99. Estimate of Alfred's Reign. — Considered as a whole, Alfred's reign is the most noteworthy of any in the annals of the early English sovereigns. It was marked throughout by intelligence and progress. His life speaks for itself. The best commentary on it is the fact that, in 1849, the people of Wantage,[1] his native place, celebrated the thousandth anniversary of his birth — another proof that "what is excellent, as God lives, is permanent."[2]

100. Dunstan's Reforms. — Two generations after Alfred's death, Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, the ablest man in an age when all statesmen were ecclesiastics, came forward to take up and push onward the work begun by the great king. He labored for higher education, for strict monastic rule, and for the celibacy of the monks.

101. Regular and Secular Clergy. — At that time the clergy of England were divided into two classes, — the "regulars," or monks, and the "seculars," or parish priests and other clergy not bound by monastic vows. The former lived in the monasteries apart from the world; the latter lived in it. By their monastic vows,[3] the "regulars" were bound to remain unmarried, while the "seculars" were not. Notwithstanding Alfred's efforts at reform, many monasteries had relaxed their rules, and were again filled with drones. In violation of their vows, large numbers of the monks were married. Furthermore, many new churches had been endowed and put into the hands of the "seculars."

102. Danger to the State from Each Class of Clergy. — The danger was that this laxity would go on increasing, so that in time the married clergy would monopolize the clerical influence and clerical wealth of the kingdom for themselves and their families. They would thus become an hereditary body, a close corporation, transmitting their power and possessions from father to son through generations. On the other hand, the tendency of the unmarried

[1] Wantage, Berkshire. [2] R. W. Emerson.

[3] The monastic vows required poverty, chastity, and obedience to the rules of their order.

clergy would be to become wholly subservient to the church and the Pope, though they must necessarily recruit their ranks from the people. In this last respect they would be more democratic than the opposite class. They would also be more directly connected with national interests and the national life, while at the same time they would be able to devote themselves more exclusively to study and to intellectual culture than the "seculars."

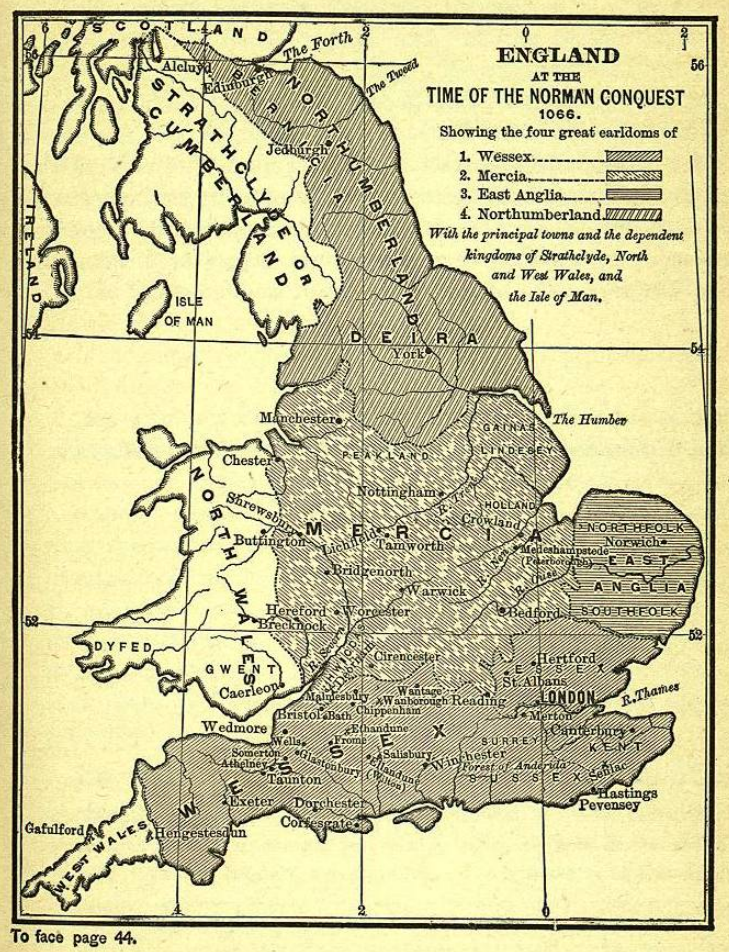
103. Dunstan as a Statesman and Artisan. — In addition to these reforms, Dunstan proved himself to be as clever a statesman as theologian. He undertook, with temporary success, to reconcile the conflicting interests of the Danes and the English. He was also noted as a mechanic and worker in metals. The common people regarded his accomplishments in this direction with superstitious awe. Many stories of his skill were circulated, and it was even whispered that in a personal contest with Beelzebub, it was the devil and not the monk who got the worst of it and fled from the saint's workshop, howling with dismay.

