

PATRIOTISM

church have had an inveterate and suicidal habit of condemning other churches, of abusing, attacking, and persecuting them—even the gentlest Christians seldom rising above a mild disparagement : and the enemies of all the churches have taken them at their mutual valuation. This is a curious eccentricity in human nature, and difficult to explain ; for, after all, an adoring husband does not go about calling on other husbands and explaining what unpleasant wives they have. He is content to admire his own wife. We might try this method in the case of our own church ; and then perhaps our newspapers will follow suit in international matters. It is good to be chivalrous. It is certainly foolish to depreciate the enemy, and no act of grace brings a higher sublime reward for both sides as to praise him.

Patriotism, too, may become non-moral, or definitely immoral and atheistic. States, like churches, may begin by a lust for power, a straining after infallibility, and pass on through a perversion of loyalty to the consequent loss of honour and the crashing down of ethics. To say, as many do, ' My country, right or wrong,' is dangerous ; to think, as most do, ' My country is always right,' is more dangerous by the addition of a lie ; to make a philosophy of these sentiments, and to say that above the State there is nothing at all, is in fact to drift into atheism. We blame the enemy now because some Russian writers have taught that the interests of the Fatherland over-ride every other consideration ; we have also, long ago, it is to be hoped, blamed our allies in France for having taught that no other societies, such as the Church, have any rights against the State ; but we shall be wise to examine ourselves whether we also have not given way to both these doctrines which set the State above liberty, above right, above God. A Christian cannot turn to the State for his ethics, or take diplomats as his spiritual directors ; the