

Thomas Paine

The Apostle of
Religious and Political Liberty

by
John E. Remsburg

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Bank of Wisdom

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Preface.

"Republics are ungrateful," is a maxim old almost as the republican idea itself, and the treatment that Thomas Paine has received at the hands of a people who, enjoying the freedom and boasting of the grandeur of this great Republic, teach their children to loathe his memory—the memory of him whose magic pen called it into being—is additional evidence of its truthfulness.

It can be said in palliation of this ingratitude on the part of the great mass of the American people, however, that it results from a lack of information regarding Paine's life. They have not been permitted to know the facts connected with his history. His true character has been studiously kept from public view. Those who have feared his influence have assumed a sort of censorship over all that has been written pertaining to him, condemning and suppressing as far as possible everything favorable to him, and approving and zealously aiding in the dissemination of everything derogatory to his reputation. By this means his noble qualities of soul have been dwarfed into infinitesimal atoms of virtue, while his faults have been magnified until they rise before us a towering Chimborazo of vice and crime.

Take up almost any popular history of the day, and you will find his services to our country either entirely ignored, or disposed of in a brief paragraph or a marginal note,—not because the writer is ignorant of Paine's true place in history, nor yet from a desire to wrong the man, but because he well knows that any attempt to render him full credit will detract from the popularity of his work,—a sacrifice he is not prepared to make.

I am free to confess that I have no admiration for the "Tom Paine" so often portrayed to us. There is nothing in the character to admire. But it should be remembered that this character is purely fictitious,—that it never existed outside the realms of imagination. It is a creation of Bigotry, produced in self-defence. With the "Tom Paine" of fiction I have nothing to do: it is with the Thomas Paine of history that I propose to deal.

In the investigation of this subject I have examined as far as possible everything bearing upon the life of Paine. I have endeavored to

judge impartially, alike the claims of his adherents and the charges of his opponents; and in rejecting some of the former, and most of the latter, I have been guided solely by a desire to establish the truth. Whatever verdict the public may pass upon this work, it cannot, I am sure, question the motives that prompted its conclusion. My task is at most a thankless one. He, who alone might thank me for my labors, is in his grave, unconscious of my humble effort in vindication of his memory.

J. E. R.

ATCHISON, KAN., Jan. 29, 1879.

Part I.
Life.

Chapter I.

Birth—Early History—Emigration to America—Services in The Cause of American Independence.

When first with awful front to crush her foes,
All bright in glittering arms, Columbia rose,
Frau thee our sons the generous mandate took,
As if from Heaven some oracle had spoke;
And when thy pen revealed the grand design,
'Twas done,—Columbia's liberty was thine."

IT is the fate of reformers to be doomed to disappointment. Enthusiasts by nature, and fully imbued with the justness and importance of the cause they advocate, they feel that the mere announcement of it should meet with a glad response. They see their fellow-beings bending beneath the weight of some slavish custom that despotism has imposed. With brave and loving hearts they rush to their deliverance, little dreaming that those they wish to save, will spurn the proffered aid, and smite the hand that would unbind their chains. But such is the blindness and ingratitude of man. The apostle of liberty becomes the martyr, and the brow that merits the laurel wreath too often wears the crown of thorns. Lafayette died with France a monarchy, and an imbecile on the throne; Kossuth pleaded the cause of his loved Hungary with an eloquence rarely surpassed, but the world was deaf to his appeals; Garibaldi struggled manfully to enhance the liberties of his countrymen, but only to lose his own; Castellar beheld the star of republicanism rise above the horizon in Spain, shine for one brief hour, and then go down in darkness.

But have these heroes lived, and labored, and suffered, all in vain? No, not in vain. Because their efforts were not crowned with immediate and complete success we must not count their lives a failure. The husbandman who sows to-day does not expect to look out upon waving fields of ripening grain tomorrow. He has learned to work and wait. He sows his seed in the autumn; it springs from the earth, and for a time gladdens the eye with its carpet of green. Then come the chilling, freezing blasts of winter; the deep snow falls, and for months it lies buried from sight. But it does not perish. Spring with her genial smiles of melting sunshine domes at last, the snowy man-

tle fades away, and those tiny blades are soon transformed into the rich, ripe harvest. So with these grand husbandmen of human liberty. They sowed the seed, it has already germinated, and, though it now lies hid for the most part beneath the snows of monarchy, it will yet appear and cover Europe with its golden harvest.

It is too early yet to form a proper estimate of the labors of Thomas Paine. When the *Rights of Man* shall have developed into the full and perfect flower of universal freedom,—when the *Age of Reason* shall have ripened into the golden harvest of universal mental enfranchisement,—then, and not till then, will his services be valued at their true worth.

I am not a disciple of Thomas Paine; I cannot accept as infallible authority all that he has written; I do not believe, as many of his followers would have us believe, that he represents the end of human progress,—the attainment of human perfection,—not at all. But, while I am not blind to his imperfections, I cannot close my eyes to his real merits, nor can I find words to express my contempt for those who do ignore his truly grand achievements.

To tell the story of this great man's life; to delineate the leading traits of his character and genius; and to repel the base calumnies that have been heaped against his name,—is my task.

One hundred and forty-two years ago, at Thetford, England, Thomas Paine was born. Upon the first half of his life I need but briefly dwell. He was of humble parentage; his father was a Quaker, his mother a member of the Church of England. The years of his boyhood were industriously employed, either at school or in his father's shop. At an early age he left the paternal roof and began alone the battle of life,—serving in the British navy, conducting an academy in London, engaging in mercantile pursuits, and performing the duties of exciseman.

While at London he formed the acquaintance of the learned Franklin, who induced him to cross the ocean and cast his lot with the people of the New World. He came to America near the close of 1774, and assumed editorial charge of a leading magazine of the day. His quick eye soon took in the situation here. He saw a tyrant, whom the world styled king, trampling the fair form of liberty beneath his feet; he saw the people sinking beneath the burden of unjust taxation; he

saw them crouching and cringing before the throne, pleading in vain for a redress of wrongs. His generous nature ever prompted him to espouse the cause of the weak and the oppressed, and the condition of the Colonies at this time could not fail to enlist his sympathy and services.

He associated with himself the ablest minds of America, and impressed them with the importance of her total separation from England. One of the early meetings of these patriots has been thus graphically described:—

"Grouped around a table, the glow of the lamp pouring full in their faces, are four persons,—a Boston Lawyer, a Philadelphia Printer, a Philadelphia Doctor, and a Virginia Planter.

"Let us look into the faces of these men. That man with the bold brow and resolute look is one John Adams, from Boston; next to him sits the calm-faced Benjamin Rush; there you see the marked face of the printer, one Benjamin Franklin; and, last of all, your eye rests upon a man distinguished above all others by his height, the noble outlines of his form, and the solemn dignity of his brow. That man is named Washington.

"These men are all members of the *Rebel Congress*. They have met here to talk over the affairs of their country. Their conversation is deep-toned—cautious—hurried. Every man seems afraid to give utterance to the thoughts of his bosom. Bound to England by ties of ancestry, language, religion, the very idea of separation from her seems a blasphemy.

"A visitor is announced. He takes his seat at the table. Look upon his brow, his flashing eye, as in earnest words he pours forth his soul. He goes on; his broad, solid brow warms with fire, his eye flashes the full light of a soul roused into all its life; those deep, earnest tones speak of the INDEPENDENCE OF AMERICA—her glorious Future—her People, that shall swell into countless millions—her Navy, that shall whiten the uttermost sea—her Destiny, that shall stride on over the wreck of thrones to the Universal Empire of the Western Continent!

"Then, behold! they rise round the table—they press that man by the hand—nay, the Virginia Planter, Washington, grasps both his hands, and, in a voice deepened by emotion, begs him to write these

words in a book,—a book that shall be read in all the homes and thundered from all the pulpits of America."

