

The
Life of Thomas Paine
With a History of his
Literary, Political and Religious Career
in
America, France, and England

by
Moncure Daniel Conway

Volume II.

Moncure Daniel Conway
The Life of Thomas Paine.
With a History of his
Literary, Political and Religious Career
In America, France, and England

Volume II.

To Which is Added
a Sketch of Paine
by William Cobbett

1908

This issue 2024
by grundskyld.dk

Content

Content.....	3
Chapter I. "Kill the King, but not the Man".....	5
Chapter II. An Outlawed English Ambassador	17
Chapter III. Revolution vs. Constitution.....	29
Chapter IV. A Garden in the Faubourg St. Denis.....	51
Chapter V. A Conspiracy.....	64
Chapter VI. A Testimony under the Guillotine	78
Chapter VII. A Minister and his Prisoner	90
Chapter VIII. Sick and in Prison.....	102
Chapter IX. A Restoration	122
Chapter X. The Silence of Washington	132
Chapter XI. <i>The Age Of Reason</i>	143
Chapter XII. Friendships	172
Chapter XIII. Theophilanthropy	186
Chapter XIV. The Republican Abdiel	207
Chapter XV. The Last Year in Europe.	226
Chapter XVI. The American Inquisition	238
Chapter XVII. New Rochelle and the Bonneville.....	254
Chapter XVIII. A New York Prometheus	280
Chapter XIX. Personal Traits	302
Chapter XX. Death and Resurrection	314
Appendix A. The Cobbett Papers.	332
Thomas Paine, A Sketch of his Life and Character.....	334
Appendix B. The Hall Manuscripts	360
Letter. Philadelphia, August 30, 1785.	360
Appendix C. Portraits of Paine	372

Chapter I. "Kill the King, but not the Man"

Dumas' hero, Dr. Gilbert (in *Ange Pitou*), an idealization of Paine, interprets his hopes and horrors on the opening of the fateful year 1793. Dr. Gilbert's pamphlets had helped to found liberty in the New World, but sees that it may prove the germ of total ruin to the Old World.

"A new world," repeated Gilbert; "that is to say, a vast open space, a clear table to work upon,—no laws, but no abuses; no ideas, but no prejudices. In France, thirty thousand square leagues of territory for thirty millions of people; that is to say, should the space be equally divided, scarcely room for a cradle or a grave for each. Out yonder, in America, two hundred thousand square leagues for three millions of people; frontiers which are ideal, for they border on the desert, which is to say, immensity. In those two hundred thousand leagues, navigable rivers, having a course of a thousand leagues; virgin forests, of which God alone knows the limits,—that is to say, all the elements of life, of civilization, and of a brilliant future. Oh, how easy it is, Billot, when a man is called Lafayette, and is accustomed to wield a sword; when a man is called Washington, and is accustomed to reflect deeply,—how easy is it to combat against walls of wood, of earth, of stone, of human flesh! But when, instead of founding, it is necessary to destroy; when we see in the old order things that we are obliged to attack,—walls of bygone, crumbling ideas; and that behind the ruins even of these walls crowds of people and of interests still take refuge; when, after having found the idea, we find that in order to make the people adopt it, it will be necessary perhaps to decimate that people, from the old who remember to the child who has still to learn; from the recollection which is the monument to the instinct that is its germ—then, oh then, Billot, it is a task that will make all shudder who can see beneath the horizon. ... I shall, however, persevere, for although I see obstacles, I can perceive the end; and that end is splendid, Billot. It is not the liberty of France alone that I dream of; it is the liberty of the whole world. It is not the physical equality; it is equality before the law,—equality of rights. It is not only the fraternity of our own citizens, but of all

nations. ... Forward, then, and over the heaps of our dead bodies may one day march the generations of which this boy here is in the advanced guard!"

Though Dr. Gilbert has been in the Bastille, though he barely escapes the bullet of a revolutionist, he tries to unite the throne and the people. So, as we have seen, did Paine struggle until the King took flight, and, over his own signature, branded all his pledges as extorted lies. Henceforth for the King personally he has no respect; yet the whole purpose of his life is now to save that of the prisoner. Besides his humane horror of capital punishment, especially in a case which involves the heads of thousands, Paine foresees Nemesis fashioning her wheels in every part of Europe, and her rudder across the ocean,—where America beholds in Louis XVI. her deliverer.

Paine's outlawry, announced by Kersaint in Convention, January 1st, was more eloquent for wrath than he for clemency. Under such menaces the majority for sparing Louis shrank with the New Year; French pride arose, and with Danton was eager to defy despots by tossing to them the head of a king. Poor Paine found his comrades retreating. What would a knowledge of the French tongue have been worth to this leading republican of the world, just then the one man sleeplessly seeking to save a King's life! He could not plead with his enraged republicans, who at length overpowered even Brissot, so far as to draw him into the fatal plan of voting for the King's death, coupled with submission to the verdict of the people. Paine saw that there was at the moment no people, but only an infuriated clan. He was now defending a forlorn hope, but he struggled with a heroism that would have commanded the homage of Europe had not its courts been also clans. He hit on a scheme which he hoped might, in that last extremity, save the real revolution from a suicidal inhumanity. It was the one statesmanlike proposal of the time: that the King should be held as a hostage for the peaceful behavior of other kings, and, when their war on France had ceased, banished to the United States.

On January 15th, before the vote on the King's punishment was put, Paine gave his manuscript address to the president: debate closed before it could be read, and it was printed. He argued that the Assembly, in bringing back Louis when he had abdicated and fled,

was the more guilty; and against his transgressions it should be remembered that by his aid the shackles of America were broken.

