A VINDICATION

OF

THOMAS PAINE.

BY

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

AND

THOMAS PAINE.

A CRITICISM.

BY

MONCURE D. CONWAY

"To argue with a man who has renounced the use and authority of reason, is like administering medicine to the dead."—Thomas Paine.

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VINDICATION OF THOMAS PAINE.

"To argue with a man who has renounced the use and authority of reason, is like administering medicine to the dead."—THOMAS PAINE

PEORIA, ILL., October 8th, 1877.

To the Editor of the New York Observer:

SIR: Last June, in San Francisco, I offered a thousand dollars in gold—not as a wager, but as a gift—to any one that would substantiate the absurd story that Thomas Paine died in agony and fear, frightened by the clanking chains of devils. I also offered the same amount to any minister that would prove that Voltaire did not pass away as serenely as the coming of the dawn. Afterwards, I was informed that you had accepted the offer, and called upon me to deposit the money. Acting upon this information, I sent you the following letter:

"PEORIA, ILL., August 31st, 1877.

"*To the Editor of the New York Observer:*

"I have been informed that you have accepted, in your paper, an offer made by me to any clergyman in San Francisco. That offer was, that I would pay one thousand dollars in gold to any minister in that city, who would prove that Thomas Paine died in terror because of religious opinions he had expressed, or that Voltaire did not pass away serenely as the coming of the dawn.

"For many years, religious journals and ministers have been circulating certain pretended accounts of the frightful agonies endured by Paine and Voltaire when dying; that these great men, at the moment of death, were terrified because they had given their honest opinions on the subject of religion to their fellowmen. The imagination of the religious world has been taxed to the utmost in inventing absurd and infamous accounts of the last moments of these intellectual giants. Every Sunday-paper, thousands of idiotic tracts, and countless stupidities, called sermons, have been filled with these calumnies.

"Paine and Voltaire both believed in God—both hoped for immortality—both believed in special providence; but both denied the inspiration of the Scriptures—both denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. While theologians most cheerfully admit that most murderers die without fear, they deny the possibility of any man who has expressed his disbelief in the inspiration of the bible, dying except in an agony of terror. These stories are used in revivals and in Sunday schools, and have long been considered of great value.

"I am anxious that these slanders shall cease. I am desirous of seeing justice done, even at this late day, to the dead.

"For the purpose of ascertaining the evidence upon which these death-bed accounts really rest, I make to you the following proposition:

"*First.*—As to THOMAS PAINE: I will deposit with the First National Bank of Peoria, Illinois, one thousand dollars in gold, upon the following conditions: This money shall be subject to your order when you shall, in the manner hereinafter provided, substantiate that Thomas Paine admitted the bible to be an inspired book, or that he recanted his infidel opinions—or that he died regretting that he had disbelieved the bible—or that he died calling upon Jesus Christ in any religious sense whatever.

"In order that a tribunal may be created to try this question, you may select one man, I will select another, and the two thus chosen shall select a third, and any two of the three may decide the matter.

"As there will be certain costs and expenditures on both sides, such costs and expenditures shall be paid by the defeated party.

"In addition to the one thousand dollars in gold, I will deposit a bond with good and sufficient security in the sum of two thousand dollars, conditioned for the payment of all costs, in case I am defeated. I shall require of you a like bond.

"From the date of accepting this offer, you may have ninety days to collect and present your testimony, giving me notice of time and place of taking depositions. I shall have a like time to take evidence upon my side, giving you like notice, and you shall then have thirty days to take further testimony in reply to what I may offer. The case shall then be argued before the persons chosen; and their decision shall be final as to us.

"If the arbitrator chosen by me shall die, I shall have the right to chose another. You shall have the same right. If the third one, chosen by our two, shall die, the two shall choose another; and all vacancies, from whatever cause, shall be filled upon the same principle.

"The arbitrators shall sit when and where a majarity shall determine, and shall have full power to pass upon all questions arising as to competency of evidence and upon all subjects.

"*Second.*—As to VOLTAIRE: I make the same proposition:—If you will substantiate that Voltaire died expressing remorse, or showing, in any way, that he was in mental agony because he had attacked Catholicism—or because he had denied the inspiration of the bible—or because he had denied the divinity of Christ.

"I make these propositions because I want you to stop slandering the dead.

"If the propositions do not suit you in any particular, please state your objections, and I will modify them in any way consistent with the object in view.

"If Paine and Voltaire died filled with childish and silly fear, I want to know it, and I want the world to know it. On the other hand, if the believers in superstition have made and circulated these cruel slanders concerning the mighty dead, I want the world to know that.

"As soon as you notify me of the acceptance of these propositions, I will send you the certificate of the bank that the money has been deposited upon the foregoing conditions, together with copies of bonds for costs. "R. G. INGERSOLL."

In your paper of September 27th, 1877, you acknowledge the the receipt of the foregoing letter, and, after giving an outline of its contents, say:

"As not one of the affirmations, in the form stated in this letter, was contained in the offer we made, we have no occasion to substantiate them. But we are prepared to produce the evidence of the truth of our own statement, and even to go further: to show not only 'that Tom Paine died a drunken, cowardly, and beastly death,' but that for many years previous, and up to that event, he lived a drunken and beastly life."

In order to refresh your memory as to what you had published, I call your attention to the following, which appeared in the New York *Observer*, the 19th of July, 1877:

"PUT DOWN THE MONEY.

"Col. Bob Ingersoll, in a speech full of ribaldry and blasphemy, made in San Francisco recently, said:

"'I will give $1,000 in gold coin to any clergyman who can substantiate that the death of Voltaire was not as peaceful as the dawn; and of Tom Paine, whom they assert died in fear and agony, frightened by the clanking chains of devils—in fact, frightened to death by God. I will give $1,000 likewise to any one who can substantiate this 'absurd story'—a story without a word of truth in it.'

"We have published the testimony, and the witnesses are on hand to prove that Tom Paine died a drunken, cowardly and beastly death. *Let the Colonel deposit the money with any honest man, and the absurd story, as he terms it, shall be shown to be an 'ower true' tale. But he won't do it. His talk is infidel 'buncombe,' and nothing more.*"

On the 31st of August I sent you my letter, and on the 27th of September you say in your paper: "As not one of the affirmations in the form stated in this letter was contained in the offer we made, we have no occasion to substantiate them."

What were the affirmations contained in the offer you made? I had offered a thousand dollars in gold to any one who would substantiate "*the absurd story*" *that Thomas Paine died in fear and agony, frightened by the clanking chains of devils—in fact, frightened to death by God.*"

In response to this offer you said: Let the Colonel deposit the money with an honest man, and the 'absurd story,' as he terms it, shall be shown to be an 'ower true' tale. But he won't do it. His talk is infidel 'bnncombe,' and nothing more."

Did you not offer to prove that Paine died in fear and agony, frightened by the clanking chains of devils? Did you not ask me to deposit the money that you might prove the "absurd story" to be an "ower true" tale, and obtain the money? Did you not, in your paper of the 27th of September, in effect deny that you had offered to prove this "absurd story?" As soon as I offered to deposit the gold and give bonds besides, to cover costs, did you not publish a falsehood?

You have eaten your own words, and for my part, I would rather have dined with Ezekiel than with you. You have not met the issue. You have knowingly avoided it. The question was not as to the personal habits of Paine. The real question was, and is, whether Paine was filled with fear and horror at the time of his death on account of his religious opinions. That is the question. You avoid this. In effect, you abandon that charge, and make others.

To you belongs the honor of having made the most cruel and infamous charges against Thomas Paine that have ever been made. Of what you have said you cannot prove the truth of one word.

You say that Thomas Paine died a drunken, cowardly and beastly death.

I pronounce this charge to be a cowardly and beastly falsehood.

Have you any evidence that he was in a drunken condition when he died?

What did he say or do of a *cowardly* character just before, or at about the time of his death?

In what way was his death cowardly? You must answer these questions, and give your proof, or all honest men will hold you in abhorrence. You have made these charges. The man against whom you make them is dead. He cannot answer you. I can. He cannot compel you to produce your testimony, or admit by your silence that you have cruelly slandered the defenseless dead. I can, and I will. You say that his death was cowardly. In what respect? Was it cowardly in him to hold the Thirty-nine Articles in contempt? Was it cowardly *not* to call on your Lord? Was it cowardly not to be afraid? You say that his death was beastly. Again I ask, in what respect? Was it beastly to submit to the inevitable with tranquility? Was it beastly to look with composure upon the approach of death? Was it beastly to die without a complaint, without a murmur—to pass from life without a fear?

Did Thomas Paine Recant?

Mr. Paine had prophesied that fanatics would crawl and cringe around him during his last moments. He believed that they would put a lie in the mouth of death.

When the shadow of the coming dissolution was upon him, two clergymen, Messrs. Milledollar and Cunningham, called to annoy the dying man. Mr. Cunningham had the politeness to say: "You have now a full view of death; you cannot live long; and whosoever does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will assuredly be damned." Mr. Paine replied: "Let me have none of your popish stuff. Get away with you. Good morning."

