

thousand, having one with another a mean burthen of 120 tons.* My friend, Mr. J. L. Prevost, also informs me that on inspecting Lloyd's lists for the years 1829, 1830, and 1831, he finds that no less than 1953 vessels were lost in those three years, their average tonnage being about 150 tons, or in all nearly 300,000 tons, being at the enormous rate of 100,000 tons annually of the merchant vessels of one nation only. This increased loss arises, I presume, from increasing activity in commerce.

Out of 551 ships of the royal navy lost to the country during the period above mentioned, only 160 were taken or destroyed by the enemy, the rest having either stranded or foundered, or having been burnt by accident; a striking proof that the dangers of our naval warfare, however great, may be far exceeded by the storm, the shoal, the lee-shore, and all the other perils of the deep.†

Durable nature of many of their contents. — Millions of silver dollars and other coins have been sometimes submerged in a single ship, and on these, when they happen to be enveloped in a matrix capable of protecting them from chemical changes, much information of historical interest will remain inscribed, and endure for periods as indefinite as have the delicate markings of zoophytes or lapidified plants in some of the ancient secondary rocks. In almost every large ship, moreover, there are some precious stones set in seals, and other articles of use and ornament composed of the hardest substances in nature, on which letters and various images are carved — engravings which they may retain when included in subaqueous strata, as long as a crystal preserves its natural form.

It was, therefore, a splendid boast, that the deeds of the English chivalry at Agincourt made Henry's chronicle

— as rich with praise

As is the ooze and bottom of the deep
With sunken wreck and sumless treasuries;

for it is probable that a greater number of monuments of the skill and industry of man will, in the course of ages, be collected together in the bed of the ocean, than will exist at any one time on the surface of the continents.

If our species be of as recent a date as is generally supposed, it will be vain to seek for the remains of man and the works of his hands imbedded in submarine strata, except in those regions where violent earthquakes are frequent, and the alterations of relative level so great, that the bed of the sea may have been converted into land within the historical era. We need not despair, however, of the discovery of such monuments, when those regions which have been peopled by man from the earliest ages, and which are at the same time the principal theatres of volcanic action, shall be examined by the joint skill of the antiquary and geologist.

Power of human remains to resist decay. — There can be no doubt

* Caesar Moreau's Tables of the Navigation of Great Britain.

† I give these results on the authority of Captain W. H. Smyth, R.N.