

**LOVE OF COUNTRY, A
LECTURE
DELIVERED AT THE
WOOLWICH INSTITUTION**

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Love of country, a lecture delivered at the woolwich institution by Henry Mead

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HENRY MEAD

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BY

HENRY MEAD, 44

AUTHOR OF "FREEDOM, THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE, AND OTHER POEMS,"

"THE MORAL PHILOSOPHY OF SHAKESPEARE." &c.

"Breathes here a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land !
SCOTT.



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LOVE OF COUNTRY.

“Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own my native land !
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd,
From wandering on a foreign strand !
If such there breathe, go, mark him well ;
For him no minstrel raptures swell ;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth, as wish can claim ;
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentrated all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonour'd and unsung.”

SCOTT.

AMID the infinite variety of subjects which attract the attention of the student of humanity, there are none so pleasing as the study of the finer emotions of the soul. It is curious and instructive in the highest degree, to watch the process by which a feeling is converted into a passion, or by which a sentiment originally pure and holy, becomes tainted and corrupt under the influence of a baneful atmosphere. True it is, that somewhat of pain may occasionally disturb the harmony of our meditations,

but he who would become versed in the mysteries of the human heart, will be often called upon to purchase knowledge at the price of happiness, and taught to feel that wisdom and melancholy are nearly allied. As he proceeds in his task it will however be good for him to reflect, that the heart he is dissecting is the heart of a brother, and that in portraying the soul of his fellow-man, he is, though haply unconsciously, shadowing forth his own.

Philosophers early discovered that there existed, and ever had existed in the human mind, certain principles or motives to action ; which, however modified by time or education, always present the same leading characteristics, and of these the principal and most important is the Love of Country. It is the same in every climate under the sun — prompting alike the savage and the sage. It warms the Laplander among his frozen waste, and tempers the heat of the tropics — it is to the moral what gravitation is to the material world — the power which keeps all things in their appointed stations. Without the aid of its beneficent influence, the world would be one vast charnel-house. The possession of a greater degree of sun or shade, would bring mankind into perpetual, and wasting conflicts, until the human race would become extinct, and the fowl and the brute again remain sole monarchs of the mighty solitude. But Providence in its wisdom orders all things aright. By a happy provision all are content with the land of their birth — all deem themselves the possessors of some good peculiarly their own, and which more than counterbalances aught that is enjoyed by their neighbours. Well has the poet said :

“ But where to find the happiest spot below,
Who shall direct when all pretend to know ;
The shuddering tenant of the frigid zone,
Boldly proclaims that happiest spot his own ;

Re counts the treasures of his stormy seas,
And his long nights of revelry and ease ;
The naked negro panting at the Line
Boasts of his golden sands, and palmy wine ;
Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,
And thanks his gods for all the good they gave ;
This is the patriot's boast where'er he roam,
His first, best, country ever is at home."

But the Love of Country is not only an universal, but also an indestructible feeling. Who is there that having passed but a brief moiety of the space allotted to man, has not mourned over the instability of earthly hopes, and earthly enjoyments? Fame, wealth, love, all forms of joy and gladness, are but as passing shows; chance may destroy them—death inevitably will—but our country endureth for ever. It is the same in our youth, as in our old age: we tread the same soil, we feel the same sun that warmed the hearts and nourished the frames of our earliest ancestors, that will continue to delight and cherish our children, when we are mingled with the elements. Tired of wandering, the traveller returns to the home of his fathers—he goes forth to revisit the haunts of his childhood, and, but that his shadow is lengthened, and the visions of fancy are exchanged for the recollections of memory, he might dream that Time had rolled back its iron car, and he was again the happy child, who loved to lie at his length on the grass, and dream that life was as cloudless as the summer sky above it. He looks around, and all seems to justify the thought; the sunbeams still search the valley as they were wont to do in the days of old; the brook still ripples forth its wonted melody; the bee goes murmuring by to practise its sweet alchemy; and the flowers—they seem to bloom upon the very stems from which he plucked them long years ago, when he thought their fairy

forms were the most beautiful in nature. Such is the tale of human feelings—so rolls the tide of human enjoyments. Whilst the river rushes to the ocean, and the winds to their appointed resting place—whilst the wild bird seeks the cloud, and the fox its den—whilst a stone remains on the hills, or a flower in the vallies,—our affections still cling to our native land: one generation cometh, and another passeth away, but our country endureth for ever.

Genius is essentially patriotic, and were it not so, we should deem the existence of patriotism a fable; for what is genius but an exalted sympathy with all that is great and noble! In the beautiful mythology of the ancients—that noble monument of the unilluminated wisdom of the heathen—the benefactors of their country ranked next to the gods in human estimation. For them the poet tasked his loftiest energies; for their honor the painter, and the masters who wrought in stone, stamped on the breathing statue, or the glowing canvas, the impress of a beauty which nature never bestowed on her most favored children. All things were eloquent in their praise:—

“ They fell devoted, but undying;
The very gale their names seem'd sighing;
The waters murmured of their name,
The woods were peopled with their fame;
The silent pillar, lone and grey,
Claim'd kindred with their sacred clay;
Their spirits wrapt the dusky mountain;
Their memory sparkled o'er the fountain;
The meanest rill, the mightiest river,
Roll'd mingling with their fame for ever.”

The great secret of ancient superiority lay in the unity of purpose, the brotherly association of all ranks and orders of genius. All were devoted to the attainment of

one common good, all co-operated in its accomplishment, all participated equally in its advantages. The poet shared the immortality which he gave; Achilles and Homer—Homer and Achilles—so runs the tide of classic recollections. Not a vestige of their existence remains on the earth, yet their histories are familiar to us as household words:—

“ Not a stone o’er their turf, not a bone in their graves,
But they live in the verse that immortally saves.”

Of the patriotism of genius, our own glorious Shakespeare, the mightiest of the mighty, affords a beautiful example. In a hundred passages he has forcibly displayed the patriotism of his nature. It is as if the bard had looked upon futurity with a prophet’s eye, foreseeing the time, when Englishmen would feel an additional inducement to the love of their country, as they reflected that it was the land of Shakespeare, and that millions of souls yet unborn would live to hail him as the greatest human benefactor of his race. As we listen to the music of his thoughts, we fancy that it is a mother caressing her favorite child. It is as if he could wear his own dear England beneath his vest, next unto his heart, for fear the winds of heaven should visit it too roughly. He calls it

“ This royal throne of kings! this sceptre’d isle!
This earth of majesty! this seat of Mars,
This other Eden! demi-paradise!
This fortress built by nature for herself,
Against infection and the hand of war!
This happy breed of men! this little world!
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands!