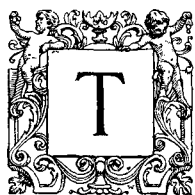


# Patriotism

BY WILLIAM ROSCOE THAYER

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HERE is a belief abroad to-day that many Americans, whose number can only be conjectured, have never thrilled with patriotic emotion, have never said to themselves, proudly and gratefully, "This is my own, my native land!" They feel no dread of forfeiting fair renown because of their lack of patriotism. However they may disguise the fact to themselves, they are the victims of egotism, of a peculiarly mean and depraving egotism. When you hear men say, "The country has no claims upon us," you can be sure that they have either been misled by sophists and by the sly and secret enemies of the country, or that their hearts have become too incrustated with selfishness for any noble impulse to penetrate.

There are, of course, radicals who, in this age of dissolution, hold that patriotism, like religion and like the most sacred family ties, are worn-out ideals, pretty but fatuous survivals of a superstitious stage in human development. They argue, too, that because morals vary in different lands, morality is "a mere question of latitude," and, therefore, that it may be disregarded. They had no part in shaping the laws, religious or social, which have been handed down and still govern public affairs and private conduct; why, then, should they heed them? With these and similar pleas they justify their egotism.

In truth, however, the man or woman who reasons thus is the most pitiable of human beings. Not to feel that you are part of a community is really to be unhuman; for the animals have this feeling by instinct, and in ants and bees it produces results which rival those of the highest type of men. To be shut up in the prison of your own self, without

even a peep-hole through which you can look out upon others or communicate with them; to pass your time in such solitary confinement, unsustained by any fellow feeling, unstirred by any motive except the gratification of selfish desires, is a form of punishment more cruel than any devised by medieval torturers.

In general, persons who announce, often somewhat boastfully, that they have discarded patriotism—as if by so doing they proved their superior intelligence—do not philosophize. They pursue their own ease and comfort. Most of their days, until an emergency comes, they give little thought to the country, which remains an abstraction for them except when it calls on them to pay taxes. They grumble if the local government allows the streets, or the water-supply, or the policing, to run down; but even then they do not take the trouble to go to the polls and vote for a better mayor. If they are in business, they probably regard the national Government as a vast purveyor of benefits, through appropriations or through the tariff, for those citizens who know how to get them. They usually take no more thought of what the country does for them than little children take of the means by which their parents supply them with food and clothes. Children pay back in affection, but the unpatriotic egotists feel neither gratitude nor affection; instead of being thankful for what they have, they complain that it is so little.

Is the alleged decay of American patriotism of recent growth? Since the outbreak of the atrocious war in August, 1914, powerful influences have been at work loosening the spiritual fiber of Americans. Some of these influences were accidental, some sprang from lack of leadership, others from ill-judged and

possibly misconstrued advice, and others from deliberately malign propaganda.

The undermining, thus begun, was carried on from two different directions, both aimed at the same goal. The Prussian propagandists, almost frantically bent on preventing this country not merely from joining the Allies, but even from selling them food and munitions—a perfectly legitimate trade—circulated doubts, falsehoods, misrepresentations, all of which tended to plant in the American mind the assumption that there was no distinction between right and wrong. Such insinuations, accompanied by the suggestion that it was the Allies who made Germany seem harsh to the United States, led to the blurring of the moral sense—the moral sense in which patriotic emotion grows.

Most efficient accomplices of Prussianism were the champions of Pacifism. The minority of the Pacifists consisted of devoted zealots who, like the rest of the world, outside of Germany, regard peace as a final blessing and object of mankind, an object so transcendent that it must be striven for even at the cost of national honor, and of private obligation to family and friends. Since the Witchcraft Delusion over two centuries ago there has been no obsession like Pacifism. This, too, like the belief in witches, renders its victims insensible to moral considerations and impervious to the affections which govern normal men. The majority of Pacifists, less sincere than these fanatics, made Pacifism a screen for their cowardice, for their indifference, and for their greed. "Peace-at-any-price" was their motto, anything to prevent war was their endeavor. Many of them were secretly conniving with the Prussian propagandists, for whom these doctrines summed up the goal of German desires over here.

