

PATRIOTISM

' This ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.'

Patriotism is a salt against rottenness, a glorious spur to high endeavour ; it recovers the half-obliterated virtue of loyalty, calls every man to service, and ennobles great and small alike. 'Tis so universal that even the professors cannot escape it.

But all is not patriotism that glitters. Fear, prejudice, and hate, a base and morbid sensationalism, collective selfishness and corporate egotism, pass themselves off for the true thing in war time : there are not a few who are as eager to make money out of their country's need now as in times of peace ; and we non-combatants are always in danger of thinking that the beginning and end of our duty is to call vehemently upon the young—and the poor—to sacrifice themselves in defence of our comfortable persons and property. And, in general, this patriotism is marred by gross and cruel faults, just as the religion of Christendom has been, though the faults of patriotism are not used by agnostics as an argument against it—as the faults of religion are ; which, possibly, is because the agnostics are inside the one and not inside the other.

Patriotism, like religion, is of course marred by boasting. So vulgar a fault need only be mentioned, and is really less with us to-day than in former wars ; but it is not dead, and we shall do well to have in mind certain of our own poets, when we sing—

Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
And lesser breeds without the law—

for the lesser breeds are to be distinguished by the thickness rather than by the colour of their skin, and many Gentiles write articles in our own newspapers.

Patriotism is often marred also by evil-speaking, and in this also is like religion. The members of each