On another occasion a Methodist minister obtruded himself when Willet Hicks was present. The minister declared to Mr.

Paine, "that unless he repented of his unbelief he would be damned." Paine, although at the door of death, rose in his bed and indignantly requested the clergyman to leave the room. On another occasion, two brothers by the name of Pigott sought to convert him. He was displeased, and requested their departure. Afterwards, Thomas Nixon and Capt. Daniel Pelton visited him for the express purpose of ascertaining whether he had, in any manner, changed his religious opinions. They were assured by the dying man that he still held the principles he had expressed in his writings.

Afterwards, these gentlemen, hearing that William Cobbett was about to write a life of Paine, sent him the following note:

"New York, April 24th, 1818.

"Sir: Having been informed that you have a design to write a history of the life and writings of Thomas Paine, if you have been furnished with materials in respect to his religious opinions, or rather of his recantation of his former opinions before his death, all you have heard of his recanting is false. Being aware that such reports would be raised after his death by fanatics who infested his house at the time it was expected he would die, we, the subscribers, intimate acquaintances of Thomas Paine since the year 1776, went to his house. He was sitting up in a chair, and apparently in full vigor and use of all his mental faculties. We interrogated him upon his religious opinions, and if he had changed his mind, or repented of anything he had said or wrote on that subject. He answered, "Not at all," and appeared rather offended at our supposition that any change should take place in his mind. We took down in writing the questions put to him, and his answers thereto, before a number of persons then in his room, among whom were his doctor, Mrs. Bonneville, etc. This paper is mislaid and cannot be found at present, but the above is the substance, which can be attested by many living witnesses.

"THOMAS NIXON,
"DANIEL PELTON."

Mr. Jarvis, the artist, saw Mr. Paine one or two days before his death. To Mr. Jarvis he expressed his belief in his written opinions upon the subject of religion. B. F. Haskin, an attorney of the city of New York, also visited him, and inquired as to his religious opinions. Paine was then upon the threshold of death but he did not tremble. He was not a coward. He expressed his firm and unshaken belief in the religious ideas he had given to the world.

Dr. Manley was with him when he spoke his last words. Dr. Manley asked the dying man if he did not wish to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, and the dying philosopher answered: "I have no wish to believe on that subject." Amasa Woodsworth sat up with Thomas Paine the night before his death. In 1839 Gilbert Vale, hearing that Mr. Woodsworth was living in or near Boston, visited him for the purpose of getting his statement. The statement was published in the *Beacon* of June 5, 1839, while thousands who had been acquainted with Mr. Paine were living.

The following is the article referred to:

"We have just returned from Boston. One object of our visit to that city was to see a Mr. Amasa Woodsworth, an engineer, now retired in a handsome cottage and garden at East Cambridge, Boston. This gentleman owned the house occupied by Paine at his death—while he lived next door. As an act of kindness, Mr. Woodworth 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. He was always there with Dr. Manley, the physician, and assisted in removing Mr. Paine while his bed was prepared. He was present when Dr. Manley asked Mr. Paine 'if he wished to believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.' He says that lying on his back he used some action, and, with much emphasis, replied: 'I have no wish to believe on that subject.' He lived some time after this, but was not known to speak, for he died tranquilly. He accounts for the insinuating style of Dr. Manley's letter, by stating that that gentleman, just after its publication, joined a church. He informs us that he has openly reproved the doctor for the falsity contained in the spirit of that letter, boldly declaring before Dr. Manley, who is yet living, that nothing which he saw justified the insinuations. 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; but that being very ill and in pain, chiefly arising from the skin being removed in some parts by long lying, he was generally too uneasy to enjoy conversation on abstract subjects. This, then, is the best evidence that can be procured on this subject, and we publish it while the contravening parties are yet alive, and with the authority of Mr. Woodsworth.

"GILBERT VALE."

A few weeks ago I received the following letter, which confirms the statement of Mr. Vale:

"NEAR STOCKTON, CAL., GREENWOOD COTTAGE, July 9, 1877.

"COL. INGERSOLL: In 1842 I talked with a gentleman in Boston. I have forgotten his name; but he was then an engineer of the Charlestown navy yard. I am thus particular, so that you can find his name on the books. He told me that he nursed Thomas Paine in his last illness, and closed his eyes when dead. I asked him if he recanted and called upon God to save him. He replied: "No; he died as he had taught. He had a sore upon his side, and when we turned him it was very painful, and he would cry out, 'O God,' or something like that." "But," said the narrator, "That was nothing, for he believed in a God." I told him that I had often heard it asserted from the pulpit that Mr. Paine had recanted in his last moments. The gentleman said that it was not true, and he appeared to be an intelligent, truthful man. With respect I remain, &c.,

"PHILIP GRAVES, M. D."

The next witness is Willet Hicks, a Quaker preacher. He says that during the last illness of Mr. Paine he visited him almost daily, and that Paine died firmly convinced of the truth of the religious opinions he had given to his fellow men. It was to this same Willet Hicks that Paine applied for permission to be buried in the cemetery of the Quakers. Permission was refused. This refusal settles the question of recantation. If he had recanted, of course there could have been no objection to his body being buried by the side of the best hypocrites in the earth. If Paine recanted, why should he be denied "a little earth for charity?" Had he recanted, it would have been regarded as a vast and splendid triumph for the Gospel. It would, with much noise and pomp and ostentation, have been heralded about the world.

I received the following letter to-day. The writer is well known in this city, and is a man of high character:

PEORIA, ILL., October 8th, 1877.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL—*Esteemed Friend:* My parents were Friends (Quakers). My father died when I was very young. The elderly and middle-aged Friends visited at my mother's house. We lived in the city of New York. Among the number, I distinctly remember Elias Hicks, Willet Hicks, and a Mr. ——

Day, who was a book-seller in Pearl street. There were many others, whose names I do not now remember. The subject of the recantation of Thomas Paine of his views about the bible in his last illness, or at any other time, was discussed by them, in my presence, at different times. I learned from them that some of them had attended upon Thomas Paine in his last sickness, and ministered to his wants up to the time of his death. And upon the question of whether he did recant there was but one expression. They all said that he did not recant in any manner. I often heard them say that they wished he had recanted. In fact, according to them, the nearer he approached death the more positive he appeared to be in his convictions.

These conversations were from 1820 to 1822. I was at that time from ten to twelve years old, but these conversations impressed themselves upon me because many thoughtless people then blamed the Society of Friends for their kindness to that "arch-infidel," Thomas Paine. Truly yours,

"A. C. HANKINSON."

A few days ago I received the following:

"ALBANY, NEW YORK, September 27th, 1877.

"DEAR SIR: It is over twenty years ago that, professionally, I made the acquaintance of John Hogeboom, a justice of the peace of the County of Rensselaer, New York. He was then over seventy years of age, and had the reputation of being a man of candor and integrity. He was a great admirer of Paine. He told me he was personally acquainted with him, and used to see him frequently during the last years of his life in the city of New York, where Hogeboom then resided. I asked him if there was any truth in the charge that Paine was in the habit of getting drunk. He said that it was utterly false; that he never heard of such a thing during the life time of Mr. Paine, and did not believe any one else did. I asked him about the recantation of his religious opinions on his death-bed, and the revolting death-bed scenes that the world had heard so much about. He said there was no truth in them; that he had received his information from persons who attended Paine in his last illness, "and that he passed peacefully away, as we may say, in the sunshine of a great soul." * * * Yours truly,

"W. J. HILTON."

The witnesses by whom I substantiate the fact that Thomas Paine did not recant, and that he died holding the religious opinions he had published, are

First.—Thomas Nixon, Captain Daniel Pelton, B. F. Haskin. These gentlemen visited him during his last illness for the purpose of ascertaining whether he had, in any respect, changed his views upon religion. He told them that he had not.

Second.—Jas. Cheetham. This man was the most malicious enemy Mr. Paine had, and yet he admits that "Thomas Paine died placidly, and almost without a struggle."—*Life of Thomas Paine, by James Cheetham.*

Third.—The ministers, Milledollar and Cunningham. These gentlemen told Mr. Paine that if he died without believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, he would be damned, and Paine replied: "Let me have none of your popish stuff. Good morning."—*Sherwin's Life of Paine, page 220.*

Fourth.—Mrs. Hedden. She told these same preachers, when they attempted to obtrude themselves upon Mr. Paine again, that the attempt to convert Mr. Paine was useless; "that if God did not change his mind, no human power could."

Fifth.—Andrew A. Dean. This man lived upon Paine's farm, at New Rochelle, and corresponded with him upon religious subjects.—*Paine's Theological Works, page 308.*

Sixth.—Mr. Jarvis, the artist with whom Paine lived. He gives an account of an old lady coming to Paine, and telling him that God Almighty had sent her to tell him that unless he repented and believed in the blessed Saviour he would be damned. Paine replied that God would not send such a foolish old woman with such an impertinent message.—*Clio Rickman's Life of Paine.*

Seventh.—William Carver, with whom Paine boarded. Mr. Carver said again and again that Paine did not recant. He knew him well, and had every opportunity of knowing.—*Life of Paine by Vale.*

Eighth.—Dr. Manley, who attended him in his last sickness, and to whom Paine spoke his last words. Dr. Manley asked him if he did not wish to believe in Jesus Christ, and he replied: "I have no wish to believe on that subject."

