Letters to the Editor

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NOTES ON POINTS IN SOME OF THIS WEEK'S LETTERS APPEAR ON P. 836.

CORRESPONDENTS ARE INVITED TO ATTACH SIMILAR SUMMARIES TO THEIR COMMUNICATIONS.

AN ETHICAL DECLARATION FOR THE TIMES

IN the last few years several of the most enlightened communities of Europe have been dispersed, and the principles of justice and tolerance openly challenged. More than this, the conception of the objective truth which is the basis of science and of all human progress is being steadily undermined. European civilization has had profound failings, but we must either devote our energies to maintaining and developing what is good in it or accept a collapse into a barbarism of violence and intolerance. The greatest danger to-day lies in the complacent illusion — seen so often in history and now prevalent in the more fortunate countries — that civilized traditions are an inalienable legacy which can be enjoyed indefinitely by generations which are no longer ready to make sacrifices for them.

It is my belief that men in all countries who do not wish to betray the tradition they have inherited must now discard false modesty and announce clearly for what they stand. We do not deserve and we shall not long retain the fruits of a civilization to which we do not declare and prove our active loyalty. More than two thousand years ago the Hippocratic Oath was used to promote amongst practitioners of the art of medicine certain standards appropriate to their task. It is suggested that a

Declaration such as that here reproduced should be offered to-day by cultural, educational, and technical institutions throughout the world to their members. The advance of intolerance and of the lie can only be reversed by awakening a militant loyalty to the principles of a world civilization, and this loyalty

must be focused in special symbols and instruments.

Though the Declaration is designed on the broadest human basis to appeal to all who understand what civilization means, it is appropriate that it should appear first in NATURE. Science is to-day the only non-partisan and universal authority, and its principles are at stake. If the Declaration is timely it may either serve as the stimulus to a special declaration of scientific faith by the scientific organizations in all countries, or spread from this background to wider circles.

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DECLARATION

I AM the inheritor of the tradition of civilization which has proved more lasting than empires. Whenever I use the language or the products of science I unconsciously pay homage to the countless men for whom no sacrifice was too great in the struggle to develop the human mind and establish the truth. Toleration and freedom are the heart of this tradition; for individual thought and love of truth are the basis not only of science, but also of justice and of civilization.

I DECLARE my loyalty to this tradition, my belief in the freedom of the individual to develop his talents for the enrichment of the community, and my conviction that man's community is now the whole human race, within which each nation must play its characteristic part. The natural balance between personal freedom and the proper demands of society, which is the life and health of civilization, is to-day doubly threatened: in certain societies by the denial of freedom and in the democratic countries by the irresponsibility of individuals. In the face of this threat:

I PLEDGE myself to use every opportunity for action to uphold the great tradition of civilization, to protect all those who may suffer for its sake, and to pass it on to the coming generations. I recognize no loyalty greater than that to the task of preserving truth, toleration, and justice in the coming world order.

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