

testify by oath their belief in his innocence. Those who thus swore were styled "Compurgators," and the system itself was called "Compurgation." The second method, termed "Ordeal," was never used except when the first had failed. It was supposed to be a direct appeal to God. The person accused was required to plunge his arm in boiling water, or to carry red-hot iron in his naked hand. If the injured member were not healed within a specified time, guilt was supposed to have been clearly proved. Christianity did much, at first to modify, and eventually to remove, these imperfect and cruel systems.

7. The early English were a people "given to hospitality," excessively fond of "good cheer," and sometimes indulging even in gluttony and drunkenness. In matters of food and drink they desired abundance rather than delicacy.

Habits of the early English. They had none of the Norman taste for fine houses and stately castles. The dwellings even of the wealthier thanes were plain, while those of the lower classes were squalid and uncomfortable. Outdoor sports received much attention. The early English were honorably distinguished for their love of music and poetry; nor did any other nation of the time excel them in the development of a native literature.

8. Great changes took place between the landing of the Jutes and the Norman Conquest. Descriptions are sometimes given, which, while true as applied to the barbarous pagans that originally conquered Britain, do great injustice to the comparatively civilized people whom William and his barons found upon our shores.

General progress of civilization.

CHAPTER X.

THE NORMAN LINE.—WILLIAM I.

1066 to 1087 A.D.

1. William, though known in English history as the *Conqueror*, claimed the throne of England as lawful heir of Edward the Confessor. In this view, he took up arms, not to win a crown by conquest, but to maintain a title justly his. But as we have already seen, the succession belonged to the Norman Duke neither by natural right nor by English law. He was a foreigner, while Harold, whom he defeated and slew, was an Englishman of noble birth, duly chosen by the highest national authority to succeed the childless Confessor.

2. The Conqueror united with great military skill uncommon political sagacity and foresight. He was not wantonly cruel, and his admirers claimed that he never shed blood unnecessarily. In his own province of Normandy, his rule is said to have been mild as well as wise. Still, he was ambitious;

William's character.