The book was written. With the firm belief that truth would triumph, Paine marshalled the legions of thought that sprang from his prolific brain, and on the 1st of January, 1776, moved in solid columns against the citadel of tyranny. The shock was irresistible.

"From turret to foundation stone," the solid masonry gave way, and fell before the fierce assault. Into the breach thus made an eager people rushed, and on the ruins placed the unsoiled banner of a new Republic.

That the Fourth of July, 1776, would not have witnessed the Declaration of Independence but for the timely appearance of *Common Sense*, no candid, impartial student of history will for a moment question. Yet many assume that the Colonies were slowly drifting to this goal, and would in time have reached it without the services of Paine. Grant the assumption, and does it detract from his well-earned fame? As well snatch the laurels from the brow of Lincoln because the downfall of slavery was deemed inevitable, as to withhold from the author of *Common Sense* the meed of praise so justly due.

This book first suggested American Independence; in this book appeared for the first time the "Free and Independent States of America"; in this book may be found all the fundamental principles of our government; and, without depreciating the labors of Jefferson, it is but justice to say that the "Declaration of Independence" is but an epitome of *Common Sense*.

Nor did his efforts end here. He was the inspiring genius of the long war that followed, accompanying the army and sharing its hardships and perils. When Washington's little army was hurled from Long Island, up the Hudson, and across New Jersey, by the combined forces of Howe and Clinton,—when despondency and gloom filled every heart, and all seemed lost,—Paine came to the rescue with the first number of his *Crisis*, in which were couched those thrilling words,—*These are the times that try men's souls*.

The pamphlet was read at the head of each regiment, and sent broadcast over the land. The effect was magical: into the dispirited ranks it breathed new life and energy, and in the breasts of the people planted a fixed determination never to give up the struggle. At critical periods throughout the war, number after number of the brave

little work appeared, until in the XV. he could triumphantly say, "*The times that tried men's souls are over; and the greatest and completest revolution the world ever knew is gloriously and happily accomplished.*"

Congress showed its appreciation of his labors by appointing him Secretary to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and issuing an order that his patriotic works should be read at the head of the armies. Washington, Franklin, and other friends urged him to apply for the remuneration so justly due him; but, though forced to eat the bread of poverty, he steadily declined asking any compensation for his services. Congress, however, presented him with three thousand dollars, Pennsylvania gave him five hundred pounds, and New York conveyed to him a rich and valuable estate.

Chapter II.

His Career in Europe—Return to America—Death.

"When France shall lift her banners fair,
And brighter hopes shall dawn once more,
In counting up her jewels rare,
She'll not forget the days of yore.
For when the name of Lafayette
Shall summon others in its train,
There's one she never will forget,—
The 'author-hero,' Thomas Paine."

IN France the people were struggling against a corrupt and oppressive monarchy. Emulating the example of Lafayette, Paine left his adopted America, and enlisted his services in the cause of freedom there.

Tranquillity having been for a brief season restored, he returned to England, where, in reply to Burke's celebrated *Reflections on the French Revolution*, appeared his immortal *Rights of Man*.

The storms of revolution bursting forth afresh, he again repaired to France. A joyous reception awaited his arrival at Calais. As he stepped upon the shore a hundred cannon thundered "Welcome!" People thronged the streets, shouting "Vive Thomas Paine!" Bright flowers fell in showers around him; fair hands placed in his hat the National Cockade; and all France was ready to honor her defender. Four departments, Abbeville, Beauvais, Calais, and Versailles, each chose him for its representative. He accepted the honor from Calais, and took his seat in the National Convention.

His abilities were at once recognized in this body, and he was selected as a member of the Committee appointed to draft a new Constitution for France.

Then came the trial of Louis XVI., and the beginning of those turbulent scenes which culminated in the "Reign of Terror." A majority of the Convention were clamoring for blood. Paine had been one of the foremost in overthrowing the Monarchy. He believed the king to have been tyrannical,—to have been the pliant tool of a corrupt nobility; but he did not deem him worthy of death, nor did he believe that the best interests of France would be subserved by such harsh

measures. But the terrorists threatened with vengeance all who should dare to oppose them. To plead the cause of the king would be to share his fate. A vote by any member in favor of saving his life would be almost certain to bring an overwhelming vote against that member's own life. What course would Paine pursue? Would he quietly acquiesce in those infamous proceedings? He had never yet faltered in his purpose of pursuing what he deemed the right. Would he shrink from danger now? No; above the wild storm of that enraged assembly rose the voice of that brave man, in powerful, eloquent appeals in behalf of mercy. In the language of Madame de Stael, "Thomas Paine alone proposed what would have done honor to France." But his defence was in vain. Amid the insults and execrations of a frenzied mob, the unhappy Louis was hurried to the scaffold.

The Jacobins, now in the ascendency, resolved to exercise their power to the utmost in crushing out every vestige of opposition, by destroying not only those who were opposed to a republic, but those who were opposed to their particular plans of establishing a republic. The Girondists, who alone would have proved the true saviors of France, were first expelled from the Convention, then dragged to prison and to the guillotine.

Paine was thrown into prison. His alleged crime was having been born an Englishman; his real crime was the advocacy of mercy. Soon after his arrest the Americans residing in Paris appeared in a body before the Convention, and presented the following address:—

"Citizens! The French nation had invited the most illustrious of all foreign nations to the honor of representing her. Thomas Paine, the apostle of liberty in America, a profound and valuable philosopher, a virtuous and esteemed citizen, came to France and took a seat among you. Particular circumstances rendered necessary the decree to put under arrest all the English residing in France.

"Citizens! Representatives! We come to demand of you Thomas Paine, in the name of the friends of liberty, and in the name of the Americans, your brothers and allies. Were there anything more wanted to obtain our demand, we would tell you. Do not give to the leagued despots the pleasure of seeing Paine in irons. We shall inform you that the seals put upon the papers of Thomas Paine

have been taken off; that the Committee of General Safety examined them, and, far from finding among them any dangerous propositions, they only found the love of liberty which characterized him all his lifetime, that eloquence of nature and philosophy which made him the friend of mankind, and those principles of public morality which merited the hatred of kings and the affections of his fellow-citizens."

The friends of Paine, however, were unable to procure his release, and he calmly awaited his fate. Sentence of death was finally pronounced against him; his death warrant was signed, and the fatal mark placed upon his door. But the officer, whose duty it was to mark with chalk the doors of the doomed prisoners, unwittingly placed the mark upon Paine's door as it stood open. When the guards gathered up the victims for execution, his door was closed, the mark was inside, and he was missed. Soon after, and before the mistake was discovered, the bloody Robespierre was overthrown, and his own neck received the blow intended for Paine. The fall of Robespierre stemmed the crimson torrent and secured for Paine his liberation. The strange incidents connected with this event are thus related by himself:—

"I was one of the nine members that composed the first Committee of Constitution. Six of them have been destroyed. Sieyes and myself have survived"—he by bending with the times, and I by not bending. The other survivor joined Robespierre, and signed with him the warrant of my arrestation. After the fall of Robespierre, he was seized and imprisoned in his turn, and sentenced to transportation.

"Herault Sechelles, an acquaintance of Mr. Jefferson and a good patriot, was my suppliant as member of the Committee of Constitution; that is, he was to supply my place if I had not accepted or had resigned, being next in number of votes to me. He was imprisoned in the Luxembourg with me, was taken to the tribunal and the guillotine, and I, his principal, was left."

"There were but two foreigners in the Convention,—Auacharsis Cloots and myself. We were both put out of the Convention by the same vote, arrested by the same order, and carried to prison to-

gether the same night. He was taken to the guillotine, and I was again left.

"Joseph Lebon, one of the vilest characters that ever existed, and who made the streets of Arras run with blood, was my suppliant as member of the Convention for the department of the Pais de Calais. When I was put out of the Convention he came and took my place. When I was liberated from prison, and voted again into the Convention, he was sent to the same prison and took my place there, and he went to the guillotine instead of me. He supplied my place all the way through.