"Let then those United States be the guard and the asylum of Louis Capet. There, in the future, remote from the miseries and crimes of royalty, he may learn from, the constant presence of public prosperity, that the true system of government consists not in monarchs, but in fair, equal, and honorable representation. In recalling this circumstance, and submitting this proposal, I consider myself a citizen of both countries. I submit it as an American who feels the debt of gratitude he owes to every Frenchman. I submit it as a man, who, albeit an adversary of kings, forgets not that they are subject to human frailties. I support my proposal as a citizen of the French Republic, because it appears to me the best and most politic measure that can be adopted. As far as my experience in public life extends, I have ever observed that the great mass of people are always just, both in their intentions and their object; but the true method of attaining such purpose does not always appear at once. The English nation had groaned under the Stuart despotism. Hence Charles I. was executed; but Charles II. was restored to all the powers his father had lost. Forty years later the same family tried to re-establish their oppression; the nation banished the whole race from its territories. The remedy was effectual; the Stuart family sank into obscurity, merged itself in the masses, and is now extinct."

He reminds the Convention that the king had two brothers out of the country who might naturally desire his death: the execution of the king might make them presently plausible pretenders to the throne, around whom their foreign enemies would rally: while the man recognized by foreign powers as the rightful monarch of France was living there could be no such pretender.

"It has already been proposed to abolish the penalty of death, and it is with infinite satisfaction that I recollect the humane and excellent oration pronounced by Robespierre on the subject, in the constituent Assembly. Monarchical governments have trained the human race to sanguinary punishments, but the people should not follow the examples of their oppressors in such vengeance. As France has been the first of European nations to abolish royalty,

let her also be the first to abolish the punishment of death, and to find out a milder and more effectual substitute."

This was admirable art. Under shelter of Robespierre's appeal against the death penalty, the "Mountain"¹ could not at the moment break the force of Paine's plea by reminding the Convention of his Quaker sentiments. It will be borne in mind that up to this time Robespierre was not impressed, nor Marat possessed, by the homicidal demon. Marat had felt for Paine a sort of contemptuous kindness, and one day privately said to him: "It is you, then, who believe in a republic; you have too much sense to believe in such a dream." Robespierre, according to Lamartine, "affected for the cosmopolitan radicalism of Paine the respect of a neophyte for ideas not understood." Both leaders now suspected that Paine had gone over to the "Brissotins," as the Girondists were beginning to be called. However, the Brissotins, though a majority, had quailed before the ferocity with which the Jacobins had determined on the king's death. M. Taine declares that the victory of the minority in this case was the familiar one of reckless violence over the more civilized—the wild beast over the tame. Louis Blanc denies that the Convention voted, as one of them said, under poignards; but the signs of fear are unmistakeable.

Vergniaud had declared it an insult for any one to suppose he would vote for the king's death, but he voted for it. Villette was threatened with death if he did not vote for that of the king. Sievès, who had attacked Paine for republicanism, voted death. "What," he afterward said—"what were the tribute of my glass of wine in that torrent of brandy?" But Paine did not withhold his cup of cold water. When his name was called he cried out: "I vote for the detention of Louis till the end of the war, and after that his perpetual banishment." He spoke his well prepared vote in French, and may have given courage to others. For even under poignards—the most formidable

¹ So called from the high benches on which these members sat. The seats of the Girondists on the floor were called the "Plain," and after their over-throw the "Marsh."

being liability to a charge of royalism—the vote had barely gone in favor of death.¹

The fire-breathing Mountain felt now that its supremacy was settled. It had learned its deadly art of conquering a thinking majority by recklessness. But suddenly another question was sprung upon the Convention: Shall the execution be immediate, or shall there be delay? The Mountain groans and hisses as the question is raised, but the dictation had not extended to this point, and the question must be discussed. Here is one more small chance for Paine's poor royal client. Can the execution only be postponed it will probably never be executed.

Unfortunately Marat, whose thirst for the King's blood is almost cannibalistic, can read on Paine's face his elation. He realizes that this American, with Washington behind him, has laid before the Convention a clear and consistent scheme for utilizing the royal prisoner. The king's neck under a suspended knife, it will rest with the foreign enemies of France whether it shall fall or not; while the magnanimity of France and its respect for American gratitude will prevail. Paine, then, must be dealt with somehow in this new debate about delay.

He might, indeed, have been dealt with summarily had not the *Moniteur* done him an opportune service; on January 17th and 18th it printed Paine's unspoken argument for mercy, along with Erskine's speech at his trial in London, and the verdict. So on the 19th, when Paine entered the Convention, it was with the prestige not only of one outlawed by Great Britain for advocating the Rights of Man, but of a representative of the best Englishmen and their principles. It would be vain to assail the author's loyalty to the republic. That he would speak that day was certain, for on the morrow (20th) the final vote was to be taken. The Mountain could not use on Paine their weapon against Girondins; they could not accuse the author of the

¹ Upwards of three hundred voted with Paine, who says that the majority by which death was carried, unconditionally, was twenty-five. As a witness who had watched the case, his testimony may correct the estimate of Carlyle:

"Death by a small majority of Fifty-three. Nay, if we deduct from the one side, and add to the other, a certain Twenty-six who said Death but coupled some faintest ineffectual surmise of mercy with it, the majority will be but One." See also Paine's *Mémoire, etc.. à Monroe*.

