

Lettre à Émile Zola du 24 février 1898

Auteur(s) : X,

Les folios

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

6 Fichier(s)

Les mots clés

[affaire Dreyfus](#), [Journalisme](#)

Relations

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X, Lettre à Émile Zola du 24 février 1898, 1898-02-24

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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AdresseLondres

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Notice créée par [Jean-Sébastien Macke](#) Notice créée le 24/08/2020 Dernière modification le 26/08/2020

Londres 24 février 1894

90
Cher maître.

Permettez-moi de vous féliciter
du triomphe de votre cause.
La révision Dreyfus est faite.
pas à huit clos, mais devant
le monde entier, par Maître Labori
et pour preuve je vous envoie
le leading article du Daily Telegraph
le journal le plus répandu du
monde entier. Vous cher maître
avez déroulé devant un auditoire
de plusieurs millions d'âmes et
par les criminels eux-mêmes,
un drame de la vie contem-
poraine, si empoignant, qu'
non seulement en Europe, mais
en Amérique, on ne parlait
plus on ne lisait plus autre
chose. Et quelle mise en scène,
le palais d'injustice, cette chambre
où l'on se jette des encriers à

à la tête comme Dernier argument
cette jeunesse studieuse (?) Sans les
rues, cette ligue patriotique, qui
hurle la France aux Français
Lola est un Italien (si vous l'êtes
à moitié : c'est que vous êtes de
cette race, dont Gallilée était,
et pour si muove ;) ces soldats
brillants, qui n'ont jamais
vus les canons, pas ceux de
l'ennemi et pas les leurs.
Les 12 épiques qui s'appellent le
peuple français ou le pays ou
généralment les Drummones qui
marchent main en main avec la ligue
patriotique (?) voulaient tuer et jeter
les Juifs, pour faire de la
France une Espagne nouvelle
mais plus terrible, car maintenant
ce n'est plus une guerre de religion
mais une guerre d'envie contre

toute supériorité. Cette haine
contre une race qui vous a donné
Moïse et ses lois éternelles, sur
lesquelles toutes les sociétés modernes
sont basées, et le Christ qui a
taillé de réformer et de moderniser
les antiques croyances, et
Spinoza et autre grand Philosophe.
Pendant l'empire, qui a ouvert
les portes de la France à tous
les hommes de génie, les Meyer-
Beer, les Offenbach, les Heine,
Börne ont mis leurs
talents à vos pieds, les Rachel,
Sara Bernhardt, Malibran
et un millier d'autres encore. -
Tout ça s'est déroulé sous nos yeux
effrayés, c'était tellement réaliste,
que nous ne pouvions plus dormir
croyants, que nous tomberions
tous dans cet abîme.

Pour l'amour de Dieu, ne faites
sous pas faire d'interpellation
à la chambre, espérons un
revirement d'opinion, un peu de
tranquillité et le bon sens fran-
çais prendra le dessus. Déjà aujourd'hui,
vos ennemis et ceux de la
justice croient avoir honte
d'eux même. Croyez Monsieur
à l'admiration profonde
et l'estime sincère du monde
honorable et vive Lola!

a veiled lady to Major ESTERHAZY; yet the Major was not arrested for having it in his possession, nor were any of those responsible for its safe keeping punished or molested. An officer who was among the body that condemned DREYFUS, and was, presumably, sworn to secrecy like his colleagues, was alleged at M. ZOLA's trial to have revealed the fact that the prisoner was convicted on the strength of a document which he had never seen; yet no action was taken against the indiscreet Judge. One of the most brilliant French officers, the Chief of the Information Bureau, was spied and shadowed as soon as he expressed doubts as to DREYFUS's guilt, his correspondence was opened, anonymous compromising letters were sent to him containing statements which only an officer of the Staff could know, and at last he was drafted to a place in Africa where his life was in danger. And, finally, the military chiefs appearing as mere witnesses in a civil court wholly disregarded the ruling of the Judge, partly conducted the trial, and grossly intimidated the jury by threatening and strike if the prisoner were acquitted. None to the less, all true friends of France, while deeply deploring the sad exhibition of wild passion and blind prejudice which has just come to an end, will tenaciously cling to the fond belief that the military chiefs—who are now the sole and irresponsible arbiters of the Republic—will prove, in their own special sphere, still worthy of the best traditions of their chivalrous forefathers.