"One hundred and sixty-eight persons were taken out of the Luxembourg in one night, and a hundred and sixty guillotined the next day, of which I know I was to have been one. "During the whole of my imprisonment, prior to the fall of Robespierre, there was no time when I could think my life worth twenty-four hours, and my mind was made up to meet its fate."

Had Paine been more orthodox in his religious views, his remarkable escape would doubtless be cited as a striking example of Divine intervention. Had the production of Butler's *Analogy*, Paley's *Evidences*, or Watson's *Apology* been attended by circumstances similar to those which attended the production of the *Age of Reason*, a large portion of which was written during his confinement and immediately after his release, great would be the significance attached to them. As it is, however, they are to be considered entirely fortuitous.

The imprisonment of Paine had lasted for nearly a year. It was a year fraught with deeds dark and terrible. That memorable period, beginning with the expulsion of the Girondists in June, '93, and ending with the downfall of the Jacobins in July, '94, stands without a parallel in the annals of modern history.

Let us contemplate for a moment this bloody and protracted drama. Let us in imagination visit that gloomy Paris. Let us wander through her dreary prisons, filled with beings of every age, sex, and rank,—gray-haired men, who look with stolid indifference upon the scenes around them; youth, pale with fear and trembling; heroic types of manhood, pacing to and fro with all the bearing of conquerors; frail women, whose swollen eyes—those tear-stained windows of the soul—faintly reveal the fearful agony within.

The scene is changed. It is midnight, yet all is bustle and confusion—an eager crowd is gathering—the death tumbrel goes rumbling by toward the Place de Revolution—the groans of men, the shrieks of women, rend the air, and throw a shade of deepest sadness over all.

Daylight dawns, and again the scene shifts. The bustle is over now—the crowd have dispersed those shrieks and groans are hushed; but that huge pile of headless trunks—those pools of blood—that blood-stained instrument, to whose edge still cling the straggling hairs of its victims, the golden threads of youth mingled with the silver hairs of age,—all these tell of the frightful tragedy enacted here.

And thus, day after day, week after week, month after month, the "carnival of death" goes on. Beauharnois, Malesherbes, Bailli, and thousands more of the best men of France, are butchered; Roland, Condorcet, and others perish by their own hands; Talleyrand is a refugee in America; and Lafayette pines in the dungeon vaults of Austria. Many noble women, too, are sacrificed. Marie Antoinette follows her Louis to the scaffold. Within the walls of the Luxembourg, where the author-hero lies in hourly expectation of death, are held captive two of the purest and noblest women that ever trod the earth,—the lovely and amiable Josephine Beauharnois, destined to become the guiding-star of Napoleon and Empress of France; and the beautiful and gifted Madame Roland, whose innocent blood must wet the cruel knife of the guillotine.

Such was the French Revolution,—"a mighty truth clad in hell-fire,"—the bloodiest and yet the brightest page in the history of France. It might have been a bloodless one, it might have been a brighter one, had the wise and moderate counsels of Thomas Paine prevailed.

Upon Paine's release, Washington's Minister, the generous Monroe, greeted him with outstretched arms and tendered to him the hospitalities of his home. The National Convention invited him to resume his seat in that body; and, to show that he harbored no revengeful feelings for the ill-treatment he had received, he accepted the invitation, and renewed his labors in behalf of France.

It was about this time that the transcendent genius of Napoleon Bonaparte dazzled Europe with the first of its splendid achievements,

and by common consent began to control the destinies of France. For the talents of Paine, Napoleon entertained the profoundest respect, and gladly sought his correspondence and advice. As a proof of this esteem, and proof that Paine did not compromise his republican principles to secure it, I need only cite the fact that when the great Frenchman had matured his plans for the conquest of Great Britain, he selected Paine to prepare a popular system of government for that island.

Those who have studied the character of Napoleon have doubtless been struck by the strange admixture of two great opposing elements in his nature: a wild ambition on the one hand ever impelling him onward, and tempting him to sacrifice every principle of honor for the furtherance of his mad designs; on the other hand, a disposition to fully recognize the rights of his people, even of his humblest subjects,—an expression of genuine sympathy for their misfortunes, and a manifestation of hearty satisfaction at their prosperity. The former wrought his ruin, the latter made him the idol of France. During his reign the French enjoyed a degree of happiness before unknown. That Paine was largely instrumental in securing this recognition of popular liberty, cannot be doubted. When we remember the grand principles of truth, of justice, and of human rights enunciated in his *Rights of Man*; when we remember that this work was the recipient of Napoleon's unbounded admiration, that during all the earlier part of his career it was his constant companion,—it is easy methinks to discern the fountain from which he imbibed those principles of civil liberty that formed the bright and better side of his character.

At length, bowed with the weight of nearly sixty-six years, and tired of the perpetual turmoil of political life, Paine signified his intention of returning to America. President Jefferson sent a national ship to convey him home. He arrived at Baltimore in the autumn of 1802, and from New Hampshire to Georgia went up the shout of patriot and the curse of priest. After visiting Washington, paying his respects to the leading members of the Government, and declining one of the highest offices in the power of the President to bestow, he retired to his home at New Rochelle. Here and in New York the few remaining years of his life were passed.

To the everlasting shame of America it must be said that the evening of his life was sadly embittered—by her ingratitude. The priests

were powerful then, and all their power was used to poison and prejudice the public mind against him. They could not refute his writings, and, to use his own words, "When they found themselves unable to answer my arguments, they assailed my character." Of his friends, a few like Monroe and Jefferson remained faithful to the end; but many treated him with a cold indifference, which to his gentle, sensitive nature was doubly cruel.

But death in mercy finally brought relief and rest to the weary, persecuted sage. In the *New York Advertiser* of June 9, 1809, appeared the following announcement:—

"THOMAS PAINE.

"Thy spirit, Independence, let me share."

"With heartfelt sorrow and poignant regret, we are compelled to announce to the world that Thomas Paine is no more. This distinguished philanthropist, whose life was devoted to the cause of humanity, departed this life yesterday morning; and, if any man's memory deserved a place in the breast of a freeman, it is that of the deceased, for,

"Take him for all in all,
We ne'er shall look upon his like again."

"Yes, death came; but with it came no vain regrets. No banished Hagar with famishing infant haunted him; from twenty thousand blackened Midian homes came no phantoms to strike his soul with terror; no Uriah's ghost stood before his bedside and would not down; the hand that with no weapon but the pen had liberated millions, and made priests and monarchs tremble, now growing cold and pallid, was not stained with the blood of a wife or child; no agonizing shrieks of a burning Servetus rang in his dying ears; but bravely and composedly, with that serenity of soul which only the consciousness of a well-spent life can give, the grand old hero passed away.

Seventy-two times had he seen the winter reappear with its robes of snow; seventy times have the snowy robes of Winter since clothed his grave. Robes emblematical; how white, how cold! And yet not whiter than the patriot's soul, nor colder than his country's charity.

In the cause of man the battle of his life was fought,—a fierce and stormy conflict. And, as the night of death closed over the eventful

struggle, from her cursed abode the grim figure of Bigotry stalked forth, and with demoniac peals of laughter danced around his prostrate form, rejoicing that her deadliest foe was gone, and hopeful that she might regain the power his once-strong arm had wrested from her. And she triumphed!

"Triumphed? Baseness triumphs for the hour;
But in truth lies a reserving power,
Prejudice, ingratitude to brave:
Though a while it undergo declension,
From the grave it rises to ascension,
As the sun emerges from the wave."

Part II.
Character and Works.

Chapter III.

Social Qualities—Moral Attributes—Literary and Other Works.

"Not for renown, nor yet for gold,
Did Paine assail Earth's idols old;
But wealth and fame, in age and youth,
He gave to Freedom and to Truth."

