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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**

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Section V.

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S E C T I O N V.

(1) **T**HE character or station which preceded knighthood, was that of the *ecuyer*, or armour-bearer. The candidate for chivalry had formerly been a *page*, a *valet*, or a *damoiseau*. The last term was applied to the sons of men of rank. *G. André de la Roque, Traité de la noblesse, p. 7. Moeurs des François par le Gendre, p. 63. Daniel, Hist. de la milice Française, tome 1. p. 94. 95. St Palaye Mem. sur l'anc. Cheval. partie 1.*

In those times, the terms *pagé* and *valet* were not expressive of meanness and low condition, as at present. *Du Cange, voc. Valeti et Domicellus. Sir John Fortescue*, who was chief justice under Henry VI. has observed, when speaking of England, 'Sunt *Valecti* diversi in regione illa qui plus quam sexcenta scuta per annum expendere possunt.' *De Laud. Leg. Angliae, c. 29.*

(2) The age of knighthood, it is probable, varied with the nature and weight of the arms which were in use at different periods. In general, it has been fixed by antiquaries and historians at 21 years. This rule, however, could be infringed in favour

favour of signal merit or high birth. The noviciate of the knight commenced in his seventh year. In that tender age, he turned his attention to the art of war, his mistress, and his catechism. *Daniel, Milice Françoise, lib. 3. ch. 4. Reliq. Spelman, p. 174. St Palaye, Mem. sur l'anc. Cheval. partie 1.*

(3) The power of the German priests did not escape the penetration of *Tacitus*. 'Neque animadvertere, neque vincere, neque verberare quidem nisi sacerdotibus permiffum.' *De Mor. Germ. c. 7.* The Christian priests were no less selfish and ambitious. In every country of Europe, they attained immense wealth, and prodigious influence. They presided in the inferior courts with the civil magistrates; they took their seats in the national assemblies; and, in the preambles of the barbaric laws, they are often mentioned next to the Kings themselves. 'Incipiunt,' says the prologue to the Capitularies of Charlemagne, 'capitula regum et episcoporum, maximeque nobilium omnium Francorum.' *Baluz. Capit. Reg. Franc tome 1. p. 698.* It is thus, also, in some of the prefaces to the Anglo-Saxon laws. The powers they assumed were exorbitant, and often improperly exercised. To use the strong language of *Bacon*, 'they were lovers of lordships, and troublers of states.' *Hist. and polit. discourse on the laws and government of England.*

(4) *Selden, Tit. hon. part. 2. ch. 5. sect. 34. 35. Ashmole, Institutions of the Garter, ch. 1. sect. 9. Du Cange, voc. Miles.*

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Daniel,



Daniel, Milice Françoise, lib. 3. ch. 4. La Roque, p. 354. 356. A description of the ceremonies used at the creation of knights of the bath, is inserted in the *Appendix*, No. 6. They were nearly the same with those employed in the creation of the knight-bachelor, and illustrate the manners of old times.

(5) The *festum tyrocinii*, which is the name given in the old historians to the rejoicings on the investiture of knighthood, often lasted many days; and, in the cases of persons of distinction, was solemnized with torneaments and shows. The season of torneaments was also embraced as a fit occasion for conferring knighthood on those whose birth and fortune did not entitle them to exhibit these solemnities. And this, from the principle of giving encouragement to the military art. For the same reason, public entries into cities, coronations, and festivals of every kind, were opportunities for the creation of knights.

(6) Spelman, voc. Auxilium. Ashmole, ch. 1. sect. 9. St. Palaye, tom. 1. p. 195. 248. Daniel, Milice Françoise, liv. 3. ch. 4.

