

The Dreyfus Case.

A PUZZLE IN HANDWRITING.

BY J. HOLT SCHOOLING.



READERS of this Magazine may perhaps recall a set of papers by me on the handwritings of famous men: Dickens, Gladstone, Carlyle, Tennyson, etc. The study of handwriting—viewed as a series of little gestures of the hand, which are self-registering in black and white at the moment when they are made—is full of interest, and part of my work is the forming of opinions as to the authenticity of this or that handwriting which is submitted to me.

Lately, a gentleman from Paris came to see me about the "Dreyfus case"—that *cause célèbre* of the Paris law-courts which, in the winter of 1894-95, made so great a stir in France and elsewhere, notably in this country, where, later, a play was written and acted at the Adelphi, based upon the Dreyfus case. A famous scene in this play was where the unhappy officer was degraded in the midst of his comrades, by having his uniform torn and defaced and his sword broken across the knee of the sergeant deputed to carry out the act

of degradation on his former captain. But, before the play ended, the victim was found innocent.

My client from Paris put into my hands a facsimile of the document which practically condemned Captain Dreyfus to degradation and to imprisonment for life on a charge of treason to France—on a charge of selling to Germany information about France's private arrangements for a possible war.

*Sans nouvelles m'indiquant que vous
desirez me voir, je vous adresse cependant
Monsieur quelques renseignements intéressants
1^o une note sur le feu hydraulique
ou 120 et le mécanisme de ses divers conduits
avec plan.
2^o une note sur les troupes de couverture.
(quelques modifications sont apportées par
le nouveau plan.)
3^o une note sur une modification avec
formation de l'artillerie.
4^o une note relative à Madagascar.
5^o le projet de manuel de tir de
l'artillerie de campagne (26 mars 1894.)*

i.—The incriminatory document attributed to Captain Dreyfus, said to have been stolen from the German Embassy in Paris, and which constituted the charge against Captain Dreyfus of treason to France. Continued on the next page; for translation see text.

Le dernier document est extrêmement
difficile à se procurer et je ne puis
l'avoir à ma disposition que très-peu
de jours. Le ministre de la guerre
en a envoyé un nombre fixe dans
les corps et ces corps en sont responsables.
Chaque officier détenteur doit
remettre le sien après les manœuvres.
Si donc vous voulez y prendre
quelques notes et l'envoyer
à ma disposition après, j'en
prendrai à moins que vous ne
vouliez que je le fasse copier
ou extenso chez vous en adressant
la copie.

Je m'en mets en manœuvres.

2.—The incriminatory document. Continued from the preceding page; for translation see text.

Also, several letters written by Captain Dreyfus before and after his trial were given to me, and I was asked to form an opinion as to whether Dreyfus did or did not write the document which is shown in facsimile in Nos. 1 and 2. Other men, in France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, in the United States, and elsewhere, have also been asked for an opinion on this incriminatory document, and, to my mind, the case is of so much interest and importance that, with the sanction of my Parisian client, I am now putting the matter before the British public.

Any reader of this paper is invited to examine the handwriting of the incriminatory document shown in Nos. 1 and 2, and to compare it with the admitted handwriting of Captain Dreyfus shown in No. 3, and with the admitted handwriting of ex-Captain and

Convict Alfred Dreyfus, shown in No. 4. He, or she, is invited to study these handwritings very carefully, preferably through a magnifier, and to form an opinion as to whether the hand that wrote Nos. 1 and 2 was the same hand that wrote Nos. 3 and 4. I may say that my opinion has been formed, written, and sent to Paris.

The limits of space prevent me from showing here all the documents upon which my opinion was based. But those now shown may be taken as fairly representing the set of papers submitted to me. There is the incriminatory document in Nos. 1 and 2; in No. 3 there is a letter written by Captain Drey-

fus to a friend in August, 1893, prior to the accusation; and in No. 4 there is the handwriting of the wretched convict dated 21st January, 1895, and written in the French convict prison, Saint-Martin-de-Ré. All these facsimiles are here shown in the same size as the originals.

For the convenience of readers I will now give a transcript and a translation of the incriminatory document (see Nos. 1 and 2):—

Transcript:—Sans nouvelles m'indiquant que vous désirez me voir, je vous adresse cependant Monsieur quelques renseignements intéressants.