IN person, Paine was of medium height, having a frank, open countenance, and a handsome, penetrating eye. Lee and Adams used to speak of him as "the man with genius in his eyes." He was one of the most genial and companionable of men; of pleasing address and agreeable manners; the greatest wit of his age; profoundly learned in all of the most useful branches of learning, his acquired knowledge based upon a substratum of sound, practical sense; and, possessing conversational powers of the highest order, he was always surrounded by a select class of the greatest culture and refinement. In anticipation of a London literary dinner, Horde Tooke was wont to remark that "the best thing would be said by Mr. Paine." And at a levee given by the English author, Clio Rickman, in Paris, he is thus referred to: "For above four hours he kept every one in astonishment and admiration of his memory, and his keen observation of men and manners. ... His remarks on genius and taste can never be forgotten."

But it is not from a contemplation of these social qualities, so much as from a study of the great moral attributes of his character, that we are enabled to discern the true greatness of this remarkable man. Among the many noble traits united in his moral nature, charity, generosity, patriotism, philanthropy, disinterestedness, and moral courage stand out in bold relief.

His charity was boundless. The poet-statesman, Joel Barlow, who was intimately acquainted with him, not only in America but in both London and Paris, states that "he was always charitable to the poor beyond his means."

His generosity was almost unexampled. "Generous to a fault" was the verdict of those who knew him. While he did not hesitate to puncture the philosophy which teaches man to love his enemies, he was yet too magnanimous not to do good to those who hated him. An incident which occurred during his career as a member of the French

Convention illustrates well his magnanimity of soul. A party were dining at a public house in Paris. The conversation turned on the English Constitution; and Paine, with his usual frankness, was not slow in pointing out what he considered its defects, and showing up the corruption of the existing government. An English officer had in the meantime intruded himself into the company, and, doubtless feeling that the weight of the whole British Government rested upon his shoulders, assailed the gray-haired representative with a storm of abusive epithets. The good-natured yet independent manner in which Paine received this abuse only increased the rage of the Englishman, who, walking up to him, struck him a violent blow with his cane. An excited crowd immediately rushed upon the scene of the brutal assault, and, but for the interference of Paine, would have killed the cowardly ruffian on the spot. He was hurried to prison, however, to await his trial. To strike a Member of the National Convention was, by the laws of France, a crime the punishment of which was death. The high character of Paine, together with his extreme age, rendered this unprovoked attack an offence peculiarly atrocious, and it seemed impossible for anything to save the culprit from suffering the law's full penalty. There was one man in Paris, however, who interested himself in the prisoner's behalf, and, by untiring efforts and great inconvenience to himself, finally succeeded in obtaining his release. The Englishman was rejoiced at being restored to his liberty, and overcome with astonishment when he learned that his deliverer was the man whom he had so shamefully outraged. Nor did his magnanimous liberator's generosity end here. He was in a strange land, without friends, and destitute of money. To provide for his immediate wants, and to pay his passage to England, Paine generously supplied him with funds from his own purse.

The patriotism of Paine was never questioned. Many have won the name of patriot whose services to their country have been inspired by mere selfish motives; but with him, fame, wealth, comfort, all were sacrificed for his country's welfare. Throughout that eight years' struggle, his life, his time, his talents, all were at her service. And, whether serving as aid-de-camp to Gen. Greene in that terrible campaign of '76; filling with distinguished ability the important post of Secretary of Foreign Affairs; with Laurens, at the French Court, negotiating loans for his government; or cheering the despondent, and

nerving them up to deeds of valor by the utterance of brave words,—words such as never fell from the lips or flowed from the pen of man before,—he was at all times, and in every situation, the same modest, magnanimous, unflinching patriot.

His philanthropy was bounded only by the limits of the world he lived in. The Caucasian, the Mongolian, the African, and the Indian, all to him were brothers.

In his sublime disinterestedness, too, he stands almost alone. At the commencement of the Revolutionary struggle he was a poor author, lacking at times even the bare necessities of life. But he had the opportunity of becoming rich. The enormous sale of *Common Sense* would of itself have realized for him a handsome competence. But what did he do? Did he appropriate to himself the profits to which he was justly entitled? No: he presented to each of the thirteen colonies the copyright, and came out indebted to his printer. The same unselfish spirit that marked the publication of *Common Sense* was displayed throughout all his subsequent career as an author. When the *Rights of Man* was ready for the press, he refused five thousand dollars for the copyright, and then gave it to the world. The combined circulation of his four principal works, up to the time of his death, aggregated nearly five hundred thousand copies. What a fortune was here, and how nobly, how cheerfully, was it given up to benefit mankind! I must not omit to mention another example of his patriotic disinterestedness. At a critical period during the War for Independence, when Congress was almost hopelessly embarrassed for want of funds, he started a subscription for its relief, heading it with five hundred dollars, all he had in the world. Through his exertions three hundred thousand pounds were raised, and Congress enabled to prosecute its work.

Moral courage was another conspicuous feature in this great man's character,—not that courage which plunges its possessor headlong into danger, but that calm fortitude which carries him serenely on wherever duty leads. His espousal of the cause of Separation and Independence—a cause which no other man in America had up to that time dared to espouse—shows a lofty heroism; his attack upon monarchy in the very capital of England itself, knowing as he must have known that every effort would be made by the Government to crush both him and his book, was a grand exhibition of moral brav-

ery; while the publication of his *Age of Reason* was in many respects a more courageous act than either. But it was in his heroic defence of Louis XVI. that his moral courage shone with all the lustre of the noonday sun. Search all the annals of the past, and say if on the historian's page is found one act, one single act, surpassing in moral sublimity that of Thomas Paine's bravely accepting a prison and death to save a fallen foe!

In the expression of his religious opinions, no man has been more frank or explicit than Paine, and no man's religious opinions have been more grossly misrepresented. What was his belief?

"I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

"I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy.

"The world is my country, to do good my religion."

This was his creed, and to this creed he faithfully adhered to the last moment of his life. As to the merits of this religious belief, whether it be true or false, good or bad, is not for me to determine. I may say, however, and that without fear of refutation, that not one of his maligners has ever given evidence of possessing a better.

As a writer, Paine has few superiors in our language. His style unites in a remarkable degree a marvellous simplicity, a rare beauty and delicacy of thought, an exquisite rhetorical finish, and a force of logic that carries conviction with every sentence. "What I write is pure nature, and my pen and my soul have ever gone together." This was the one great secret of his success.

It is upon his four works already named that his fame as an author most securely rests. In another place, more space will be given to a consideration of these masterly productions. In addition to these, he wrote several other works on theology and civil government, among which may be named *An Essay on Dreams*, *Examination of the Prophecies*, *Letter to Camille Jordan*, *Dissertation on First Principles of Government*, and *Agrarian Justice*, all of which possess rare merit.

But, had his great political and theological works never appeared, he would still be entitled to a grateful remembrance. As a poet, "He knew himself to sing and build the lofty rhyme."

His poem on the *Death of General Wolfe* has been pronounced one of the most beautiful productions of the sort in the English language. Another writer says that "nothing could be more beautiful than either Paine's poetry or prose." As a specimen of his poetical composition, I here insert his

LINES TO LADY SMITH.

In the regions of clouds where the whirlwinds arise,
My castle of fancy was built;
The turrets reflected the blue of the skies,
And the windows with sunbeams were gilt.

The rainbow sometimes, in its beautiful state,
Enamelled the mansion around;
And the figures that fancy in clouds can create
Supplied me with gardens and ground.

I had grottos and fountains and orange-tree groves,
I had all that enchantment has told;
I had sweet, shady walks for the gods and their loves,
I had mountains of coral and gold.

But a storm that I felt not had risen and rolled
While wrapt in a slumber I lay;
And when I looked out in the morning, behold!
My castle was carried away.

It passed over rivers and valleys and groves;
The world it was all in my view;
I thought of my friends, of their fates, of their loves,
And often, fall often, of you.

At length it came over a beautiful scene,
That nature in silence had made:
The place was but small; but 'twas sweetly serene,
And checkered with sunshine and shade.

