

Nation

Charlotte Perkins Gilman

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THE nation is the unit. That which makes
You an American of our Today,
Requires this nation and its history,
Requires the sum of all our citizens,
Requires the product of our common toil,
Requires the freedom of our common laws,
The common heart of our humanity.

Decrease our population, check our growth,
Deprive us of our wealth, our liberty,
Lower the nation's conscience by a hair,
And you are less than that you were before!
You stand here in the world the man you are,
Because your country is America!

Our liberty belongs to each of us:
The nation guarantees it; in return
We serve the nation, serving so ourselves.
Our education is a common right;
The state provides it, equally to all,
Each taking what he can; and in return
We serve the state, so serving best ourselves.
Food, clothing, all necessities of life —
These are a right as much as liberty!
The nation feeds its children. In return
We serve the nation, serving still ourselves.
Nay, not ourselves — ourself! We are but parts.
The unit is the state — America!