

Lettre de J. N. Cooke à Émile Zola datée du 28 février 1898

Auteur(s) : Cooke, J. N.

Transcription

Texte de la lettreNew York le 28 février 1898.

Monsieur Zola,

Cher Monsieur,

Nous cédonc enfin au désir irrésistible de vous infliger quelques mots de sympathie. Vous ne serez peut-être pas fâché de voir ce que pensent nos deux principaux journalistes.

Nous croyons que votre bonne œuvre ne fait que commencer et que le bon Dieu saura bien tirer parti de l'injustice dont vous êtes la victime pour en faire sortir la victoire. Nous autres Franco-Américains, qui vivons sous une véritable république, nous sommes avec vous de cœur et, sachant que tout ce que la pauvre France possède d'hommes sensés vous soutient, nous croyons que vous ne vous laissez pas abattre et que par un moyen ou un autre vous saurez bien atteindre votre but, car, comme on dit ici :

« The pen is mightier than the sword »

Pour annoncer votre condamnation un de nos journaux disait : « Plus de République en France ! » car en effet il n'y a que les tyrans du Moyen Âge pour permettre une pareille abomination. Et ce pauvre Dreyfus, comme il m'empêche de dormir ! À la pensée de la femme et du frère de ce pauvre martyr notre cœur se serre souvent, bien souvent.

J'ai l'honneur, Monsieur Zola, de vous saluer avec la plus sincère et la plus profonde admiration.

Mme J. N. Cooke née Geepidon

381 St Nicholas Ave. Harlem.

New York City.

Note ajoutée : Vous viendrez peut-être bien faire un tour aux États-Unis. Nous l'espérons et

Les folios

En passant la souris sur une vignette, le titre de l'image apparaît.

8 Fichier(s)

Les mots clés

[Américains](#), [Dreyfus](#), [voyage aux USA](#)

Relations

Ce document n'a pas de relation indiquée avec un autre document du projet.□

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Centre d'Étude sur Zola et le Naturalisme & Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes, CNRS-ENS ; projet EMAN (CNRS-ENS-Sorbonne Nouvelle).

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Copier

Présentation

GenreCorrespondance

Date d'envoi[1898-02-28](#)

Adresse381 St Nicholas Ave. Harlem. New York City

Description & Analyse

DescriptionSoutien pour l'affaire Dreyfus, explique que le peuple américain est derrière Zola.

Notesoui, quatre coupures de journaux, vraisemblablement du New York Times.

Information générales

Langue[Français](#)

CoteAME 1898_02_28 LEF.18.Cooke.28021898.NY

Éléments codicologiques Lettre originale, sans enveloppe, papier très fin, une feuille pliée en deux dont trois pages sont utilisées.

SourceCollection famille Émile-Zola

Informations éditoriales

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Mentions légales

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Notice créée par [Richard Walter](#) Notice créée le 06/11/2018 Dernière modification le 21/08/2020

New York, le 28 Février 1898.

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381 St. Nicholas Ave.
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et vous verrez comme on vous aime ici.
Jamais vous n'y avez eu tant d'amis.

WILL ZOLA APPEAL?

It is reported that M. ZOLA has determined not to appeal from his sentence, but to undergo it, and, as used to be said in our political campaigns, "to leave the responsibility where it belongs."

It is to be hoped that this report is not true, and it is to be observed that it finds no countenance in the proceedings of M. ZOLA's counsel. Not only did M. LABORI carefully observe, upon every suitable occasion, the French equivalent of taking an exception, but at the conclusion of the trial he immediately filed notice of appeal. The prospect of spending a year in prison, even under the most favorable conditions, cannot be agreeable to M. ZOLA. It is true that it might supply him with the means of framing out of his experience a much more serious indictment of French society than he has framed in the form of fiction. But there is nothing except the actual condition of a political prisoner in France upon which his confinement would shed any light that cannot be procured without it.

But the main point is that M. ZOLA owes it not only to himself as a "good Frenchman"—and at present he is the best one in sight—but he owes it to France to give her every chance to exculpate herself. It is his civic duty to take every available form of appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober. There is no doubt that at present Philip is extremely drunk. The Parisian analogues of our yellow journals are much more potent upon public opinion. If the sensational press of New York could have its way, the whole population would be roaring for war with Spain. But the sensational press of Paris has had its way, and has stirred the population into a state of mind with which reason has had nothing to do. It has turned a public trial into a farce, played by the mob as chorus and Generals in uniform as principals, making speeches directing the jury what to do and producing incredible statements upon which they declined to face cross-examination. Such a mockery of justice has not been seen in modern times in a civilized country. And the infection has reached the Legislature. The Government, which had so slender a majority two months ago, is sustained by a vote of ten to one when the question is of the case of ZOLA.

The legal appeal lies to the Court of Cassation, and it is the same as would be taken in a similar case under our own procedure. That is to say, the case is reviewable, not as to the findings of the jury upon facts submitted to it, but upon the conduct of the trial by the Judge. If the upper court finds that the learned Judge erred in not compelling the attendance of witnesses summoned by the defense, in not compelling witnesses who did appear to testify, in excluding testi-

mony because it might compromise the national security, in allowing Generals of the army to tell the jury what it ought

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mony because it might compromise the national security, in allowing Generals of the army to tell the jury what it ought to do, and if it annuls the trial on any or all of these grounds, then it will become evident that there is a tribunal in France which is above the passions of the hour and beyond the dictation of the Parisian mob. Such a showing would be very well worth making for the honor of France, and M. ZOLA ought to furnish the opportunity of making it.