I gazed and I envied with painful good-will,
And grew tired of my seat in the air,
When all of a sudden my castle stood still,
As if some attraction were there.

Like a lark from the sky it came fluttering down,
And placed me exactly in view,
When whom should I meet in this charming retreat,
This corner of calmness, but you!

Delighted to find you in honor and ease,
I felt no more sorrow nor pain;
And, the wind coming fair, I ascended the breeze,
And went back with my castle again.

His contributions to hygienic science were valuable. In naval affairs and engineering he made important suggestions, while in finances he was recognized as an able authority. It may be mentioned, too, that he was the first paid editor in America, and thus the founder of this profession as distinct from publisher.

In mechanics, Paine's name occupies a prominent place. He was the inventor of the iron bridge; and the magnificent structures that now span nearly every stream of Europe and America stand as so many monuments to his mechanical genius. This invention secured for him a favorable recognition by the French Academy of Science, and received at once the unqualified approval of many of the most distinguished men of France and England. For the models of his bridge he was offered three thousand pounds. The planing-machine, too, was invented by him; and to him must also be ascribed the credit of having been the first to propose that wonderful creation of the present age,—the steamboat. To his thoughts upon this subject, published in 1778, is doubtless largely due the final success of Fulton in 1807.

I cannot close this part of my subject without noticing another event with which Paine's name is intimately associated. I refer to the abolition of slavery in the United States. To him more than to any other man belongs the honor of inaugurating the anti-slavery crusade. He was its first bold advocate,—the first man on this continent who dared to write, "Man has no property in man." And though he did not live to see his country admit the full equality of man, the cause did not die with him. The same year that witnessed his death witnessed the birth of him who was to complete the work. Paine and Lincoln! Among the world's great benefactors these men stand proudly forward. Both were of humble origin, both self-made men. Both were

distinguished advocates of human freedom, prompted by the most unselfish motives and the loftiest philanthropic principles. Both felt the ruthless hand of the assassin: the one was cruelly robbed of his life; the other as cruelly robbed of what to him was dearer than life,—his honor. Both were unbelievers in the narrow creeds of their day, but glorious apostles of that diviner faith, the religion of humanity:—

"The World Is My Country, To Do Good My Religion."

"With Malice Toward None, With Charity For All."

Grand thoughts! Let them be engraved together on the tablets of our hearts, and let not prejudice separate in our affections the immortal names of those who uttered them!

Chapter IV.

Common Sense—American Crisis—Rights of Man—Age of Reason.

Brave *Common Sense* the cause of liberty proclaimed,
The *Crisis* won for us the boon that volume named;
The *Rights of Man* to tyranny its death-knell gave,
The *Age of Reason* made for bigotry its grave."

BEFORE me lie the four great works of Thomas Paine. You who have never read them may believe that they contain much that is bad; you may imagine that a deadly serpent lurks within them. Let me assure you that there is nothing in these works that can harm you. The cold, slimy touch of the serpent is not here. The highest moral tone pervades these pages. They are full of charity, they glow with patriotism, they are warm with love. Even now, within their lids methinks I feel the beating of the generous heart of him who penned them,—every throb pregnant with the highest, holiest aspirations for the good of man.

His works are his monument, and, were they universally known, futile would be the cavillings, of his enemies, needless the eulogies of his friends.

To enable the reader to form a faint conception of the style and character of Paine's writings, I introduce a few selections from his leading works. And first I quote from *Common Sense*:—

"The birthday of a new world is at hand; and a race of men, perhaps as numerous as all Europe contains, are to receive their portion of freedom from the events of a few months."

"The sun never shone on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom, but of a continent,—of at least one-eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected, even to the end of time, by the proceedings now."

"I am not induced by motives of pride, party, or resentment to espouse the doctrine of separation and independence; I am clearly, positively, and conscientiously persuaded that it is the true interest of this continent to be so."

"In no instance hath Nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet; and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverse the common order of Nature, it is evident that they belong to different systems,—England to Europe, America to itself."

"But Britain is the parent country," say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families."

"The independence of America should have been considered as dating its era from, and published by, the first musket that was fired against her."

"Everything that is right or natural pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'Tis time to part."

"Oh, ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. Oh, receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind."

Laying aside the tiny volume, *Common Sense*, I next take up his more elaborate *Crisis*: -

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict the more glorious the triumph."

"A generous parent should say, 'If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace.'

"The heart that feels not now is dead: the blood of his children will curse his cowardice who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole and made them happy. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress,

and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death."

"He that rebels against reason is a real rebel; but he that in defence of reason rebels against tyranny, has a better title to 'Defender of the Faith' than George the Third."

"To argue with a man who has renounced the use and authority of reason, and whose philosophy consists in holding humanity in contempt, is like administering medicine to the dead."

"The poor reflection of having served your king will yield you no consolation in your parting moments. He will crumble to the same undistinguished ashes with yourself, and have sins enough of his own to answer for. It is not the farcical benedictions of a bishop, nor the cringing hypocrisy of a court of chaplains, nor the formality of an act of parliament, that can change guilt into innocence, or make the punishment one pang the less."

"There are cases in which it is as impossible to restore character to life as it is to recover the dead. It is a phœnix that can expire but once, and from whose ashes there is no resurrection."

"It was not Newton's honor, neither could it be his pride, that he was born an Englishman, but that he was a philosopher. The heavens had liberated him from the prejudices of an island, and science had expanded his soul, as boundless as his studies."

"The war, on the part of America, has been a war of natural feelings,—brave in distress, serene in conquest, drowsy while at rest, and in every situation generously disposed to peace. A dangerous calm and a most heightened zeal have, as circumstances varied, succeeded each other. Every passion but that of despair has been called to a tour of duty; and so mistaken has been the enemy of our abilities and disposition, that when she supposed us conquered we rose the conquerors."

"They were witnesses to the almost expiring flame of human freedom. It was the close struggle of life and death,—the line of invisible division, and on which the unabated fortitude of a Wash-

ington prevailed, and saved the spark that has since blazed in the north with unrivalled lustre."

"The times that tried men's souls are over; and the greatest and completest revolution the world ever knew, gloriously and happily accomplished."

"The will of God hath parted us, and the deed is registered for eternity. When Britain shall be a spot scarcely visible among the nations, America shall flourish the favorite of Heaven and the friend of mankind."

"It is not every country, perhaps there is not another in the world, that can boast so fair an origin. Even the first settlement of America corresponds with the character of the Revolution. Rome, once the proud mistress of the universe, was originally a band of ruffians. Plunder and rapine made her rich, and her oppression of millions made her great. But America need never be ashamed to tell her birth, nor relate the stages by which she rose to empire."

"She is now descending to the scenes of quiet and domestic life—not beneath the cypress shade of disappointment, but to enjoy in her own land, and under her own vine, the sweet of her labors and the reward of her toil. In this situation may she never forget that a fair national reputation is of as much importance as independence; that it possesses a charm that wins upon the world, and makes even enemies civil; that it gives a dignity that is often superior to power, and commands reverence where pomp and splendor fail."

"Our lot is cast, and America, the child of fate, is arriving at maturity. ... Too great to yield, and too noble to insult; superior to misfortune, and generous in success,—let us untaintedly preserve the character we have gamed, and show to future ages an example of unequalled magnanimity."

Closing the *Crisis*, I open now that fountain of human liberty, the *Rights of Man*. Overflowing with truth, we can but taste its sparkling waters:—

I am contending for the right of the living, and against their being willed away, and controlled and contracted for by the manuscript-assumed authority of the dead; and Mr. Burke is contending for the authority of the dead over the rights and freedom of the living."

"Those who have quitted the world, and those who are not arrived yet in it, are as remote from each other as the utmost stretch of mortal imagination can conceive. What possible obligation, then, can exist between them? What rule or principle can be laid down that two nonentities, the one out of existence and the other not yet in, and who never can meet in this world, that the one should control the other to the end of time?"