I. Une note en le frein hydraulique du 120 et la manière dont s'est conduite cette pièce.

II. Une note sur les troupes de couverture (quelques modifications seront apportées par le nouveau plan).

III. Une note sur une modification aux formations de l'artillerie.

IV. Une note relative à Madagascar.

V. Le projet de manuel de tir de l'artillerie de campagne (14 Mars, 1894).

And facsimile No. 2 continues:—

Ce dernier document est extrêmement difficile à se procurer et je ne puis l'avoir à ma disposition que très peu de jours. Le ministère de la guerre en a envoyé un nombre fixe dans les corps et ces corps en sont responsables, chaque officier détenteur doit remettre le sien après les manœuvres. Si donc vous voulez y prendre ce que vous intéresse et le tenir à ma disposition après, je le prendrai. A moins que vous ne voulez que je le fasse copier in extenso, et ne vous en adresse la copie.

Je vais partir en manœuvres.

The preceding is the actual text of this fatal document, of which I now give the meaning:—

Translation: Without having heard whether you wish to see me, I am now sending you some interesting information.

I. A note on the hydraulic brake, 120, and the way it worked.

[This is a new brake to a cannon which had not then come into use; the 120 refers to the diameter of the bore of the cannon.—J.H.S.]

II. A note concerning the covering forces. (Several modifications will be made by the new plan.)

III. A note concerning alterations in the formations of the artillery.

IV. A note relating to Madagascar.

V. The rough draft of a manual of artillery field practice.

This last document is very difficult to get, and I can have it at my disposal for a few days only. The War Office has sent a fixed number to the various regiments, and these regiments are responsible for them; each officer having one being obliged to return it after the manœuvres. If you would like to make extracts of the parts which interest you, and will keep the manuscript at my disposal, I will get one. Unless you would like me to make a copy of it *in extenso*, and to send you only the copy.

I am just off to the manœuvres.

Here is a damning thing indeed! And this traitorous paper was found (so the prosecuting counsel said) in a waste-paper basket at the German Embassy in Paris—of all places!—torn into four pieces. From the first a storm of public anger and indignation arose against Captain Dreyfus, and whether he did or did not write this document, the whole of the French

Press assumed his guilt before the trial took place. The bare idea of a French officer selling secret war-information to the hated Germans seems to have set French opinion ablaze, and indignation at the fact certainly prevented the just and fair treatment of the accused man. His guilt was at once taken for granted in the great eagerness to punish *somebody*. Perhaps Dreyfus was guilty, perhaps not, but he was not fairly treated by the French Press, and he went

Mon cher Paul,
 Me voici parti.
 Heureux de te revoir Vendredi
 prochain, tu nous apprends
 au même temps des nouvelles toutes
 fraîches. Mais tes arrivées en pen-
 sées pour que je puisse t'accompa-
 gner à Londres; il faut en effet
 que je sois Lundi prochain à Paris;
 or en partant Samedi de Paris,
 cela me permettrait seulement
 de passer à Dimanche à Londres;
 ce qui me paraît insuffisant,
 surtout étant donné l'orthodoxie
 anglaise.

3.—The first page of a letter written by Captain Dreyfus in August, 1893—before he was accused of treason to France; for translation see text.

to his trial an already condemned man. That, at any rate, is a fact. To some extent this injustice was due to the strong anti-Jew feeling then widespread in France—and Dreyfus is a Jew.

Before Captain Dreyfus was accused of

AVIS

Les détenus ne peuvent écrire qu'à leurs proches parents et tuteurs, et seulement une fois par mois, à moins de circonstances exceptionnelles. Ils peuvent être temporairement privés de correspondance.

Ils ne doivent parler que de leurs affaires de famille et de leurs intérêts privés.

Il leur est interdit de demander ou de recevoir des aliments ou des **timbres-poste**. Ils ne peuvent envoyer ou recevoir des secours que sur l'autorisation expresse du Directeur; ces secours doivent leur être adressés, soit en billets de banque par lettres chargées, soit en mandats-poste au nom du greffier comptable.

La correspondance est tue, tant au départ qu'à l'arrivée, par l'administration, qui a le droit de retenir les lettres.

Les familles peuvent adresser leurs lettres au Directeur, sous enveloppe affranchie, mais elles ne doivent recourir à aucun autre intermédiaire.

Les visites ont lieu au parloir deux fois par semaine, le et le à heures.

Les visiteurs doivent être munis d'une pièce constatant leur parenté.

DÉPÔT DE SAINT-MARTIN-DE-RÉ

le 21 Janvier 1895

Noms et prénoms *Alfred Dreyfus* Mardi.