104. New Invasions; Danegeld. — With the close of Dunstan's career, the period of decline sets in. Fresh inroads began on the part of the Northmen,[1] and so feeble and faint-hearted grew the resistance that at last a royal tax, called Danegeld, or Dane-money, was levied on all landed property in order to raise means to buy off the invaders. For a brief period this cowardly concession answered the purpose. But a time came when the Danes would no longer be bribed to keep away.

105. The Northmen invade France. — The Danish invasion was really a part of a great European movement. The same Northmen who had obtained so large a part of England, had also, in the tenth century, under the leadership of Rollo, established themselves in France. There they were known as Normans, a softened form of the word "Northmen," and the district where they settled came to be called from them Normandy. They founded

1 This name was given to Norsemen, Swedes, Danes, and all northern tribes.

No. 7.



a line of dukes, or princes, who were destined, in the course of the next century, to give a new aspect to the events of English history.

106. Sweyn conquers England; Canute.[1] — In 1013 Sweyn, the Dane, conquered England, and "all the people," says the Chronicle, "held him for full king." He was succeeded by his son Canute, who, though from beyond sea, could hardly be called a foreigner, since he spoke a language and set up a government differing but little from that of the English. After his first harsh measures were over he sought the friendship of both church and people. He rebuked the flattery of courtiers by showing them that the in-rolling tide is no respecter of persons; he endeavored to rule justly, and his liking for the monks found expression in his song: —

"Merrily sang the monks of Ely
As Cnut the King was passing by."

107. Canute's Plan; the Four Earldoms. — Canute's plan was to establish a great northern empire embracing Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and England. To facilitate the government of so large a realm, he divided England into four districts, Wessex, Mercia, East Anglia, and Northumbria, which, with their dependencies, embraced the entire country. Each of these districts was ruled by an earl[2] invested with almost royal power. For a time the arrangement worked well, but eventually discord sprang up between the rulers, and the unity of the country was imperilled by their individual ambition and their efforts to obtain supreme authority.

108. Prince Edward. — On the accession of the Danish conqueror Sweyn, Ethelred II., the Saxon king, sent his French wife Emma back to Normandy for safety. She took with her her son Prince Edward, then a lad of nine. He remained at the French

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1 Also spelled Cnut and Knut.

2 Earl ("chief" or "leader"): a title of honor, and of office. The four earldoms established by Canute remained nearly unchanged until the Norman Conquest, 1066. See Map No. 7, page 44.

court nearly thirty years, and among other friends to whom he became greatly attached was his second cousin, William, Duke of Normandy.

109. Restoration of the English Kings; Edward the Confessor. — In 1042 the oppressive acts of Canute's sons excited insurrection, and both Danes and Saxons joined in the determination to restore the Saxon line. Edward was invited to accept the crown. He returned to England and obtained the throne. By birth he was already half Norman; by education and tastes he was wholly so. It is very doubtful whether he could speak a word of English, and it is certain that from the beginning he surrounded himself with French favorites, and filled the church with French priests. Edward's piety and blameless life gained for him the title of "the Confessor," or, as we should say to-day, "the Christian." He married the daughter of Godwin, Earl of Wessex, the most powerful noble in England. Godwin really ruled the country in the king's name until his death in 1053, when his son Harold succeeded him as earl. The latter continued to exercise his father's influence to counteract the French.