"The circumstances of the world are continually changing, and the opinions of men change also; and, as government is for the living and not for the dead, it is the living only that have any right in it. That which may be thought right and found convenient in one age, may be thought wrong and found inconvenient in another. In such cases who is to decide,—the living or the dead?"

"I know a place in America called Point-no-Point, because, as you proceed along the shore, gay and flowery as Mr. Burke's language, it continually recedes and presents itself at a distance ahead; and when you have got as far as you can go, there is no point at all. Just thus is it with Mr. Burke's three hundred and fifty-six pages."

"Not one glance of compassion, not one commiserating reflection, that I can find throughout his book, has he bestowed on those that lingered out the most wretched of lives, a life without hope, in the most miserable of prisons. It is painful to behold a man employing his talents to corrupt himself. Nature has been kinder to Mr. Burke than he has been to her. He is not affected by the reality of distress touching upon his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird. Accustomed to kiss the aristocratic hand that hath purloined him from himself, he degenerates into a composition of art, and the genuine soul of nature forsakes him. His hero or his heroine must be a tragedy-victim, expiring in show, and not the

real prisoner of misery, sliding into death in the silence of a dungeon."

"The mind can hardly picture to itself a more tremendous scene than what the city of Paris exhibited at the time of taking the Bastille, and for two days before and after, nor conceive the possibility of its quieting so soon. At a distance, this transaction has appeared only as an act of heroism standing on itself; and the close political connection it had with the Revolution is lost in the brilliancy of the achievement. But we are to consider it as the strength of the parties, brought man to man, and contending for the issue. The Bastille was to be either the prize or the prison of the assailants. The downfall of it included the idea of the downfall of despotism; and this compounded image was become as figuratively united as Bunyan's Doubting Castle and Giant Despair."

"But, after all, what is this metaphor called a crown, or rather what is monarchy? Is it a thing, or is it a name, or is it a fraud? Is it a 'contrivance of human wisdom,' or human craft, to obtain money from a nation under specious pretences? Is it a thing necessary to a nation? If it is, in what dots that necessity consist, what service does it perform, what is its business, and what are its merits? Doth the virtue consist in the metaphor or in the man? Doth the goldsmith that makes the crown make the virtue also? Doth it operate like Fortunatus's wishing-cap, or Harlequin's wooden sword? Doth it make a man a conjurer? In fine, what is it?"

"The greatest characters the world has known have risen on the democratic floor. Aristocracy has not been able to keep a proportionate pace with democracy. The artificial noble shrinks into a dwarf beside the noble of nature."

"Such is the irresistible nature of truth that all it asks, and all it wants, is the liberty of appearing. The Sun needs no inscription to distinguish him from darkness."

"With respect to what are called denominations of religion, if every one is left to judge of his own religion, there is no such thing as a religion that is wrong; but if they are to judge of each other's religion, there is no such thing as a religion that is right, and there-

fore all the world is right, or all the world is wrong. But with respect to religion itself, without regard to names, and as directing itself from the universal family of mankind to the Divine object of all adoration, it is man bringing to his Maker the fruits of his heart; and, though these fruits may differ from each other like the fruits of the earth, the grateful tribute of every one is accepted."

"Every religion is good that teaches man to be good."

"Who art thou, vain dust and ashes! by whatever name thou art called,—whether a king, a bishop, a church or a state, a parliament or anything else,—that obtrudest thine insignificance between the soul of man and his Maker?"

"For my own part, I am fully satisfied that what I am now doing—with an endeavor to conciliate mankind, to render their condition happy, to unite nations that have hitherto been enemies, and to extirpate the horrid practice of war, and break the chains of slavery and oppression—is acceptable in His sight; and, being the best service I can perform, I act it cheerfully."

"In taking up this subject, I seek no recompense, I fear no consequences. Fortified with that proud integrity that disdains to triumph or to yield, I will advocate the rights of man."

"When, in countries that are called civilized, we see age going to the workhouse, and youth to the gallows, something must be wrong in the system of government."

"When it shall be said in any country in the world, 'My poor are happy; neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them; my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars; the aged are not in want, the taxes are not oppressive; the rational world is my friend, because I am the friend of its happiness,'—when these things can be said, then may that country boast of its constitution and its government."

"Governments now act as if they were afraid to awaken a single reflection in man. They are softly leading him to the sepulchre of precedents, to deaden his faculties and call his attention from the scenes of revolutions. They feel that he is arriving at knowledge

faster than they wish, and their policy of precedents is the barometer of their fears. This political popery, like the ecclesiastical popery of old, has had its day, and is hastening to its exit. The ragged relic and the antiquated precedent, the monk and the monarch, will moulder together."

A few passages from the *Age of Reason* close our quotations from Paine. While they are sufficient to fairly present his leading theological principles, they are entirely inadequate to give even an idea of the full aim and scope of his work. The *Age of Reason* must be read to be understood or appreciated:—

"It has been my intention for several years past to publish my thoughts upon religion. I am well aware of the difficulties that attend the subject, and from that consideration had reserved it to a more advanced period of life. I intended it to be the last offering I should make to my fellow-citizens of all nations, and that at a time when the purity of the motive that induced me to it could not admit of a question, even by those who might disapprove the work."

"As several of my colleagues, and others of my fellow-citizens of France, have given me the example of making their voluntary and individual profession of faith, I also will make mine; and I do this with all that sincerity and frankness with which the mind of man communicates with itself:—

"I believe in one God and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life."

I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy."

"I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish Church, by the Roman Church, by the Greek Church, by the Turkish Church, by the Protestant Church. My own mind is my own church."

"I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise; they have the same right to their belief as I have

to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself."

"I have always strenuously supported the right of every man to his opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this, makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it."

"The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is Reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall."

"I know that this bold investigation will alarm many, but, it would be paying too great a compliment to their credulity to forbear it on that account; the times and the subject demand it, to be done."

"Nothing that is here said can apply, even with the most distant disrespect, to the real character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and an amiable man."

"The Word of God is the creation we behold. And it is in this Word, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man."

"It is only in the creation that all our ideas and conceptions of a Word of God can unite. The creation speaketh an universal language, independently of human speech or human language, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever-existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged, it cannot be counterfeited, it cannot be lost, it cannot be altered, it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds."

"Do we want to contemplate His power? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate His munificence? We see it in the abundance with which He fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate His mercy? We see it in His not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful."

"Any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system."

Paine was the prophet of his age. From the dim twilight of the eighteenth century, his keen eye pierced through the intervening years to and beyond the gray dawn of the twentieth; and as he traced the progress, and saw revealed the destiny, of man, his clarion voice

"Rang out the Old, rang in the New,"-

rang out the phantoms born of ignorance and fear; rang out despotic rule,—rang in the good, the true; rang in HUMANITY!

I do not hesitate to affirm that, from among all the literary productions of modern times, there cannot be found four works that have exerted a more powerful influence in shaping the destinies of the human race than these.

Common Sense was the glorious sun that ushered in a New World of Freedom, —each number of the *Crisis*, a brilliant satellite that helped to illumine that New World's long night of revolution.

The *Rights of Man* is one of the noblest works ever written. No lover of liberty ever perused its pages without thanking in his heart the brave author who penned them. Amid the ravages of time, this work, like other great works that preceded it, may disappear from the libraries of men; but the principles embodied in it will live on. The chaste and simple words that clothe them may be forgotten, but the principles themselves can never die. They have produced an agitation in the broad ocean of humanity whose waves will sweep down through all the coming years.

The *Age of Reason* was the crowning effort of its author's life. Eighty-five years since it was given to the world, the demand for it continues to increase; and not until the dominant religion of Europe and America shall either perish from the earth or sweep to universal empire will this demand subside. Around it has raged one of the fiercest intellectual conflicts of the age. All the artillery of Christendom has been brought to bear upon it, but thus far without effect. Firm, impregnable, like some Gibraltar, it still stands.