Rights of Man of being royalist. When he had mounted the tribune, and the clerk (Bancal, Franklin's friend) was beginning to read his speech, Marat cried, "I submit that Thomas Paine is incompetent to vote on this question; being a Quaker his religious principles are opposed to the death-penalty." There was great confusion for a time. The anger of the Jacobins was extreme, says Guizot, and "they refused to listen to the speech of Paine, the American, till respect for his courage gained him a hearing."¹ Demands for freedom of speech gradually subdued the interruptions, and the secretary proceeded:

"Very sincerely do I regret the Convention's vote of yesterday for death. I have the advantage of some experience; it is near twenty years that I have been engaged in the cause of liberty, having contributed something to it in the revolution of the United States of America. My language has always been that of liberty and humanity, and I know by experience that nothing so exalts a nation as the union of these two principles, under all circumstances. I know that the public mind of France, and particularly that of Paris, has been heated and irritated by the dangers to which they have been exposed; but could we carry our thoughts into the future, when the dangers are ended, and the irritations forgotten, what to-day seems an act of justice may then appear an act of vengeance. [*Murmurs.*] My anxiety for the cause of France has become for the moment concern for its honor. If, on my return to America, I should employ myself on a history of the French Revolution, I had rather record a thousand errors dictated by humanity, than one inspired by a justice too severe. I voted against an appeal to the people, because it appeared to me that the Convention was needlessly wearied on that point; but I so voted in the hope that this Assembly would pronounce against death, and for the same punishment that the nation would have voted, at least in my opinion, that is, for reclusion during the war and banishment thereafter. That is the punishment most efficacious, because it includes the whole family at once, and none other can so operate. I am still against the appeal to the primary assemblies, because there is a better method. This Convention has been elected to form a Constitution, which will be submitted to the primary assemblies. After its

¹ *History of France*, vi., p. 136.

acceptance a necessary consequence will be an election, and another Assembly.

We cannot suppose that the present Convention will last more than five or six months. The choice of new deputies will express the national opinion on the propriety or impropriety of your sentence, with as much efficacy as if those primary assemblies had been consulted on it. "As the duration of our functions here cannot be long, it is a part of our duty to consider the interests of those who shall replace us. If by any act of ours the number of the nation's enemies shall be needlessly increased, and that of its friends diminished,—at a time when the finances may be more strained than to-day,—we should not be justifiable for having thus unnecessarily heaped obstacles in the path of our successors. Let us therefore not be precipitate in our decisions. "France has but one ally—the United States of America. That is the only nation that can furnish France with naval provisions, for the kingdoms of northern Europe are, or soon will be, at war with her. It happens, unfortunately, that the person now under discussion is regarded in America as a deliverer of their country. I can assure you that his execution will there spread universal sorrow, and it is in your power not thus to wound the feelings of your ally. Could I speak the French language I would descend to your bar, and in their name become your petitioner to respite the execution of the sentence on Louis."

Here were loud murmurs from the "Mountain," answered with demands for liberty of opinion. Thuriot sprang to his feet crying, "This is not the language of Thomas Paine." Marat mounted the tribune and asked Paine some questions, apparently in English, then descending he said to the Assembly in French: "I denounce the interpreter, and I maintain that such is not the opinion of Thomas Paine. It is a wicked and faithless translation."¹

¹ "Venant d'un démocrate tel que Thomas Paine, d'un homme qui avait vécu parmi les Américains, d'un penseur, cette déclaration parut si dangereuse à Marat que, pour en détruire l'effet, il n'hésita pas à s'écrier: 'Je dénonce le truchement. Je soutiens que ce n'est point là l'opinion de Thomas Paine. C'est une traduction infidèle.'"—Louis Blanc. See also *Histoire Parlementaire*, xxiii., p. 250.

These words, audacious as mendacious, caused a tremendous uproar. Garran came to the rescue of the frightened clerk, declaring that he had read the original, and the translation was correct. Paine stood silent and calm during the storm. The clerk proceeded:

"Your Executive Committee will nominate an ambassador to Philadelphia; my sincere wish is that he may announce to America that the National Convention of France, out of pure friendship to America, has consented to respite Louis. That people, your only ally, have asked you by my vote to delay the execution.

"Ah, citizens, give not the tyrant of England the triumph of seeing the man perish on a scaffold who helped my dear brothers of America to break his chains!"

At the conclusion of this speech Marat "launched himself into the middle of the hall" and cried out that Paine had "voted against the punishment of death because he was a Quaker." Paine replied, "I voted against it both morally and politically."

Had the vote been taken that day perhaps Louis might have escaped. Brissot, shielded from charges of royalism by Paine's republican fame, now strongly supported his cause. "A cruel precipitation," he cried, "may alienate our friends in England, Ireland, America. Take care! The opinion of European peoples is worth to you armies!" But all this only brought out the Mountain's particular kind of courage; they were ready to defy the world—Washington included—in order to prove that a King's neck was no more than any other man's. Marat's clan—the "Nihilists" of the time, whose strength was that they stopped at nothing—had twenty-four hours to work in; they surrounded the Convention next day with a mob howling for "justice!" Fifty-five members were absent; of the 690 present a majority of seventy decided that Louis XVI. should die within twenty-four hours.

A hundred years have passed since that tragedy of poor Louis; graves have given up their dead; secrets of the hearts that then played their part are known. The world can now judge between England's Outlaw and England's King of that day. For it is established, as we have seen, both by English and French archives, that while Thomas Paine was toiling night and day to save the life of Louis that life lay in the hand of the British Ministry. Some writers question the historic