When the celebrated Joan d' Arc raised the siege of Orleans, the English commander, the Earl of Suffolk, ' was obliged to yield himself prisoner to a French man called Renaud; ' but, before he submitted, he asked his adversary whether he ' was a gentleman? On receiving a satisfactory answer, he de-
' manded,

‘manded, Whether he was a *knight*? Renaud replied, That he
 ‘had not yet attained that honour. *Then I make you one*, replied
 ‘Suffolk. Upon which he gave him the *blow* with his sword,
 ‘which dubbed him into that fraternity; and he immediately
 ‘surrendered himself his prisoner.’ *Hume, vol. 2. p. 340.*

(7) The knights affected great magnificence, and more parti-
 cularly after the holy wars. ‘Portabant autem diversi generis
 ‘species preciosas, aurum et argentum, pallia oloferica, purpu-
 ‘ram, siclades, ostrum et multiforium vestium ornamenta;
 ‘praeterea arma varia, tela multiplicis generis, infinitas loricas,
 ‘culcstras de serico acu variatas operose, papiliones et tentoria
 ‘preciolissima,’ &c. *Brompton, ap. Baron. Angl. p. 281.*

(8) The horse and armour of a knight were called his *conten-
 nementum*, or *countenance*. *Selden, Tit. Hon. part 2. ch. 5. sect.*
 37.

The respectful behaviour, even to vanquished knights, and
 indeed the extreme honour in which knights in general were
 held, is exemplified very strongly in the conduct of Edward III.
 to Eustace de RibauMont. This prince thought it necessary to
 leave England privately for the protection of Calais, and carried
 with him the Prince of Wales. The day after his arrival at
 Calais, a battle ensued between his troops and the French forces
 commanded by Geoffrey de Charni, who, notwithstanding the



truce which had been concluded between the contending powers, had bribed the governor of Calais to surrender the place to him. To prevent this circumstance, was the intention of Edward's visit.

This great prince, who fought as a private gentleman under Sir Walter Manny, encountered Eustace de Ribau mont, a hardy and valorous knight, who beat him twice to the ground. Pushed to extremity, Edward had occasion for all his strength and address. After an encounter, sharp and dangerous, he vanquished his antagonist, who surrendering his sword, yielded himself his prisoner. The next day the English enjoyed their victory, and in the evening the French prisoners were invited to sup with the Prince of Wales and the English nobility. After supper, Edward himself entered the apartment, and conversed, in a strain of compliment and familiarity, with the prisoners. His behaviour to his antagonist Eustace de Ribau mont was more particularly attentive, and is thus described by *Froissard*. ‘ Vint le Roi
 ‘ à Messire Eustache de Ribau mont : Vous êtes le chevalier au
 ‘ monde que veisse onques plus vaillamment assaillir ses enemis,
 ‘ ne son corps deffendre, ni ne me trouvai onques en bataille où
 ‘ je veisse qui tant me donnaist affaire corps à corps, que vous
 ‘ avez hui fait ; si vous en donne le prix sur tous les chevaliers
 ‘ de ma court par droite sentence. Adonc print le roi son cha-
 ‘ pelet qu’il portoit sur son chef (qui estoit bon et riche) et le meist
 ‘ sur le chef de Monseigneur Eustache, et dit : Monseigneur Eu-
 ‘ stache,

‘ stache, je vous donne ce chapelet pour le mieux combattant de
 ‘ la journée de ceux du dedans et du dehors, et vous prie que
 ‘ vous le portez cette année pour l’amour de moi. Je sai que
 ‘ vous êtes gai et amoureux, et que volontiers vous trouvés entre
 ‘ dames et damoiselles, si dites par tout où vous irez, que je le
 ‘ vous ai donné. Si vous quite votre prison, et vous en pouvez
 ‘ partir demain, s’il vous plaist.’ *an.* 1348.

(9) Favine, Theater of Honour, book. 1. St Palaye Mem:
 sur l’anc. Cheval. partie 4. Selden, Tit. hon. part 2. ch. 5. sect.
 37.

(10) The chief strength of armies consisted, at this time, of
 cavalry. The skilful management of a horse was, of conse-
 quence, one of the great accomplishments of a knight or a warri-
 our. It is to be noticed, that this way of thinking characterized
 some of the German tribes, even in the age of *Tacitus*. The
 following energetic description of the *Tencteri*, is applicable,
 in a striking manner, to the purer ages of chivalry, ‘ *Tencteri*
 ‘ *super solitum bellorum decus, equestris disciplinae arte praece-*
 ‘ *lunt. Nec major apud Catos peditum laus, quam Tencteris*
 ‘ *equitum. Sic instituere majores, posteris imitantur. Hi lusus*
 ‘ *infantium, haec juvenum aemulatio, perseverant senes.’* *De*
Mor. Germ. c. 32.

