

⑤ The Decline of Chivalry: The gradual petering out of the Crusades; The disastrous defeats of knightly armies by foot soldiers and bowmen in such battles as those of Courtrai (1302), Crécy (1346) and Agincourt (1415); The development of artillery; the steady erosion of feudalism by the royal power in favour of a centralized monarchy—all these factors had their effect on knightly life in the 14th and 15th centuries. In their struggle against the great feudatories the kings were glad enough to have the numerous class of knights on their side; but they were anxious to bring it entirely under their control. The kings arrogated to themselves the right to dub and promoted the reduction of knightly life from the status of a supranational confraternity to that of a dependent and domesticated nobility in the modern sense. Chivalry lost its martial simplicity and became a fashion of modish elegance for the sophisticated nobles of a prince's entourage. The change was already fore-shadowed in literature by the transition from the *Chansons de geste* (epic) which reflect the old knightly and indeed constitute the source of much of our information on its ethos to the *romans courtois* with their emphasis on love and on the chivalrous pursuit and service of ladies; Courtly Love pastime and preferred more than battle; and the old song of personal honour gave way to that petty sensitivity to signs of disrespect from others which was to culminate in the 16th century in the vogue of duels of honour which at times were to culminate in the efforts of Philippe de Mézières (qv) in the latter half of the 14th century, to promote a new knightly order true to the old ideals, bear witness against the contemporary state of chivalry.

⑥ THE SECULAR ORDERS OF MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY—An exalted type of knightly life emerged with the secular orders founded by kings and princes who exploited the attraction of the chivalrous idea both to satisfy the nobility's thirst for special lustre without increasing its real power and to form an elite of great nobles bound by an express devotion to the sovereign's person. These secular orders were multiplied throughout Europe and eventually throughout the world from the end of the middle ages onward, and the later ones had nothing in common with the old code of chivalry but the name of knights, the accolade, and insignia. A few of them, however, which were instituted before the total eclipse of chivalry and survived into modern times can be mentioned here.

A. The Order of the Garter: This English Order was instituted by King Edward III about the middle of the 14th century. According to unauthenticated legend, the king founded it after picking up a garter dropped at a dance by the countess of Salisbury, when he rebuked those who laughed suggestively at his courtesy with the famous words *honi soit qui mal y pense* which translated simply means, "Shame on him who thinks ill of it." Since its original records date down to 1416 have perished, the year of its institution is not exactly known. The dates suggested vary between 1344 (*Jean Froissart*, most probably mistaken) and 1351, but it is unlikely that it existed before the summer of 1346, since neither the Prince of Wales (Edward the Black Prince) nor several others of the original companions had received knightly honours, a prerequisite of membership, before the middle of that year. It was in being by 1349. Its membership at first comprised the king and the Prince of Wales, each with 12 companions (as they might have had at a tournament). From 1376 to 1415 ladies were admitted to its annual feast, at Windsor on April 23 (St. George's Day) for which they were provided with the robes and insignia of the order. The post-medieval development of the order is described below, under British Orders.

B. The Order of the Collar—This was a Savoyard Order instituted in 1362 by Amadeus VII. It was renamed The Order of Annunziata (Annunciation) by Duke Charles III in 1518; it eventually became the highest order of the Kingdom of Italy.

C. The Order of the Golden Fleece (La Toison d'Or) This order was founded by Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, at Bruges in Flanders in 1430, to commemorate his wedding there to Isabella of Portugal. Its first chapter was held at Lille in 1431, and in 1432 the seat was fixed at Dijon, capital of the duchy of Burgundy. Dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and to St. Andrew, it was first constituted to have a grand master (the sovereign duke) and 23 knights, but membership was subsequently increased to 31 then later to 51. The order, founded to defend the Catholic religion and to uphold the usages of chivalry, was itself to settle disputes between its knights, whose deeds were appraised, commended or censured at its chapters; and the knights had the right to trial by their fellows on charges of rebellion, treason or heresy. Through the marriage of Mary of Burgundy to the Austrian Archduke Maximilian (1477) the grand mastership passed to the house of Hapsburg. The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (Charles I of Spain) who granted the order exclusive jurisdiction over all crimes committed by its members, left the grand mastership to his son Philip II of Spain, to whose successors it was confirmed by Pope Clement VIII in 1600; but after the extinction of the Spanish Hapsburgs (1700) it was disputed between the Bourbon kings of Spain and the Austrian Hapsburgs. The Emperor Charles VI instituted the order in Vienna in 1713, and thereafter both the Austrians and Spanish sovereigns and pretenders to the throne continued to award the Golden Fleece as their principal order of knightly honour. The Golden Fleece was exclusively reserved to Catholics of the highest nobility.

D. The Order of St. Maurice: This was another Savoyard order which was instituted by Amadeus VIII for his intimates on his retirement from public affairs in 1434. On his becoming anti-pope as Felix V the order fell into practical abeyance till 1572 but it was subsequently merged with a branch of the order of St. Lazarus, to survive into modern times as an Italian Order (SS. Maurizio and Lazzaro).

E. The Order of St. Hubert—This order, founded by Gerhard V duke of Jülich, in 1444, to commemorate his victory at Ravensberg over Arnold of Egmond on St. Hubert's day, fell into abeyance with the extinction of the house of Jülich in 1609 but was revived in 1708 by the Wittelsbach claimants to the Jülich succession and survived into modern times as the highest order of the Kingdom of Bavaria.

F. The Order of St. Michael: Louis XI of France founded this order in 1469. (John II's Order of the Star, founded in 1351, has fallen into abeyance in the later course of the hundred year war.) Having fallen into disrepute, it was merged with the Order of the Holy Spirit (*Saint Esprit*) founded by Henry III in 1578. Together known as *les Ordres du roi* and distinguished by the blue cord on which the insignia were worn, these two were the most coveted French orders under the ancien régime.