Ninth.—Willet Hicks and Elias Hicks, who were with him frequently during his last sickness, and both of whom tried to persuade him to recant. According to their testimony Mr. Paine died as he lived—a believer in God and a friend of man. Willet

Hicks was offered money to say something false against Paine. He was even offered money to remain silent, and allow others to slander the dead. Mr. Hicks, speaking of Thomas Paine, said: "He was a good man—an honest man."—*Vale's Life of Paine.*

Tenth.—Amasa Woodsworth, who was with him every day for some six weeks immediately preceding his death, and sat up with him the last two nights of his life. This man declares that Paine did not recant, and that he died tranquilly. The evidence of Mr. Woodsworth is conclusive.

Eleventh.—Thomas Paine himself. The will of Mr. Paine, written by himself, commences as follows: "The last will and testament of me the subscriber, Thomas Paine, reposing confidence in my creator, God, and in no other being, for I know of no other, nor believe in any other;" and closes with these words: "I have lived an honest and useful life to mankind; my time has been spent in doing good; and I die in perfect composure and resignation to the will of my creator, God."

Twelfth.—If Thomas Paine recanted why do you pursue him? If he recanted he died substantially in your belief; for what reason, then, do you denounce his death as cowardly? If, upon his death-bed, he renounced the opinions he had published, the business of defaming him should be done by infidels, not by christians.

I ask you if it is honest to throw away the testimony of his friends—the evidence of fair and honorable men—and take the putrid words of avowed and malignant enemies?

When Thomas Paine was dying, he was infested by fanatics—by the snaky spies of bigotry. In the shadows of death were the unclean birds of prey waiting to tear, with beak and claw, the corpse of him who wrote the "Rights of Man;" and there, lurking and crouching in the darkness, were the jackals and hyenas of superstition ready to violate his grave.

These birds of prey—these unclean beasts—are the witnesses produced and relied upon by you.

One by one the instruments of torture have been wrenched from the cruel clutch of the church, until within the armory of orthodoxy there remains but one weapon—Slander.

Against the witnesses that I have produced you can bring just two—Mary Roscoe and Mary Hinsdale. The first is referred to in the memoir of Stephen Grellet. She had once been a servant in his house. Grellet tells what happened between this girl and Paine. According to this account, Paine asked her if she had ever read any of his writings, and on being told that she had read very *little* of them, he inquired what she thought of them, adding that from such an one as she he expected a correct answer.

Let us examine this falsehood. Why would Paine expect a correct answer about his writings from one who had read very little of them? Does not such a statement devour itself? This young lady further said that the "Age of Reason" was put in her hands, and that the more she read in it, the more dark and distressed she felt, and that she threw the book into the fire. Whereupon Mr. Paine remarked: "I wish all had done as you did, for if the devil ever had any agency in any work, he had it in my writing that book."

The next is Mary Hinsdale. She was a servant in the family of Willet Hicks. She, like Mary Roscoe, was sent to carry some delicacy to Mr. Paine. To this young lady Paine, according to her account, said precisely the same that he did to Mary Roscoe, and she said the same thing to Mr. Paine.

My own opinion is that Mary Roscoe and Mary Hinsdale are one and the same person, or the same story has been, by mistake, put in the mouths of both.

It is not possible that the identical conversation should have taken place between Paine and Mary Roscoe, and between him and Mary Hinsdale.

Mary Hinsdale lived with Willet Hicks, and he pronounced her story a pious fraud and fabrication. He said that Thomas Paine never said any such thing to Mary Hinsdale.—*Vale's Life of Paine.*

Another thing about this witness. A woman by the name of Mary Lockwood, a Hicksite Quaker, died. Mary Hinsdale met her brother about that time and told him that his sister had recanted, and wanted her to say so at her funeral. This turned out to be false.

It has been claimed that Mary Hinsdale made her statement to Charles Collins. Long after the alleged occurrence Gilbert Vale, one of the biographers of Paine, had a conversation with Collins concerning Mary Hinsdale. Vale asked him what he thought of her. He replied that some of the Friends believed that she used opiates, and that they did not give credit to her statements. He also said that he believed what the Friends said, but thought that when a young woman, she *might* have told the truth.

In 1818 William Cobbett came to New York. He began collecting materials for a life of Thomas Paine. In this way he became acquainted with Mary Hinsdale and Charles Collins. Mr. Cobbett gave a full account of what happened in a letter addressed to the Norwich *Mercury* in 1819. From this account it seems that Charles Collins told Cobbett that Paine had recanted. Cobbett called for the testimony, and told Mr. Collins that he must give time, place and circumstances. He finally brought a statement that he stated had been made by Mary Hinsdale. Armed with this document, Cobbett, in October of that year, called upon the said Mary Hinsdale, at No. 10 Anthony street, New York, and showed her the statement. Upon being questioned by Mr. Cobbett, she said, "that it was so long ago that she could not speak positively to any part of the matter—that she would not say that any part of the paper was true—that she had never seen the paper—and that she had never given Charles Collins authority to say anything about the matter in her name." And so in the month of October, in the year of grace, 1818, in the mist and fog of forgetfulness, disappeared forever one Mary Hinsdale, the last and only witness against the intellectual honesty of Thomas Paine.

Did Thomas Paine Die in Destitution and Want?

The charge has been made, over and over again, that Thomas Paine died in want and destitution; that he was an abandoned pauper—an outcast, without friends and without money. This charge is just as false as the rest.

Upon his return to this country, in 1802, he was worth $30,000 according to his own statement, made at that time, in the following letter, addressed to Clio Rickman:

My Dear Friend: Mr. Monroe who is appointed minister extraordinary to France, takes charge of this, to be delivered to Mr. Este, banker, in Paris, to be forwarded to you.

I arrived in Baltimore, 30th of October, and you can have no idea of the agitation which my arrival occasioned. From New Hampshire to Georgia (an extent of 1,500 miles), every newspaper was filled with applause or abuse.

My property in this country has been taken care of by my friends, and is now worth six thousand pounds sterling, which, put in the funds, will bring me £400 sterling a year.

Remember me, in affection and friendship, to your wife and family, and in the circle of your friends.

THOMAS PAINE.

A man, in those days, worth thirty thousand dollars was not a pauper. That amount would bring an income of at least two thousand dollars per annum. Two thousand dollars then, would be fully equal to five thousand dollars now.

On the 12th of July, 1809, the year in which he died, Mr. Paine made his will. From this instrument we learn that he was the owner of a valuable farm within twenty miles of New York. He also was the owner of thirty shares in the New York Phœnix Insurance Company, worth upwards of fifteen hundred dollars. Besides this, some personal property and ready money. By his will he gave to Walter Morton and Thomas Addis Emmet, brother of Robert Emmet, two hundred dollars each, and one hundred dollars to the widow of Elihu Palmer.

Is it possible that this will was made by a pauper—by a destitute outcast—by a man who suffered for the ordinary necessaries of life?

But suppose, for the sake of the argument, that he was poor, and that he died a beggar, does that tend to show that the bible is an inspired book, and that Calvin did not burn Servetus? Do you really regard poverty as a crime? If Paine had died a millionaire, would you have accepted his religious opinions? If Paine had drank nothing but cold water, would you have repudiated the five cardinal points of Calvinism? Does an argument depend for its force upon the pecuniary condition of the person making it? As a matter of fact, most reformers—most men and women of genius—have been acquainted with poverty. Beneath a covering of rags have been found some of the tenderest and bravest hearts.

Owing to the attitude of the churches for the last fifteen hundred years, truth-telling has not been a very lucrative business. As a rule, hypocrisy has worn the robes, and honesty the rags. That day is passing away. You cannot now answer the argument of a man by pointing at the holes in his coat. Thomas Paine attacked the church when it was powerful—when it had what is called honors to bestow—when it was the keeper of the public conscience—when it was strong and cruel. The church waited till he was dead, and then attacked his reputation and his clothes.

Once upon a time a donkey kicked a lion. The lion was dead.

Did Thomas Paine Live the Life of a Drunken Beast, and Did He Die a Drunken, Cowardly and Beastly Death?

Upon you rests the burden of substantiating these infamous charges.

You have, I suppose, produced the best evidence in your possession, and that evidence I will now proceed to examine. Your first witness is Grant Thorburn. He mades three charges against Thomas Paine. 1st. That his wife obtained a divorce from him in England for cruelty and neglect. 2nd. That he was a defaulter, and fled from England to America. 3rd. That he was a drunkard. These three charges stand upon the same evidence—the word of Grant Thorburn. If they are not all true, Mr. Thorburn stands impeached.

