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## Tribute of American Bar

William L. Ransom

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## TRIBUTE OF AMERICAN BAR

WILLIAM L. RANSOM†

AT a time when America and the world are taking stock of the assets of Christian civilization and are making re-appraisal of the spiritual and social forces which enter into the individual life, there may be far-reaching significance in the moving exercises which took place in the little town of Tréguier, in quaint Brittany, France, on May 19, 1936. This was the traditional "Grand Pardon" and fête day of St. Ives—lawyer, priest, and saint—an affair always well attended; but this year the day was distinguished by the dedicatory ceremonies, ecclesiastical and lay, for the memorial window which had been installed in the cathedral at Tréguier, as the gift and testimonial of American lawyers to the patron saint of their profession. I count it as a great privilege that the culmination of this worthy project, and the installation and the presentation and dedication of this memorial, took place during the year in which I was President of the American Bar Association.

An assemblage estimated as high as 40,000 people gathered, from all parts of France, for this occasion. Regardless of whether they came for the special ceremonies or for the traditional privileges of the Pardon and fête, their presence was tribute to the life and services of a lawyer who never held high office, never addressed multitudes by radio, never asserted personal leadership, never marshalled any admiring throng in the advocacy of a controversial cause, never identified himself with high forensic art or with ambitious adaptations of the eternal law of individual rights to the supposed will of majorities. Numbers in attendance in a public assemblage may ordinarily have little or no lasting significance, even when their gathering is voluntary and spontaneous; but we may gain a standard of comparison, if we try to imagine an assemblage of 40,000 men and women being brought together, anywhere in the United States, in memory of any other lawyer, long since dead. If we search out the spiritual causes of the continued adoration of the life and character of St. Ives, the disclosed reasons may be of benefit to the members of the profession of law, in their contemporary self-analysis and re-examination of what they can do to serve.

It is not within the province of this foreword to set forth any narration

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of the impressive ceremonials at Tréguier. As Mr. Donald Harper of Paris, member of the Committee of American lawyers, wrote to me, "the picturesque costumes of the inhabitants, the gorgeous robes of the clergy, the French lawyers in their robes, added much to the colorful pageantry." A most appropriate and moving surprise was the incident when, at the end of the characteristically formal banquet which signaled the day, twelve American seminarists, who are finishing their studies at the Grand Seminary at St. Brieuc, thrilled those present with the singing of "The Star Spangled Banner." And then when M. LeBellac, the eloquent Vicar General, concluded his panegyric to the sainted Ives Heloury, lawyer, priest and judge, in the course of the pontifical vespers, the French daily newspaper *L'Ouest-Eclair* fittingly said:

"The shining figure of the humble rector of the little parishes of Louanne and Tredrez, takes on at once, in the eyes of the pilgrims, the mystical character which is proper for it: ascetic, miracle-worker, hero of charity, St. Ives is all that at the same time."

It is trite to say that in bestowing this timely and appropriate memorial to St. Ives, American lawyers have honored their patron saint not so much as themselves. The occasion should lead each of us to think, as to our ideals for ourselves and for our profession. No socialized concept of life or human relationships has yet been established, which could destroy or impair the everlasting truth, exemplified by St. Ives, that justice and fair dealing and consideration for the unfortunate and the oppressed are individual and personal. St. Ives sought no socialized justice, and needed no militancy of majorities. So long as poor or rich are anywhere denied justice, so long as the arbitrary use of power by government or in private hands leaves men and women with a rankling sense of wrong, so long as defects in the law or its administration close the door of hope and crush "the good and the true and the beautiful in human lives," there is work for lawyers to do.

I could not now state the matter better, for this foreword, than I did in the letter which, as President of the American Bar Association, I sent to the Honorable Pendleton Beckley, of Paris, Chairman of the American Committee, and which was placed in the front of the memorial book left in the cathedral at Tréguier:

"In paying respect to the memory of St. Ives, we make obeisance to our noblest concept of our profession—the ideal that remains aspiration, the hope that is held in the heart but never realized, the vision of what our profession might be but rarely is. St. Ives was and will remain the patron saint of the lawyers, not alone of France and the United States, but of all lands, religions and races, everywhere. His was the universal sense of justice and law and peace—no considerations of geography and no boundaries laid by men could encompass such a soul. Like One who was the noblest and purest of men, he 'went about doing good.'