truth of the offer made by Danton, but none can question the refusal of intercession, urged by Fox and others at a time when (as Count d'Estaing told Morris) the Convention was ready to give Pitt the whole French West Indies to keep him quiet. It was no doubt with this knowledge that Paine declared from the tribune that George III. would triumph in the execution of the King who helped America to break England's chains. Brissot also knew it when with weighed words he reported for his Committee (January 12th): "The grievance of the British Cabinet against France is not that Louis is in judgment, but that Thomas Paine wrote *The Rights of Man*." "The militia were armed," says Louis Blanc, "in the south-east of England troops received order to march to London, the meeting of Parliament was advanced forty days, the Tower was reinforced by a new garrison, in fine there was unrolled a formidable preparation of war against—Thomas Paine's book on the Rights of Man!"¹ Incredible as this may appear the debates in the House of Commons, on which it is fairly founded, would be more incredible were they not duly reported in the "Parliamentary History."² In the debates on the Alien Bill, permitting the King to order any foreigner out of the country at will, on making representations to the French Convention in behalf of the life of Louis, on augmenting the military forces with direct reference to France, the recent trial of Paine was rehearsed, and it was plainly shown that the object of the government was to suppress freedom of the press by Terror. Erskine was denounced for defending Paine and for afterwards attending a meeting of the "Society of Friends of the Liberty of the Press," to whose resolutions on Paine's case his name was attached. Erskine found gallant defenders in the House, among them Fox, who demanded of Pitt: "Can you not prosecute Paine without an army?" Burke at this time enacted a dramatic scene. Having stated that three thousand daggers had been ordered at Birmingham by an Englishman, he drew from his pocket a dagger, cast it on the floor of the House of Commons, and cried: "That is what we are to get from an alliance with France!" Paine—Paine—Paine—was the burden laid on Pitt, who had said to Lady Hester Stanhope: "Tom Paine is quite right."

¹ *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol. viii., p. 96.

² Vol. xxv.

That Thomas Paine and his *Rights of Man* were the actual cause of the English insults to which their declaration of war replied was so well understood in the French Convention that its first answer to the menaces was to appoint Paine and Condorcet to write an address to the English people.¹

It is noticeable that on the question whether the judgment on the King's fate should be submitted to the people, Paine voted "No." His belief in the right of all to representation implied distrust of the immediate voice of the masses. The King had said that if his case were referred to the people "he should be massacred." Gouverneur Morris had heard this, and no doubt communicated it to Paine, who was in consultation with him on his plan of sending Louis to America.² Indeed, it is probable that popular suffrage would have ratified the decree. Nevertheless, it was a fair "appeal to the people" which Paine made, after the fatal verdict, in expressing to the Convention his belief that the people would not have done so. For after the decree the helplessness of the prisoner appealed to popular compassion, and on the fatal day the tide had turned. Four days after the execution the American Minister writes to Jefferson: "The greatest care was taken to prevent a concourse of people. This proves a conviction that the majority was not favorable to that severe measure. In fact the great mass of the people mourned the fate of their unhappy prince."

To Paine the death of an "unhappy prince" was no more a subject for mourning than that of the humblest criminal—for, with whatever extenuating circumstances, a criminal he was to the republic he had sworn to administer. But the impolicy of the execution, the resentment uselessly incurred, the loss of prestige in America, were felt by Paine as a heavy blow to his cause—always the international republic. He was, however, behind the scenes enough to know that the blame rested mainly on America's old enemy and his league of foreign courts against liberated France. The man who, when Franklin said "Where liberty is, there is my country," answered "Where liberty is not, there is mine," would not despair of the infant republic be-

¹ *Le Département des Affaires Étrangères pendant la Révolution, 1787-1804*. Par Frédéric Masson, Bibliothécaire da Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. Paris, 1877, p. 273.

² Morris' *Diary*, ii., pp. 19, 27, 32.

cause of its blunders. Attributing these outbursts to maddening conspiracies around and within the new-born nation, he did not believe there could be peace in Europe so long as it was ruled by George III. He therefore set himself to the struggle, as he had done in 1776. Moreover, Paine has faith in Providence.¹

At this time, it should be remembered, opposition to capital punishment was confined to very few outside of the despised sect of Quakers. In the debate three, besides Paine, gave emphatic expression to that sentiment, Manuel, Condorcet,—Robespierre! The former, in giving his vote against death, said: "To Nature belongs the right of death. Despotism has taken it from her; Liberty will return it." As for Robespierre, his argument was a very powerful reply to Paine, who had reminded him of the bill he had introduced into the old National Assembly for the abolition of capital punishment. He did, indeed, abhor it, he said; it was not his fault if his views had been disregarded. But why should men who then opposed him suddenly revive the claims of humanity when the penalty happened to fall upon a King? Was the penalty good enough for the people, but not for a King? If there were any exception in favor of such a punishment, it should be for a royal criminal.

This opinion of Robespierre is held by some humane men. The present writer heard from Professor Francis W. Newman—second to none in philanthropy and compassionateness—a suggestion that the death penalty should be reserved for those placed at the head of affairs who betray their trust, or set their own above the public interests to the injury of a Commonwealth.

The real reasons for the execution of the King closely resemble those of Washington for the execution of Major André, notwithstand-

¹ "The same spirit of fortitude that insured success to America will insure it to France, for it is impossible to conquer a nation determined to be free. ... Man is ever a stranger to the ways by which Providence regulates the order of things. The interference of foreign despots may serve to introduce into their own enslaved countries the principles they come to oppose. Liberty and equality are blessings too great to be the inheritance of France alone. It is honour to her to be their first champion; and she may now say to her enemies, with a mighty voice, 'O, ye Austrians, ye Prussians! ye who now turn your bayonets against us, it is for you, it is for all Europe, it is for all mankind, and not for France alone, that she raises the standard of Liberty and Equality!'"—Paine's address to the Convention (September 25, 1792) after taking his seat.

ing the sorrow of the country, with which the Commander sympathized. The equal nationality of the United States, repudiated by Great Britain, was in question. To hang spies was, however illogically, a conventional usage among nations. Major André must die, therefore, and must be refused the soldier's death for which he petitioned. For a like reason Europe must be shown that the French Convention is peer of their scornful Parliaments; and its fundamental principle, the equality of men, could not admit a King's escape from the penalty which would be unhesitatingly inflicted on a "Citizen." The King had assumed the title of Citizen, had worn the republican cockade; the apparent concession of royal inviolability, in the moment of his betrayal of the compromise made with him, could be justified only on the grounds stated by Paine,—impolicy of slaying their hostage, creating pretenders, alienating America; and the honor of exhibiting to the world, by a salient example, the Republic's magnanimity in contrast with the cruelty of Kings.

