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EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK REGISTERED NURSE.

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EDITORIAL.

"NO PEACE WITHOUT FREEDOM."

In a letter received from the States last year from a leader—if not the greatest leader the American nursing world has ever had, she wrote, "I just love your Anthony Eden," and she will love him all the more when his speech given recently in London as the guest of honour of the Royal Society of St. George, comes to her notice.

Proposing the toast "England," Mr. Anthony Eden said that England had sought to bequeath to succeeding centuries not her armies, fleets, and aeroplanes, not her victories on land or sea or in the air, not even her commercial experience or her industrial skill, but the art of self-government by a free people.

The ideal towards which the English people had been subconsciously groping or actively striving through the centuries of their history was their conception that, while a well-ordered State must seek the greatest good of the greatest number, it protected the rights and liberties of majority and minority alike; it must guarantee to the humblest of its citizens as to the greatest full individual liberty and undoubted equality before the law. So long as an Englishman obeyed his country's laws, it was the duty of government to ensure for him freedom to think, freedom to worship, freedom to speak, freedom to act as he would.

They were right to set such store by this heritage of freedom, for unless men were free how could they work together on equal terms and with mutual understanding? Could anyone doubt that the universal realisation of freedom would be a great step towards the establishment of permanent peace? If men were free—truly free in all nations—could think, speak, communicate as they would with each other across the frontiers, no better antidote could be provided to methods of propaganda which were a present danger to peace. Conversely, the more freedom was repressed, the wider the area where its true practice was unknown, the greater the temptation to the abuse of power, and the graver the risks of conflict. For us, freedom was a condition of national life, for the world it was a condition of true international understanding. There could be no lasting peace without freedom.

That night they saw England as a land where the conception of ordered freedom and constitutional government should prevail; a land which sought by example of its sons to inspire others with its own belief in toleration, liberty, and peace; a land which sought to adapt and not to destroy; a land whose people, even in face of the strident challenge of the modern world, would not lose heart.

It is utterly futile, Mr. Eden continued, to imagine

that we are involved in a European crisis that may pass as it has come. We are involved in a crisis of humanity all the world over. We are living in one of those great periods of history which are awe-inspiring in their responsibilities and in their consequences. Stupendous forces are loose, hurricane forces. Democracy is the most difficult to practise of all forms of government. It is in many respects easier to allow others to do our thinking for us than to work out for ourselves our individual duty as citizens and do it. A democratic State depends for its successful working upon the corporate effort of all its citizens. Once let it deviate from the narrow path too far either to the left or to the right, and democracy degenerates rapidly into licence on the one hand or repressive restrictions upon liberty on the other, either of which inevitably leads to tyranny. And then democracy is doomed. Therefore, to keep our democratic faith and practice intact in face of the forces now loose in the world calls for a remarkable combination of wisdom, courage, and restraint of prudent leadership and sustained national effort.

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We know that England stands to-day for freedom, for toleration, and for justice; but it is not enough to say that. For our faith in the future of mankind we should be prepared to make every contribution in our power.

"England would wish, I believe, to see prevail throughout the world those conditions which she has tried and is trying to create in her own land, an equal opportunity for all to develop to the full their own individuality without let or hindrance.

"We have found that one essential condition of such progress is the rule of law. This being so what must be our aim? We must first wish to see the rule of law between nations acknowledged. We must wish this because it is a condition of civilised life between countries. We must, therefore, also wish justice to be done by just means. This must make us readily accept, as trustees of a great part of the earth's surface, the duties of trusteeship, the need of understanding, of toleration, and of generosity. The England of to-day stands for something positive, the creation at last of a comity of nations in which each can develop and flourish and give to their uttermost their own special contribution to the diversity of life."

Had Mr. Eden addressed his inspiring words specially to the nursing community in England, in the present unworthy struggle to suppress free thought and action in its ranks, and thus establish an intolerable autocracy, surely every word spoken by him would have gone straight to its goal.

Let us take heed lest worse befall us.

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