



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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Tribute to France, 1918.

18-9 1918

" A TRIBUTE TO FRANCE "

It is with a sense of deepest gratification that we welcome into our midst this morning an emissary of France, a brave son of our gallant ally.

We, of this land, who knew France, love her. They, who knew not France, in the past spoke contemptuously of her. They, who but skimmed over the surface of French life and never plumbed its depth, spoke dogmatically about a dying France, a France filled with social leeches and foam, a France effervescing, mercurial, lacking the great vitality for mighty and sustained effort. They, who knew not France, spoke of a dying France whose glory was a memory, whose future was oblivion. They, who knew not France, spoke as fools speak, but we, who knew France, love her for what she is and was. We knew the brave and beautiful France. We knew the hardihood of her peasantry. We knew her toilers, stout of heart and clear of vision. We knew her poets and her dreamers, rightful heirs of ancient Hellas - they, who continued the glorious traditions of Greece - they, who wove, with fingers of infinite love and tenderness, the grand tapestry of civilization.

We, who love France, knew also the divinity of her womanhood, the secret of her charmed life. We, who knew France, knew her for what she really is -- the Knight Errant of Civilization, the Apostle of Liberty, the Herald of the Morning. We, who love France, knew her holy passion for righteousness and her readiness to justify her faith by her blood.

We, who love France, knew that when France spoke the world listened, when France struck the world trembled. The Torch of France -- how often has it set the world afire.

Some nations think and some nations feel. A thinking nation may be selfish, cruel, and sometimes and frequently very happy. But a nation that feels deeply, keenly, a nation that is sensitive to the deep pathos and sorrow of life, a nation that responds to the appeal of a tortured humanity,

a nation such as France --- a feeling nation, is kind and loving and humble and often, all too often, is sad. We love her for her kindness and her patience - yes, and for her sadness. And, at this hour of her supreme destiny, we are giving evidence of our love for beautiful France. O how much of her immortal spirit has become the precious heritage of America. Her spirit - the spirit of her thinkers and dreamers, spoke thru the lips, guided the thoughts and fashioned the convictions of those mighty men who founded this republic.

Her generous help to our struggling soldiers, in the hour of direst need, hastened the ultimate triumph of the revolutionary forces.

The spirit of France is written large in the sacred documents of America. In the very wonderful dawn of our history we stood side by side, France and America, and today we are again standing shoulder to shoulder, fighting the good fight for God and for humanity. And the bond of our union is being forged closer and closer every day and the unity is being sealed and sanctified in death.

Before very long many of our brave boys will have found their last resting place in beautiful France. Before very long many a tear-dimmed eye will turn from these, our shores, to the shores of beautiful France seeking the graves of brave American lads. "Truly, the beloved and the sweet, in death as in life, they were not parted."

We, who love France, have faith in her. They speak of France being bled white. France will never be "bled white". For every stream of life-giving blood which France gives generously unto the world, a river of divine strength, of living inspiration, is returned unto her. Unto France has been vouchsafed the gift of immortality.

Some nations are crushed and broken by suffering but France, beautiful France, is transfigured by suffering. No feature of her life is so wonderful as that miracle of recuperation, that phenomenon of rapid recovery which is so characteristic of France. The Phoenix, rising from its ashes, is really France rising, young and beautiful, from the ashes of her self-immolation

upon the altar of humanity. And so, as American, we salute France,----also as Jews. It was France, brave, beautiful France, that first emancipated my people. It was France that first struck the shackles from off the hands of my people. Our brave boys are, at this hour, giving evidence of their eternal gratitude for that, and, from the heart of Israel, a prayer ascends on high at this hour of destiny, that France, Herald of the Morning, Apostle of Liberty, the Spokesman of Civilization, may come out of this, her greatest trial, transfigured as of yore, strengthened in her nobility, purified because of her suffering, exalted because of her sacrifices, resplendent in her trials.

Brave, beautiful France!

It is with a sense of infinite gratification indeed, that we welcome to our midst an emissary of France, a brave son of our gallant Ally, - Captain Marcel Knecht.

