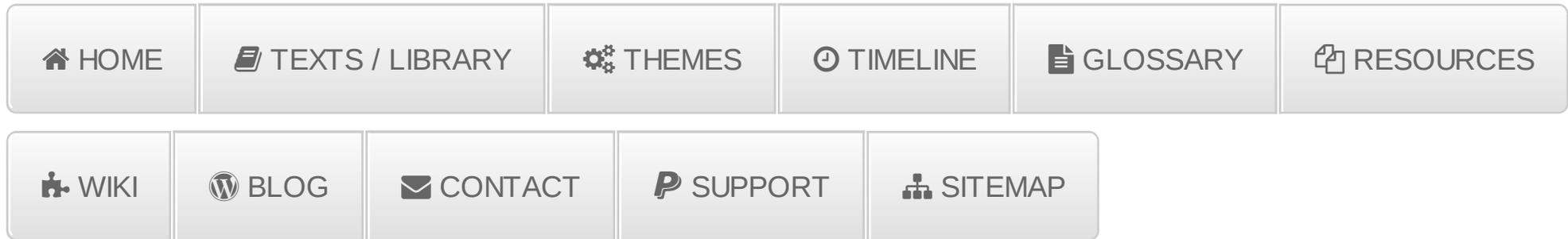


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Patriotism | Patriae Encomium

SOURCE:

This is a kind of public exercise, probably spoken by Lucian himself, or written by him for one of his pupils, when he appeared in the character of an orator or rhetorician.

- Based on Francklin

1

IT is a truism with no pretensions to novelty that there is nothing sweeter than one's country. Does that imply that, though there is nothing pleasanter, there may be something grander or more divine? Why, of all that men reckon grand and divine their country is the source and teacher, originating, developing, inculcating. For great and brilliant and splendidly equipped cities many men have admiration, but for their own all men have love. No man--not the most enthusiastic sightseer that ever was--is so dazzled by foreign wonders as to forget his own land.

2

He who boasts that he is a citizen of no mean city misses, it seems to me, the true patriotism; he suggests that it would be a mortification to him to belong to a State less distinguished. It is country in the abstract that I delight rather to honour. It is well enough when you are comparing States to

investigate the questions of size or beauty or markets; but when it is a matter of choosing a country, no one would exchange his own for one more glorious; he may wish that his own resembled those more highly blest, but he will choose it, defects and all.

3

It is the same with loyal sons, or good fathers. A young man who has the right stuff in him will honour no man above his father; nor will a father set his affections on some other young man to the neglect of his son. On the contrary, fathers are so convinced of their children's being better than they really are, that they reckon them the handsomest, the tallest, the most accomplished of their generation. Any one who does not judge his offspring thus I cannot allow to have the father's eye.

4

The fatherland! it is the first and the nearest of all names. It is true there is nothing nearer than a father; but a man who duly honours his father, according to the dictates of law and nature, will yet be right to honour his fatherland in still higher degree; for that father himself belongs to the fatherland; so does his father's father, and all his house back and back, till the line ends with the Gods our fathers.

5

The Gods too love the lands of their nativity; though they may be supposed to concern themselves with human affairs in general, claiming the whole of earth and sea as theirs, yet each of them honours above all other lands the one that gave him birth. That State is more majestic which a God calls his country, that isle has an added sanctity in which poesy affirms that one was born. Those are acceptable offerings, which a man has come to their respective homes to make. And if Gods are patriotic, shall not men be more so?

6

For it was from his own country that every man looked his first upon the Sun; that God, though he be common to all men, yet each reckons among his country Gods, because in that country he was revealed to him. There speech came to him, the speech that belonged to that soil, and there he got knowledge of the Gods. If his country be such that to attain true culture he must seek another, yet even for that culture let him thank his country; the word State he could never have known, had not his country shown him that States existed.

7

And surely men gather culture and learning, that they may thereby render themselves more serviceable to their country; they amass wealth that they may outdo their neighbours in devoting it to their country's good. And 'tis no more than reason; it is not for those who have received the greatest of all benefits to prove thankless; if we are grateful, as we doubtless should be, to the

individual benefactor, much more ought we to give our country her due; against neglect of parents the various States have laws; we should account our country the common mother of us all, and recompense her who bred us, and taught us that there were laws.

8

The man was never known who so forgot his country as to be indifferent to it when established in another State. All who fare ill abroad are perpetually thinking how country is the best of all good things; and those who fare well, whatever their general prosperity, are ever conscious of the one thing lacking: they do not live at home, but are exiles; and exile is a reproach. Those again whose sojourn has brought them distinction by way of garnered wealth or honourable fame, acknowledged culture or approved courage, all of them, you will find, yearn for their native land, where are the spectators of their triumphs that they would most desire. A man's longing for home is indeed in direct proportion to his credit abroad.

9

Even the young have the patriotic sentiment; but in the old it is as much more keen as their sense is greater. Every old man directs his efforts and his prayers to ending his life in his own land; where he began to live, there would he lay his bones, in the soil that formed him, and join his fathers in the grave. It is a dread fate to be condemned to exile even in death, and lie in alien earth.

10

But if you would know the true man's feeling for his country, it is in the born citizen that you must study it. The merely naturalized are a sort of bastards ever ready for another change; they know not nor love the name of country, but think they may find what they need in one place as well as another; their standard of happiness is the pleasures of the belly. Those whose country is their true mother love the land whereon they were born and bred, though it be narrow and rough and poor of soil. If they cannot vaunt the goodness of the land, they are still at no loss for praises of their country; if they see others making much of bounteous plains and meadows variegated with all plants that grow, they too can call up their country's praise; another may breed good horses; what matter? theirs breeds good men.

11

A man is fain to be at home, though the home be but an islet; though he might have fortune among strangers, he will not take immortality there; to be buried in his own land is better. Brighter to him the smoke of home than the fire of other lands.

12

In such honour everywhere is the name of country that you will find legislators all the world over punishing the worst offences with exile, as the heaviest penalty at their command. And it is just the

same with generals on service. When the men are taking their places for battle, no such encouragement as to tell them they are fighting for their country. No one will disgrace himself after that if he can help it; the name of country turns even a coward into a brave man.

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