If you believed the militant Pacifist, he would stand by and do nothing when a ruffian assaulted his wife on the street; and the Pacifist mother would allow a kidnapper to snatch her child from her arms without resisting him. Fortunately fate does not always allow us to be as wicked as the doctrines we profess.

Amid the contradiction of these vari-

ous opinions the ideal of patriotism inevitably suffered. What was the average man, to whom patriotism was as much an innate ideal as was his love for his mother, to think when he heard it either disparaged or left to be obeyed or not according to the preference of each individual? What should he think of a patriotism made to conform with business interests? Whatever he thought, these contradictions perplexed him, and his perplexity cooled his ardor.

Let us examine whether the apparent decline in patriotism during the atrocious war be only a symptom of a long-standing disease. Ordeal by battle is the final test of character, and character is an accumulative product. Could American manliness be sapped in only thirty months? What, we may ask, was the general character of Americans in the years preceding the world-wide conflict?

At the close of the Civil War in 1865 patriotism glowed in all the Northern States; and by degrees the Southerners, who had paid the full measure of devotion to their section, renewed their loyalty to the Union, and nobody dreams that they will ever again organize an armed conspiracy against the national existence. By 1880, however, several causes had come into play which, as it turned out, were seriously to affect American patriotism. The first of these was immigration; foreigners poured into this country in ever-increasing numbers, until the rate of inflow surpassed our powers of assimilation. After a while countries more and more remote in space were combed by the rapacious dealers in labor and by the agents of greedy steamship companies, for those multitudes more and more remote in language, customs, and ideals, which they dumped upon our land. And now the United States has assembled the largest collection of illiterates of different tongues that exists in the world. We have opened a clinic in which superstitions, hereditary feuds, and race differences can be studied. Instead of being transformed into Americans, these immigrants have transplanted to our social soil their own churches and customs, and they retain their own lan-

guages; in other words, they are so thickly coated with their foreignness that they remain insoluble in our American life. And we, be it said to our shame and to our shortsightedness, have hardly made an effort to absorb these millions of potential Americans. Potential? Most of them are already legal Americans, as it requires only two years for them to become naturalized, whereas a native-born American must be twenty-one years old before he is allowed to vote. All this reflects, not upon the immigrants, but upon ourselves who have permitted immigration to pour in in too great volume and have done nothing to Americanize it.

Patriotism can never be based on what a man earns. It lives in the heart, not the purse. I once heard Senator Villari, the Italian historian, say that in traveling beyond the Alps he came upon a gang of Italian laborers at work on the Austrian highroad. Being deeply interested in the problem of emigration, which was then threatening to deprive Italy of her excellent peasants, he talked with the road-makers, and asked them whether they were not homesick for their mother country. "My mother country," one of them replied, "is the country which gives me bread to keep me alive." For the student of patriotism there is deep significance in that reply. It means, among other things, that until a man, forced to go abroad for his sustenance, succeeds in earning a livelihood, he does not trouble himself about patriotism. We have many millions of foreigners in the United States, who came here primarily to seek to better their fortune; their relations with the country are also purely commercial. Their stake in America is measured by their wages. You would not care to avow that your love of your mother, wife, and children had the same monetary source. The immigrants' knowledge of Americans comes chiefly from their dealings with their employers, who may be foreigners like themselves.

Extremes meet. The second cause assigned for the decline in patriotism is the amazing wealth heaped up during the last quarter of a century. We hear it alleged that certain plutocrats, like the immigrant proletarian, measure their pa-

triotic duty by the dollars-and-cents scale; in other words, they care for the country only in so far as it promotes their business interests and affords them conditions under which they can get rich. Why should they take time from business to perform a citizen's duties if, as the cynical allege, they hire more expert lobbyists to see that legislatures and Congress pass laws for their benefit?

But while under this aspect wealth lowers civic standards by corroding the morals of the briber and of the bribed, the numbers involved in such transactions may be small. The deterioration of the large class of rich, however, spreads through that class to all its ramifications. It is as true to-day as when Goldsmith first wrote the lines:

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

Men grow strong through struggle and competition; wealth saps them by providing the means to gratify their appetites without effort. It stimulates selfishness. By killing healthy incentive, it quenches zeal. Spartans were not bred on lotus-eating nor the minute-men trained by luxury. Wealth is proverbially timid. The multimillionaire shrinks from plunging into the unknown ventures which idealists say can alone lead to the bettering of the masses, or to the stamping out of social evils. Why change? the multimillionaire asks; and he knows that the existing system allows him to flourish. So we must regard material prosperity as a cause of the weakening of the civic and ethical vigor which finds its highest expression in patriotism.

We must count as a third reason for the decline the spread of socialism. The socialist would do away with love of country, because he would do away with the country as an exclusive national unit of selfishness, which wars on the other collective units of selfishness. Remove the partition lines, often arbitrary, and you remove the cause of national antagonism, usually illogical and always destructive. The socialist, therefore, is international, and so he consistently discourages patriotism which creates and glorifies national units of selfishness.

William Lloyd Garrison, who was no socialist, summed up this doctrine most seductively in his famous phrase, "My country is the world; my countrymen are mankind." A glittering ideal and one which has replaced that of being "a citizen of the world," which Socrates described himself. But to sympathize with the people of other countries, to wish to treat them with all the honor and justice you would show your neighbors, does not require that you give up your affection, your obligation, and your duty, as a son of *your* mother country.

When the "citizen of the world" was in fashion the person who aimed at being such a "citizen" implied that he was a man whose cultivation and manners fitted him to appear in any society in any country. No local prejudices, no provincial narrowness, no barriers of language or creed, hemmed him in. He had no convictions to be rasped. These "citizens" who shed their worldly wisdom on the eighteenth century were followed by the "cosmopolitans" of the nineteenth century and of to-day—most agreeable companions, especially if they come by their cosmopolitanism naturally instead of adopting it as a pose.

But the socialist and Garrison and the rest, in hoping that by blotting out the limits which inclose nations they can annul national antagonisms and establish an international Utopia, overlook what seem to be permanent conditions in the improvement of mankind.

Probably the propaganda which has steadily grown louder during the past twenty years, "that democracy is a failure," has poisoned some minds, and to that extent it has contributed to the eclipse of patriotism. The worship of efficiency—a crassly materialist cult—has been promoted to the disparagement of the United States, because it has usually been illustrated by a comparison between Germany, the efficient despotism, and the United States, the inefficient democracy. The unspoken but intended moral is that if Americans hope to be efficient they must give up democracy and organize despotism. The Germans are ready, nay eager, to save them the bother of working this change.

With these facts before us, we must recognize that in 1914, before the war

began, influences and conditions which were by no means recent had corroded the patriotic instincts of many Americans, and had predisposed them to listen indulgently to the anti-patriotic appeals of Pacifists and to the moral sedatives of neutralists. Neutrality, too, has been conjured up to persuade slackers and the indifferent that they have no patriotic duties. But it remains eternally true that those who are not with the truth are against it.

In earlier stages patriotism, being a necessity, developed as a matter of course in every one. So long as the tribal stage existed, each member of a tribe must cleave to it for self-preservation. All he was, his fortune in peace or in war, depended upon the prosperity of his tribe, and his devotion to his chief was unquestioning and unreserved. Tribal patriotism flourished not only among the American Indians and the Scottish clans, but among the tiny city-states of antiquity and similar communities elsewhere. The mere fact of being a stranger was equivalent to being an enemy; the customs or laws of a tribe applied only to it; accordingly, persons not of the tribe were outlaws, liable to be enslaved or killed for no other reason than that. So a man stood by his clan and obeyed his chief as a matter of course, requiring no demonstration that duty as well as self-interest admonished him to patriotism.

When the smaller and often isolated state gave way to larger political combinations—to kingdoms and empires—patriotism continued to be the natural ideal of every citizen, and the ruler, who symbolized the state, received the obedience and the loyalty of all. The great empire protected its members just as the small clan had done, and in return they honored and supported and almost worshiped it. They felt a mighty pride in being members of a mighty empire. The best service that monarchs have rendered has been to personify the state; the average human being finds it so hard to burn with zeal for an abstract ideal and so easy to idolize a person! As rulers, the last Stuarts were incompetent and ignoble; as men, immoral—and yet infatuation

for them and their line persisted for nearly a century after they had disappeared.

