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**A View Of Society In Europe, In Its Progress From  
Rudeness To Refinement: Or, Inquiries Concerning The  
History Of Law, Government, And Manners**

**Stuart, Gilbert**

**Edinburgh, 1778**

Chapter IV. The Fall of Chivalry as Military Establishment. The Knights of Honour lose their Consideration. Their Numbers and Venality. Wealth becomes a more solid Title to Kighthood than personal ...

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## CHAPTER IV.

*The Fall of Chivalry as a Military Establishment. The Knights of Honour lose their Consideration. Their Numbers and Venality. Wealth becomes a more solid Title to Knighthood than personal Merit. This Dignity is connected with the Possession of a Fee. It ceases to be Honourable, and is made a Subject of Compulsion. Fines for the Exemption from Knighthood. The antient Chivalry disappears on the Rise of Regular Armies.*

**A**LL the splendour and advantages of the antient chivalry could not uphold the feudal militia. The dubbed knight, or the knight of honour, was to fall with the mere military tenant, or the knight of tenure. Chivalry was to decay as well as knight-service. When they ceased to give a mutual aid and support, they were soon to operate in a contrary direction, and to promote the decline of each other.

In the order of dubbed knights, there were necessarily a multitude of warriors, whose military renown had chiefly entitled them to the investiture of arms, and whose accomplishments  
were



were greater than their fortunes. Their knowledge in war, and the rank to which they were advanced by the ceremonial of knighthood, gave them the capacity of acting in all stations. Their poverty, splendid, but inconvenient, made them attach themselves, in a more particular manner, to princes and nobles (1). From these they received pensions, and, in the households of these, they enjoyed and sustained honours and offices. Men of rank were to vie with one another in their numbers and attachment. They became a part of the garniture, the magnificence, and the pride of nobility (2).

There were thus, in the declension of the feudal army, a society of men, who could supply the personal service and attendance of the luxurious and the great. A substitution of knights, in the place of the barons and vassals of the crown, was thence to prevail very generally. And, while knights were, in this manner, to wound deeply the military discipline and arrangements, they were to throw a contempt on knighthood by their numbers and venality. The change of manners, and the uses of wealth, had tarnished the lustre and the glories of the antient chivalry.

In the state of its degradation, the long and hard apprenticeship to arms which, of old, had prepared the candidate for the struggles and the cares of knighthood, was forgotten. The possession of a portion of land was to be sufficient to give a title to  
this





knighthood; and princes, when they could not recover their armies, were to fill their exchequers (6).

In a condition, not merely of meanness, but of disgrace and calamity, the antient chivalry could not exist long. It was worn out to extremity; and the military and regular establishments to which the defects of the feudal arrangements pointed so strongly, were to supersede its uses and advantages. It did not die, as so many writers have fancied, of the ridicule of Cervantes, but of old age, despondence, and debility.

C H A P-

