

**THE ÆSOPIC FABLES IN
THE MIREOIR HISTORICAL
OF JEHAN DE VIGNAY**

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PREFATORY NOTE.

While working on Æsopic Fable Literature as a member of the Romance Seminary of the Johns Hopkins University in the Spring of 1903, my attention was attracted to the short collection of Æsopic fables contained in Jehan de Vignay's *Miroir Historial*. Upon investigation it appeared that no critical study of these fables had hitherto been made, nor had the text of them ever been published. Indeed, very little was known concerning the life and works of this once popular Old-French author, aside from the frequent occurrence of his manuscripts.

Through the kindness of Dr. G. C. Keidel, who allowed me to make use of his notes on manuscripts in European libraries, and through personal research in various libraries both in this country and abroad, I have been able to make out a list of one hundred and thirty-two manuscripts of Jehan de Vignay that are still extant. Several short and very incomplete lists of his manuscripts had previously been made by various scholars, but none of them were serious attempts at making a fairly complete manuscript bibliography for this author.¹

In connection with my work on this subject I have made use of the private library of Prof. A. Marshall Elliott of the Johns Hopkins University, of the libraries of the Peabody Institute and of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and of the Library of Congress in Washington. During the summer of 1905 I worked on the original manuscripts and incunabulum editions also of the British Museum in London and of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

¹ Cf. Paul Meyer, *Romania*, Vol. xxv (1906), pp. 405-423; Gustav Gröber, *Grundriss der Romanischen Philologie*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 390; and also an unpublished list of manuscripts of the *Miroir Historial* made by members of the Romance Seminary of the Johns Hopkins University.

As a basis of work on the Old-French text I had at hand before going abroad a photographic copy of the manuscript in the Bibliothèque Municipale of Besançon, kindly made for me in 1905 by Dr. M. P. Brush of the Johns Hopkins University.

During my stay in Europe in the summer of 1905 I collated two additional manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris; and I have since had the remaining Paris manuscripts copied by a professional copyist, as also the manuscript in Leiden. The manuscripts in the Vatican Library and the British Museum, on the other hand, I have had photographed for my use in preparing this edition.

PART I.
INTRODUCTION.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.

Prominent among the many translators of Latin works into Old-French prose is a fourteenth century author named Jehan de Vignay. His work as a translator is notable not only for its unusual extent, but also for the great popularity which it enjoyed during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and even the sixteenth centuries.

It seems strange that we should know so little about the life of an author of such note as Jehan de Vignay; but unfortunately the information on this subject found in his own works seems to be very meager, and the evidence outside of these is also extremely scanty. One thing at least is certain, namely, that our author was a monk of the order of St. Jacques, living about the time of the last kings of the main Capetian line, and that of Philippe VI (1328-1350).¹ It was by the order of the wife of the latter, Jeanne de Bourgogne, that he made most of his translations; and it was to her also that he usually dedicated them. One translation—*le Livre des Eschez*—he dedicated to Philippe's oldest son, Jehan de France, Duc de Normandie. In fact he was for many years held in high esteem at the royal court under whose patronage he worked. This is attested by the fact that the manuscripts copied during the author's lifetime were on a magnificent scale, and were beautifully illuminated, being intended for the most part for the private libraries of the royal family.¹ In acknowledgment of

¹Cf. Delisle's article on the *Manuscripts royales of the Miroir Historial*, in the *Gazette Archéologique*, Vol. XI (1886), pp. 37-101.

these honors Jehan de Vignay in the great majority of the introductions or colophons to his translations makes humble obeisance coupled with well-wishes for the continuance of prosperity to all the members of the "ligne des fleurs de lys."