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one can fitly ascribe a form to a veritable chaos of eloquent philippics, hysterical appeals, and brutal threats, was not merely singular, but unparalleled in the records of civil or military justice. M. ZOLA had publicly asserted that the court-martial by which Major ESTERHAZY was acquitted of high treason had deliberately bolstered up the illegality of the DREYFUS trial, simply in obedience to superior orders. This was an insult offered to men of unblemished reputation, and the clever writer whose zeal had outrun his discretion was prosecuted in consequence. He pleaded justification, and was asked for proof. What he should have done in order to make good his charge was, in the first place, to show that the DREYFUS trial was, in truth, illegal, and then that this illegality was knowingly upheld by the court-martial which acquitted M. ESTERHAZY. But the moment his counsel called witnesses in support of the first allegation, the presiding Judge refused to admit any evidence against the chose jugée, and announced that so long as the proceedings lasted, no person should under any pretext whatever, be allowed even to allude to the traitor DREYFUS or his trial. Yet it is only a few months since another chose jugée, equally sacred, by which a perfectly innocent man had died a convict in Cayenne, was revised, and his memory tardily rehabilitated, and at this very moment a similar chose jugée is about to be quashed, which consisted in the condemnation by a court-martial, and the execution, forty-six years ago, of a man whose innocence has long since been amply demonstrated by the real criminal who confessed. However this may be, the Court declared that it would brook no mention of DREYFUS or his trial, and this decision, right or wrong, is perfectly intelligible. Utterly incomprehensible, therefore, is the fact that the moment the military witnesses came upon the scene they laughed to scorn the ruling of the Judge, inveighed bitterly against DREYFUS, gave their word of honour that he was guilty, and when confidence in their judgment was shaken by contradictions among themselves, they actually sprang upon the audience a new document in support of his guilt which had come into their possession nearly two years after his condemnation. The Court unhesitatingly admitted all this as relevant evidence; yet when M. ZOLA's counsel sought to examine these voluble witnesses he was stopped by the Judge, who reminded him of the decision of the Court, which tabooed all allusion to DREYFUS, and to which no exception could be made. Meantime, the angry crowd was allowed to shout, interrupt, threaten, and insult M. ZOLA and his counsel, without a word of remonstrance, while those who applauded M. ZOLA were hustled and ejected, and the Court listened with marked respect and evident approval while the military chiefs were actually intimidating the jury. Thus, General BOISDEFFRE, the Chief of the Staff, told the jury that a verdict for M. ZOLA would be followed by a strike on the part of the leaders of the Army, and that the sons of the men in the box would be led to the slaughter in the coming war, which was much nearer at hand than people commonly supposed. The annals of human justice will be searched in vain for a parallel to such amazing irregularities.

Yet after all the form of M. ZOLA's trial is a matter which mainly concerns Frenchmen. The question underlying it was the real point of interest, and impartial people of all nations who have wearily waded through this legal chaos look with incredulous amazement upon the grim reality which lurks beneath the glitter of forensic fine phrases. For the main issue which was tried turned really upon the legality of DREYFUS's condemnation, and some interesting facts which came out during the present trial throw a flood of light upon this question. Thus, he was arrested on suspicion of a treasonable act which he had no conceivable motive to commit, and on the strength of an undated and unsigned document, the writer of which apparently communicated secrets to Germany of which DREYFUS could have had no knowledge. The case against the prisoner was prepared by Major SANDHERR, a man who hated the very name of Jew, and who was then suffering from softening of the brain, of which he afterwards died. In presence of these facts the Judges were about to acquit DREYFUS, when the War Minister, General MEXMER, laid before them a secret document, which he concealed, not only from his own Ministerial colleagues, but from the prisoner and his counsel. This document, which is now admitted to have been in the War Office eight months before, and to have no direct application to DREYFUS, turned the scales of justice, and the prisoner was condemned to a punishment worse than death. We can hardly wonder that General JUVIS should have stigmatised the trial as an abomination, that Lieutenant-Colonel PROQUART should treat it as a mockery, and that three Cabinet Ministers, MM. TRARIEUX, TREVENET, and GUYOT, should unanimously condemn it as illegal. To all questions and protests the military chiefs replied pledging their word that DREYFUS was guilty, and refusing to speak of the proofs offered, lest the national defence should be prejudiced. The evidence of the Military Chief of the Secret Information Department given at M. ZOLA's trial, however, shook everyone's faith in the secret "proof," and then Generals PELLIEUX and GONSE, apparently without seriously consulting the War

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Damages amounting to £120 were awarded Miss Emily Schrader, residing at Trinity-square, Southwark, in an action for breach of promise of marriage against a post-office sorter, named Albert R. J. Davenport.