110. Edward builds Westminster Abbey. — During a large part of his reign, Edward was engaged in building an abbey at the west end of London, and hence called the West-minster.[1] He had just completed and consecrated this great work when he died, and was buried there. We may still see a part of his building in the crypt or basement of the abbey, while the king's tomb above is the centre around which lies a circle of royal graves. To it multitudes made pilgrimage in the olden time, and once every year a little band of devoted Roman Catholics still gather about it in veneration of virtues that would have adorned a cloister, but had not breadth and vigor to fill a throne.

With Edward, save for the short interlude of Harold, the last of the Saxon kings and the "ablest man of an unprogressive race," the period closes.

[1] Minster: a name given originally to a monastery; next, to a church connected with a monastery; and now often, though incorrectly, applied to a cathedral.

111. Harold becomes King, 1066. — On his death-bed, Edward, who had no children, recommended Harold, Earl of Wessex, as his successor, though, according to the Normans, he had promised that their Duke William, who, as we have seen, was a distant kinsman, should reign after him. The Witan,[1] or National Council, chose Harold, who was crowned Jan. 16, 1066.

112. What the Saxon Conquest did for Britain. — Saxons, Jutes, and Angles invaded Britain at a period when its original inhabitants had become cowed and enervated by the despotism and worn-out civilization forced on them by a foreign power.

The new-comers brought that healthy spirit of barbarism, that irrepressible love of personal liberty, which the country stood most in need of. The conquerors were rough, ignorant, cruel; but they were fearless and determined. These qualities were worth a thousand times more to Britain than the gilded corruption of Rome. In time the English themselves lost spirit. Their besetting sin was a stolidity which degenerated into animalism and sluggish content.

113. Elements contributed by the Danes. — Then came the Danes, bringing with them that new spirit of still more savage independence which so well expressed itself in their song, "I trust my sword, I trust my steed, but most I trust myself at need." They conquered the land, and in conquering regenerated it. So strong was their love of independence, that even the peasants were quite generally free. More small independent landholders were found among the Danish population than anywhere else; and it is said that the number now existing in the region they settled is still much larger than in the south. Finally, the Danes and English, both of whom sprang from the same parent stock, mingled and became in all respects one people.

114. Summary: What the Anglo-Saxons accomplished. — Thus Jutes, Saxons, Angles, and Danes, whom together we may

[1] Witan: literally the "Wise men," the chief men of the realm.

call the Anglo-Saxons,[1] laid the corner-stone of the English nation. However much it has changed since, it remains, nevertheless, in its solid and fundamental qualities, what these first peoples made it.

They gave first the language, simple, strong, direct, and plain, — the familiar, every-day speech of the fireside and the street, the well-known words of both the newspaper and the Bible.

Next, they established the government in its main outlines as it still exists; that is, a king, a legislative body representing the people, and the germ, at least, of a judicial system embodying trial by jury.[2]

Last, and best, they furnished that conservative patience, that calm, steady, persistent effort, that indomitable tenacity of purpose, and cool, determined courage, which have won glorious battle-fields on both sides the Atlantic, and which in peace, as well as in war, are destined to win still greater victories in the future.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE SAXON, OR EARLY ENGLISH, PERIOD — 449-1066.[3]

I. GOVERNMENT. — II. RELIGION. — III. MILITARY AFFAIRS. — IV. LITERATURE, LEARNING, AND ART. — V. GENERAL INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE. — VI. MODE OF LIFE, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS.

GOVERNMENT.

115. Beginning of the English Monarchy. — During the greater part of the first four centuries after the Saxon conquest Britain was divided into a number of tribal settlements, or petty kingdoms, held by Jutes, Angles, and Saxons, constantly at war with each other. In the

[1] Anglo-Saxons: some authorities insist that this phrase means the Saxons of England in distinction from those of the continent. It is used here, however, in the sense given by Mr. Freeman as a term describing the people formed in England by the union of all the Germanic tribes.

[2] See Paragraph No. 125.

[3] This section contains a summary of much of the preceding period, with considerable additional matter. It is believed that it will be found useful both for review and for reference. When a continuous narrative history is desired, this, and similar sections following, may be omitted.

ninth century, the West Saxons, or inhabitants of Wessex, succeeded, under the leadership of Egbert, in practically conquering and uniting the country. Egbert now assumed the title of "King of the English," and Britain came to be known, from the name of its largest division, as Angle-Land, or England. Later, the Danes obtained possession of a large part of the country, but eventually united with the English and became one people.

