

all these accounts united, nowhere greater power. * * *

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God made man unarmed; but anger and revenge have mended the work of God, and furnished his hands with weapons invented in hell. Christians attack christians with engines of destruction, fabricated by the devil. A cannon, a mortar, no human being could have devised them originally, they must have been suggested by the evil one. Nature, indeed, has armed lions with teeth and claws, and bulls with horns; but whoever saw them go in bodies to use their arms for mutual destruction? What man ever saw so small a number as even ten lions congregated to fight ten bulls, and drawn up in battle array? But, how often have twenty thousand christians met an equal number on the same plain, all prepared to shoot each other through the heart, or to plunge the sword or bayonet through each other's bowels. So little account do they make of hurting their brethren, that they have not the smallest scruple to spill every drop of blood in their bodies. Beasts of the forest, your contests are at least excusable, and sometimes amiable; ye fight only when driven to madness by hunger, or to defend your young ones; but, as for those who call themselves your lords, men and christians, the faintest shadow of an affront is sufficient to involve them in all the horrors of premeditated war.

If the lower orders of the people were to act in this manner, some apology might be found in their supposed ignorance; if very young men were to act in

] A few lines are here omitted, because, though descriptive of France in the days of Erasmus, they now bear but little resemblance to it.

Erasmus,
The Complaint of Peace
[Querela Pacis]
(1517)

this manner, the inexperience of youth might be pleaded in extenuation; if the poor laity only were concerned, the frailty of the agents might lessen the atrocity of the action; but the very reverse of this is the truth. The seeds of war are chiefly sown by those very people, whose wisdom and moderation, characteristic of their rank and station, ought to compose and assuage the impetuous passions of the people. The people, the ignoble vulgar, despised as they are, are the very persons who originally raise great and fair cities to their proud eminence, who conduct the commercial business of them entirely, and, by their excellent management, fill them with opulence. Into these cities, after they are raised and enriched by Plebeians, creep the satraps and grandees, like so many drones into a hive; pilfer what was earned by others industry; and thus, what was accumulated by the labour of the many, is dissipated by the profligacy of the few; what was built by Plebeians on upright foundations, is levelled to the ground by cruelty and royal patrician injustice.

If the military transactions of old time are not worth remembrance, let him who can bear the loathsome employ, only call to mind the wars of the last twelve years; let him attentively consider the causes of them all, and he will find them all to have been undertaken for the sake of kings; all of them carried on with infinite detriment to the people, while, in most instances, the people had not the smallest concern, either in their origin or their issue.

Then, as to young men being chiefly concerned in this mischief of exciting war, so far from it, that you hide your grey hairs with a helmet; *Canitium galea premitis*; and you deem it an honour to the hoary head of a

christian, to encourage or even take an active part in war, though the heathen poet Ovid says, "*Turpe senex miles*;" That an old man, a warrior, is a loathsome object. Ovid's countrymen would have considered a fighting-man, or one that set others on to fight at seventy years old, a blood-thirsty dotard, with one foot in his grave, a monster of wickedness and folly.

As to the laity only being concerned, it is so far from true, that priests, whom God, under the severe and sanguinary dispensation of Moses, forbade to be polluted with blood, do not blush; that christian divines and preachers, the guides of our lives, do not blush; that professors of the purest divinity do not blush; that neither bishops, cardinals, nor Christ's own vicars, blush to become the instigators, the very firebrands of war, against which Christ, from whom they all pretend to derive the only authority they can have, expressed his utter detestation. What possible consistency can there be between a mitre and a helmet, a pastoral staff and a sabre? between the volume of the gospel, and a shield and buckler? How can it be consistent to salute the people with the words, "Peace be with you," and, at the same time, to be exciting the whole world to bloody war? with the lips to speak peace, and with the hand and every power of action, to be urging on havoc? Dare you describe Christ as a Reconciler, a Prince of peace, and yet palliate or commend war, with the same tongue, which, in truth, is nothing less than to sound the trumpet before Christ and Satan at the same time. Do you presume, reverend sir, with your hood and surplice on, to stimulate the simple, inoffensive people to war, when they come to church, expecting to hear from your mouth the Gospel of peace? Are you not appre