The Zola trial ends to-day. Maître Labori will bring his cogent and convincing argument to a close. The Presiding Judge will submit the case to the jury with all possible bias in favor of the prosecution. The mob of Paris, which has had full freedom of the court, will raise its brutal clamor of "Death to Zola! Death to the Jews!" led by army officers and unchecked by the Judge. And after more or less deliberation the jury will bring in a verdict of Guilty or Not Guilty. In theory the verdict is the climax of a trial. In this case it cannot fail to be an anti-climax. Interest in it will be perfunctory. However shrilly the newsboys may cry it on the streets it will sound dull as a twice-told tale upon the ear. There is hearing and there is thought for one thing alone, and that thing is the speech of the defendant. In that titanic utterance the great case found its climax. It matters not what follows. No word of twelve can overmatch the word of one when that one is a hero speaking from his soul for truth and right.

Such was M. Zola's utterance on Monday. Call it argument, call it appeal, call it defiance, as you will. It was all three in one. And as each and as a whole it was unique amid court speeches of our times. For its match in intrinsic eloquence and pathos we must turn back to the classic days of oratory; and even there we shall scarcely find its superior. For its equal in national moment one knows not whither to turn. The dying words of Robert Emmet were full of moving pathos. The closing speech of Sheridan in the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings was a masterpiece of austere adjuration. But this was even more. It dealt not merely with the fate of its author, nor with the incomparably mournful fate of the exile of Devil's Island. Nor did it touch upon the honor and stability alone of the Court to which it was addressed. The orator spoke for the honor of the fatherland; in his own words, "for the salvation of France"; for the cause of humanity, of justice and of eternal truth.

The verdict of the jury matters little. It will not change a single mind's opinion in all the world. The injustice of the Court, the travesty of a trial, have discounted its value hopelessly. The world has watched and listened, and has already framed a verdict to its own satisfaction. It has hitherto had much fault to find with Emile Zola, and most justly. To-day it forgives him much. It believes that he has spoken the truth, and that he has done so because of an unselfish love of truth. He has brought upon himself the obloquy of the very rabble that once hailed with joy his less creditable works; but he has won for himself the esteem and praise of millions to whom his very name was once distasteful. The savage howls and shrieks that assailed him in the courtroom are lost in the world-wide plaudits of those who honor manhood and believe in righteousness. The verdict of the jury matters little. It will supply only one word to the defendant's title. Hero he is already. It rests with the twelve jurors to say whether he is also to be Martyr or Victor. And even that matters little, for in such a cause a martyr is a victor. oui !

XX THE FRENCH SITUATION.

The obvious and outrageous perversion of justice in the Zola case is by no means the most depressing circumstance in the French situation. It was plain to everybody that ZOLA was convicted without the least reference to the merits of the case and on the demand of the Parisian mob. The fact was discreditable to the Judge who presided and allowed himself and his court to be used as the instruments of the mob. But it is not so serious as the vote in the Chamber of Deputies, which makes it appear that the mob consists, for the moment, of all France. Nothing for many years has so vividly illustrated VOLTAIRE'S unflattering description of his countrymen as the revelations in this case.

Emboldened by the assurance in advance of the vote which showed that the Legislature partook the passions of the street mob, M. MELINE announced that the Government would "suppress the agitation" of the Zola case. It has since appeared what he meant. The proposal to revive the censorship of the press, which was abandoned in France seventeen years ago, was made some time since, with special reference to the Dreyfus case, but before the trial of ZOLA. In the present insane temper of the Legislature, it might be adopted. At present, however, the responsibilities of publishers begin in France, as in this country, after publication. These responsibilities the French Government, it is announced, being encouraged by the verdict in the case of ZOLA, means to enforce against four Parisian newspapers which have demanded the reopening of the Dreyfus case. More than that, the Paris correspondents of various foreign newspapers, English, German, Belgian, and Italian, have, it is credibly reported, been notified that if they do not "abandon their attitude of hostility to France" they will be expelled from the country. The offense of which they were guilty was of course the offense of telling the plain truth about the trial of ZOLA.

"This reasoning mistakes the age." If the French republic, or any other republic, cannot stand publicity, it is doomed. M. MELINE and his colleagues, inspired by the high officers of the army and sustained by the Parisian mob, seem to have concluded that their best way of obviating hostile comment is to suppress it. That course may be successful for a time. It is the old-fashioned prescription of "nailing up the safety valve." That course prevents the escape of superfluous steam. It also insures that when an explosion does occur, it will wreck the whole machine.

PERSONAL.

—ZOLA's condemnation, or rather the manner of ZOLA's condemnation, is of more than abstract and impersonal interest in other countries, especially in those where the notion is cherished that the only legitimate objects of legal procedure are the ascertaining of facts and the awarding of justice. If ZOLA, a French citizen of some wealth and much repute, could be made the victim of irresponsible power exercised from behind the cringing shoulders of French Judges and jurymen, what certainty, what probability even, is there that a foreigner's rights will be respected in the French tribunals, or that he will not be dealt with in any way that Gallic prejudices or fears may dictate? This is really a grave question. Civilized nations do not allow their subjects to be tried in the courts of China because they doubt both the power and inclination of a semi-civilized race to try an alien fairly; it was at a very recent date that Japan was permitted to exercise judicial authority over foreigners. If ZOLA had published in Egypt charges against the Khédive, not Egyptians but men from Europe and America would have judged him. In short, the need for extraterritorial courts is recognized and their establishment is insisted upon wherever the ordinary principles of right and equity, as understood by real Occidentals, are not observed by the local officials. Who will say that extraterritorial courts are not needed in France? If an American or an Englishman should by chance be tried and punished as ZOLA was, the spectacle would be unendurable, and yet that fate may befall any one of the many Americans and Englishmen temporarily residing in the so-called republic.