116. The King and the Witan. — The government of England was vested in an elective sovereign, assisted by the council of the Witan, or Wise Men. Every freeman had the right to attend this national council, but, in practice, the right became confined to a small number of the nobles and clergy.

117. What the Witan could do. — 1. The Witan elected the king (its choice being confined to the royal family). 2. In case of misgovernment, it deposed him. 3. It made or confirmed grants of public lands. 4. It acted as a supreme court of justice both in civil and criminal cases.

118. What the King and Witan could do. — 1. They enacted the laws, both civil and ecclesiastical. (In most cases this meant nothing more than stating what the custom was, the common law being merely the common custom.) 2. They levied taxes. 3. They declared war and made peace. 4 They appointed the chief officers and bishops of the realm.

119. Land-Tenure before the Conquest. — Before they invaded Britain the Saxons and kindred tribes appear to have held their estates in common. Each had a permanent homestead, but that was all.[1] "No one," says Cæsar, "has a fixed quantity of land or boundaries to his property. The magistrates and chiefs assign every year to the families and communities who live together, as much land and in such spots as they think suitable. The following year they require them to take up another allotment.

"The chief glory of the tribes is to have their territory surrounded with as wide a belt as possible of waste land. They deem it not only a special mark of valor that every neighboring tribe should be driven to a distance, and that no stranger should dare to reside in their vicinity,

[1] "The houses were not contiguous, but each was surrounded by a space of its own." — TACITUS, *Germania*.

but at the same time they regard it as a precautionary measure against sudden attacks."[1]

120. Folkland. — Each tribe, in forming its settlement, seized more land than it actually needed. This excess was known as Folkland (the People's land), and might be used by all alike for pasturing cattle or cutting wood. With the consent of the Witan, the king might grant portions of this Folkland as a reward for services done to himself or to the community. Such grants were usually conditional and could only be made for a time. Eventually, they returned to the community. Other grants, however, might be made in the same way, which conferred full ownership. Such grants were called Bocland (Book land), because conveyed by writing, or registered in a charter or book. In time, the king obtained the power of making these grants without having to consult the Witan, and at last the whole of the Folkland came to be regarded as the absolute property of the crown.

121. Duties of Freemen. — Every freeman was obliged to do three things: 1. He must assist in the maintenance of roads and bridges. 2. He must aid in the repair of forts. 3. He must serve in case of war. Whoever neglected or refused to perform this last and most important of all duties was declared to be a *Nithing*, or infamous coward.[2]

122. The Feudal System. — In addition to the Eorls (earls)[3] or nobles by birth, there gradually grew up a class known as Thanes (companions or servants of the king), who in time outranked the hereditary nobility. To both these classes the king would have occasion to give rewards for faithful service and for deeds of valor. As his chief wealth consisted in land, he would naturally give that. At first no conditions seem to have been attached to the gift; but later the king might require the receiver to agree to furnish a certain number of fully equipped soldiers to fight for him. These grants were originally made for life only, and on the death of the recipient they returned to the crown.

[1] Cæsar, Gallic War, Book VI.

[2] Also written *Niding*. The English, as a rule, were more afraid of this name than of death itself.

[3] The Saxons, or Early English, were divided up into three classes, — Eorls (earls), who were noble by birth; Ceorls (churls), or simple freemen, and slaves. The slaves were either the absolute property of the master, or were bound to the soil and sold with it. This latter class, under the Norman name of *villeins*, became numerous after the Norman Conquest in the eleventh century. The chieftains of the first Saxon settlers were called either Ealdormen (aldermen) or Heretogas, the first being civil or magisterial, the latter military officers. The Thanes were a later class, who, from serving the king or some powerful leader, became noble by military service.

The nobles and other great landholders following the example of the king, granted portions of their estates to tenants on similar conditions, and these again might grant portions to those below them in return for satisfactory military or other service.

