

deeds half heroic and half criminal, she became an Empire, and to make the fabric real, the Empire forced on her a higher state-unity. I mean, not simply the unwritten government known as the British Constitution, but the freedom for the individual, the tolerance in religion, the education in self-government and the instinct for justice which constitute the British State, the tersest phrase at our disposal for the Empire in its moral and conscious aspect. For Britain, nationality, or, as I prefer to call it, nationalism is a word of doubtful meaning—true or false according to the limits set to it.

Three obvious cases of nationalism within the Empire present themselves. As a minor instance there is French Canada. A nation, equal with Britain in genius and spirit, played the game and lost; bequeathing to the victors, in her loss, a section of her subjects, which bore within it all the elements of the more natural form of nationality. There are those who think Britain unfortunate in her concessions; but apart from the obvious policy of generosity in an indisputable winner towards the vanquished, the French-Canadians had such claims as the real elements of nationality must always carry with them, and as the French-Canadian element expands, so also, and in exact proportion, must these privileges expand. But there is a limit to such nationalism. For Quebec is part of the British State; its hopes of independence are, by every rule of the political game, preposterous; and, in politics, to struggle with the inevitable is not merely political folly—it is high treason against progress.

There is the nationalism of Ireland. A nation, with claims to nationality by her insular position, her racial and temperamental peculiarities and accidents of history, has had her nationality rendered pathologically extreme through mishaps, errors, and ignorance. It was natural that Irish nationalism should enter imperial politics, with its claims—natural also that these claims should receive satisfaction to the point of home rule. But the cry for separation marks the entrance of excess; and Britain, who has redeemed the past with imperial generosity, must plead the higher considerations of state when she refuses to separate what nature and policy have determined to bind together.

Lastly there is the imminent question of Canadian nationalism. And let me say, parenthetically, that whether reciprocity be right or wrong economically, it is absurd to talk of commercial relations as though they involved an element of nationality. Commerce will neither make Canada more independent than before, nor join her to the state with which she trades. Commerce may assist, as it did in Germany, to complete what the real national forces were slowly achieving; it can never make, of itself, a new national union.

To the Gladstonian Liberal, the British Empire is based on local autonomy, and Canada is the perfect example of such local independence. Step by step, she has claimed as her rights the powers that are reserved for independent nations; and were the British State only one of the "natural" units, her connection with Canada would already have become more than doubtful.