The charge that Mrs. Paine obtained a divorce on account of the cruelty and neglect of her husband is utterly false. There is no such record in the world, and never was. Paine and his wife separated by mutual consent. Each respected the other. They remained friends. This charge is without any foundation in fact. I challenge the christian world to produce the record of this decree of divorce. According to Mr. Thorburn, it was granted in England. In that country public records are kept of all such decrees. Have the kindness to produce this decree, showing that it was given on account of cruelty, or admit that Mr. Thorburn was mistaken.

Thomas Paine was a just man. Although separated from his wife, he always spoke of her with tenderness and respect, and frequently sent her money without letting her know the source from whence it came. Was this the conduct of a drunken beast?

The second charge, that Paine was a defaulter in England and fled to America, is equally false. He did not flee from England. He came to America, not as a fugitive, but as a free man. He came with a letter of introduction, signed by another infidel, Benjamin Franklin. He came as a soldier of Freedom—an apostle of Liberty.

In this second charge there is not one word of truth.

He held a small office in England. If he was a defaulter, the records of that country will show that fact.

Mr. Thorburn, unless the records can be produced to substantiate him, stands convicted of at least two mistakes.

Now as to the third: He says that in 1802 Paine was an "old remnant of mortality, drunk, bloated and half asleep."

Can any one believe this to be a true account of the personal appearance of Mr. Paine in 1802? He had just returned from France. He had been welcomed home by Thomas Jefferson, who had said that he was entitled to the hospitality of every American.

In 1802 Mr. Paine was honored with a public dinner in the city of New York. He was called upon and treated with kindness and respect by such men as De Witt Clinton.

In 1806 Mr. Paine wrote a letter to Andrew A. Dean upon the subject of religion. Read that letter and then say that the writer of it was an old remnant of mortality, drunk, bloated and half asleep. Search the files of the New York *Observer* from the first issue to the last, and you will find nothing superior to this letter. In 1803 Mr. Paine wrote a letter of considerable length, and of great force, to his friend Samuel Adams. Such letters are not written by drunken beasts, nor by remnants of old mortality, nor by drunkards. It was about the same time that he wrote his "Remarks on Robert Hall's Sermons." These "Remarks" were not written by a drunken beast, but by a clear-headed and thoughtful man

In 1804, he published an essay on the invasion of England, and a treatise on gun-boats, full of valuable maritime information; in 1805, a treatise on yellow fever, suggesting modes of prevention. In short, he was an industrious and thoughtful man. He sympathized with the poor and oppressed of all lands. He looked upon monarchy as a species of physical slavery. He had the goodness to attack that form of government. He regarded the religion of his day as a kind of mental slavery. He had the courage to give his reasons for his opinion. His reasons filled the churches with hatred. Instead of answering his arguments they attacked him. Men who were not fit to blacken his shoes blackened his character.

There is too much religious cant in the statement of Mr. Thorburn. He exhibits too much anxiety to tell what Grant Thorburn said to Thomas Paine. He names Thomas Jefferson as one of the disreputable men who welcomed Paine with open arms. The testimony of a man who regarded Thomas Jefferson as a disreputable person, as to the character of anybody, is utterly without value.

In my judgment, the testimony of Mr. Thorburn should be thrown aside as wholly unworthy of belief.

Your next witness is the Rev. J. D. Wickham, D.D., who tells what an elder in his church said. This elder said that Paine passed his last days on his farm at New Rochelle, with a solitary female attendant. This is not true. He did not pass his last days at New Rochelle; consequently, this pious elder did not see him during his last days at that place. Upon this elder we prove an alibi. Mr. Paine passed his last days in the city of New York, in a house upon Columbia street. The story of the Rev. J. D. Wickham, D.D., is simply false.

The next competent false witness is the Rev. Charles Hawley, D.D., who proceeds to state that the story of the Rev. J. D. Wickham, D.D., is corroborated by older citizins of New Rochelle. The names of these ancient residents are withheld. According to these unknown witnesses, the account given by the deceased elder was entirely correct. But as the particulars of Mr. Paine's conduct "were too loathsome to be described in print," we are left entirely in the dark as to what he really did.

While at New Rochelle, Mr. Paine lived with Mr. Purdy, with

Mr. Dean, with Capt. Pelton, and with Mr. Staple. It is worthy of note that all of these gentlemen give the lie direct to the statements of "older residents" and ancient citizens spoken of by the Rev. Charles Hawley, D.D., and leave him with the "loathsome particulars" existing only in his own mind.

The next gentleman you bring upon the stand is W. H. Ladd, who quotes from the memoirs of Stephen Grellett. This gentleman also has the misfortune to be dead. According to his account, Mr. Paine made his recantation to a servant girl of his by the name of Mary Roscoe. To this girl, according to the account, Mr. Paine uttered the wish that all who read his book had burned it. I believe there is a mistake in the name of this girl. Her name was probably Mary Hinsdale, as it was once claimed that Paine made the same remark to her, but this point I shall notice hereafter.

These are your witnesses, and the only ones you bring forward to support your charge that Thomas Paine lived a drunken and beastly life, and died a drunken, cowardly and beastly death. All these calumnies are found in a life of Paine by James Cheetham, the convicted libeller already referred to. Mr. Cheetham was an enemy of the man whose life he pretended to write.

In order to show you the estimation in which this libeller was held by Mr. Paine, I will give you a copy of a letter that throws light upon this point:

"OCTOBER 27th, 1807.

"MR. CHEETHAM: Unless you make a public apology for the abuse and falsehood in your paper of Tuesday, October 27th, respecting me, I will prosecute you for lying. * * *

"THOMAS PAINE."

In another letter, speaking of this same man, Mr. Paine says: "If an unprincipled bully cannot be reformed, he can be punished." "Cheetham has been so long in the habit of giving false information, that truth is to him like a foreign language."

Mr. Cheetham wrote the life of Paine to gratify his malice and to support religion. He was prosecuted for libel—was convicted and fined.

Yet the life of Paine, written by this man, is referred to by the christian world as the highest authority.

As to the personal habits of Mr. Paine we have the testimony of William Carver, with whom he lived; of Mr. Jarvis, the artist, with whom he lived; of Mr. Purdy, who was a tenant of Paine's; of Mr. Burger, with whom he was intimate; of Thomas Nixon and Capt. Daniel Pelton, both of whom knew him well; of Amasa Woodsworth, who was with him when he died; of John Fellows, who boarded at the same house; of James Wilburn, with whom he boarded; of B. F. Haskin, a lawyer, who was well acquainted with him, and called upon him during his last illness; of Walter Morton, President of the Phœnix Insurance Company; of Clio Rickman, who had known him for many years; of Willet and Elias Hicks, Quakers, who knew him intimately and well; of Judge Hertell, H. Margary, Elihu Palmer and many others. All these testified to the fact that Mr. Paine was a temperate man. In those days nearly everybody used spirituous liquors. Paine was not an exception; but he did not drink to excess. Mr. Lovett who kept the City Hotel, where Paine stopped, in a note to Caleb Bingham, declared that Paine drank less than any boarder he had.

Against all this evidence you produce the story of Grant Thorburn—the story of the Rev. J. D. Wickham, that an elder in his church told him that Paine was a drunkard, corroborated by the Rev. Charles Hawley, and an extract from Lossing's history to the same effect. The evidence is overwhelmingly against you. Will you have the fairness to admit it? Your witnessess are merely the repeaters of the falsehoods of James Cheetham, the convicted libeller.

After all, drinking is not as bad as lying. An honest drunkard is better than a calumniator of the dead. "A remnant of old mortality, drunk, bloated and half asleep," is better than a perfectly sober defender of human slavery.

To become drunk is a virtue compared with stealing a babe from the breast of its mother.

Drunkenness is one of the beatitudes, compared with editing a religious paper devoted to the defence of slavery upon the ground that it is a divine institution.

Do you really think that Paine was a drunken beast when he wrote "Common Sense"—a pamphlet that aroused three millions of people as people were never aroused by words before? Was he a drunken beast when he wrote the "Crisis?" Was it to a drunken beast that the following letter was addressed:

"ROCKY HILL, September 10, 1783.

"I have learned, since I have been at this place, that you are at Bordentown. Whether for the sake of retirement or economy I know not. Be it for either, or both, or whatever it may, if you will come to this place and partake with me, I shall be exceedingly happy to see you at it. Your presence may remind congress of your past services to this country; and if it is in my power to impress them, command my best exertions with freedom, as they will be rendered cheerfully by one who entertains a lively sense of the importance of your works, and who, with much pleasure, subscribes himself

"Your sincere friend,
"GEORGE WASHINGTON."

Did any of your ancestors ever receive a letter like that?

Do you think that Paine was a drunken beast when the following letter was received by him:

"You express a wish in your letter to return to America in a national ship. Mr. Dawson, who brings over the treaty, and who will present you with this letter, is charged with orders to the captain of the *Maryland* to receive and accommodate you back, if you can be ready to depart at such a short warning. You will, in general, find us returned to sentiments worthy of former times; *in these it will be your glory to have steadily labored, and with as much effect as any man living.* That you may live long to continue your useful labors, and reap the reward in the *thankfulness of nations,* is my sincere prayer. Accept the assurances of my high esteem and affectionate attachment.

"THOMAS JEFFERSON."

