

Patriotism.

ALUMNI PRIZE ESSAY BY MR. A. AUSTIN O'BRIEN.

For Romans in Rome's quarrel
Spared neither land nor gold,
Nor son nor wife nor limb nor life,
In the brave days of old.

WHO as he contemplates the national turmoil of the present time, but is impelled to ask : "What is behind it all ?" What passion is goading the citizens of the warring nations on to such colossal sacrifices ? And the answer will almost invariably be : "It is a love for their respective countries." We might go further, asking : "In what does this 'love of country' or patriotism consist ? Is it worthy of being fostered in the hearts of men ? And if so, are we responding faithfully to its demands and exigencies ? To a consideration of those questions let us devote our thoughts for a brief time.

Patriotism consists in "serving one's country, either in defending it from invasion or in protecting its rights and maintaining its laws and institutions."

Since the time when Adam first saw the Garden of Eden, this passion has been a predominant emotion among all peoples. The open pages of history are mute testimony to the fact that man has ever been peculiarly attracted to the soil he calls his own. The natural conditions of that region upon which he happens to dwell, the noble deeds of his fellow sojourners there, and the literature which they, in the language common to his people, have produced, stir up in him a sympathy, an admiration and a love, which move him to exclaim in the fullness of his pride : "This is my own, my native land."

To the Roman the yellow Tiber, fast rushing to the sea, was equalled by no other river. No poet so great as his Virgil, his Ovid, his Horace ; no patriot so true as Curtius, Cincinnatus or Regulus. The Englishman sees a beauty in the broad, majestic Thames which he can find in none other. To him no writer is so worthy of respect and admiration as the sympathetic Chaucer,

In Memoriam

Everard W. McLellan

Hector Gallant

John O'Connor

Former Students of
St. Dunstan's, who died recently
on the field of battle

"On Fame's eternal camping ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And Glory guards, with solemn round,
The bivouac of the dead."

the beloved Shakespeare and the immortal Tennyson. And never a hero graced the annals of his country with deeds equal to those of Alfred, of Nelson or of Wellington. The American finds his ideal of a river in the Mississippi, winding long and lazily through the fertile plains, while he glories in relating above all others the deeds of his heroes of liberty : Washington, Adams, Lincoln. The Canadian may roam to other climes and there dwell for a brief time, but ever there remains uppermost in his affections a love for his "Lady of the Snows." Well might the poet exclaim :

"Such is the patriot's boast, where'er we roam,
His first, best country ever is at home."

And far from being contrary to the sacred laws of charity, this affection for one's own country is most just and conformable to right reason. Those, who argue that our love for mankind should not be local but cosmopolitan, forget that it is impossible to love everyone in general and nobody in particular. They forget that, if you would learn how best to promote the interests of your fellow-man, the first maxim to be remembered is : "To thine own self be true." Who—though he may have the most kindly feelings towards all mankind—but feels a special throb of love for his good old father who protected and nurtured him through the years of his helplessness ? It was so ordained by God. To the home go the first fruits of love from the garden of the heart. As the child grows older and his powers of appreciation and affection widen, he shares those fruits first with the fatherland then with mankind in general.

But what has that great depository of God's teachings, the Bible, to say on this subject ? Numerous are the examples of patriotism contained within its hallowed pages ; ample is the stimulus given to this noble sentiment ; and high the praise bestowed on the notable exponents thereof. Turn to the story of the venerable Moses. Note with what affection towards the Israelites he shares their fortunes—joys in their prosperity—sorrows, chides and prays for them in their adversity. Indeed did he not even refuse a kingly crown when to ac-

cept it would entail the destruction of his chosen, though disobedient people? The great warrior—King David, and the whole line of prophets who came after him all exhibited a patriotic spirit highly worthy of emulation. And what finer expression of affection towards a motherland could be found than that of those exiled singers who exclaimed,—“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”

One more example will suffice to show the sacred character of patriotism. This is found in the New Testament, and the patriot is no less a personage than our Divine Saviour Himself. Amid the toils, sorrow and sufferings attendant on His heavenly mission, He saw fit to bestow on the land of His earthly fathers a special ray of affection: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” He exclaimed, “How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate.” Thus we see that not only because of its instinctive presence in all honest minds but also because of the sanction it receives in the Books of the Old and New Inspiration this sentiment ought to be cultivated in our midst.

And yet despite this fact it has been sometimes stated in recent years that patriotism was on the decline among the peoples of the world. It has been claimed that the development of many of the civilized nations into purely commercial and trading peoples gave rise to a reluctance to sacrifice anything which did not immediately bring its reward in dollars and cents. Thus, it was declared, the citizens being blinded to a proper realization of those inspiring and permanent principles, which ought to be the pride of every country, were devoting themselves rather to a pursuit of their own selfish ends. Whether or not such statements were well grounded—certain it is, that we of the British Empire and of Canada in particular to-day have no reason to be ashamed of any lack of patriotism. If in recent years it could not be distinctly recognized it was not because it

had completely died out but rather because no great crisis arose to demand a pronounced expression of it.

