

Lettre de F. Cafiell à Émile Zola du 28 février 1898

Auteur(s) : Cafiell, F.

Les folios

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

4 Fichier(s)

Les mots clés

[affaire Dreyfus](#)

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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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913
51, ST JAMES' SQUARE, W.

28 Feb. 98

Mon Sieur,

I admire you above
all men for your
great courage in
defence of that un-
fortunate Capt.
Dreyfus. The trial
was a perfect farce
judge & jury cowards
& the generals still worse

And your sentence
and justice -

My sincere comfort
to Martin Labor &
Clemence for their mag-
nificent speech -
All true Englishmen
I am sure think as
I do - I enclose two
cuttings from news
papers amongst many

They all share what they think
of that one sided trial

Agree 'r'
Agree Mansour

Je vous prie

mes sentiments et mes

Sympathies sinceres

Wm. L. J. Capell.

ZOLA'S TRIAL.

After twenty-five years of Republican Government, during which the nation showed so much vitality and such buoyancy of heart that one marvelled at her splendid powers of recuperation, France has this week presented to the world such a spectacle of corruption and rank injustice, tyranny, and utter demoralization, that the whole civilized world is seriously asking what next will happen. Were Boulanger alive to-day, so completely has the army got possession of the people, even that craven coward, who hesitated so often at the psychic moment, would probably think the situation good enough for a *coup d'etat* and the wretched populace, who have given themselves body and soul to a military despotism, would then quickly realize the fool's paradise in which they are living. Whatever else the trial of M. Zola may have done, it has probably convinced everyone out of France that there is something radically wrong about the way in which Captain Dreyfus has been put away, and they will also come to the conclusion that a Government which sets itself to burke simple enquiry and to consign to prison anyone who may dare question the justice of their persecution, is in a very unsatisfactory condition. The world has rarely witnessed such a travesty of justice as that associated with the Zola trial. The Judge seems to have gone into Court on the first day with the sentence in his pocket, and as has been naively remarked, he might just as well have told the gentlemen of the jury that he was sure they would do their duty as Frenchmen, and therefore could go to sleep until their verdict was expected. But while this mockery of a trial may have suited the French people, outsiders have been quietly analysing the proceedings and discovering the most astounding discrepancies, and it is just as well to have them borne in upon our minds, because this business is not yet over, and we may expect some remarkable developments. A diligent student of the history of the case has made the following deductions from the Zola trial. Captain Dreyfus, it will be remembered, 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. 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 Goussier, 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

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. 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 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. So that every step taken in this extraordinary matter seems to be establishing the innocence of Dreyfus rather than the guilt of anybody.

Perhaps there are not many citizens of France who will admit to-day that in years to come the name of Zola will be cherished as only a true and honest patriot can be treasured by the people of a nation. But there must be French people of intelligence who perceive in the result of the trial, which came to an end this week, the most terrible blow to the third Republic that could possibly be conceived. However gratifying to the spleen of the populace may be the condemnation of the brave novelist, every man who helped raise the shouts of "Vive l'Armée," and "A bas Zola," must know that he was aiding and abetting the State in admitting before the world that it chooses to be deliberately dishonest for its own ends. Liberty, equality, and fraternity, which are supposed to be the watch-words of an autonomic constitution, are symbolic only of a military despotism at which the people are so unwise, so short-sighted, as to connive. Zola, no doubt, foresaw that there may come another Reign of Terror more awful than that instituted by a lawless mob, when the people of France would be the victims of men strong enough to use the nation's arms to their own ends. Zola is the martyr of the boasted liberty of the French Republic, and his sentence has stained the honour of his country.