When constitutional government came and parties managed national affairs, we might expect that devotion to the sovereign would weaken, because his subjects could not fail to note that the leaders in parliament and the dominant political party actually ruled the state. In fact, however, though the prestige of the monarch, for the time being, may have weakened, patriotism has not. In England, for example, love of country never slackened, but the recognition of the obligations which that love creates did grow dim. And that is the case here.

Loyalty, the outward expression of patriotism, has for its reverse, treason, the most detestable crime of which a citizen can be guilty. And justly so, because the person who betrays his country puts its very existence in jeopardy, and is, potentially, a murderer on a vast scale. His baseness has neither parallel nor palliation. The final bond between man and man is mutual trust. The traitor breaks trust not merely with one man, but with all his countrymen and women, and in order to achieve his crime he resorts to deceit. Dante, an infallible appraiser of human wickedness, assigned traitors, as being the most depraved of criminals, to the deepest pit of hell. Type of them all was Judas, who added supreme deceit to his supreme guilt, betraying his Master with a kiss. By the magnitude of the punishment we measure the preciousness of the object betrayed.

In all countries traitors have been accursed. Even monarchs who plot treason against their rivals hate or despise the traitors whom they employ. Benedict Arnold's treason proved to be insignificant, so far as concerned the outcome of the Revolutionary War, but it brought him an immortality of infamy which all his remorse could not wash out, and which will carry his name, odious and loathsome, to the latest posterity. For patriotism is not the sentiment of a few of the overfastidious, but of the great mass of men and women whose instincts are healthy, whose aims are worthy, and whose judgments are

sound. They revolt against treason as against filth.

How could it be otherwise? How could we fail to love our great mother—our country—to whom we owe all that we are? Our country is our larger home, and home, for every creature who is not a slave or a pitiable human derelict, orphaned and outcast, is a sacred abode, unlike any other, not to be exchanged for any other. The Swiss peasant finds home in his bleak chalet, with no comforts, with many deprivations, very scantily provisioned, cut off in winter for weeks it may be from his nearest neighbors; and yet, transplant him to the city, surround him with luxury and repose, spare him from drudging for tomorrow's meager fare, and he will pine of homesickness—pine, and perhaps die. The Arab takes his home with him wherever he pitches his tent; and he, too, would languish were he forced to exchange his nomadic freedom for any dwelling, were it a palace, fixed on immovable foundations. And so of each of us; there is no place like home. The triteness of the maxim confirms its truth.

The outer habitation does not make the home; nor do the furniture, clothes, and food. Home is a complex of whatever has shaped our life—in childhood, the love and discipline of father and mother, the comradeship of brothers and sisters, the intimacy of playmates, and all sounds, sights, impressions, and emotions which we were drawing in unawares from nature and the world outside of us; as we mature, home means wife and children, and the friends at table or by the fireside, the dreams, the labor, the sorrows, joys, and aspirations which are the lot of man. Wooden walls and plaster ceilings are but the shell that holds us while we absorb these experiences, which memory preserves when they are past. Associations almost unobserved in the making bind us forever, having become an indivisible part of ourselves.

Not less noble and scarcely less instinctive should be the love we feel for our larger home, our country.

The claim of patriotism will not be denied. The sophists who would steal away your belief in courage, in honor,



in your duty to your country and land, the perverts who would argue away your devotion and ridicule your ideal of chivalry, are spawned by and do the bidding of Belial, who can make the worse appear the better reason.