Today the sight of millions of free British citizens standing, with swords drawn against an unscrupulous enemy, and ready to embark amidst the bloody rapids and whirlpools of modern battle is a sufficient indication that yet the British heart beats true to its ancient ideals of "truth, pity, freedom and hardiness." And we should remember also that, while the other belligerent nations are for the most part raising and maintaining their forces by conscription, we enjoy the singularly enviable reputation of having least of all tampered with the free will of our citizens in the matter of defending their country.

And for what is this colossal sacrifice being made by our citizens? Is it for pecuniary gain? By no means. For they do not hope for wider colonial possessions. Their highest ambition now would be to see those already acquired, utilized and developed to the greatest degree of perfection possible. Is it for personal honor, fame or military distinction? Certainly not. For how meagre a recognition are transient banquetings, laudatory speeches, even magnificent monuments and eulogizing epitaphs to the poor hero who sacrifices his limbs or his life in the bloody crucible of Picardy, Gallipoli or Mesopotamia. No, these are not the motives which prompt our British citizens to lay down the implements of peace and take up these of war. The ideals for which their Empire stands have been violated and the aggressor must be humbled.

But not on the battlefield alone is the lamp of patriotism burning to-day in all its intensity. There is another picture, almost as beautiful and inspiring as that of the stricken soldier-boy who, on the desolate Flemish plain, pours forth to meet the crimson rays of the setting sun the last crimson drops of his lifeblood. It is the sight of the aged mother bidding adieu to the object of her greatest pride and attachment in this world—her son. From the time of his birth he had received her tenderest care, and in him lay all her hopes for support and happiness in her declining years. But now, when he has reached manhood, another claimant—the

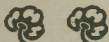
motherland, steps forward and demands the services, nay, if need be, the life of that son. The gray-haired mother, realizing the priority of that claim, bows her will in obedience and although her heart is well-nigh breaking, gives him that firm and re-assuring farewell which tells him that she is as ready to sacrifice her dearest treasure as he is, his life. Such parents and kindred—and many can be found to-day—are truly patriots.

And yet there is another class which is highly deserving of that name. It is the huge army, who unable to engage in actual warfare are sustaining the vital industries of our nation. Their work is indeed an important one. To provide an uninterrupted supply of the necessities of life, both for our men who are fighting and for their dependents at home, is a patriotic work of no mean order; and in the performance of it much has been and will continue to be expected from Canada. Thus far she has played her part nobly. Besides adding some four hundred thousand men to the allied armies she has supplied the British forces with munitions to the value of approximately five hundred millions of dollars. She has given a whole-hearted support to every movement whose object was to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded in Europe or of their dependents at home. She has been the great bread-basket of the Empire, supplying from her vast prairies, fertile farmlands and inexhaustible fishing areas immense quantities of food. And it is only by continuing faithfully in such achievements, even at the cost of much inconvenience to her citizens, that Canada will be doing her whole duty in repaying that filial obligation she owes to the motherland.

Even after peace is concluded Canada will find much to do that will be advantageous both to herself and to the "Old Country." To make our Dominion the best and the most prosperous dependency in the world and at the same time to further, as best he can, the interests of Great Britain should be the watchword of every true Canadian. This he can do by faithfully and efficiently performing the daily tasks of life—by growing more and more wheat, by raising more and

more cattle, by mining an ever increasing supply of minerals. Canada can take much of the surplus population of England and settle it on her unoccupied and unbroken farm-lands. By so doing she would be assisting the motherland in the solution of her labor questions and at the same time furthering her own development. By attending to such duties and, above all, by recognizing only clean government, and by keeping their own hearts free from the corruption of luxury or needless poverty, Canadian citizens will be perpetuating that first and very important quality of all honest minds—a true love of country.

Should we not, then, thank God that the spirit of patriotism—so time-honored and sacred—is still alive amongst us? The experience of the great nations of the past teaches us that as soon as this noble passion departs from a people—as soon as private interests are preferred to public ones, just so soon does the downfall of the nation begin. That this may not happen to our British Empire let us, whether “on the battlefield, “in the workshop, on the farm or wherever we may be,” keep always burning on the altar of our hearts the triple flame of love—for God, for Home, for Country.



The time draws near the birth of Christ :
 The moon is hid ;
 The night is still ;
 The Christmas bells from hill to hill
 Answer each other in the mist.

—Tennyson.

Immodest words admit of no defence,
 For want of decency is want of sense.

—Earl of Roscommon.

A wise man thinks before he speaks ; but a fool speaks, and then thinks of what he has been saying.