Did any of your ancestors ever receive a letter like that?

"It has been very generally propagated through the continent that I wrote the pamphlet 'Common Sense.' I could not have written anything in so manly and striking a style.

"JOHN ADAMS."

"A few more such *flaming* arguments as were exhibited at Falmouth and Norfolk, added to the sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning contained in the pamphlet 'Common Sense,' will not leave numbers at a loss to decide on the propriety of a separation.

"GEORGE WASHINGTON."

"It is not necessary for me to tell you how much all your countrymen—I speak of the great mass of the people—are interested in your welfare. They have not forgotten the history of their own revolution, and the difficult scenes through which they passed; nor do they review its several stages without reviving in their bosoms a due sensibility of the merits of those who served them in that great and arduous conflict. The crime of ingratitude has not yet stained, and, I trust, never will stain, out national character. You are considered by them as not only having rendered important services in our revolution, but as being on a more extensive scale the friend of human rights and a distinguished and able advocate in favor of public liberty. To the welfare of Thomas Paine, the Americans are not, nor can they be, indifferent.

JAMES MONROE."

Did any of your ancestors ever receive a letter like that?

"No writer has exceeded Paine in ease and familiarity of style, in perspicuity of expression, happiness of elucidation, and in simple and unassuming language.

"THOMAS JEFFERSON."

Was ever a letter like that written about an editor of the *New York Observer*?

Was it in consideration of the services of a drunken beast that the legislature of Pennsylvania presented Thomas Paine with five hundred pounds sterling?

Did the State of New York feel indebted to a drunken beast, and confer upon Thomas Paine an estate of several hundred acres?

Did the congress of the United States thank him for his services because he had lived a drunken and beastly life?

Was he elected a member of the French convention because he was a drunken beast? Was it the act of a drunken beast to put his own life in jeopardy by voting against the death of the king? Was it because he was a drunken beast that he opposed the "reign of terror"—that he endeavored to stop the shedding of blood, and did all in his power to protect even his own enemies?

Do the following extracts sound like the words of a drunken beast:

"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."

"My own mind is my own church."

"It is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself."

"Any system of religion that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system."

"The word of God is the creation which we behold."

"The age of ignorance commenced with the christian system."

"It is with a pious fraud as with a bad action—it begets a calamitous necessity of going on."

"To read the bible without horror, we must undo everything that is tender, sympathizing and benevolent in the heart of man."

"The man does not exist who can say I have persecuted him, or that I have, in any case, returned evil for evil."

"Of all the tyrants that afflict mankind, tyranny in religion is the worst."

"The belief in a cruel god makes a cruel man."

"My own opinion is, that those whose lives have been spent in doing good, and endeavoring to make their fellow-mortals happy, will be happy hereafter."

"The intellectual part of religion is a private affair between every man and his maker, and in which no third party has any right to interfere. The practical part consists in our doing good to each other."

"No man ought to make a living by religion. One person cannot act religion for another—every person must perform it for himself."

"One good schoolmaster is of more use than a hundred priests."

"Let us propagate morality, unfettered by superstition."

"God is the power, or first cause, nature is the law, and matter is the subject acted upon."

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

"The key of happiness is not in the keeping of any sect, nor ought the road to it to be obstructed by any."

"My religion, and the whole of it, is, the fear and love of the Deity, and universal philanthropy."

"I have yet, I believe, some years in store, for I have a good state of health and a happy mind. I take care of both, by nourishing the first with *temperance* and the latter with abundance."

"He lives immured within the Bastile of a word."

How perfectly that sentence describes you. The Bastile in which you are immured is the word "Calvinism."

"Man has no property in man."

What a splendid motto that would have made for the *New York Observer* in the olden time!

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

I ask you again, whether these splendid utterances came from the lips of a drunken beast?

CONCLUSION.

From the persistence with which the orthodox have charged, for the last sixty-eight years, that Thomas Paine recanted, and that when dying he was filled with remorse and fear; from the malignity of the attacks upon his personal character, I had concluded that there must be some evidence of some kind to support these charges. Even with my ideas of the average honor of believers in superstition—the disciples of fear, I did not quite believe that all these infamies rested solely upon poorly attested lies. I had charity enough to suppose that something had been said or done by Thomas Paine capable of being tortured into a foundation for these calumnies. And I was foolish enough to think that even you would be willing to fairly examine the pretended evidence, said to sustain these charges, and give your honest conclusion to the world. I supposed that you, being acquainted with the history of your country, felt under a certain obligation to Thomas Paine for the splendid services rendered by him in the darkest days of the Revolution. It was only reasonable to suppose that you were aware that in the midnight of Valley Forge, the "Crisis," by Thomas Paine, was the first star that glittered in the wide horizon of despair. I took it for granted that you knew the bold stand taken, and the brave words spoken by Thomas Paine in the French convention, against the death of the king. I thought it probable that you, being an editor, had read the "Rights of Man;" that you knew that Thomas Paine was a champion of human liberty; that he was one of the founders and fathers of this republic; that he was one of the foremost men of his age; that he had never written a word in favour of injustice; that he was a despiser of slavery; that he abhorred tyranny in all its forms; that he was in the widest and highest sense a friend of his race; that his head was as clear as his heart was good, and that he had the courage to speak his honest thoughts. Under these circumstances I had hoped that you would, for the moment, forget your religious prejudices and submit to the enlightened judgment of the world the evidences you had, or could obtain, affecting in any way the character of so great and so generous a man. This you have refused to do. In my judgment you have mistaken the temper of even your own readers. A large majority of the religious people of this country have, to a considerable extent, outgrown the prejudices of their fathers. They are willing to know the truth, and the whole truth, about the life and death of Thomas Paine. They will not thank you for having presented to them the moss-covered, the maimed and distorted traditions of ignorance, prejudice and credulity. By this course you will convince them, not of the wickedness of Paine, but of your own unfairness.

What crime had Thomas Paine committed that he should have feared to die? The only answer you can give us, that he denied the inspiration of the scriptures. If this is a crime, the civilized world is filled with criminals. The pioneers of human thought—the intellectual leaders of the world—the foremost men in every science—the kings of literature and art—those who stand in the front rank of investigation—the men who are civilizing, elevating, instructing and refining mankind, are to-day unbelievers in the dogma of inspiration. Upon this question the intellect of christendom agrees with the conclusion reached by the genius of Thomas Paine. Centuries ago a noise was made for the purpose of frightening mankind. Orthodoxy is the echo of that noise.

The man who now regards the old testament as, in any sense, a sacred or inspired book, is, in my judgment, an intellectual and moral deformity. There is in it so much that is cruel, ignorant and ferocious, that it is to me a matter of amazement that it was ever thought to be the work of a most merciful Deity.

Upon the question of inspiration, Thomas Paine gave his honest opinion. Can it be that to give an honest opinion causes one to die in terror and despair? Have you, in your writings, been actuated by the fear of such a consequence? Why should it be taken for granted that Thomas Paine, who devoted his life to the sacred cause of freedom, should have been hissed at in the hour of death by the snakes of conscience, while editors of Presbyterian papers, who defended slavery as a divine institution, and cheerfully justified the stealing of babes from the breasts of mothers, are supposed to have passed smilingly from earth to the embraces of angels? Why should you think that the heroic author of the "Rights of Man" should shudderingly dread to leave this "bank and shoal of time," while Calvin, dripping with the blood of Servetus, was anxious to be judged of God? Is it possible that the persecutors; the instigators of the massacre of St. Bartholomew; the inventors and users of thumb-screws, and iron boots, and racks; the burners and tearers of human flesh; the stealers, whippers and enslavers of men; the buyers and beaters of babes and mothers; the founders of inquisitions; the makers of chains; the builders of dungeons; the slanderers of the living and the calumniators of the dead; all died in the odor of sanctity, with white, forgiven hands folded upon the breasts of peace, while the destroyers of prejudice; the apostles of humanity; the soldiers of liberty; the breakers of fetters; the creators of light; died surrounded by the fierce fiends of fear?

In your attempt to destroy the character of Thomas Paine you have failed, and have succeeded only in leaving a stain upon your own. You have written words as cruel, bitter and heartless as the creed of Calvin. Hereafter you will stand in the pillory of history as a defamer—a calumniator of the dead. You will be known as the man who said that Thomas Paine, the "Author Hero," lived a drunken and beastly life, and died a drunken, cowardly and beastly death. These infamous words will be branded upon the forehead of your reputation. They will be remembered against you, when all else you may have uttered shall have passed from the memory of men.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

THOMAS PAINE.

THOMAS PAINE.

MONCURE D CONWAY.