(11)



(11) Hence the distinction of knights *banneret* and knights *bachelors*; the latter expression denoting the simple knight; the former, the knight who had a standard and followers. The number of knights and esquires who served under the banneret, varied in proportion to his riches, and influence. It is also observable, that this dignity was not always feudal. It was sometimes personal. *Selden, Tit. hon. part 2. ch. 3. sect. 23. and ch. 5. sect. 39. Du Cange, Dissert. sur l'Histoire de S. Louis. Spelm. voc. Banerettus. Daniel, Milice Françoise, liv. 3. ch. 5.*

(12) Favine, Theater of Honour, book 10. St Palaye, Mem. sur l'anc. Cheval. partie 6.

(13) An old ceremonial of chivalry has these words: ‘ Le Roy
‘ Artus d’Angleterre, et le Duc de Lencastre ordonnerent et fi-
‘ rent la table ronde, et les behours, tournois, et joustes, et moult
‘ d’autres choses nobles, et jugemens d’armes, dont ils ordonnerent
‘ pour juger, *dames et damoiselles*, Roys d’armes et heraux.’
Dissert. 7. sur l’ Histoire de S. Louis, p. 179.

(14) The greater torneaments were those given by sovereigns and princes, to which knights were invited from every part of Europe; for, over Christendom, the honour and privileges of knighthood were the same. The lesser torneaments were those given by the barons.

It



It deserves observation, that the exhibition of torneaments produced an intercourse between the nations of Europe, which could not but contribute to knowledge and civilization. When there were no exprefs prohibitions, knights followed the more important torneaments wherever they were celebrated, for the purpose of studying the art of war; and that they might find signal and proper opportunities of distinguishing themselves, and of cultivating the friendship and acquaintance of illustrious persons of both sexes. It was even the fashion for knights to avoid the restraint of marriage for some years after their installation into the order, that they might consecrate them to the travelling into distant countries, and the visiting of foreign courts, 'a fin de s'y rendre chevaliers parfaits.' *St. Palaye, tom. 2. p. 8.*

From these circumstances, it is obvious, that the strong conclusions of Dr Robertson, concerning the little intercourse between nations, during the middle ages, are not to be relied upon in all their force, but to be understood with much reserve, and many limitations. *Hist. of Charl. V. vol. 1. p. 325. et seq.*

(15) This present was called *faveur*. *St. Palaye, tom. 1. p. 95.* Hence the pieces of lace or riband which are yet sometimes distributed at marriages, are termed the bride's *favours*.

(16) It would be tedious to enumerate and to describe the different forms of exercise or combat which were practised in the torneaments;



torneaments; and it is not necessary in this work. The *jouste* was the combat of one against one; *les armes à outrance*, were the combats of six against six, and consisted occasionally of more or fewer persons. *Le pas d'armes*, was the defence of a pass by one or more persons against every assailant. The curious reader may consult the books which treat expressly of torneaments.

(17) Favine on torneaments. St Palaye, Mem. sur l'anc. Cheval. partie 2.

(18) 'Effigiesque et signa quaedam detracta lucis in praelium ferunt.' Tacit. de Mor. Germ. c. 7. The posterity of the Germans were equally superstitious under the light of the gospel. 'Les Germains,' says St Foix, who had this passage of Tacitus in his eye, 'portoient à la guerre des drapeaux, et des figures qui étoient en dépôt pendant la paix dans les vois sacrées.' He adds, 'Nos Rois alloient prendre de même la chappe de S. Martin sur son tombeau, et l'oriflamme dans l'église de S. Denis, et les reportoient lorsque la guerre étoit finie.' *Ess. Hist. sur Paris, tom. 2. p. 187.*

(19) The Edda, Keyfler, Antiq. select. Septentr. p. 149.—163. Pelloutier, Hist. des Celtes, liv. 3. ch. 18.

(20)



(20) The discerning reader will perceive, that I describe Christianity from the writings of the clergy ; because, it is always from their representations of it that it acts upon society and manners. I therefore speak politically, and not as an inquirer into theology.

