

Hence arose the marvellous system of chivalry. The minds of all sorts of people quickly imbibed these extravagant ideas. Then it was that in romances they beheld knight-errants, necromancers, fairies, winged or intelligent horses, invisible or invulnerable men, magicians who concerned themselves in the birth and education of great personages, enchanted and disinherited palaces, a new world in the midst of the old one, and the ordinary course of nature left only to the lower class of mankind.

Knight-errants always in armour, in a part of the world full of castles, forts, and robbers, found honour in punishing injustice, and in protecting weakness. Hence our romances abound with gallantry founded on the idea of love, joined with that of strength and protection.

Such was the original of gallantry, when they formed to their imaginations an extraordinary set of men, who at the sight of virtue joined with beauty and distress, were inclined to expose themselves to all hazards for their sake, and to endeavour to please them in the common actions of life.

Our romances of chivalry flattered this desire of pleasing, and communicated to a part of Europe that spirit of gallantry, which we may venture to affirm was very little known to the ancients.

The prodigious luxury of that immense city Rome, flattered the idea of sensible pleasures. A certain notion of tranquillity in the fields of Greece, gave rise to the description* of soft and amorous sentiments. The idea of knight-errants, protectors of the virtue and beauty of the fair-sex, led people to that of gallantry.

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* See the Greek romances of the middle age.