No d'écrou Atelier *9^h matin*

~~Il~~ ~~vous~~ ~~en~~ ~~voie~~ ~~un~~ ~~bon~~ ~~soir~~,

Comme tu dois souffrir! —

Le drame dont nous sommes les victimes est certes vraiment le plus épouvantable de ce siècle. Avoir tout pour soi; bonheur, avenir, intérieur charmant, et puis tomber Coup, à vos accusés et condamné pour un crime monstrueux!

Ah le monstre qui a jeté ainsi le dishonneur dans une famille aurait raison fait de nos têtes, au moins il n'y aurait que nous qui aurions souffert.

4.—Part of the first page of a letter written, 21st January, 1895, by ex-Captain and convict Alfred Dreyfus, in the French Convict Prison of Saint-Martin-de-Ré—after he was degraded and sentenced to imprisonment for life for treason to France; for translation see text.

having supplied Germany with information, the French War Office was aware of a leakage somewhere. There are not wanting evidences which tend to support the assertion of Dreyfus's friends that he, the Jew, was made a scapegoat—but I will not enter into this part of the matter, which touches the political and racial aspects of this famous case: it is the handwriting which claims our attention.

No. 3 is the first page of a letter written in

August, 1893, by Captain Dreyfus to a friend. He says:—

(Translation.)

MY DEAR PAUL,

We shall be very glad to see you next Friday; you will then bring us all the recent news. But you come a little late for me to go to London with you; as a matter of fact, I must be in Paris next Monday; now, leaving Berok (?) on Saturday, this will give me only the Sunday in London, which I think too short a while, especially considering English orthodoxy.

And a transcript of No. 3 will be useful to

readers who intend to accept my invitation to study the handwritings of all these facsimiles:—

Transcript of No. 3: Mon cher Paul,—Nous serons très heureux de te recevoir Vendredi prochain; tu nous apporteras en même temps des nouvelles toutes fraîches. Mais tu arrives un peu tard pour que je puisse t'accompagner à Londres; il faut en effet que je sois Lundi prochain à Paris; or en partant Samedi de Berok [?], cela me ferait passer seulement la journée de Dimanche à Londres, ce qui me paraît insuffisant, surtout étant donnée l'orthodoxie Anglais."

Poor wretch! Guilty or innocent, Dreyfus, at his trial and before his trial, would have been glad to have in Paris something of our "English orthodoxy," applying orthodoxy (*orthodox* from *orthos*, right, and *doxa*, opinion), or right opinion, to the treatment of a man accused of serious crime, and so abstaining from condemnation *before trial* of the accused man.

Facsimile No. 4 is part of the first page of a letter written by the convict Alfred Dreyfus to a near relative on 21st January, 1895, in the prison of Saint-Martin-de-Ré. Here is a translation:—

How thou must suffer! The tragedy whose victims we are is truly the most frightful of this century. To have everything—happiness, a future, a charming home—and then, suddenly to be accused and convicted of a monstrous crime!

Ah! the wretch who has thus thrown dishonour into a home should rather have killed me, for then I should have been the only sufferer.

This sad letter covers four closely-written pages. Another passage reads:—

But what do I pray for night and day? Justice, justice.

Are we in the nineteenth century, or have we gone

back into the past for several hundreds of years? Is it possible that innocence be unrecognised in an age of light and truth?—truth that I seek; I ask for no mercy, but I demand that justice which is the right of every human being.

* * * * *
Give me news of all ours, embrace all my friends,
I dare not speak of my darling children.
* * * * *

ALFRED.

The transcript of No. 4 is:—

Comme tu dois souffrir!—le drame dont nous sommes les victimes est certainement le plus épouvantable de ce siècle. Avoir tout pour soi, bonheur, avenir, intérieur charmant, et puis tout à coup, se voir accusé et condamné pour un crime monstrueux! Ah le monstre qui a jeté ainsi le déshonneur dans une famille aurait mieux fait de me tuer, au moins il n'y aurait que moi qui aurait souffert.

Dreyfus the Jew had not justice. He was a condemned man from the moment when the crime of which he was accused became known to the French nation, to the moment when his terrible sentence of degradation and life-imprisonment was spoken to Dreyfus, Captain in the honourable army of France. Of mercy, all that he has had is the loaded pistol which has been placed on the ledge in his cell. He says he will not use it—yet—although he longs to, for Dreyfus believes in his own innocence, and so do others, while many more are anxious that at least this poor wretch should have a fair trial, which he most surely did not have three years ago. There is a tragedy in the pen-strokes on these pages, and they are perhaps silent witnesses to a most tragic and awful blunder. Perhaps this grim drama of real life will end as did the sham one at the theatre—who knows?