In the Queen's Bench, Mr. Robert William Paul recovered £150 from the Alhambra Company for breach of agreement engaging plaintiff to show his cinematograph for eight weeks.

The theatrical divorce case of Jarman v. Jarman and Reed (co-respondent) resulted in a decree nisi being pronounced, and the husband being awarded £250 damages. Mr. John Monk, the co-respondent in the suit of Silvester v. Silvester, was ordered to pay £550 damages.

Before the Consistory Court, the Rev. Charles William Alfred Brooke, who was a licensed curate of Camden Town, appeared to answer charges under the Clergy Discipline Act.

Heavy fines were inflicted upon Mr. Richard Bourn, a pawnbroker, of High-street, Plaistow, for failing to enter in his pledge-book particulars of certain transactions.

In the Stock Exchange Consols declined $\frac{1}{8}$, to 112 $\frac{1}{2}$. Home railways closed weak, Americans flat, and Canadian, Mexican, and Argentine lines steady. Foreign Government bonds generally improved. Mines showed irregular movements. Rupee Paper was quoted 63 $\frac{1}{2}$, and silver 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ d per ounce. Money was in strong demand at 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., discount being firm at the same rate.

M. ZOLA has been condemned to a year's imprisonment and a fine of three thousand francs. Major ESTERHAZY has been raised to the level of a military hero, and the chiefs of the French Army, having definitely succeeded in setting themselves above the civil law and the political administration, are now the paramount, and practically the omnipotent power in the Republic. Such are the main results of the deplorable exhibition of racial hatred, religious fanaticism, military ambition, and aggressive patriotism known as the ZOLA case, which has for the past fifteen days aroused every wild passion of the French heart. The form of the trial, if

justice will be searched in vain for a parallel to such amazing irregularities.

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We regret to say that the part played by the chiefs of the French Army in the dramatic trilogy which has culminated in M. ZOLA's condemnation is far more creditable to their patriotic feelings than to their judgment on less prosaic matters. Thus, they called upon their countrymen to accept their uncorroborated word that the prisoner was guilty, yet they themselves abandoned the proofs which they had deemed convincing at the court-martial, and appealed to a document which was not even penned until DREYFUS had spent over eighteen months on the Devil's Island. They solemnly pledged their word that they could reveal nothing that had taken place at the trial without endangering the safety of the Republic, and they flourished the interests of the national defence, like a Medusa's head, to frighten off the men who hungered and thirsted after justice, and at the very same time they were confiding the main facts of the trial to journalistic friends for the purposes of polemics, and allowed the most secret documents to be copied, and even photographed. They averred that they would permit the light of publicity to fall on every detail which did not jeopardise the welfare of the State, yet when requested to give their word that DREYFUS had not been illegally convicted on the strength of a document which he never saw, they were significantly silent. They privately assured DREYFUS in his prison cell, before his trial, that his accomplices were known and would be shortly arrested, and publicly they boasted that the treason of one wretch who was alone in his crime, could not reflect discredit upon the Army or its chiefs. They asked the country to rely upon the discretion and judgment of its officers, and admitted that, despite this discretion, for the past twenty years secret documents affecting the national defence have been constantly and systematically disappearing. One of the papers of the ZOLA trial, which was locked up in the most private recesses of the War Ministry lest its publication should precipitate a war, was abstracted last autumn and handed by