During the International Exposition at Philadelphia, by which the hundredth year of American independence was celebrated, a number of eminent citizens of the United States presented to that city a bust of Thomas Paine. The offer was promptly declined. After a century of progress in a republic founded in religious freedom by freethinkers the *odium theologicum* was still strong enough, when the list of revolutionary heroes was unrolled for national homage, to single out for insult the man who in the year commemorated was idolised beyond all others, above even Washington himself. A recent writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* remarks that "his (Paine's) career was wonderful, even for the age of miraculous events he lived in." This is literally true, but one may now add that even the wonders of his career while living are eclipsed by those which have attended his name and fame. It would be impossible to find in the eighteenth century a name surrounded with brighter halo by those of his contemporaries whom the world now honors; it would be equally impossible to find in the nineteenth century a name more covered with obloquy. Nor is this obloquy found in theological quarters alone. There is a purely mythological Paine still industriously circulated in pictorial tracts, which show him recanting his opinions, and dying "in fear and agony, frightened by the clanking chains of devils—in fact, frightened to death by God." But there is also a conventionalised Paine whose actuality is admitted even by scholars, and who is denied a place of honor among independent minds as contemptuously as the bust was refused a niche in the Independence Hall at Philadelphia.

At a time when even such a liberal thinker as Mr. Leslie Stephen is found contributing his assent to the *schwärmerei* of traditions and denunciations gathered around the reputation of Paine, an attempt to secure a rehearing of his case may meet little favor. Many of the unorthodox may properly repudiate anything looking like an admission that the works or character of Paine form any part of their case. What matters it if he was a lax thinker, an ignorant, tipsy vagabond? *Concessum sit.* His writings are of no importance to our questions, his political opinions and deeds have no relation to present emergencies. But even conceding this, it may be claimed that the man whom, above all others, theological hatred has distinguished by the persistency of its invective has some title to the consideration of a tolerant age; and further, that polemical writings which elicited more volumes in reply from eminent theologians than any others of their time can hardly be without historical interest, if no other. However, I am induced to submit the present study not by any desire to vindicate Paine's opinions, nor even primarily to vindicate Paine himself, but by a conviction that beneath the conventionalised and vulgarised notion of this man lies obscured a remarkable chapter of modern history, and altogether hidden one the best types of English mind and character.

The pious mythology that has gathered around Paine may be briefly dismissed. All the morning-stars become rebellious and diabolical Lucifers to those on whose darkness they bring the light. The light which Paine brought upon the bald dogmas of a hundred years ago has so far faded to the light of common day, that many who regard his name with abhorrence are nearer to him in belief than to those with whom their notions of the man originated. To such his reign of terror is generally explained by the theory that he must have been a blasphemer, and an atheist of an especially vulgar type. The late Lord Dalling, in his essay on Cobbett, speaks of Paine as "an atheist;" whereas his theism was pronounced and almost passionate. The Bishop of Llandaff, in replying to Paine, said, "There is a philosophical sublimity in some of your ideas when speaking of the Creator of the universe." It seems to have been part of the evidences of such Christianity as Paine opposed that its assailants should die in agony and terror. The same imagination that invented the horrors of Faust's end is, however, somewhat tempered in the sensational pulpit pictures of the death-beds of Voltaire and Paine; and all may be favorably contrasted with the realistic scenes attending the last moments of Bruno and some others which they succeeded. But in Paine's case an amusing solecism is presented in the twofold character of the myth, which equally insists that he recanted his heresies and was nevertheless carried off by devils. The denunciations which have pursued him have been directed against a man who is yet declared to have died in the true faith. In truth, poor Paine did have a hard time of it in his closing days. No sooner was it known that his end was near than fanatical preachers and women managed to gain entrance to his room and tried to convert him. To the ministers who told him that if he died without believing on the Lord Jesus Christ he would be damned, Paine replied, "Let me have none of your popish stuff. Good morning." A woman came saying that God had sent her to tell him that unless he repented and believed in the blessed Saviour he would be damned. Paine replied that God would not send a foolish old woman with such an impertinent message. One after another these obtrusive zealots were dismissed, and finally, in the words of his relentless enemy, Cheetham, "Thomas Paine died placidly, and almost without a struggle." In the year of his death, 1809, Paine wrote his will, at the close of which he says: "I have lived an honest and useful life to mankind; my time has been spent in doing good; and I die in perfect composure and resignation to the will of my Creator, God."

In the biography of Cobbett, recently published,* there are several allusions to Paine, and the efforts made by Cobbett to repair the wrong he had done to the good name of Paine are indicated, though with less fulness than the facts admit of. While Paine was in France, amid revolutionary scenes and perils, there appeared in London *The Life of Thomas Paine, the Author of Rights of Man. By Francis Oldys, A.M., of the University of Pennsylvania. Printed for John Stockdale, Piccadilly,* 1791. Mr. Edward Smith justly characterises it as "one of the most horrible collections of abuse which even that venal day pro-

* *The Life of William Cobbett.* By Edward Smith. (Sampson Low & Co.)

duced." It is now known to have been written by George Chalmers, who fled from America and became a Government clerk and pamphleteer in England. Paine probably did not see this libel until long after it was written. The malice displayed in every line, and its political animus, rendered a reply unnecessary; and the pamphlet was sinking into oblivion when William Cobbett reprinted it in his *Censor*. He lamented his mistake, and carried his desire to make reparation to the extent of bringing Paine's bones to England in hope that they might be entombed with honor. The welcome which Cobbett and Paine's bones received may be judged from the fact that the Bolton town-crier was imprisoned ten weeks for announcing their arrival. And now, sixty years later, for mere mention of these bones with honor, Cobbett's biographer has received a sentence of corresponding severity from a weekly reviewer, who, to the growing Paine-myth, adds the unique charge of venality!

There are several good biographies of Paine,—such as those written by Vale, Sherwin, Rickman, Linton,—yet in an important public library in London the only books concerning him are the political libel of George Chalmers and the pious libel of Cheetham, for which he was convicted in a court of Christians. Cheetham was a Manchester man who went to New York and edited a paper. No sooner had the grave closed over Paine than Cheetham, in the same year, published his accusations. The worst of these involved the honor of a lady, Madame Bonneville, who promptly prosecuted the accused for slander; and though the judge reminded the jury that the defendant's book was calculated to aid Christianity, they brought in a verdict against him with damages. It is important, however, to state that the most eminent Christian writers in America were not deceived by these libels. Thus, the Rev. Solomon Southwick, editor of the *Christian Visitor* when Cheetham's book appeared, wrote: "Had Thomas Paine been guilty of any crime, we should be the last to eulogise his memory. But we cannot find he was ever guilty of any other crime than that of advancing his opinions freely upon all subjects connected with public liberty and happiness. . . . . We may safely affirm that Paine's conduct in America was that of a real patriot. In the French Convention he displayed the same pure and disinterested spirit. . . . . His life, it is true, was written by a ministerial hireling, who strove in vain to blacken his moral character. The late James Cheetham likewise wrote his life, and we have no hesitation in saying that we knew perfectly well at the time the motives of that author for writing and publishing a work which, we have every reason to believe, is a libel almost from beginning to end. In fact, Cheetham had become tired of this country, and had formed a plan to return to England and become a ministerial editor in opposition to Cobbett, and his *Life of Paine* was written to pave his way back again."*

Although the authorities of Philadelphia have refused to admit the bust of Paine to a place in Independence Hall, his portrait is there, and it is near that of George III. This juxtaposition is proper enough. To these two men may be fairly ascribed the revolution and its event, of which Independence Hall is the historic memorial. It was at a time when those American leaders from whose statuesque company Paine is rejected, sat in the same place anxious and dismayed, without any clear idea of whither the storm was bearing them and the country, that there appeared among them that Englishman and his Quaker coat who was the first to pronounce the word "Independence." Not for a long time after the struggle had begun, did the idea of complete separation from England enter the question. The leaders regarded themselves as resisting a special wrong; and at any time before Paine began his appeals the English Ministry might have ended the difficulty by conceding to the colonies immunity from certain taxes. There is even reason to believe that submission rather than separation was beginning to be the question in the minds of many influential Americans at the close of that dark year, 1774, when Paine arrived in America. "Independence was a doctrine scarce and rare even towards the conclusion of the year '75. All our politicks had been founded on the hope or expectation of making the matter up; a hope which, though general on the side of America, had never entered the head or heart of the British

* *Testimonials, &c.*, compiled by J. N. Moreau. 1861

court."* On the 8th of July, 1775, the American Congress humbly petitioned the king "that your royal authority and influence may be graciously interposed to procure us relief from our afflicting fears and jealousies, and to settle peace through every part of your dominions; with all humility submitting to your Majesty's wise consideration, whether it may not be expedient, for facilitating these important purposes, that your Majesty be pleased to direct some mode by which the united applications of your faithful colonists to the throne, may be improved into a happy and permanent reconciliation."† Mr. Penn, who carried this petition to England, presented it on the 1st of September in the same year, and on the 4th was informed by Lord Dartmouth that "no answer would be given to it;" and, although this haughty attitude induced the revolutionary leaders to listen more favorably to Paine's arguments, even then they persuaded him to strike out of his first pamphlet on the subject a sentence which seemed to burn their ships. The sentence erased from *Common Sense* was:—"A greater absurdity cannot be conceived of than three millions of people running to their sea-coast every time a ship arrived from London, to know what portion of liberty they should enjoy."‡

It is probable that even Franklin, who introduced Paine to the chiefs of the revolution as a friend he had met in London, knew little of the moral region from which the man had come, or how much of England he bore with him. No individual of that time was more related to the feelings and convictions which stirred the genuine heart of the English people. He went from those humble clubs which had no constitutions, and met in public-houses and small rooms, wherein were uttered in the ear many things that have since been proclaimed from the housetops. One such circle was that which met at the White Hart in Lewes every evening. Its central figure was the exciseman, Thomas Paine (then about thirty years of age), who generally had in his possession the "Headstrong Book,"—an old volume of Homer

* Crisis No. 3. Paine himself appears to have reached the conclusion that complete and final separation was necessary only after the battle at Concord and Lexington, April 19, 1775.—*Common Sense*, p. 28.