In time, it came to be an established principle, that every freeman below the rank of a noble must be attached to some superior whom he was bound to serve, and who, on the other hand, was his legal protector and responsible for his good behavior. The lordless man was, in fact, a kind of outlaw, and might be seized like a robber. In that respect, therefore, he would be worse off than the slave, who had a master to whom he was accountable and who was accountable for him. Eventually it became common for the small landholders, especially during the Danish invasions, to seek the protection of some neighboring lord who had a large band of followers at his command. In such cases the freeman gave up his land and received it again on certain conditions. The usual form was for him to kneel, and, placing his hands within those of the lord, to swear an oath of homage, saying, "I become your man for the lands which I hold of you, and I will be faithful to you against all men, saving only the service which I owe to my lord the King." On his side, the lord solemnly promised to defend his tenant or vassal in the possession of his property, for which, he was to perform some service to the lord.

In these two ways, first, by grant of lands from the king or a superior, and second, by the act of homage (known as *commendation*), the feudal system (a name derived from *feodum*, meaning land or property), grew up in England. Its growth, however, was irregular and incomplete; and it should be distinctly understood that it was not until after the Norman Conquest in the eleventh century that it became fully established.

123. Advantages of Feudalism. — This system had at that time many advantages. 1. The old method of holding land in common was a wasteful one, since the way in which the possessor of a field might cultivate it would perhaps spoil it for the one who received it at the next allotment. 2. In an age of constant warfare, feudalism protected all classes better than if they had stood apart, and it enabled the king to raise a powerful and well-armed force in the easiest and quickest manner. 3. It cultivated two important virtues, — fidelity on the part of the vassal, protection on that of the lord. Its corner-stone was the

faithfulness of man to man. Society has outgrown feudalism, which like every system had its dark side, but it can never outgrow the feudal principle.

124. Political Divisions; the Sheriff. — Politically, the kingdom was divided into townships, hundreds (districts furnishing a hundred warriors, or supporting a hundred families), and shires or counties, the shire having been originally, in some cases, the section settled by an independent tribe, as Sussex, Essex, etc.

In each shire the king had an officer, called a shire-reeve or sheriff,[1] who represented him, collected the taxes due the crown, and saw to the execution of the laws. In like manner, the town and the hundred had a head-man of its own choosing to see to matters of general interest.

125. The Courts. — As the nation had its assembly of wise men acting as a high court, so each shire, hundred, and town had its court, which all freemen might attend. There, without any special judge, jury, or lawyers, cases of all kinds were tried and settled by the voice of the entire body, who were both judge and jury in themselves.

126. Methods of Procedure; Compurgation. — In these courts there were two methods of procedure: first, the accused might clear himself of the charge brought against him by compurgation;[2] that is, by swearing that he was not guilty and getting a number of reputable neighbors to swear that they believed his oath. If their oaths were not satisfactory, witnesses might be brought to swear to some particular fact. In every case the value of the oath was graduated according to the rank of the person, that of a man of high rank being worth as much as that of twelve common men.

127. The Ordeal. — If the accused could not clear himself in this way, he was obliged to submit to the ordeal.[3] This usually consisted in carrying a piece of hot iron a certain distance, or in plunging the arm up to the elbow in boiling water. The person who underwent the ordeal appealed to God to prove his innocence by protecting him from harm. Rude as both these methods were, they were better than the old tribal method, which permitted every man or every man's family to be the avenger of his wrongs.

1 Reeve: a man in authority, or having charge of something.
2 Compurgation: the act of wholly purifying or clearing a person from guilt.
3 Ordeal: judgment.

128. The Common Law. — The laws by which these cases were tried were almost always ancient customs, few of which had been reduced to writing. They formed that body of common law[1] which is the foundation of the modern system of justice both in England and America.

129. Penalties. — The penalties inflicted by these courts consisted chiefly of fines. Each man's life had a certain pecuniary value. The punishment for the murder of a man of very high rank was 2400 shillings; that of a simple freeman was only one-twelfth as much.

A slave could neither testify in court nor be punished by the court. For the man in that day who held no land had no rights. If a slave was convicted of crime, his master paid the fine and then took what he considered an equivalent with the lash. Treason was punished with death, and common scolds were ducked in a pond until they were glad to hold their tongues.