Modern assailants of the family suppose that by destroying it they can emancipate the individuals who compose it. In their delirium they conceive that the goal of life is the throwing off of all restraints. Nothing could be more mistaken. Normal restraints, those which build up a man and make him master of himself, are really the means by which he gets his true freedom. A little water in a boiler will generate enough steam to run a locomotive; the same volume on the ground is a puddle, and no more. Discipline is the barrel of the gun, the rudder of the ship. The same law applies to human beings, and such an institution as the family has proved itself indispensable to the highest development of its members. The man who thinks that by casting off its ties he gets a larger freedom deceives himself. At most he exchanges a higher plane for a lower and secures whatever privileges that descent implies. He retreats toward the plane of the beast, out of which it has been man's mission to rise and climb. He accepts the bondage of a more insistent selfishness.

Does not the same happen in the case of those who deny patriotism? Patriotism is not an institution like the family; rather is it an emotion, a passion, the flower of man's communal life. Not to feel it is to be dead indeed! is to suffer a loss which for the citizen is like incapacity to love for the individual.

Destiny works through natural processes by larger and larger groups toward the unification of mankind. From the individual as the central point rounds the first circle—the family. Girdling this the next, with a longer radius, incloses his community, village or town or city. Next, of still wider diameter, his business and professional interests and his religion; finally, the all-embracing circle of his country. The true man does not shut himself up in any of these, but lives in them all, drawing from each of them its particular inspiration. And just as the body devel-

ops its strength by the exercise of its different members, so he rounds out his potential self by exercising his powers in each of the spheres which infold him.

Cosmopolitanism has no such formative purpose. It is like a freshet which overflows fields and meadows, but lacks dynamic usefulness and cumbers the ground until it has evaporated or sunk into the soil. If its waste waters had flowed through the banks of a canal they would not have been lost. Internationalism seems to me similarly ineffectual. If a man cannot love his own country with a vigorous, noble, unselfish love, I suspect the value of his love for twenty or thirty or a hundred foreign countries.

The range of a man's sense of duty measures his level on the moral scale. Now patriotism is a duty just as love of parents or of children is. The wretch who deserts his wife and children or leaves his needy parents to starve, saying that he feels no obligation toward them, can find no one to defend him except another wretch as base as himself. How shall we qualify those who declare, often with bravado or with a tone of superiority, that patriotism does not concern them? What sort of a heart—if he have a heart at all—must his be who repudiates his country, his mother?

The normal child repays affection with affection; the normal man and woman tingle with gratitude and desire to show it to those to whom they owe much. They do not think of it as a duty; they do not dissect their motive or reason over it; they obey it as a high intuition which justifies itself. Likewise, though patriotism be a duty, every right-minded soul regards it as an ideal and rejoices that he can give everything—his life if required—in its service. "He alone is base," says Emerson, "and that is the one base thing in the universe, to receive benefits and confer none." "Dear God," exclaimed the French peasant mother, on learning that her last son—the fifth—had been killed at Verdun, "I wish that I had five more to sacrifice for France!"

Do you, whoever you are, refuse to recognize your patriotic duty—to this, your mother country? You have received from her everything—your par-

ents, your home, your associations, your opportunity, your fortune, your ideals; have you nothing to pay back? Is your heart dead, unstirred by the feeblest throb of affection? Is your conscience dead, beyond the faintest whisper of duty? Bereft of heart and of conscience, do you still call yourself a man? Who enabled you to dwell in this Republic? Was it not George Washington and his associates, who created the Republic regardless of cost or sacrifice? If Washington were alive now and gave you an estate of priceless value, would you not thank him? Would you not strive to keep it safe? He has given you this Republic to guard and love—for he still lives, both in his gift and in his imperishable influence. Who preserved the Republic for you? Was it not Abraham Lincoln? If he stood beside you now, would not shame stop your lips from saying, "I do not believe in patriotism which calls on me to risk my life in battle"? Could you bear to look in his face, to see his expression of amazement that any one born an American should deny his mother? And beside him, risen from his martyr's grave, would rise up the four hundred thousand slain in that war, for whom? For *you*.

Like all other forms of devotion, patriotism is not merely a fine sentiment nor a noble wish, but it manifests itself in service—in service that neither doubts, nor counts the cost, nor asks recognition. In peace or in war the patriot serves his country joyfully, because it is the natural thing to do.