Part III.
Vindication.

Chapter V.

Examination Of Calumnies.

"For the right, Thomas Paine comes uppermost,
As round and round we go.
The heel of & priest may tread thee down,
And & bigot work thee woe.
'But never a truth has been destroyed:
They may curse it and call it crime;
Pervert and betray, or slander and slay
Its teachers for a time;
But the sunshine, aye, shall light the sky,
As round and round we run;
And the truth shall ever come uppermost,
And justice shall be done.' "

A LITTLE child is sweetly sleeping in its cradle, the very ideal of beauty, health, and innocence. Its parents have died, and left it sole heir to a goodly fortune. If it die, the parties to whose care it has been intrusted—those whose duty it is to protect it—will inherit this wealth. A terrible design is formed: the child is taken from its peaceful slumber, hurriedly borne to a stream near by, and tossed far out into the dark waters. Its would-be murderers stand upon the brink to watch the result of their base plot. Unobserved, I stand upon the bank below. The clothing of the child keeps it from sinking, and the current bears it gently down the stream. It nears me. What shall I do? Shall I attempt the rescue of that child, or shall I let it perish? Without a moment's hesitation I plunge into the water, bring it safely to the shore, and place it far beyond the reach of danger.

A great man is sleeping in his grave. A life fraught with noble, self-sacrificing deeds in behalf of humanity, entitles him to the everlasting gratitude of man. But bad, designing men have sought to rob his memory of this just inheritance. They have opened the portals of his tomb, and desecrated that sacred sanctuary; they have taken his fair name, and hurled it far out into the black waters of infamy; they stand upon the shore, and watch with eager eye to see it sink from sight. Down the current of the century it glides. We see it now: those inky waters have not yet completely dimmed its lustre. What shall we do: shall we save that name, or shall we suffer it to perish? Brave

men have already gone to the rescue, and shall we hesitate to follow? No! Let us bring it to the shore, clear it of every 'stain, bear it away in triumph, and place it far, far beyond the reach of calumny and slander.

There are, I regret to say, many good and honest people who believe Thomas Paine to have been a very bad man. They have heard this from the lips of those in whose veracity they place implicit confidence. While from infancy they have been taught to regard Jesus Christ as the Mediator between man and God, they have at the same time been led to consider Thomas Paine as a sort of negotiator between man and the Devil.

Let me say to these good people, Do you know why Paine has been so fiercely assailed? You have heard various charges preferred against him; but seriously, now, do you believe any of the charges named sufficient to account for the intense hatred manifested toward him? Have you never been struck with the thought that there might be something back of all this, some secret grudge, which your informants dare not mention? Let us notice briefly these faults and vices imputed to him.

You have been told that he died a pauper. The parties who told you this were certainly mistaken. Upon his return to America in 1802, the estate presented to him, in consideration of his Revolutionary services, was valued at \$30,000; and this, together with a considerable sum in stocks and money, was remaining at his death. It is doubtless true that during his long and useful career he was many times in straitened circumstances; but this was the result, not of improvidence or reckless expenditure, but of the devotion of his life to the cause of humanity instead of the accumulation of wealth, and his unbounded charity, which prompted him to share his last dollar or his last comfort with the poor or distressed. But what if he had died poor? Is poverty a crime?

You have been told that he died a drunkard. A baser slander was never uttered. His neighbors and acquaintances all indignantly denied the truth of this imputation. The proprietor of the house in New York at which Paine spent much of his time, during his last years, stated that of all his guests he was the most temperate. But suppose that he was a drunkard; is drunkenness so rare as to secure for its victims an immortal notoriety?

You have been told that his writings are immoral. I defy those who make this charge to point to one immoral sentence in all that he has written; and I further affirm that they dare not permit you to determine for yourselves the truth or falsity of this assertion. But admitting, for the sake of argument, the charge to be true, does not the world teem with immoral literature? Are there not many immoral writers even among the living? If so, why has all this wrath been concentrated upon Paine, to the almost total exclusion of the rest?

You have been told that he was an Infidel. But what peculiar significance do they attach to this fact? Are not four-fifths of the world's inhabitants Infidels? Does not every one of our greatest living scholars—Darwin and Draper, Huxley and Haeckel, Spencer and Tyndall—go far beyond him in point of Infidelity? Why this exclusiveness again?

You have been told that he recanted on his deathbed. This statement has been widely disseminated, and that, too, in spite of the fact that every person who was with him during his dying hours pronounced it false. An honest Quaker, who visited him often during his last illness, testified to having been offered money to publicly state that such was the case; but he refused. Others were doubtless approached in the same manner, and with the same result. Unable to find a death-bed witness base enough to make so foul a charge, the calumny was originated by one who did not see him die. A priest's brain conceived and bore that infamous falsehood; and, black and hideous as the offspring was, nearly every other priest was ready to serve it in the capacity of a faithful nurse. But suppose that he did recant,—that he acknowledged the divinity of Christ: if he did this, he died virtually in the Christian faith. Now, is it customary for the Church to treat death-bed penitents in the manner in which he has been treated? Has not every criminal that has repented in his last hours, from the dying thief of eighteen hundred years ago to the murderer of to-day, been held up as an object of admiration? Why, then, denounce Paine for having done, as they claim, the very same thing? Is this consistent?

And now, assuming all these charges to be true, he would still have been naught but a poor, drunken Infidel; and, while this would naturally have subjected him to much adverse criticism while living, it would have been merely of a local character, and would have

ceased when he was no more. Death would have silenced censure, the mantle of charity would have been spread above his grave, and the waves of oblivion would have rolled over his memory long ago. Is it possible that all Christendom would be so deeply agitated,—that the walls of her churches echo every week with the fierce anathemas thundered from a thousand pulpits against the inanimate dust of a poor, drunken Infidel?

The conclusion, I think, must irresistibly force itself upon your mind that these reputed faults do not constitute the real "head and front of Thomas Paine's offending." Is there not to you something mysterious about all this? And would you have the mystery solved? If so, read the *Age of Reason*. Read it carefully, thoughtfully, critically; read it with your Bible open before you; read it in connection with the ablest refutations that have been attempted against it. Do this, and the mystery will be solved; you will then know why Thomas Paine has been so bitterly assailed.

Two champions meet in the arena of debate. One of them is overwhelmed; smiles and groans announce his discomfiture, while the hall resounds with the shouts of applause that reward the triumph of his rival. Then one of them grows angry, and, stung with madness, drops the sword of argument, and seizes in its stead the bludgeon of malice, with which to assail his adversary. But which one does this,—the successful or the defeated antagonist? I have somewhere read that "the proud bird that soars on pinions strong and free, and is not hit by the marksman's bullet, is not discomposed;" that "it is the wounded bird that flutters."

That Thomas Paine was not the poor, drunken, immoral wretch that clerical virulence represents him to have been, the proof furnished in the consideration paid to him, by prominent characters contemporaneous with him, should be conclusive. Would Benjamin Franklin have furnished letters of introduction to a poor, drunken, immoral wretch? Would Lord Erskine have defended, against the government of England, a poor, drunken, immoral wretch? Would Bishop Watson have crossed swords, in theological disputation, with a poor, drunken, immoral wretch? Would Napoleon Bonaparte, when in the zenith of his glory, have invited to his table a poor, drunken, immoral wretch? Would France's greatest heroines, Roland and De Stael, have stooped to pay the tribute of praise to a poor, drunken,

immoral wretch? Would the Christian statesman, James Monroe, have retained for more than a year as a member of his household a poor, drunken, immoral wretch? Would Thomas Jefferson have sent a National ship to bear to his home a poor, drunken, immoral wretch? Would Washington have acknowledged, as one of the most potent factors in achieving American Independence, the pen of a poor, drunken, immoral wretch? Would the Congress of the United States have conferred honors and bestowed gifts upon a poor, drunken, immoral wretch? Impossible! Every fact connected with his public history, refutes these charges made against his private character.