Before going into the details of the life of our author it may be appropriate briefly to discuss the probable spelling of his name. It is found with many variant spellings in its French form, and in one Latin form, if the names in question are to be identified. The latter is Johannes Vignacus. The French variants are:

1. Jehan du Vingnai,
2. Jean du Vignay,
3. Jehan de Vignay,
4. Jean de Vignay,
5. Jean de Vignai.

These are the usual interchangeable forms in the manuscripts I have seen, but we find P. Paris¹ in his catalog of manuscripts giving in addition,—Jean de Vignoy, de Vingnoy, de Vygnai and de Bignay. The former variant, Vignoy, is also used in a chart² preserved in the Archives Nationales, which is given in the Appendix.³ The latter spelling, Bignay, occurs also in the catalog of manuscripts of the Library of the University of Turin⁴ (officially known as the Biblioteca Nazionale di Torino).

In all the fourteenth century manuscripts the first name is written *Jehan*. Of course this is merely an older spelling for *Jean*, which has become the accepted modern French form, and even in the author's lifetime *Jean* and *Jehan* were both in use. This is easily to be noticed in the chronicles of the period since, for example, we find Philippe's son and successor mentioned

¹ P. Paris, *Manuscrits françois*, Vol. I, pp. 58 sqq.

² Archives Nationales, Trésor des Chartes, Reg. LXI (Charles le Bel, 1321-1323), Vol. I, cote JJ 61.

³ Appendix c.

⁴ Pasius, *Codices MSS. Bibl. Regiæ Taurinensis*, Taurini, 1749, Vol. II, p. 438. In two other references here, pp. 476, 479, we find Vignay. These manuscripts were probably destroyed in the disastrous fire of 1904.

occasionally as *Jehan* of Normandy, and again as *Jean* of Normandy. Hence we discard *Jean* as a modernized product, and on the evidence of more and older manuscript readings adopt *Jehan* as the probable writing of his Christian name.

With respect to the variations *de* and *du*, it seems that the manuscript evidence would indicate *de* as more probably correct. Both, however, appear in the older manuscripts, although *de* occurs more than twice as often as *du* in the manuscripts that I have examined.

The last part of our author's name, *Vignay*, was no doubt originally derived from the Latin form *Vignacus* as used by Hauréau.¹ In the researches of Jubainville on the subject of the development of place names,² we find the general rule that *-acus* gave *-ay* in North France, and *-ac* in Provence (*-ach* in the Celtic dialects). Thus we obtain from *Turnacus* (formed on *Turnus*) the form *Tournay* in Normandy, and *Tournac* in Gascony. Of course some place names have remained with the variant ending *-ai*, as *Cambrai*, out of *Camaracus*. Evidently, then, our form *Vignay* (or *Vignai*) came from a Latin term referring to the vine; and probably belongs to the same group of derivative names, to which belong *de Vignais*, *de Vigny*, *De Lavigne*.³ At present there are two communes in France named *Vignay*.⁴ One is in the Département de l'Ariège in the extreme South of France; the other in the Département de Seine-et-Oise. As the latter is near Paris and in what was the old Île-de-France province, it is very likely that our author came from there.

The form *Bignay* which occurs in the Turin catalog⁵ can

¹ B. Hauréau, *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, Tome xxx, Paris, 1888, pp. 289 sqq.: *Jehan de Vignay*, Grammmarien, Professeur à Dijon.

² H. de Jubainville, *Recherches sur l'origine de la Propriété Foncière et des Noms de Lieux habités en France*, Paris, 1890, pp. 170 sqq.; pp. 487 sqq.

³ See J. Sabatier, *Encyclopédie des Noms Propres*, Paris, 1865, pp. 151, 188.

⁴ See Gindre de Nancy, *Dictionnaire des Communes de la France*, Paris, 1885, p. 904.

⁵ Pasinus, *loc. cit.*

be explained as a simple variant spelling common in Italy, since *b* and *v* were easily interchanged in early Italian.¹ It may also be borne in mind that *b* and *v* very much resemble each other in many late French manuscripts. Likewise, we know that the French language was very unstable during the early part of the fourteenth century,² and thus would arise the variants ending in *-oy*, just as we have the old form *estoy* for modern *étais*. Thus we have accounted for all the variants of Vignay, except *Vingnai*, found in the oldest manuscript of the *Miroir Historial*.³ This latter form incorporates an *n* before the *g* solely to indicate that the *gn* was nasal.