Life is not worth living unless your country is founded on principles worth dying for. The estate which every American inherits he holds in trust. On him it depends whether his share in the Republic shall be handed on unsullied to his descendants—and not only unsullied, but increased and strengthened as is necessary—or whether, shorn and corrupted and shrunken through his unworthiness, it shall bear the seeds of decay for the entire fabric. Lack of imagination alone causes us not to see our obligation toward posterity. If we did see it, the sense of our responsibility to the future joined with that to the present would overwhelm us. "All men on whom the higher nature has

stamped the love of truth," says Dante, "should especially concern themselves in laboring for posterity, in order that future generations may be enriched by their efforts, as they themselves were made rich by the efforts of generations past."

"The sense of obligation!" Is not that the most widespread and pressing need of this age? Selfishness, egotism, has brought us to the pass where we turn our back on every duty which tries us, on everything annoying, unpleasant, dull. "I don't care to hear accounts of the sufferings of the wounded. They disturb my peace of mind; they don't concern me, anyway," said one of these egotists who was asked to subscribe to the American Ambulance Fund. But the final and unapproached example of this egotism was given by Germany, when she declared that the most solemn treaty which a nation can enter into was only "a scrap of paper."

The patriotic obligation which every native-born American should acknowledge ought to bind even more tightly the alien who has become naturalized as an American. The native, we may say, had no part in determining what country he should be born in, whereas the foreigner, having found his native land unsatisfactory, and having looked over the world, chooses to plant himself in the United States, as a country which best satisfies his ideals, and offers most to his material needs and desires. As the choice is his, so is he doubly bound to be loyal to the land of his adoption.

Let whoever lacks patriotism be warned that, though he knows it not, he is a slave to selfishness. He may hope to evade his duty by pleading prudence, or lack of conviction, or his disbelief in war, or any other excuse; but he is refuted by the actions of patriots in every country and in every time—actions which shine as stars to guide and inspire mankind forever. Peace-at-any-price is constructive treason. Cowardice can no more do the work of courage than putty that of steel.

As we are all parts of a larger group, so must we set the welfare of that group, be it village or city, above our own. Each of us is a twig on a many-branched tree, but the twig dies if it

be cut off from the tree. On every tree there are dead branches into which the sap, which feeds the rest, has ceased to flow. Do not mistake the rustling of the dead leaves on those branches for whispers of life-bringing messengers. Least of all mistake for true prophets those seducers who urge you to set comfort above honor, cowardice above valor, visions of an imaginary Utopia above love of your actual country. Life is a commodity allotted to every creature—to snail and snake, to tiger and hawk,

and to all the myriad sorts of men. It is the stuff out of which each weaves his particular fabric—the wicked his iniquity, the wretch his baseness, the good his benefits, the noble-minded his heroism. Therefore was it said two thousand and more years ago that “not merely to live, but to live nobly” should be the end of man. And therefore did our supreme American seer sing in a crisis like the present:

“’Tis man’s perdition to be safe  
When for the truth he ought to die.”

## A Personal Desire

BY ELLEN M. H. GATES

FOR Light and Air and Space I ask,  
And paths that upward climb;  
And heart and hand to do my task,  
And Silence, half the time.

The Light and Air and Space I crave,  
And news of deeds sublime;  
And winds to fan me, though they rave,  
And Silence, half the time.

Light, Air, and Space, and sun and stars,  
And moons that reach their prime;  
And thunder-storm, and rainbow-bars,  
And Silence, half the time.

Light, Air, and Space, and swift pursuit  
Of echoes, ringing chime on chime;  
Then old, and blind, and absolute,  
Gray Silence, half the time.

Light, Air, and Space, and tear and scar,  
And friends of many a clime;  
And broken sword and simitar,  
And Silence, half the time.

Then Light and Air and Space again,  
And end of rust and grime;  
And Music, making love to men,  
And Silence, half the time.

Light, Air, and Space, and fire and ice,  
And windows white with rime;  
And Saints that sing of Paradise,  
And Silence, half the time.

Light, Air, and Space, and Faith and Love,  
And Time’s last peak to climb;  
And then, in world all worlds above,  
Great Silence, half the time.