RELIGION.

130. The Ancient Saxon Faith. — Before their conversion to Christianity, the Saxons worshipped Woden and Thor, names preserved in Wednesday (Woden's day) and Thursday (Thor's day). The first appears to have been considered the creator and ruler of heaven and earth; the second was his son, the god of thunder, slayer of evil spirits, and friend of man. The essential element of their religion was the deification of strength, courage, and fortitude. It was a faith well suited to a warlike people. It taught that there was a heaven for the brave, and a hell for cowards.

131. What Christianity did. — Christianity, on the contrary, laid emphasis on the virtues of self-sacrifice and sympathy. It took the side of the weak and the helpless. It labored to emancipate the slave. It built monasteries, and encouraged industry and education. The church edifice was a kind of open Bible. Very few who entered it could spell out a single word of either Old or New Testament, but all, from the poorest peasant or meanest slave up to the greatest noble, could read the meaning of the Scripture histories painted on wall and window.

The church, furthermore, was a peculiarly sacred place. It was powerful to shield those who were in danger. If a criminal, or a person flee-

1 So called, in distinction from the later statute laws made by Parliament and other legislative bodies.

ing from vengeance, took refuge in it, he could not be seized until forty days had expired, during which time he had the privilege of leaving the kingdom and going into exile. This "right of sanctuary" was often a needful protection in an age of violence. It became, however, in time, an intolerable nuisance, since it enabled robbers and desperadoes of all kinds to defy the law. The right was modified at different times, but was not wholly abolished until 1624, in the reign of James I.

MILITARY AFFAIRS.

132. The Army. — The organization of the army has already been spoken of under Land-Tenure. It consisted of a national and a feudal militia. From the earliest times all freemen were obliged to fight in the defence of the country. Under the feudal system, every large landholder had to furnish the king a stipulated number of men, fully equipped with armor and weapons. As this method was found more effective than the first, it gradually superseded it.

The Saxons always fought on foot. They wore helmets and rude, flexible armor, formed of iron rings, or of stout leather covered with small plates of iron and other substances. They carried oval-shaped shields. Their chief weapons were the spear, javelin, battle-axe, and sword. The wars of this period were those of the different tribes seeking supremacy, or of the English with the Danes.

133. The Navy. — Until Alfred's reign, the English had no navy. From that period they maintained a fleet of small war-ships to protect the coast from invasion. Most of these vessels appear to have been furnished by certain ports on the south coast.

LITERATURE, LEARNING, AND ART.

134. Runes. — The language of the Saxons was of Low-German origin. Many of the words resemble the German of the present day. When written, the characters were called *runes*, mysteries or secrets. The chief use of these runes was to mark a sword-hilt, or some article of value, or to form a charm against evil and witchcraft.

It is supposed that one of the earliest runic inscriptions is the following, which dates from about 400 A.D. It is cut on a drinking-horn,[1] and (reproduced in English characters) stands thus: —

[1] The golden horn of Gallehas, found on the Danish-German frontier.

EK HLEWAGASTIR . HOLTINGAR . HORNA . TAWIDO.

I, Hlewgastir, son of Holta, made the horn.

With the introduction of Christianity, the Latin alphabet, from which our modern English alphabet is derived, took the place of the runic characters, which bore some resemblance to Greek, and English literature began with the coming of the monks.

135. The First Books. — One of the first English books was the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a history covering a period of about twelve hundred years, beginning with the Roman invasion and ending in the year 1154.

Though written in prose, it contains various fragments of poetry, of which the following (rendered into modern English), on the death of Edward the Confessor, 1066, may be quoted as an example: —

"Then suddenly came
Death the bitter
And that dear prince seized.
Angels bore
His steadfast soul,
Into heaven's light.
But the wise King,
Bestowed his realm
On one grown great,
On Harold's self,
A noble Earl!
Who in all times
Faithfully hearkened
Unto his lord,
In word and deed,
Nor ever failed
In aught the King
Had needed of him!"

Other early books were Cædmon's poem of the Creation, also in English, and Bede's church history of Britain, written in Latin, a work giving a full and most interesting account of the coming of Augustine and his first preaching in Kent. All of these books were written by the monks.