Now we have eliminated all the forms except *Vignay* and *Vingnai*, either of which the spelling of the time in its variability would permit. To compare the relative frequency in the occurrence of each form I have noted twelve spellings from the earlier manuscripts themselves. Of these twelve forms one is written *Jehan du Vingnai*,⁴ four are spelled *Jehan du Vignay*,⁵ and seven have the form *Jehan de Vignay*.⁶ In the last group, one manuscript⁷ is dated 1348, which date was but

¹ Cf. Parodi, *Del Passagio di Vin B e di Certe Perturbazioni delle Leggi Fonetiche nel Latino Volgare, Romania*, Vol. xxvii (1898), pp. 177-240.

² On this subject cf. M. Brunot's article on *Les XIVe Siècle*, pp. 533 sqq. in Petit de Julleville's *Littérature française*, Vol. II. Cf. also *infra*, p. 12, where is quoted a passage from Jehan de Vignay.

³ Paris, Bibl. Nationale, fr. 316. For a photograph and facsimile from this manuscript cf. Suchier und Birch-Hirschfeld, *Geschichte der Französischen Litteratur*, opp. p. 261.

⁴ The form *Jehan du Vingnai* is the one adopted by Jordan, *Jehan du Vingnai und sein Kirchenspiegel* (Halle dissertation, 1905), p. 5. The reason given by Dr. Jordan for adopting this form is that it is found in MS. B. N. f. 316, in his opinion from the pen of Jehan de Vignay himself. However at the beginning and close of the *Miroir de l'Eglise*, the text of which he publishes, the form used is *Jehan de Vignay*. Dr. Jordan also mentions in this connection the other usual spellings to be found in the manuscripts.

⁵ Carpentras, Bibl. Mun., 402; London, British Museum, Royal 19. D. i; Paris, Bibl. Nat., fr. 242; Ashburnham-Barrois, 19.

⁶ Bruxelles, Bibl. Royale, 9467; La Vallière-Sale, no. 263; Paris, Bibl. Nat. fr. 241, 244, 245, 19810; Roma, Bibl. Vaticana, Reg. 1678.

⁷ Paris, Bibl. Nationale, fr. 241.

some fifteen years after the original work of de Vignay was finished. This fact, proximity in date, ought to be of much importance in deciding the proper spelling of our author's name.

Accepting these data, we must assume that the usual spelling of our author's name in his own time was *Jehan de Vignay*.

Let us now pass to the main facts of the author's life. I have not been able to find any information concerning him in the leading histories of French literature, except the bare mention that Jehan de Vignay was a translator of the Middle Ages. The following histories of Old-French Literature mention him:

1. Petit de Julleville, *Littérature française*, Paris, 1896; Vol. II, pp. 262, 270, 299, 313.
2. Suchier und Birch-Hirschfeld, *Geschichte der Französischen Litteratur*, Leipzig und Wien, 1900; opp. p. 261.
3. G. Gröber, *Grundriss der Romanischen Philologie*, II. Band, I. Abteilung, Strasburg, 1902; pp. 984, 990, 1012, 1015, 1020, 1023 f., 1027, 1030.
4. Voretzsch, *Einführung in das Studium der Altfranzösischen Litteratur*, Halle, 1905; p. 498.

In order, therefore, to give any account of de Vignay's life, we have to look to his own works, from which we are able to gather a few facts.

A few additional and corroborative statements are drawn from B. Hauréau's article on Jean de Vignai in Vol. xxx of the *Histoire Littéraire de la France*,¹ and from S. Berger's *La Bible française au Moyen Age*.² His father's name has only recently been discovered in a legal account of a most important incident in Jehan de Vignay's life from the Archives Nationales in Paris.³

¹ Cf. B. Hauréau, *loc. cit.*

² S. Berger, *La Bible française au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1884; p. 221. 5me partie: *Versions du XIVe Siècle, Jean de Vignay*.

³ Cf. Appendix e, where the legal document is given in full. Of course there is a possibility that this refers to another man of identical name. But the evidence seems to indicate that this Latin chart concerns our author; especially as it is dated about five years before he commenced his great literary work.