Chapter II. An Outlawed English Ambassador

Soon after Paine had taken his seat in the Convention, Lord Fortescue wrote to Miles, an English agent in Paris, a letter fairly expressive of the feelings, fears, and hopes of his class.

"Tom Paine is just where he ought to be—a member of the Convention of Cannibals. One would have thought it impossible that any society upon the face of the globe should have been fit for the reception of such a being until the late deeds of the National Convention have shown them to be most fully qualified. His vocation will not be complete, nor theirs either, till his head finds its way to the top of a pike, which will probably not be long first."¹

But if Paine was so fit for such a Convention, why should they behead him? The letter betrays a real perception that Paine possesses humane principles, and an English courage, which would bring him into danger. This undertone of Fortescue's invective represented the profound confidence of Paine's adherents in England. When tidings came of the King's trial and execution, whatever glimpses they gained of their outlawed leader showed him steadfast as a star caught in one wave and another of that turbid tide. Many, alas, needed apologies, but Paine required none. That one Englishman, standing on the tribune for justice and humanity, amid three hundred angry Frenchmen in uproar, was as sublime a sight as Europe witnessed in those days. To the English radical the outlawry of Paine was as the

¹ This letter, dated September 26, 1792, appears in the Miles Correspondence (London, 1890). There are indications that Miles was favorably disposed towards Paine, and on that account, perhaps, was subjected to influence by his superiors. As an example of the way in which just minds were poisoned towards Paine, a note of Miles may be mentioned. He says he was "told by Col. Bosville, a declared friend of Paine, that his manners and conversation were coarse, and he loved the brandy bottle." But just as this Miles Correspondence was appearing in London, Dr. Grèce found the manuscript diary of Rickman, who had discovered (as two entries show) that this "declared friend of Paine," Col. Bosville, and professed friend of himself, was going about uttering injurious falsehoods concerning him (Rickman), seeking to alienate his friends at the moment when he most needed them. Rickman was a bookseller engaged in circulating Paine's works. There is little doubt that this wealthy Col. Bosville was at the time unfriendly to the radicals. He was staying in Paris on Paine's political credit, while depreciating him.

tax on light, which was presently walling up London windows, or extorting from them the means of war against ideas.¹ The trial of Paine had elucidated nothing, except that, like Jupiter, John Bull had the thunderbolts, and Paine the arguments. Indeed, it is difficult to discover any other Englishman who at the moment pre-eminently stood for principles now proudly called English.

But Paine too presently held thunderbolts. Although his efforts to save Louis had offended the "Mountain," and momentarily brought him into the danger Lord Fortescue predicted, that party was not yet in the ascendant. The Girondists were still in power, and though some of their leaders had bent before the storm, that they might not be broken, they had been impressed both by the courage and the tactics of Paine. "The Girondists consulted Paine," says Lamartine, "and placed him on the Committee of Surveillance." At this moment many Englishmen were in France, and at a word from Paine some of their heads might have mounted on the pike which Lord Fortescue had imaginatively prepared for the head that wrote *The Rights of Man*. There remained, for instance, Mr. Munro, already mentioned. This gentleman, in a note preserved in the English Archives, had written to Lord Grenville (September 8, 1792) concerning Paine: "What must a nation come to that has so little discernment in the election of their representatives, as to elect such a fellow?" But having lingered in Paris after England's formal declaration of war (February 11th), Munro was cast into prison. He owed his release to that "fellow" Paine, and must be duly credited with having acknowledged it, and changed his tone for the rest of his life,—which he probably owed to the English committeeman. Had Paine met with the fate which Lords Gower and Fortescue hoped, it would have gone hard with another eminent countryman of theirs,—Captain Grimstone, R.A. This personage, during a dinner party at the Palais Égalité, got into a controversy with Paine, and, forgetting that the English Jove

¹ In a copy of the first edition of *The Rights of Man*, which I bought in London, I found, as a sort of book-mark, a bill for 1L. 6s. 8d., two quarters' window-tax, due from Mr. Williamson, Upper Fitzroy Place. Windows closed with bricks are still seen in some of the gloomiest parts of London. I have in manuscript a bitter anathema of the time:

"God made the Light, and saw that it was good:
Pitt laid a tax on it,—G— d—his blood!"

could not in Paris safely answer argument with thunder, called Paine a traitor to his country and struck him a violent blow. Death was the penalty of striking a deputy, and Paine's friends were not unwilling to see the penalty inflicted on this stout young Captain who had struck a man of fifty-six. Paine had much trouble in obtaining from Barrère, of the Committee of Public Safety, a passport out of the country for Captain Grimstone, whose travelling expenses were supplied by the man he had struck.

In a later instance, related by Walter Savage Landor, Paine's generosity amounted to quixotism. The story is finely told by Landor, who says in a note: "This anecdote was communicated to me at Florence by Mr. Evans, a painter of merit, who studied under Lawrence, and who knew personally (Zachariah) Wilkes and Watt. In religion and politics he differed widely from Paine."

"Sir," said he, "let me tell you what he did for me. My name is Zachariah Wilkes. I was arrested in Paris and condemned to die. I had no friend here; and it was a time when no friend would have served me: Robespierre ruled. 'I am innocent!' I cried in desperation. 'I am innocent, so help me God! I am condemned for the offence of another.' I wrote a statement of my case with a pencil; thinking at first of addressing it to my judge, then of directing it to the president of the Convention. The jailer, who had been kind to me, gave me a gazette, and told me not to mind seeing my name, so many were there before it.