"Profound in his learning, disciplined in his habits, magnanimous in his devotion to the Christ he served and to the law he exemplified, he spent his life in the cause of justice and fair dealing among the common people—assisting without recompense the widows, the orphans, the poor, all who had the greatest need of such a ministry of justice.

"In a later day and a more complex civilization, the profession of the law seems often to have strayed far from the noble example of its patron saint. The concepts of individual justice and fair play between man and man, so finely exemplified in the life of St. Ives, have given way to impersonal and often brutal practices which punish and crush many people, in the name of a 'social justice' which too often is organized greed. But in the silence of the Cathedral in Brittany, we may reverently give homage to our patron, in whose path we have so poorly followed.

"We of the American Bar are happy to have installed this memorial window, in perpetual tribute to his name and fame, and with the hope also that such a token will serve the even greater cause of peace and justice among the Nations—the abandonment of force and arbitrary will, in favor of the humane ascendancy of peace and justice according to the impartial arbitrament of law. Between Nations, no more than between men, there are and can be no controversies or conflicts of interest that are in fact beyond the possibility of determination through the ministry of an impartial and law-governed Court. To the supremacy of international adjudication backed by the decent opinion of mankind, the lawyers of all the Nations might well dedicate themselves anew, as an act of fealty to the genius of their patron saint and to the spirit of all law."

This foreword may appropriately be closed with a quotation from Mr. Beckley's moving words of presentation:

"In presenting this window as a memorial to St. Ives we wish to render homage to a man who represented the ideals of our profession, who devoted all his energies to the service of justice and right, and who thus merits the distinction of being the patron of lawyers throughout the world.

"His life, so humble and austere, and above all his passionate defense of the downtrodden, have made him famous in every country, and it is not without justice that he is called 'the lawyer of the poor.' Today we have wished to show that he is, in our minds, the ideal of the man of law in relation to those he judges and those he defends."

Truly there is hope and cheer for the preserving of religion and civilization, so long as the ideals and the example of St. Ives are deeply cherished in the hearts of so many people in modern states.

## A MESSAGE OF THANKS FROM TREGUIER

REV. LOUIS LAINÉ†

YOU have asked me to tender a brief message to the Bar of the United States and to express my sentiments upon the gift of the (St. Ives) Memorial Window presented to the Cathedral of Tréguier. How could I decline such a duty? On the contrary I am eager to fulfill it with all the outbursts of my soul filled with admiration and gratitude.

What a magnificent gesture the American lawyers have made in generously consenting to give expression to their devotion to Saint Ives by the offering of a very beautiful window which shows the Saint performing his office of judge, and which bears the escutcheon of the United States. That act, which is enduring, has immediately given proof of its power and fecundity, for on the very day of the unveiling of the memorial window and of the Feast Day of Saint Ives, the glorious 19th day of May, 1936, Monsieur Thomas Braun, "*bâtonnier*" of the Order of Lawyers of Belgium, who was in attendance at Tréguier, announced that he wanted to obtain for his country and for his Order the great honor the American lawyers have acquired by their gesture and by their gift; and on the 19th of May, 1937, the lawyers of Belgium will repeat the act which the lawyers of the United States have had the glory first to accomplish: they will come in great numbers to offer another memorial window to their patron Saint Ives, and certainly the Belgian lawyers will invite to that celebration the lawyers of the United States.

So it comes to pass that Saint Ives receives adoration and international homage, and through that devotion, the great fraternity of the lawyers throughout the world increases its power, strengthens its unity and thus gives to Justice and to Law an unshakable rampart.

Let thanks be always rendered to the American Bar for the immortal splendor of their act and of their gift.

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† Rector, Cathedral at Tréguier, Brittany.

This message has been translated from the French by Professor Ernest Chenel, Head of the Department of Modern Languages, Graduate School, Fordham University.