; and also to build storehouses against this wall for the preservation of the fittings and equipment of the said vessels ; all of which works are to be performed under the direction of William, archdeacon of Taunton, and the greatest diligence is to be used, in order that the whole may be completed during the summer.

The naval power of England appears to have continued sufficient to maintain the sovereignty assumed by John. For the occurrence of predatory excursions by some Ge­noese during the reign of Edward I. caused all the nations of Europe, bordering on the sea, to appeal to the kings of England, whom they acknowledged to be in peaceable pos­session of the “ Sovereign Lordship and Dominion of the Seas of England, and Islands of the same which proves that their claim was generally acknowledged. This docu­ment, Evelyn says, was still extant in his time, in the ar­chives of the Tower. The right to the absolute sove­reignty of the seas was maintained up to the reign of James I. Queen Elizabeth insisted on and maintained her power to refuse or grant passage through the narrow seas, accord­ing to her pleasure. In 1634 Charles I. asserted his right to their sovereignty ; and in 1654 the Dutch were com­pelled, after a severe struggle, to submit to it, and consent to “ strike their flags and lower their top-sails on meeting any ship of the English navy in the British seas which homage the commanders of English men-of-war were in­structed to exact from all foreign vessels until so lately as the close of the last war, when it was judiciously aban­doned, for reasons which we shall give in the words of Sir John Barrow. In his Life of Howe, with reference to Tra­falgar, he says, “ That batde, moreover, having so com­pletely humbled the naval powers of France and Spain, suggested to the consideration of the Board of Admiralty, with the approbation of the government, the omission of that arbitrary and offensive article which required naval officers to demand the striking of the flag and lowering of the top-sail from every foreign ship they might fall in with. That invidious assumption of a right, though submitted to generally by foreigners for some centuries, could not pro­bably have been maintained much longer, except at the cannon’s mouth ; and it was considered, therefore, that the proper time had come when it might both morally and po­litically be spontaneously abandoned.”

It is generally supposed, that ships intended only for sailing were first built by the Genoese, and that not until the beginning of the fourteenth century. We rather incline to the opinion, that in the Mediterranean they date from