† *Journals of Congress.*

‡ Rush's Letter, July 17, 1809.

which was delivered to the wrangler who most obstinately and successfully defended his position in an evening's debate. It would not be a little curious if, as Clio Rickman seems to think, it was while as yet Paine had no reputation beyond the village, that one of the White Hart company wrote verses to him such as the following:

> "Thy logic vanquished error, and thy mind
> No bounds but those of right and truth confined.
> Thy soul of fire must sure ascend the sky,
> Immortal Paine, thy fame can never die."

Paine was not then, indeed, a mere radical in the rough. His father (a stay-maker) was the son of a respectable Quaker farmer; his mother the daughter of a lawyer in Thetford, where Paine was born (1736), and they made sacrifices to secure him the best education within their reach. He studied well in the Thetford grammer-school, whose master was the Rev. William Knowles; and, at any rate, he appears to have given satisfaction as teacher of English in an academy in London, where he was employed in 1765. He had also considerable experience of various sides of life, having served for a time on "the *King of Prussia* privateer," married, and held the office of exciseman in several places. Paine possessed some qualities not so common in his countrymen; first of all, a profoundly religious nature, which at first was manifested in a tendency to apply scriptural phrases to real things, but ultimately expressed itself in those earnest negations which gained him the name of infidel; secondly, he was morally a man of the world, entirely without that insularity which is sometimes confused with patriotism. Franklin having said, "Where liberty is, there is my country," Paine amended the saying with, "Where liberty is not, there is mine."

Such was the man, and with such antecedents, who emigrated to America at the moment when the colonists were fighting against the powers which were even more hated, because more hopelessly, by poor men like himself in England. The third Georgian reign, with its corruptions and its unconquerable stupidities, could hardly be seen through three thousand miles, as they were seen by English radicals who read the speeches of Pitt aud the invectives of Junius. Paine was a sort of English ambassador of this sentiment to which Transatlantic independence was a dream, while in America it was a dread. In the preface of that work which literally electrified the American people are these words, "The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind."

The work referred to is that entitled *Common Sense.* It was published January 1, 1776, and was the first work of Paine's which reached the entire nation. The circulation speedily ran to a hundred thousand. Concerning the effect it produced there can be no question. Upon this point his admirers and enemies agree. Rush, who refused to renew acquaintance with him because of his infidelity, at the same time (1809) wrote, "*Common Sense* burst from the press with an effect which has rarely been produced by types and paper in any age or country." Washington writes to General Reed, March, 1776, "By private letters which I have lately received from Virginia, I find that *Common Sense* is working a powerful change in the minds of many men." And again, "A few more such flaming arguments as were exhibited at Falmouth and Norfolk, added to the sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning contained in the pamphlet *Common Sense*, will not leave numbers at a loss to decide on the propriety of a separation." General Lee writes to Washington, "Have you seen the pamphlet *Common Sense*? I never saw such a masterly irresistible performance. It will, if I mistake not, in concurrence with the trancendent folly and wickedness of the Ministry, give the *coup de grâce* to Great Britain. In short, I own myself convinced by the arguments of the necessity of separation." But there is no need to accumulate such quotations. John Adams (who detested Paine), Jefferson, Franklin, the contemporary historians Gordon and Ramsay, and all cognisant of the facts, even including Cheetham, unite in the testimony that this first appeal for American independence did more than anything else to unite the colonies around that aim, and render any subsequent compromise impossible. Among the many examples of its effect one may be mentioned. By request of General Scott, a leading member of the New York Assembly, who was alarmed at the still semi-treasonable position of Paine, a number of distinguished members of that body met to read the pamphlet and prepare an answer. They met several evenings. When the readings were ended they unanimously concluded to attempt no answer.

That Thomas Paine was a charlatan, and his writings shams, is now so often assumed, that perhaps one may, without arrogance, express concurrence with the estimate of the American statesmen and generals. If an essay is to be judged, like an organism in nature, by its degree of adequacy to its own ends, Paine's *Common Sense* may be numbered among the few perfect works; and those who regard the detachment of the English colonies in America, and their constitution as a republic, in the light of a necessary world-event, may further regard as a great work the pamphlet so adapted to a great purpose. To that purpose, if it were to succeed, it was necessary to unite thirteen colonies, representing several centres of various history, interest, religion, and even, to some extent, of race. The people of New England, severely trained in the religion of obedience to rulers, and rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; the Dutch population of New York, so slow to arouse; the Quakers of Pennsylvania, with their already loud testimonies against armed resistance; the old English families of Maryland, Virginia, and elsewhere, whose pride as well as sentiment clung to "the mother country," as so many in Canada now do; all these must be combined and concentrated upon an aim which, if it should fail, would be treason,—if it should succeed, would but launch them upon an unknown sea, whose farther shore was haunted by dangers more formidable than their pilgrim fathers had encountered. Paine begins by penetrating the superstition about Government. It is the expedient of men living in society to defend themselves against the wickedness of exceptional persons. They prudently surrender part of their property to protect the rest. "Society in every state is a blessing, but Government in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one; for when we suffer or are exposed to the same miseries by a Government, which we might expect in a country without a Government, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer." There follows an illustration likely to tell upon the colonial mind—a small number of people in some sequestrated region; their co-operation under common difficulties, their decrease of reciprocal attachment when prosperity did away with dangers which had bound them in a common cause; the appearance of vice, followed by the need of regulations. "Some convenient tree will afford them a state-house, under the branches of which the whole colony may assemble to deliberate on public matters. . . . In this first Parliament every man by natural right will have a seat." But with increase of the colony general convenience will require the selection of a few from the whole body. This is all very simple, and says Paine, "the more simple anything is, the less liable is it to be disordered, and the easier repaired when disordered." With which maxim in view he reaches, on the fourth page, the Constitution of England. "Absolute Governments (through the disgrace of human nature) have this advantage with them, that they are simple; if the people suffer they know the head from which their sufferings springs, know likewise the remedy, and are not bewildered by a variety of causes and cures. But the Constitution of England is so exceedingly complex that the nation may suffer for years together, without being able to discover in which part the fault lies; some will say in one and some in another, and every political physician will advise a different medicine."

The English Constitution, he says, is compounded of—1. The remains of Monarchical Tyranny in the person of the King; 2. The remains of Aristocratical Tyranny in the persons of the Peers; 3. The new Republican Materials in the persons of the Commons, on whose virtue depends the freedom of England. "To say that the Constitution of England is a *union* of three powers, reciprocally *checking* each other, is farcical." How came the King by a power which the People are afraid to trust and always obliged to check? This question, which it is always so easy for a peaceful and prosperous people to answer, was put by Paine to a nation who knew none of those practical advantages of monarchy which are its only real arguments. A power, he says, that needs checking, cannot be from God, nor could it be the gift of a wise people. Nor, he adds, is the check adequate, while the King is giver of places and pensions. "Though we have been wise enough to shut and lock a door against absolute Monarchy, we at the same time have been foolish enough to put the Crown in possession of the key." General principles like these are followed by a scriptural argument. It is presented with entire sincerity—for the *Age of Reason* is yet fifteen years away—and makes such use of the divine reproofs of the Israelites for wishing a king as could not have been answered by any pulpit in the land at that day.

Samuel's diatribe (I. viii. 10) plentifully interlarded with applications, ending with "Ye shall cry out in that day because of your King which ye shall have chosen, and the Lord will not hear you in that day," passed from the pen of Paine to the pulpits as the voice of prophecy. With equal force did the author touch every variety of sentiment. Did the Quakers long for peace? Kings and civil wars go together. "Thirty kings and two minors have reigned in that distracted kingdom (England) since the Conquest, in which time there have been (including the Revolution) no less than eight civil wars and nineteen rebellions." Did the old gentleman talk tenderly of the old home and mother country? There lay the dead of Concord and Lexington, there was the cold, unnatural disdain of every petition; "wherefore since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to the cutting of throats under the violated unmeaning names of parent and child." Were some faint-hearted? He reminded them how many allies they might expect as an independent country; how America was without an enemy in the world except as being a part of Great Britain. He awakened the poor by tracing poverty to dependence, and pointing out the vast resources of the country which, could America trade directly with foreign nations, would make them the richest of nations. He also enlisted the pride of the non-English settlers by his sentence—"Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America." Nay, even the Reconciliationists he convinced by his argument to show the perils of their plan, even were it possible—an argument which the King was rendering final by his speech on the same day that Paine's pamphlet was published. In addition to this there was a remarkably clear outline of a colonial republic such as might be formed, and a demonstration of the presence of both the men and means to conduct the same. "No writer," wrote Jefferson, "has exceeded Paine in ease and familiarity of style, in perspicuity of expression, happiness of elucidation, and in simple and unassuming language." This is eminently true of *Common Sense,* which is almost as free from suggestion of the writer's personality as the Declaration of Independence. The man is utterly merged in the cause he has espoused, and the result is a style never arrogant, yet strangely authentic. Its wonderful effect was much enhanced by their knowledge that its author had devoted the copyright to the colonies.

