

**THE JUSTIFICATION OF
WAR, AS THE MEDIUM
OF CIVILIZATION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649318766

The justification of war, as the medium of civilization by George Stephens

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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GEORGE STEPHENS

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BY
GEORGE STEPHENS,

AUTHOR OF "THE MANUSCRIPTS OF KENNEL," "ESSAYS," "DRAMAS," ETC.

"Of all things tending to the greatness of any Kingdom or State, the principal is, to have a race of Military Men."—BACON.

LONDON:
G. MITCHELL, RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.

1850.

TO
TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE
THE LORD PALMERSTON,
THIS TREATISE UPON THE
Δικαιώματα των πολέμων
OF
ARISTOTLE,
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

THE
JUSTIFICATION OF WAR
AS THE
MEDIUM OF CIVILIZATION.

It is unnecessary to dilate upon the importance of the thesis which is proposed for consideration in the following pages:—namely, the civilizing influence of the martial spirit on the state of manners, and of society at large. Few subjects can be more important. It has acquired an adscititious interest from certain modern doctrines that have been broached concerning it. I venture in the present treatise to lay my own views in refutation thereof before the public. They are the result of deep meditation upon the evils as well as the advantages entailed by War,—a science, the study of which in all its bearings I commenced long before the birth of the Peace Society.

Hobbes and others have contended, from much observation, that the natural state of man is War. The

first blood shed in the world was that of Abel. Probably the precedent of murder did not remain long without finding imitators. Tubal-Cain, to the grief of his father, became a fabricator of arms. The Abels of the earth stood on their defence—hence, War. Like most things under the sun, abstractedly considered, it is a great evil, but one that would seem to be inevitable. In the present state of society it notoriously is so in many cases.

It has, however, pleased the Almighty Disposer of events to educe good from this sad fact. "Out of the nettle," War, mankind are led to "pluck the flower," Civilization. I do not know that the subject has been proposed or considered in this view before, but the position cannot well be impugned with any success.

God has made a state of war auxiliary to the elevation of human nature, to its enlightenment, and to its exaltation to that point of perfection, when we are assured, by prophecy, man will be at peace under his own fig-tree. Providence, moreover, has so ordered the course of the events of this world, that meanwhile war upon the whole is conducive to the general prosperity, and consequently it should be regarded in the light of a Good, though, like all other good things, it is far from disseized of its original taint. The fuller exposition of this argument it will be the office of the following pages to unfold.

He who first reduced to rule that art which has for its object the defence of persecuted virtue, and the punishment of successful wickedness, to curb ambition, and to oppose the unjust claims and pretensions of superior power—

*“pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.”—*

employed his faculties on the most useful and necessary of all the sciences, and he should be ranked amongst the greatest benefactors of his species.

The calamities attendant upon war, as do all the calamities entailed by man's lost innocence, present undoubtedly a mournful subject of contemplation to any reflecting mind. Nevertheless, I am led to the conclusion, that it is often the duty of a Christian statesman, in the fluctuating and infinitely varying circumstances which affect a kingdom's relative welfare and safety, to take the initiative in venturing upon hostilities, when I consider, that the principles which should govern the conduct of nations are only one branch of the law of nature.

It will be found that self-preservation and self-defence are generally admitted to be a primary law—to be obligatory in their own nature. Even a Quaker, I presume, would resist a highwayman. If God, by means of right reason, imposes certain instinctive duties between individuals, it is evident he is likewise willing that

nations, which are only human societies, should observe the same duties, and act upon the same maxims among themselves. The law written in the heart of man is just as binding in the one case as in the other, though the civil state may impart to it a new degree of force and consistency.

Self-preservation is countenanced by the sacred oracles. It forms part of the law of Moses. Therefore, reasoning by analogy, not that nation who may be driven, by an enlarged view of what self-defence requires, to commence hostilities, but the one whose unjust pretensions or actual encroachment is the cause of the shedding of blood, will have to bear the whole moral guilt.

To kill a man is a bad action in a robber, but it is accounted laudable in a citizen or soldier who defends his life or country unjustly attacked. In this latter case, however, a notable distinction ought always to be retained in our thoughts.

Individuals who suffer their private enmity to vacate the unalterable laws of right are obnoxious to the judgment of human tribunals, and other parties have the option of referring their quarrels to the good offices of such as may be willing to compose the difference. It follows, that in the community of nature, no one is entitled to exercise the right of avenging injuries *à l'outrance*, except under circumstances where his own death would be the penalty of any truce to resentment.

But among different communities or states, all being alike governed by self-interest, there can be no impartial umpire ; or if impartiality were attainable, the nation, or power invested with supreme jurisdiction, can have no means or authority to secure or enforce the observance of its decisions. Therefore, arbitration being impossible, of the right of a nation to resort to arms in self-defence there can be no question. But the principle which admits of that right, infers, in many cases, the necessity of attacking, with a view to guard against some distant danger, or to prevent some remote contingency. Were that feasible, which is evidently an utopian fancy, that a *bona fide* league of potentates could be formed, bound to maintain the tranquillity of the world, it is certain, that it can only secure its object at the expense of the interest of one or other of the confederation, who would not be long ere he relieved himself from his false position.

Such an union, wherein *discordiæ tacitæ et quæ intelligerentur potius quam viderentur*, could serve no other end than to exhibit in the face of the world, by the inevitable violation of the compact, an appearance of vacillancy, selfishness, and dishonour. Their joint-stock alliance would be, as to its professed purposes, nugatory ; or, supposing, for the sake of argument, it were not so as respects the members of the league, it would have, at all events, to stultify itself by making