

bodies of distinction among men, more or less honorable, called the Order of Knighthood; for example, the Garter, the St. Andrew, the Bath, the Golden Fleece, the Legion of Honor, or the Elephant and Castle,

After the complete fall of the Roman Empire, and the tremendous disorganization of society produced by it, the Feudal System arose. Under this system, a large portion of Europe was parceled out, and these parcels were again subdivided by the grants made by the chief holders to their more immediate attendants. All the lords claimed absolute dominion in their own limits. To become the Knights, or body-guard, attendants or warriors, of these lords, was an object of ambition to their dependants, especially if, by the privilege, they obtained the advantage of being clothed in the rude armor of the time, and of being mounted on horseback. Then, as it was the custom to declare the youth a warrior, by some ceremony, such as presenting him with a javelin, or girding him with a sword, in public assembly, we may see in this the origin of those ceremonies which came, in course of time, to be attached to the making of a knight. A great deal was added to the original simple ceremonies by the church. The Knight was sworn to be faithful to religion as well as to his feudal lord. We must never, in estimating influences, forget what religion did, even in the roughest and darkest times, for the elevation of motive and feeling.

At the end of the eleventh century occurred that historical event known as the First Crusade. It was really an irruption of poor adventurers on the wealthy and more luxurious tribes of the East. The vast numbers who perished in that wild adventure, by sword, fire, and famine, naturally suggested the idea of having a better organized, more compact, and disciplined body, than that of savage and tumultuous hosts, in order to conquer and defend the Holy Land. Such a notion, probably but dimly seen at first, and only developed by circumstances, paved the way for the formation of the religious military Orders of Knighthood, the Knights Templar, the Knights of Malta, and the Teutonic Knights. They were framed upon the feudal model, that of companionship, or brotherhood, and obedience to a chief. But as their professed object was a higher one than that of mere plunder and conquest, religious enthusiasm being added to martial zeal, their formation may be termed the first step in the moral elevation of chivalry, or that which more immediately led to its being condensed into a system such as it afterwards became. Towards the end of the twelfth century, certain characteristics began to be associated with the name and profession of a knight. The rude adventurous character of Richard I. assisted this.

But we should form a most erroneous notion, if, in giving the history of chivalry, we should begin in the thirteenth century, and carry it on, from one gallant deed of arms to another, exhibiting nothing but a series of brilliant services. We should omit the earlier deeds of these great soldier-monks, whose name we bear, and to whose loftier aspirations we also aspire. From the very first, great deeds were done, and noble characters formed, by this republic of gentlemen, constituted on the feudal system. The Knight Templar was a brave and gallant soldier, who preformed, habitually, deeds of the highest valor; protected the oppressed with alacrity, and without the hope of fee or reward, cleared the highways of monsters, both human—in the form of robbers and prowling beggars—and inhuman, in the shape of wolves and wild boars, and the other wild beasts with which the East was then overrun,