

Each nation is made up of good, bad, and indifferent; of wise and foolish; of high and low; and each family and every individual is as different from the others on close acquaintance as blue is different from green. And yet, on first coming among them, there is a sameness which cannot fail to impress us. We feel it, but probably if asked to describe it, we would be puzzled to do so. This national peculiarity is apt to be strongest among the uneducated of a nation, because education by removing prejudices and "notions" tends to assimilate the people of different nations: but it is present in all. It is present in everything belonging to the nation—its laws, its customs, its festivals; it is written in its books and painted on its pictures. It sounds forth in its national music, and is even reflected in its religious observances. It is the spirit of the nation. It is the cord which binds many diverse individuals into one.

It is a deeply interesting study—this study of national character. Beginning with the assumption that human nature is always and everywhere fundamentally the same; to trace its progress through centuries in different countries, and mark the effects which surroundings, and events, and customs springing from these have produced; to connect with the luxuriant vegetation and burning skies of the south, the indolence, the impatience, and the fire in temper and imagination of its inhabitants; and to see in the more reluctant fruitfulness and cooler climate of the north, reasons why its people should possess more industry and more perseverance, give less time to things imaginary and more to things practical than their brethren of the south. We never look in vain for natural surroundings which are "emblems of deeds that are done in their clime."

These things teach a useful lesson to human pride; they bid us be cautious how we glory in what we are, or condemn others too severely for what they are.

That each nation should prefer its own style of living and style of thinking, is

most natural. A Canadian cannot have the same habits as a West Indian, and different habits give rise to different passions and feelings. But why on this account one should consider himself essentially better than the other, is certainly not so clear. That each should love his own country dearly—love her first and best—is not only natural, it is just and right. But that this should lead to a disdain of other countries, is surely not logical. We cannot help thinking that this love of country has been too indiscriminately lauded; that spurious imitations have passed current for the real coin.

Love of country is itself a pure, a holy feeling, as is self respect. But that love of country which leads to contempt of other countries—to a disregard of the rights of other countries—this is allied to selfishness, to self conceit. And no one who examines history can fail to observe that much of this latter feeling has been worshipped under the name of patriotism. It cannot be right to do for one's country what it would be wrong to do for oneself. And who would dream of glorifying the man who, in his eagerness for his own advancement, utterly ignores the most obvious rights of others—who is unwilling to give up the smallest part of his own rights for the general good—who connives at anything, no matter how wrong, for the furtherance of his own interests. No one, surely!

Yet Kossuth, that much lauded patriot, has left his own words as evidence of the metal of which his patriotism was made—and he is very far from standing alone—"I would praise anything, forget anyone, to help Hungary." If to be a patriot is not incompatible with being a Christian, the patriot must not forget the Christian's rule of conduct: "Do unto others as you would that others should do to you."

We are not without examples of men who, when contending for the rights of their country, when giving most indubitable proofs of their love for her by laying down fortune, health, life, for her sake, yet never forgot that the freedom,