"O!" said I 'though you would not lend me your ink, do transmit this paper to the president.'

"No, my friend!" answered he gaily. 'My head is as good as yours, and looks as well between the shoulders, to my liking. Why not send it (if you send it anywhere) to the deputy Paine here?' pointing to a column in the paper.

"O God! he must hate and detest the name of Englishman: pelted, insulted, persecuted, plundered...'

"I could give it to him,' said the jailer.

"Do then!" said I wildly. 'One man more shall know my innocence.' He came within the half hour. I told him my name, that my employers were Watt and Boulton of Birmingham, that I had papers of the greatest consequence, that if I failed to transmit them, not only my life was in question, but my reputation. He replied: 'I

know your employers by report only; there are no two men less favourable to the principles I profess, but no two upon earth are honester. You have only one great man among you: it is Watt; for Priestley is gone to America. The church-and-king men would have jappanned him. He left to these philosophers of the rival school his house to try experiments on; and you may know, better than I do, how much they found in it of carbon and calx, of silex and argilla.'

"He examined me closer than my judge had done; he required my proofs. After a long time I satisfied him. He then said, 'The leaders of the Convention would rather have my life than yours. If by any means I can obtain your release on my own security, will you promise me to return within twenty days?' I answered, 'Sir, the security I can at present give you, is trifling... I should say a mere nothing.'

"Then you do not give me your word?' said he.

"I give it and will redeem it.'

"He went away, and told me I should see him again when he could inform me whether he had succeeded. He returned in the earlier part of the evening, looked fixedly upon me, and said, 'Zachariah Wilkes! if you do not return in twenty-four days (four are added) you will be the most unhappy of men; for had you not been an honest one, you could not be the agent of Watt and Boulton. I do not think I have hazarded much in offering to take your place on your failure: such is the condition.' I was speechless; he was unmoved. Silence was first broken by the jailer. 'He seems to get fond of the spot now he must leave it.' I had thrown my arms upon the table towards my liberator, who sat opposite, and I rested my head and breast upon it too, for my temples ached and tears had not yet relieved them. He said, 'Zachanah! follow me to the carriage.' The soldiers paid the respect due to his scarf, presenting arms, and drawing up in file as we went along. The jailer called for a glass of wine, gave it me, poured out another, and drank to our next meeting."¹

¹ Zachanah Wilkes did not fail to return, or Paine to greet him with safety, and the words, "There is yet English blood in England." But here Landor passes off into an imaginative picture of villages rejoicing at the fall of Robespierre. Paine himself

Another instance may be related in Paine's own words, written (March 20, 1806) to a gentleman in New York.

"Sir,—I will inform you of what I know respecting General Miranda, with whom I first became acquainted at New York, about the year 1783. He is a man of talents and enterprise, and the whole of his life has been a life of adventures.

"I went to Europe from New York in April, 1787. Mr. Jefferson was then Minister from America to France, and Mr. Littlepage, a Virginian (whom Mr. Jay knows), was agent for the king of Poland, at Paris. Mr. Littlepage was a young man of extraordinary talents, and I first met with him at Mr. Jefferson's house at dinner. By his intimacy with the king of Poland, to whom also he was chamberlain, he became well acquainted with the plans and projects of the Northern Powers of Europe. He told me of Miranda's getting himself introduced to the Empress Catharine of Russia, and obtaining a sum of money from her, four thousand pounds sterling; but it did not appear to me what the object was for which the money was given; it appeared a kind of retaining fee.

"After I had published the first part of the *Rights of Man* in England, in the year 1791, I met Miranda at the house of Turnbull and Forbes, merchants, Devonshire Square, London. He had been a little before this in the employ of Mr. Pitt, with respect to the affair of Nootka Sound, but I did not at that time know it; and I will, in the course of this letter, inform you how this connection between Pitt and Miranda ended; for I know it of my own knowledge.

"I published the second part of the *Rights of Man* in London, in February, 1792, and I continued in London till I was elected a member of the French Convention, in September of that year; and went from London to Paris to take my seat in the Convention, which was to meet the 20th of that month. I arrived in Paris on the 19th. After the Convention met, Miranda came to Paris, and was appointed general of the French army, under General Dumouriez. But as the affairs of that army went wrong in the beginning of the year 1793, Miranda was suspected, and was brought under arrest to Paris to take his trial. He summoned me to appear to his charac-

had then been in prison seven months; so we can only conjecture the means by which Zachariah was liberated.—Lander's Works, London, 1853, i., p. 296.

ter, and also a Mr. Thomas Christie, connected with the house of Turnbull and Forbes. I gave my testimony as I believed, which was, that his leading object was and had been the emancipation of his country, Mexico, from the bondage of Spain; for I did not at that time know of his engagements with Pitt Mr. Christie's evidence went to show that Miranda did not come to France as a necessitous adventurer; but believed he came from public-spirited motives, and that he had a large sum of money in the hands of Turnbull and Forbes. The house of Turnbull and Forbes was then in a contract to supply Paris with flour. Miranda was acquitted.

"A few days after his acquittal he came to see me, and in a few days afterwards I returned his visit. He seemed desirous of satisfying me that he was independent, and that he had money in the hands of Turnbull and Forbes. He did not tell me of his affair with old Catharine of Russia, nor did I tell him that I knew of it. But he entered into conversation with respect to Nootka Sound, and put into my hands several letters of Mr. Pitt's to him on that subject; amongst which was one which I believe he gave me by mistake, for when I had opened it, and was beginning to read it, he put forth his hand and said, 'O, that is not the letter I intended'; but as the letter was short I soon got through with it, and then returned it to him without making any remarks upon it. The dispute with Spain was then compromised; and Pitt compromised with Miranda for his services by giving him twelve hundred pounds sterling, for this was the contents of the letter.