From the pretended friends of Christianity, and from its most zealous partizans, too, I fear, it has received deep and cruel wounds. Its most enlightened and genuine admirers have reason to regret, that it has not been left to defend itself. Were it possible to destroy the comments, the explanations, the catechisms, and the systems of divines, a very considerable blow would be given to infidelity. One can respect the honest doubts of philosophy. But, is it possible to withhold indignation or scorn, when ability stoops to be uncharitable and disingenuous, when bigotry presses her folly, and spits her venom ?

(21) It was Gregory VII. whose magnificent mind first formed the plan of the croisés. The fanaticism, the heroic spirit, and the wild enterprize of knighthood, suggested, doubtless, the idea of them. The advantages they were to give to the holy see, and the church in general, were numerous and great. The Popes not only conferred remission, or pardon of their sins, on all those who yielded to this madness ; but, what was no less interesting, they undertook the protection of their families and affairs. The clergy, of consequence, drew immense wealth, by acting as tu-

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tors



tors and trustees for widows, pupils, and minors. The troops designed for these pious projects, could be employed by the church to protect and enlarge its temporalities; and, under the pretence of recovering the holy sepulchre, prodigious sums were to be extracted from women, the devout, the infirm, and the dying.

From the holy wars it followed, that new fraternities of knight-hood were invented. Hence the knights of the holy sepulchre, the hospitallers, templars, and an infinite number of religious orders who shed blood, and deformed society, for the glory of God. Many of these acquired great riches, and all of them increased the influence of the church.

Some writers have fancied, but very absurdly, that the croises gave rise to chivalry. Without chivalry the croises could not have been carried into execution. The Popes and the clergy would in vain have preached, that they were the road to salvation and the gates to heaven.

From the cultivated state of manners in the east, some improvement was imported into Europe by the crusaders. But the crusades deserve not to be considered as the first, or indeed as a very powerful cause of refinement in Europe; though it is to be allowed, that they encouraged a respect for order, and ideas of regular government; and that they made additions to the
science



science of heraldry and the fashions of liveries, and heightened the splendour of equipage and dress.

When the medal, however, is reversed, there appear many and great disadvantages. They drained the kingdoms of Europe of their inhabitants; they took away their riches, and thereby discouraged trade and the arts; they removed kings and nobles beyond the seas, and introduced into states disquiets and disorder; they added to the power of the Roman see, by affording favourable opportunities for the operation of its policy, and for establishing the right of the Popes to interfere in the temporal affairs of nations; and, in fine, they promoted every pious impertinence, and advanced the most abject superstition.

It is also worthy of remark, that some writers, who have no tincture of philosophy, have treated chivalry and the holy wars as primary and distinctive causes of the refinement of the European states; yet the latter, being really the consequences of the former, their influence ought to have been ascribed to them.

The same want of penetration is perceivable in those, who, while they urge as a primary source of improvement, the revival of literature, hold out, distinctively, as another cause of it, the civil code, or the laws of the Romans. They might, with equal propriety, record as particular and distinctive sources of refinement, the writings of Cicero, of Livy, or of Tacitus.

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During the prevalence of chivalry, it is likewise to be observed, that the ardour of redressing wrongs seized many knights so powerfully, that, attended by esquires, they wandered about in search of objects whose misfortunes and misery required their assistance and succour. And, as ladies engaged more particularly their attention, the relief of unfortunate damsels was the achievement they most courted. This was the rise of knights-errant, whose adventures produced romance. These were originally told as they happened. But the love of the marvellous came to interfere; fancy was indulged in her wildest exaggerations, and poetry gave her charms to the most monstrous fictions, and to scenes the most unnatural and gigantic.

(23) ‘Supplicem aut debilem vel arma abjicientem hostem occidere, etiam hodie apud Gothos sempiterno opprobrio dignum computatur.’ *Jo. Magnus, Hist. Suec. lib. 4.*

In the battle of Poitiers, fought by the heroic Edward Prince of Wales, the King of France was made prisoner; and the behaviour to the captive monarch illustrates, more than any particulars I can mention, the nobleness of the principles of chivalry. The Earl of Warwick conducted the French king, with many demonstrations of respect, to the Prince's tent.