136. Art. — The English were skilful workers in metal, especially in gold and silver, and also in the illumination of manuscripts.[1] Alfred's Jewel, a fine specimen of the blue enamelled gold of the ninth century, is preserved in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. It bears the inscription: "Alfred me heht gewurcan," *Alfred caused me to be worked* [*or made*].

The women of that period excelled in weaving fine linen and woollen cloth and in embroidering tapestry.

[1] These illuminations get their name from the gold, silver, and bright colors used in the pictures, borders, and decorated letters with which the monks ornamented these books. For beautiful specimens of the work, see Silvestre's Paléographie.

137. Architecture. — In architecture no advance took place until very late. Up to the year 1000 the general belief that the world would end with the close of the year 999 prevented men from building for permanence. The Saxon stone work exhibited in a few buildings like the church-tower of Earl's Barton, Northamptonshire, is an attempt to imitate timber with stone, and has been called "stone carpentry."[1] Edward the Confessor's work in Westminster Abbey was not Saxon but Norman, he having obtained his plans, and probably his builders from Normandy.

GENERAL INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE.

138. Farms; Slave-Trade. — The farming of this period, except on the church lands, was of the rudest description. Grain was ground by the women and slaves in stone hand-mills. Later, the mills were driven by wind or water power. The principal commerce was in wool, lead, tin, and slaves. A writer of that time says he used to see long trains of young men and women tied together, offered for sale, "for men were not ashamed," he adds, "to sell their nearest relatives, and even their own children."

MODE OF LIFE, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS.

139. The Town. — The first Saxon settlements were quite generally on the line of the old Roman roads. They were surrounded by a rampart of earth set with a thick hedge or with rows of sharp stakes. Outside this was a deep ditch. These places were called towns from "tun," meaning a fence, hedge, or other enclosure.[2]

140. The Hall. — The buildings in these towns were of wood Those of the lords or chief men were called "halls" from the fact that they consisted mainly of a hall, or large room, used as a sitting, eating and, often as a sleeping room, — a bundle of straw or some skins thrown on the floor serving for beds. There were no chimneys, but a hole in the roof let out the smoke. If the owner was rich, the walls would be decorated with bright-colored tapestry, and with suits of armor and shields hanging from pegs.

[1] See Parker's Introduction to Gothic Architecture for illustrations of this work.

[2] One or more houses might constitute a town. A single farmhouse is still so called in Scotland.

141. Life in the Hall. — Here in the evening the master supped on a raised platform at one end of the "hall," while his followers ate at a lower table.

The Saxons were hard drinkers as well as hard fighters. After the meal, while horns of ale and mead were circulating, the minstrels, taking their harps, would sing songs of battle and ballads of wild adventure.

Outside the "hall" were the "bowers," or chambers for the master and his family, and, perhaps, an upper chamber for a guest, called later by the Normans a *sollar*, or sunny room.

If a stranger approached a town, he was obliged to blow a horn; otherwise, he might be slain as an outlaw.

Here, in the midst of rude plenty the Saxons or Early English lived a life of sturdy independence. They were rough, strong, outspoken, and fearless. Theirs was not the nimble brain, for that was to come with another people, though a people originally of the same race. Their mission was to lay the foundation; or, in other words, to furnish the muscle, grit, and endurance, without which the nimble brain is of little permanent value.

142. Guilds. — The inhabitants of the towns and cities had various associations called guilds (from *gild*, a payment or contribution). The object of these was mutual assistance. The most important were the Peace-guilds[1] and the Merchant-guilds. The former constituted a voluntary police-force to preserve order, and bring thieves to punishment. Each member contributed a small sum to form a common fund which was used to make good any losses incurred by robbery or fire. The association held itself responsible for the good behavior of its members, and kept a sharp eye on strangers and stragglers, who had to give an account of themselves or leave the country. The Merchant-guilds were organized, apparently at a late period, to protect and extend trade. After the Norman Conquest they came to be very wealthy and influential. In addition to the above there were social and religious guilds which made provision for feasts, for the maintenance of religious services, and for the relief of the poor and the sick.

[1] Frithgilds.