"Now if it be true that Miranda brought with him a credit upon certain persons in New York for sixty thousand pounds sterling, it is not difficult to suppose from what quarter the money came; for the opening of any proposals between Pitt and Miranda was already made by the affair of Nootka Sound. Miranda was in Paris when Mr. Monroe arrived there as Minister; and as Miranda wanted to get acquainted with him, I cautioned Mr. Monroe against him, and told him of the affair of Nootka Sound, and the twelve hundred pounds.

"You are at liberty to make what use you please of this letter, and with my name to it."

Here we find a paid agent of Pitt calling on outlawed Paine for aid, by his help liberated from prison; and, when his true character is accidentally discovered, and he is at the outlaw's mercy, spared,—no doubt because this true English ambassador, who could not enter England, saw that at the moment passionate vengeance had taken the place of justice in Paris. Lord Gower had departed, and Paine must try and shield even his English enemies and their agents, where, as in Miranda's case, the agency did not appear to affect France. This was while his friends in England were hunted down with ferocity.

In the earlier stages of the French Revolution there was much sympathy with it among literary men and in the universities. Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, were leaders in the revolutionary cult at Oxford and Cambridge. By 1792, and especially after the institution of Paine's prosecution, the repression became determined. The memoir of Thomas Poole, already referred to, gives the experiences of a Somerset gentleman, a friend of Coleridge. After the publication of Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791) he became a "political Ishmaelite." "He made his appearance amongst the wigs and powdered locks of his kinsfolk and acquaintance, male and female, without any of the customary powder in his hair, which innocent novelty was a scandal to all beholders, seeing that it was the outward and visible sign of a love of innovation, a well-known badge of sympathy with democratic ideas."

Among Poole's friends, at Stowey, was an attorney named Symes, who lent him Paine's *Rights of Man*. After Paine's outlawry Symes met a cabinet-maker with a copy of the book, snatched it out of his hand, tore it up, and, having learned that it was lent him by Poole, propagated about the country that he (Poole) was distributing seditious literature about the country. Being an influential man, Poole prevented the burning of Paine in effigy at Stowey. As time goes on this country-gentleman and scholar finds the government opening his letters, and warning his friends that he is in danger.

"It was," he writes to a friend, "the boast an Englishman was wont to make that he could think, speak, and write whatever he thought proper, provided he violated no law, nor injured any individual. But now an absolute controul exists, not indeed over the imperceptible operations of the mind, for those no power of man can controul; but, what is the same thing, over the effects of those operations, and if

among these effects, that of speaking is to be checked, the soul is as much enslaved as the body in a cell of the Bastille. The man who once feels, nay fancies, this, is a slave. It shows as if the suspicious secret government of an Italian Republic had replaced the open, candid government of the English laws."

As Thomas Poole well represents the serious and cultured thought of young England in that time, it is interesting to read his judgment on the king's execution and the imminent war.

"Many thousands of human beings will be sacrificed in the ensuing contest, and for what? To support three or four individuals, called arbitrary kings, in the situation which they have usurped. I consider every Briton who loses his life in the war as much murdered as the King of France, and every one who approves the war, as signing the death-warrant of each soldier or sailor that falls. ... The excesses in France are great; but who are the authors of them? The Emperor of Germany, the King of Prussia, and Mr. Burke. Had it not been for their impertinent interference, I firmly believe the King of France would be at this moment a happy monarch, and that people would be enjoying every advantage of political liberty. ... The slave-trade, you will see, will not be abolished, because to be humane and honest now is to be a traitor to the constitution, a lover of sedition and licentiousness! But this universal depression of the human mind cannot last long."

It was in this spirit that the defence of a free press was undertaken in England. That thirty years' war was fought and won on the works of Paine. There were some "Lost Leaders": the king's execution, the reign of terror, caused reaction in many a fine spirit; but the rank and file followed their Thomas Paine with a faith that crowned heads might envy. The London men knew Paine thoroughly. The treasures of the world would not draw him, nor any terrors drive him, to the side of cruelty and inhumanity. Their eye was upon him. Had Paine, after the king's execution, despaired of the republic there might have ensued some demoralization among his followers in London. But they saw him by the side of the delivered prisoner of the Bastille, Brissot, an author well known in England, by the side of Condorcet and others of Franklin's honored circle, engaged in death-struggle with the fire-breathing dragon called "The Mountain." That was the

same unswerving man they had been following, and to all accusations against the revolution their answer was—Paine is still there!

A reign of terror in England followed the outlawry of Paine. Twenty-four men, at one time or another, were imprisoned, fined, or transported for uttering words concerning abuses such as now every Englishman would use concerning the same. Some who sold Paine's works were imprisoned before Paine's trial, while the seditious character of the books was not yet legally settled. Many were punished after the trial, by both fine and imprisonment. Newspapers were punished for printing extracts, and for having printed them before the trial.¹ For this kind of work old statutes passed for other purposes were impressed, new statutes framed, until Fox declared the Bill of Rights repealed, the constitution cut up by the roots, and the obedi-