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Damages amounting to £120 were awarded Miss Emily Schrader, residing at Trinity-square, in an action for breach of promise of

that so long as the proceedings lasted, no person should under any pretext whatever, be allowed even to allude to the traitor DREYFUS or his trial. Yet it is only a few months since another chose jugée, equally sacred, by which a perfectly innocent man had died a convict in Cayenne, was revised, and his memory tardily rehabilitated, and at this very moment a similar chose jugée is about to be quashed, which consisted in the condemnation by a court-martial, and the execution, forty-six years ago, of a man whose innocence has long since been amply demonstrated by the real criminal who confessed. However this may be, the Court declared that it would brook no mention of DREYFUS or his trial, and this decision, right or wrong, is perfectly intelligible. Utterly incomprehensible, therefore, is the fact that the moment the military witnesses came upon the scene they laughed to scorn the ruling of the Judge, inveighed bitterly against DREYFUS, gave their word of honour that he was guilty, and when confidence in their judgment was shaken by contradictions among themselves, they actually sprang upon the audience a new document in support of his guilt which had come into their possession nearly two years after his condemnation. The Court unhesitatingly admitted all this as relevant evidence; yet when M. ZOLA's counsel sought to examine these voluble witnesses he was stopped by the Judge, who reminded him of the decision of the Court, which tabooed all allusion to DREYFUS, and to which no exception could be made. Meantime, the angry crowd was allowed to shout, interrupt, threaten, and insult M. ZOLA and his counsel, without a word of remonstrance, while those who applauded M. ZOLA were hustled and ejected, and the Court listened with marked respect and evident approval while the military chiefs were actually intimidating the jury. Thus, General BOISDEFRE, the Chief of the Staff, told the jurymen that a verdict for M. ZOLA would be followed by a strike on the part of the leaders of the Army, and that the sons of the men in the box would be led to the slaughter in the coming war, which was much nearer at hand than people commonly supposed. The annals of human justice will be searched in vain for a parallel to such amazing irregularities.

Yet after all the form of M. ZOLA's trial is a matter which mainly concerns Frenchmen. The question underlying it was the real point of interest, and impartial people of all nations who have wearily waded through this legal chaos look with incredulous amazement upon the grim reality which lurks beneath the glitter of forensic fine phrases. For the main issue which was tried turned really upon the legality of DREYFUS's condemnation, and some interesting facts which came out during the present trial throw a flood of light upon this question. Thus, he was arrested on suspicion of a treasonable act which he had no conceivable motive to commit, and on the strength of an undated and unsigned document, the writer of which apparently communicated secrets to Germany of which DREYFUS could have had no knowledge. The case against the prisoner was prepared by Major SANDHERR, a man who hated the very name of Jew, and who was then suffering from softening of the brain, of which he afterwards died. In presence of these facts the Judges were about to acquit DREYFUS, when the War Minister, General MERCIER, laid before them a secret document, which he concealed, not only from his own Ministerial colleagues, but from the prisoner and his counsel. This document, which is now admitted to have been in the War Office eight months before, and to have no direct application to DREYFUS, turned the scales of justice, and the prisoner was condemned to a punishment worse than death. We can hardly wonder that General JUNG should have stigmatised the trial as an abomination, that Lieutenant-Colonel PROQUART should treat it as a mockery, and that three Cabinet Ministers, MM. TRARIEUX, TREVENET, and GUYOT, should unanimously condemn it as illegal. To all questions and protests the military chiefs replied pledging their word that DREYFUS was guilty, and refusing to speak of the proofs offered, lest the national defence should be prejudiced. The evidence of the Military Chief of the Secret Information Department given at M. ZOLA's trial, however, shook everyone's faith in the secret "proof," and then Generals PELLETIER and GONNE, apparently without previously consulting the War Minister, appealed to a third secret document, which, they alleged, had fallen into their hands nearly two years after the prisoner's condemnation, and invited their countrymen to accept that as proof of his guilt. Now, even if this paper be genuine, which, judging by its wording and by the circumstances of its discovery, is highly questionable, what it proves is that the trial of DREYFUS was grossly illegal, and should be revised without delay. This conclusion is further borne out by the fact that whereas the ex-Captain's alleged crime consisted in the communication of important secrets to the German Military Attaché, the German Government has declared in the most solemn and emphatic terms that neither directly nor indirectly had DREYFUS any dealings, criminal or innocent, with any of its agents. The one clear, certain, and tangible result of the investigation, in which M. ZOLA has been as tireless as a sleuthhound, would seem to be that, whether guilty or innocent, DREYFUS was condemned by a military court, which, acting doubtless with the best of motives, set at naught the indefeasible rights of a fellow-citizen, and rode roughshod over the fundamental principles of civil and military law.

We regret to say that the part played by the chiefs of the French Army in the dramatic trilogy which has culminated in M. ZOLA's condemnation