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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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Chapter IV.

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## CHAPTER IV.

(1) **A**MONG the disbursements from the Exchequer of the kings of England, there seems to have been much for the behoof of the knights of honour, whom they retained. This appears from a variety of records in *Madox*, and accounts for the high charges of the sherifs for palfreys, saddles, gilt-spurs, peacocks-crests, silk toifes, robes, gloves, steel-caps, swords, and lances. *Hist. of the Exchequer, ch. 10.*

A pension of L. 40 *per annum* was given by Edward III. to John Atte Lee, who had been invested with knighthood *in auxilium status sui manutenendi*; and that Sir Nele Loring might better maintain the honour of knighthood, he granted to him, and his heirs male, L. 20 *per annum*. An annuity of forty marks was given to Sir John Walth, by Richard II. to enable him to support this dignity. And other examples to this purpose are to be collected. *Ashmole on the Garter, p. 34.* See farther *Du Cange, voc. Milites Regis, et Dissert. 5. sur l'Histoire de St. Louis.*





(2) Information concerning the knights retained by the nobles, is not to be found in that abundance which might be expected. In an account of the household expence of Thomas Earl of Leicester an. 1313, there are charged 70 pieces of blue cloth for his knights, and 28 for the esquires; 7 furs of powdered ermin, 7 hoods of purple, 395 furs of budge for the liveries of barons, knights, and clerks; 65 saffron-coloured cloths for the barons and knights; and 100 pieces of green silk for the knights. In this account, there is also a charge of L. 623 : 15 : 5, as fees to earls, barons, knights, and esquires. *Stow, Survey of London, in Strype's edition, vol. 1. p. 243.* The total expenditure of the Earl of Leicester for one year, which was 7309, is valued by Mr Anderson, at L. 21,927 of our money; and from the difference of living, or of the efficacy of money, his expence is made to be equal to L. 103,633. *Anderson, Hist. of Commerce, vol. 1. p. 153.* A board for the knights was one of the establishments of the fifth Earl of Northumberland. *Household-book, p. 310.* See farther, *St Palaye, tome 1. p. 312. 364.*

(3) 'In the nineteenth year of King Henry III.' says *Madox*,  
 'all the sherifs of England were commanded, by close writs of  
 'the great seal, to make proclamation in their respective coun-  
 'ties, that all they who held of the king in chief, one knight's  
 'fee or more, and were not yet knighted, should take arms and  
 'get themselves knighted, before the next Christmas, as they  
 'loved



'loved the tenements or fees which they held of the king.'  
*Baron. Angl. p. 130.* Proclamations of this kind were frequent.

(4) The writs to take knighthood expressed often, in their bostoms, the single knight's fee, as the estate entitling to knighthood; and they are valuable as ascertaining, at different times, the value of the knight's fee. Thus, there are rolls of different dates which state the knight's fee at fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty pounds of yearly valuation. A specification of such records may be seen in *Ashmole, p. 33.* and *Coke, 11. Institute, p. 597.* And, it is to be wished, that some intelligent person, who has access to the public offices, would publish a series of them. From such a work ingenious men might derive many advantages.

It is not to be conceived, that the knight's fee which was held of a subject, could entitle to knighthood; and yet many learned writers have expressed themselves to this purpose. It was the knight's fee *in capite*, or of the crown. This is illustrated by the writs of summons to take knighthood. And, of this writ, the record which follows, is an example, in the usual or regular form.

Rex Vicecomiti Norf. et Suff. salutem. Praecipimus tibi, quod, visis literis istis, per totam balivam clamari facias, quod  
 omnes





omnes illi qui de nobis tenent in CAPITE feudum unius militis, vel plus, et milites non sunt, citra festum natalis Domini anno regni nostri decimo nono, arma capiant et se milites fieri faciant, sicut tenementa sua quae de nobis tenent diligunt. *Claus. 19. H. 3. m. 25. dorso. ap. Madox, Hist. of the Exchequer, vol. 1. p. 510.*

(5) In the reign of Henry III. the honour of Dudley, and other lands of Roger de Sumery, were taken into the king's possession, with all the chatels found on them; because Roger did not come to be girt with the belt of knighthood. *Bar. Angl. p. 131.* For the same reason, the same prince seized the estates of Gilbert de Sampford and William de Montagu. And, in the twentieth year of Edward I. the sheriff of Kent was commissioned to seize the lands of such persons as did not appear to take knighthood, and to answer at the exchequer for the issues of them. *Hist. of the Exchequer, vol. 1. p. 510.*

The neglect of the sherifs to distrain the lands of those who were entitled to knighthood, and refused it, was often to subject them in amerciaments and punishments. And, what is remarkable, it appears that the command of the King's writ to his officers was at times accompanied with much severity, in case they should be negligent of their duty, or be tempted to connivance by bribes. This is illustrated by the evidence of the following writ to the sheriff of Northamptonshire.

Rex





Rex Vicecom. North. salutem. Praecipimus tibi quod, sicut teipsum et omnia tua diligis, omnes illos in baliva tua, qui habeant viginti libratas terrae, distringas, quod se milites faciendos curent, citra nativitatem Sancti Johannis Baptistae proxime futur. Sciturus pro certo, quod si, pro munere, vel aliqua occasione, aliquam relaxationem eis feceris, vel aliquem respectum dederis, nos ita graviter ad te capiemus, quod omnibus diebus vitae suae te senties esse gravatum. T. R. apud Wyndesfor decimo quarto die Aprilis. *Claus. 28. H. 3. m. 12. dorso. ap. Ashmole, p. 33.* See also *Coke, 11. Inst. p. 596.*

Thus, by a strange fate, chivalry was to grow into an imposition and a tax. It is a wild circumstance, and shows the unfortunate counsels, and the perverse humour of Charles I. that this unamiable method of raising money was revived in his reign. An act of tyrannical insolence was thus founded upon the pretext of an antient custom. Charles lived to abolish the oppression he had revived, and to ordain, that no person whatever should be compelled to take the order of knighthood, or to undergo any fine or trouble for not having taken it. *Stat. Car. I. an. 1640, cap. 20.*

(6) In the reign of Henry III. Bartholomew Fitz-William gave v marks to have respite for taking knighthood; and Thomas de Moleton, and several others, gave fines on the same account. *Hist. of the Exch. vol. 1. p. 509.* In the same reign,

Robert





Robert de Menevil paid v marks for a respite of knighthood for two years; and Peter Fouden 48 shillings and 8 pence for the respite of three years. And, for a suspension from knighthood for the same period, John de Drokensford, in the days of Edward III. paid ten pounds. *Ashmole, p. 33.*

The refusing to take knighthood, when not punished by the seizure of the land, was subjected to fines and amerciaments, which seem to have been arbitrary. In the time of Edward III. William, the son of Gilbert de Alton, paid twenty shillings for not appearing and receiving knighthood, according to the command of the King's proclamation; and the fine of forty shillings was set upon Simon de Bradeney, Thomas Trivet, and John de Neirvote. In the days of Henry IV. Thomas Pauncefoot paid four nobles for this neglect or contempt. *Ashmole, p. 34.* See farther *Baron. Angl. p. 131. 132.* *Camden, Introd. to the Britan. p. 246. 247.*

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