¹ The first trial after Paine's, that of Thomas Spence (February 26, 1793), for selling *The Rights of Man*, failed through a flaw in the indictment, but the mistake did not occur again. At the same time William Holland was awarded a year's imprisonment and £100 fine for selling *Letter to the Addressers*. H. D. Symonds, for publishing *Rights of Man*, £20 fine and two years; for *Letter to the Addressers*, one year, £100 fine, with sureties in £1,000 for three years, and imprisonment till the fine be paid and sureties given. April 17, 1793, Richard Phillips, printer, Leicester, eighteen months. May 8th, J. Ridgway, London, selling *Rights of Man*, £100 and one year; *Letter to the Addressers*, one year, £100 fine; in each case sureties in £1,000, with imprisonment until fines paid and sureties given. Richard Peart, *Rights and Letter*, three months. William Belcher, *Rights and Letter*, three months. Daniel Holt, £50, four years. Messrs. Robinson, £200. Eaton and Thompson, the latter in Birmingham, were acquitted. Clio Rickman escaped punishment by running over to Paris. Dr. Currie (1793) writes: "The prosecutions that are commenced all over England against printers, publishers, etc., would astonish you; and most of these are for offences committed many months ago. The printer of the *Manchester Herald* has had seven different indictments preferred against him for paragraphs in his paper; and six different indictments for selling or disposing of six different copies of Paine,—all previous to the trial of Paine. The man was opulent, supposed worth £20,000; but these different actions will ruin him, as they were intended to do."—*Currie's Life*, i., p. 185. See Buckle's *History of Civilization*, etc., American éd., p. 352. In the cases where "gentlemen" were found distributing the works the penalties were ferocious. Fische Palmer was sentenced to seven years' transportation. Thomas Muir, for advising persons to read "the works of that wretched outcast Paine" (the Lord Advocate's words) was sentenced to fourteen years' transportation. This sentence was hissed. The tipstaff being ordered to take those who hissed into custody, replied: "My lord, they 're all hissing."

ence of the people to such "despotism" no longer "a question of moral obligation and duty, but of prudence."¹

From his safe retreat in Paris bookseller Rickman wrote his impromptu:

"Hail Briton's land! Hail freedom's shore!
Far happier than of old;
For in thy blessed realms no more
The *Rights of Man* are sold!"

The famous town-crier of Bolton, who reported to his masters that he had been round that place "and found in it neither the rights of man nor common sense," made a statement characteristic of the time. The aristocracy and gentry had indeed lost their humanity and their sense under a disgraceful panic. Their serfs, unable to read, were fairly represented by those who, having burned Paine in effigy, asked their employer if there was "any other gemman he would like burnt, for a glass o' beer." The White Bear (now replaced by the Criterion Restaurant) no longer knew its little circle of radicals. A symbol of how they were trampled out is discoverable in the "T. P." shoe-nails. These nails, with heads so lettered, were in great request among the gentry, who had only to hold up their boot-soles to show how they were trampling on Tom Paine and his principles. This at any rate was accurate. Manufacturers of vases also devised ceramic anathemas.²

¹ *Parl. Hist.*, xxxii., p. 383.

² There are two Paine pitchers in the Museum at Brighton, England. Both were made at Leeds, one probably before Paine's trial, since it presents a respectable full-length portrait, holding in his hand a book, and beneath, the words: "Mr. Thomas Paine, Author of *The Rights of Man*." The other shows a serpent with Paine's head, two sides being adorned with the following lines:

"God save the King, and all his subjects too,
Likewise his forces and commanders true,
May he their rights forever hence Maintain
Against all strife occasioned by Tom Paine."

"Prithee Tom Paine why wilt thou meddling be
In others' business which concerns not thee;
For while thereon thou dost extend thy cares
Thou dost at home neglect thine own affairs."

"God save the King!"

"Observe the wicked and malicious man
Projecting all the mischief that he can."

In all of this may be read the frantic fears of the King and aristocracy which were driving the Ministry to make good Paine's aphorism, "There is no English Constitution." An English Constitution was, however, in process of formation,—in prisons, in secret conclaves, in lands of exile, and chiefly in Paine's small room in Paris. Even in that time of Parisian turbulence and peril the hunted liberals of England found more security in France than in their native land.¹ For the eyes of the English reformer of that period, seeing events from prison or exile, there was a perspective such as time has now supplied to the historian. It is still difficult to distribute the burden of shame fairly. Pitt was unquestionably at first anxious to avoid war. That the King was determined on the war is certain; he refused to notice Wilberforce when he appeared at court after his separation

¹ When William Pitt died in 1806,—crushed under disclosures in the impeachment of Lord Melville,—the verdict of many sufferers was expressed in an "Epitaph Impromptu" (MS.) found among the papers of Thomas Rickman. It has some historic interest.

"Reader! with eye indignant view this bier;
The foe of all the human race lies here.
With talents small, and those directed, too,
Virtue and truth and wisdom to subdue,
He lived to every noble motive blind,
And died, the execration of mankind.

"Millions were butchered by his damned plan
To violate each sacred right of man;
Exulting he o'er earth each misery hurled,
And joyed to drench in tears and blood, the world.

"Myriads of beings wretched he has made
By desolating war, his favourite trade,
Who, robbed of friends and dearest ties, are left
Of every hope and happiness bereft.

"In private life made up of fuss and pride,
Not e'en his vices leaned to virtue's side;
Unsound, corrupt, and rotten at the core,
His cold and scoundrel heart was black all o'er;
Nor did one passion ever move his mind
That bent towards the tender, warm, and kind.

"Tyrant, and friend to war! we hail the day
When Death, to bless mankind, made thee his prey,
And rid the earth of all could earth disgrace,—
The foulest, bloodiest scourge of man's oppressed race."

from Pitt on that point. But the three attempts on his life, and his mental infirmity, may be pleaded for George III. Paine, in his letter to Dundas, wrote "Madjesty"; when Rickman objected, he said: "Let it stand." And it stands now as the best apology for the King, while it rolls on Pitt's memory the guilt of a twenty-two years' war for the subjugation of thought and freedom. In that last struggle of the barbarism surviving in civilization, it was shown that the madness of a populace was easily distanced by the cruelty of courts. Robespierre and Marat were humanitarian beside George and his Ministers; the Reign of Terror, and all the massacres of the French Revolution put together, were child's-play compared with the anguish and horrors spread through Europe by a war whose pretext was an execution England might have prevented.