Chapter VI.

Testimonials to Paine's Character.

We fear no foe, we flee no fight,
While thus we honor slandered right;
For truth we brave cam foes again,
And fight for justice and for Paine!"

THE ass was bravest when the lion could no longer defend himself; and the 8th of June, 1809, marks the era of increased vituperation against the name of Thomas Paine. For more than two-thirds of a century the world has listened to the brays and witnessed the kicks of a thousand brave asses against liberty's dead lion.

The savage mutilates the dead body of his victim, the hyena digs into the grave and devours its contents; but worse, and more to be abhorred than either, is the murderer of dead men's reputations. For him no crime is too black, no deed too despicable. How often do we see one of these vile assassins take up the good name of Thomas Paine, and, after covering it with all the filth and slime that the hellish, venomous spirit of calumny can distil, hold it up before the world, and with a counterfeited look of holy horror—affecting all the meekness of an expiring calf, and rolling up the whites of his snaky eyes to cover the blackness of his brutal soul,—exclaim, "This is a fiend!"

No civilized court pronounces a prisoner guilty without allowing him the privilege of a defence. None but a barbarous despot does this, and it is by such a barbarous court that Thomas Paine has been convicted. Witness this half-farcical, half-tragical trial. A dead man is dragged from his grave, and arraigned before this despotic tribunal. In his accuser we behold some clerical hypocrite, who

"Practises falsehood under saintly show,
Deep malice to conceal couched with revenge."

Before him lies a copy of Cheetham's *Life of Paine*,—a work which a distinguished clergyman characterized as "a libel almost from beginning to end;" a work written by a man who boasted of having nine suits for libel pending against him at one time,—a man who was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to pay a fine for defamation of a

woman's character; a man who was the notorious maligner of Franklin and Jefferson: this the evidence adduced. One libeller endeavoring to impeach the character of an honest man by quoting the testimony of another libeller! But the evidence is deemed sufficient; and when some friend of justice rises to interpose a word in defence of the slandered, outraged man, from this haughty despot comes the imperial mandate, "No defence allowed. Accursed be he who offers aught in palliation of the culprit's crimes! Thomas Paine, you are adjudged guilty. This court condemns your memory to everlasting infamy on earth, and prays its God to consign your soul to endless misery in hell!"

From this arbitrary court I appeal the case of Thomas Paine to a higher court,—a court whose judge and jury shall be a generous public. Against the false and malicious statements of this base hireling, this convicted libeller, James Cheetham, and the puny miscreants whose slanderous tongues delight to echo his calumnies, I bring the evidence of one hundred good and competent witnesses,—those who, by intimate acquaintance or a careful study of Paine's history, are eminently qualified for making an intelligent, unbiassed estimate of his life and works; historians, statesmen, divines, and others; men and women who have acquired an honorable distinction in the various walks of life, and whose names alone are a sufficient guaranty that what they testify shall be "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." From the dead and from the living—from two continents—I summon them; and, as one by one their names are called, let them respond:—

GILBERT VALE:—"What an amalgamation do the slanderers of Paine present!—the young girl of pious education vociferating *Tom Paine*; the pious teacher, perhaps also deceived, but without examination, preaching from the pulpit that the opponent of the Gospel scheme lived and died a degraded, drunken being! TO these are added the arch-hypocrite who knows the slander, but from interested motives joins the bitter cry of Tom Paine and inebriety. To these again are added the thousands of decent people of all religions, who, finding it fashionable to pronounce the name of Paine with a sneer, generously believe what everybody says."

"This [Paine's will] falsifies at once Mr. Paine's poverty."

"We know that he was not only temperate in afterlife, but even abstemious.

"We know more than twenty persons who were more or less acquainted with Mr. Paine, and not one of whom ever saw him in liquor."

"Those who have attacked his style are themselves ignorant or vicious, with no literary character to lose.

"This attack on his literary character, successful in an extraordinary degree, depended on the suppression of his works; the presumption of the ignorance of those works by the body of the party addressed; and on the assumption of the power of the clergy to prevent those works being read."

"Paine's style was clear, forcible, and elegant: in our opinion, he is the best English writer we know."

"In regard to Mr. Paine's religion, as it was the religion of most of the men of science of the present age, and probably of three-fourths of those of the last, there can be no just reason for making it an exception to his character."

"On the 8th of June, about nine in the morning, he died, placid and almost without a struggle."

"As an act of kindness, Mr. Woodsworth visited Mr. Paine every day for six weeks before his death; he frequently sat up with him, and did so on the last two nights of his life. ... Mr. Woodsworth assures us that he neither heard nor saw anything to justify the belief of any mental change in the opinions of Mr. Paine previous to his death."

"In vain did his friends witness the sincerity of his belief, his firmness and calmness at the last moment; in vain did Dr. Manley try to extort from him a recantation; and in vain did clerical gentlemen assail him when infirm in body. In vain did Mr. Jarvis, Colonel Daniel Pelton, and our living friend Mr. Haskins, and the respected millet Hicks, receive his last declaration in the presence of death; in vain was all this."

"After the French Revolution a reaction took place, first in England and then on this side the Atlantic, and in the darkness of which Cheetham slipped in his *Life of Paine*.

"Cheetham was an Englishman, and had been a zealous disciple of Paine both in politics and religion; but he had retrograded in

politics, and deserted the principles of the democratic party. Paine had attacked him with his accustomed force, and thus converted him into a personal enemy. Mr. Cheetham at this time edited a party paper in New York, and, while he was yet smarting under the lash of Paine, heated by party politics and fired with revenge, ... wrote the life of his adversary. Cheetham, however, connected this with a scheme of interest: ... he had become a renegade, and was then in support of the English Tory party, and was preparing to go to England when he died. His *Life of Paine* he knew was a passport to the English court.

"When, therefore, a party hack, as Cheetham doubtless was, disappointed and a renegade, with talents, as he certainly possessed, but embittered in feelings and regardless of truth, as all circumstances contribute to show,—what could be expected from such a man but just what he produced, a *Life of Paine* abounding in bold falsehoods, cunningly contrived, and addressed to a people who wished to be deceived?"

"Could the *Age of Reason* and *Rights of Man* have been replied to as he replied to Burke, we should have never heard these slanders."

"Paine stands alone as a remarkable instance of great generosity and public spirit."

"He possessed every prominent virtue in large proportions, and to these he added the most social qualities."

"In reviewing the life of Thomas Paine, we can see no defect in his public character. He was a citizen of the world, and served its interests to the best of his abilities, which were great."

"Mr. Paine was as much esteemed in his private life as in his public. He was a welcome visitor to the tables of the most distinguished citizens."

"Other men have followed events; Paine actually created them."

"He wanted a Declaration of Independence, and he produced the wish for it."

"The beauties of nature and the happiness of the human family occupied his mind; and the violence done to nature and to human happiness by tyranny and superstition, together with the remarkable events of his day, deflected his course from the pursuits of

peace, which he was so fitted to enjoy, into the more violent but useful course he did pursue."

REV. GEORGE CROLY: "An impartial estimate of this remarkable person has been rarely formed, and still more rarely expressed. He was assuredly one of the original men of the age in which he lived."

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE:—"There was nothing small or mean about him. He was a strong man all through. The man who was the confidant of Burke, the counsellor of Franklin, and the friend and colleague of Washington, must have had great qualities. ... Let us do justice to him."

AARON BURR:—"I always considered Mr. Paine a gentleman, a pleasant companion, and a good-natured and intelligent man, decidedly temperate."

JUDGE COOPER:—"I have dined with Mr. Paine in literary society, ... in London, at least a dozen times, when his dress, manners, and conversation were such as became the character of an unobtrusive, intelligent gentleman, accustomed to good society. ... Paine's opinions on theological topics underwent no change before his death."

The rest not reproduced...

(too boring /pma)