‘Here,’ says a great historian, ‘commences the real and the truly admirable heroism of Edward: For victories are vulgar things;

' things, in comparison of that moderation and humanity disco-
 ' vered by a young prince of twenty-seven years of age, not yet
 ' cooled from the fury of battle, and elated by as extraordinary
 ' and as unexpected success, as had ever crowned the arms of
 ' any general. He came forth to meet the captive king with
 ' all the signs of regard and sympathy; administered comfort to
 ' him amidst his misfortunes; paid him the tribute of praise due
 ' to his valour; and ascribed his own victory merely to the blind
 ' chance of war, or to a superior providence, which controuls all
 ' the efforts of human force and prudence. The behaviour of
 ' John shewed him not unworthy of this courteous treatment:
 ' His present abject fortune never made him forget a moment
 ' that he was a king: More sensible to Edward's generosity than
 ' to his own calamities, he confessed, that, notwithstanding his
 ' defeat and captivity, his honour was still unimpaired; and
 ' that, if he yielded the victory, it was at least gained by a prince
 ' of such consummate valour and humanity.

' Edward ordered a magnificent repast to be prepared in his
 ' tent for the prisoners, and he himself served the royal captive's
 ' table, as if he had been one of his retinue. He stood at the
 ' King's back during the meal; constantly refused to take a place
 ' at table; and declared, that, being a subject, he was too well
 ' acquainted with the distance between his own rank, and
 ' that of his royal Majesty, to assume such freedom. All his
 ' father's pretensions to the crown of France were now bu-
 ' ried



‘ried in oblivion : John, in captivity, received the honours of
 ‘a king, which were refused him when seated on the throne :
 ‘His misfortunes, not his title, were respected : And the French
 ‘prisoners, conquered by his elevation of mind, more than by
 ‘their late discomfiture, burst out into tears of joy and admira-
 ‘tion ; which were only checked by the reflection, that such ge-
 ‘nuine and unaltered heroism in an enemy, must certainly, in
 ‘the issue, prove but the more dangerous to their native coun-
 ‘try.’ *Hume, hist. of England, vol. 2. p. 214.* See also *A/b-*
mole, p. 673.

Morsels of story like these are precious, and distinguish those historians who can render instructive the details which common writers are only attentive to make agreeable.

(24) The following was one of the oaths administered by the constable in the duel. ‘A. de B. ye shall lay your hand
 ‘ayen on the holy gospels, and swere that ye shall have no moo
 ‘wepnes or poynts, but tho that ben assigned you by the con-
 ‘stable and marefchall, that is to wite, gleyve, long sward, short
 ‘sward, and dagger : Nor no knyfe, small ne grete ; ne none
 ‘engine, ne none othir instrument with poynt : Nor stone of
 ‘vertue, nor hearb of vertue ; nor charme, nor experement, nor
 ‘none othir enchauntment by you, nor for you, whereby ye
 ‘trust the better to overcome C. de D. your adversarie, that shall
 ‘come ayens you within these lists in his defence ; nor that ye
 ‘trust



‘ trust in none othir thyng properly, but in God and your body,
 ‘ and your brave quarell ; so God you help, and all halowes,
 ‘ and the holy gotpells.’ *Dugdale, origin. juridic. p. 82.*

(25) The solemn taking away of the sword, the cutting off the spurs, the tearing from the body the coat of arms, and the bruising every piece of the knight's armour, appear to have been ceremonies of the degradation. *Selden, Tit. hon. part 2. ch. 5. Sect. 38. Ashmole, p. 620.*

Religion came also to concern itself in a matter so important. Priests pronounced over the culprit a psalm, containing imprecations against traitors. Water was thrown upon him to wash away the sacred character conferred by his installation into the order. And, at length he was dragged on a hurdle to the church, where there were said and performed over him the prayers and the ceremonies which are used for the dead. *St Palaye, tome 1. p. 320.*

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the first part of the history of the world, from the creation of man to the time of the deluge. The second part of the history of the world, from the deluge to the time of the birth of Christ. The third part of the history of the world, from the birth of Christ to the present time.

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