The year which gave the Colonies the Declaration of Independence on paper, brought them mainly reverses on the field. Things went from bad to worse, until, late in the winter, Washington wrote to a Congress which had fled for safety, "Ten days more will put an end to this army." At that time Paine was serving under Washington as a common soldier, and every night, while others tried to snatch a little repose, he was writing his next great production, that number of *The Crisis* whose vast effect has made it historic. It was a little piece, afterwards printed in eight pages, written by the light of camp-fires during Washington's retreat through the Jerseys with only 2,600 men, his best arms in the hands of the enemy. The last sentence was written on the 23rd of December (1776), and Washington summoned together his dismayed and shivering soldiers to hear it read. It opened with these words:—"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 thanks of man and woman."

On the Christmas night after this was read to the remnant of his army, Washington recrossed the Delaware, and on the following day encountered the British forces at Trenton. It was the first victory of the Americans. The soldiers rushed into battle with the cry, "These are the times that try men's souls," and the nation ascribed their triumph to the pen of Paine. He speedily became the most popular man in America. Public expressions of gratitute poured in upon him from Congress and the State legislatures, with testimonials in money—it being found that he had impoverished himself by giving his copyright to the national cause—and the University of Pennsylvania awarded him the degree of A. M. The United States Congress elected him Secretary of its most important Committee, that of Foreign Affairs. And though he presently lost this by his "imprudence"* in attacking a fraudulent claim urged against the nation by one Silas Deane, who was backed by an American clique and the French Government, the State of Pennsylvania made him Clerk of its Legislature. While serving in this capacity, it became Paine's duty on one occasion (1780) to read to the Legislature a letter from Washington describing the deplorable situation caused by the capture of Charleston by the British. "A despairing silence pervaded the House" when this letter had been read, for the treasury was empty. Paine at once drew his salary, and, proposing a subscription, headed it with five hundred dollars. He was the poorest man present, and the others at once came forward with their contributions which, taken up by Congress, surmounted the emergency.

Paine had for some years indulged the hope of influencing affairs in England. "I was strongly impressed with the idea that if I could get over to England without being known, and only remain in safety till I could get out a publication, I could open the eyes of the country with respect to the madness and stupidity of the government." Full of this hope he went to Paris in 1787, bearing with him letters of introduction to eminent men there, and, after a brief sojourn, the same year crossed to England, and hastened to Thetford. His father was dead; he settled on his mother a weekly allowance of nine shillings. At this time he appears to have been mainly occupied with an iron bridge which he had invented, a model of which had been exhibited to the Academy of Sciences in Paris and received its approbation. The bridge was cast and erected at Rotherham, Yorkshire, in 1790.

* *Journals of Congress*, Jan. 7-16, 1779. A similar disregard of his own interests was shown by Paine in a pamphlet written by him against certain cherished territorial claims of Virginia, at a time when a bill was pending in the Legislature of that State to offer him a sum of money. As he was forewarned, his pamphlet defeated the bill. (Letter of Lee to Washington, 23rd July, 1784.) In the Deane affair, Congress showed its appreciation of the patriotic character of Paine's "imprudence" by voting him three thousand dollars.

At the close of the same year Paine was engaged writing, at the Angel, Islington, his *Rights of Man.* Part I. appeared in 1791, Part II. in 1792. And now Paine's collaborateurs, so far as his literary success was concerned—the Ministry—came to his aid again. The work reached a circulation of nearly forty thousand, on its merits as an answer to Burke. Ferocious denunciations of it, culminating in a prosecution and outlawry of the author, secured for it a reading hardly less than that which *Common Sense* had enjoyed in America. "Paine's *Rights of Man*," says Hazlitt, "was the only really powerful reply [to Burke's *Reflections*]; and, indeed, so powerful and explicit that the government undertook to crush it by an *ex-officio* information, and by a declaration of war against France, to still the ferment and excite an oduim against its admirers, as taking part with a foreign enemy against their prince and country."

Paine had a sixpenny edition of the work printed, from which the profit on each copy was twopence; nevertheless it speedily earned £1,000, which Paine, though still poor, gave to the Society of Constitutional Information, in London, to be distributed as they should see best. This society circulated vast numbers of Paine's works, and among other things 12,000 copies of his *Letter to Mr. Secretary Dundas*, one of the most effective things Paine ever wrote. Dundas (May 25, 1792) had opened the debate in the House of Commons on the proclamation against "wicked and seditious publications," and had especially directed the epithets against the *Rights of Man.* This gave Paine an opportunity which he was not likely to disregard, and his reply took the form of a contrast between the then uncomfortable state of financial and other affairs in England, and the prosperity which was already springing up in America.

Legal proceedings were instituted against Paine for his book, May 21, and he resolved to defend himself in person at the trial, which was appointed for the following December. This determination was changed by a deputation which came from France to inform him of his election by the department of Calais to represent them in the National Convention. The government did not detain him, probably were glad to be rid of him; at any rate, in the state of public feeling at the time, an arrest of an

American citizen and member of the French Convention might have been attended with serious complications.

While Paine was the theme of a new national anthem with one party, and was being burnt in effigy by another in his native land, he passed to Calais to be welcomed as a hero, and thence made a sort of triumphal journey to France. But he had left behind him the times that tried men's souls. During the whole of the year 1793 the Government was mainly employed in trying to trample out the works of Paine. Taking the last six months of that year, we find in the *Cambridge Independent*, the only paper audacious enough even to print full reports of the proceedings, paragraphs which reveal the extent of the crusade. The religious heresies of Paine had not yet been printed in England, and the work mainly prosecuted was *The Rights of Man*. On July 18 Mr. Cook, a baker at Cambridge, was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for having, three years and a half previously, said that "he wished all the churches were pulled down to mend the roads with; and as to the King's Chapel, he should like to see it turned into a stable." In the ardour of ferreting out Paine's works, this ancient offence, like many others, was brought to light and punished. At Nottingham, Daniel Holt, for selling a volume by Paine, was sentenced to £50 fine, two years' imprisonment, with two sureties for good behavior afterwards. The Messrs. Robinson, publishers, were fined £200 for selling a copy, though the firm had published "A Protest against Mr. Paine's Works." A boy named Sutton, at Ashfield, was fined £20, with a year's imprisonment, for "avowing himself a Painite." George Eden, for the same offence, was fined one shilling and imprisoned six months. Peart and Belcher, at Warwick, Phillips, at Leicester, and many other booksellers, were fined and imprisoned; among these being Mr. Spence, "in Little Turnstile, Holborn," which cannot be far from where Mr. Truelove has so long freely sold the works of Paine, and others much more radical, beside the little table on which Paine wrote *The Rights of Man*. In the few cases where gentlemen were found distributing the books the penalties were very severe. Thus Mr. Fische Palmer was sentenced at Perth to seven years' transportation for assisting the publication and circulation of Paine's works, in the interest of parliamentary reforms to which he had been for many years devoted. Mr. Thomas Muir, of Huntershill, for having advised persons to read "the works of that wretched outcast Paine" (to quote the Lord Advocate's words), was actually sentenced to fourteen years' transportation. The sentence was received amid hisses from the gallery. The tipstaff being ordered by the Lord Justice Clerk to take those who hissed into custody, replied, "My lord, they're all hissing." There were, indeed, large numbers of people who viewed these proceedings with indignation, but something like an apparent suppression was at length reached. The famous town-crier of Bolton who reported to his masters that he had been round that place, "and found neither the *Rights of Man* nor *Common Sense* in it," made a statement characteristic of the time. Yet at that time there were in the country more than a hundred thousand volumes of Paine in circulation among the people. They were read in secret, and the race of old Radicals has hardly run out which remembers reading the books on Sundays in fields—in groups, whose numbers alternately read, listened, and went off to keep a look-out for the police.

For a little time after his arrival in Paris, Paine enjoyed what to the majority of the republicans in his time would have been all that the heart of man could desire. It was a year of sunshine, but Paine never outgrew his Quakerism, and hated all the fuss and pomp with which the Parisians insisted on lionising "the author hero of the Revolution." Possibly he might have adapted himself to such things better had he been able to speak the French language; but as he did not, he was probably embarrassed by the attentions he received. Madame Roland has expressed, in her *Appeal*, the regret she felt at being unable to converse with Paine; but she listened carefully to his discourse with others, and being able to understand English, she was impressed by "the boldness of his conceptions, the originality of his style, the striking truths he throws out bravely among those whom they offend." Paine was described by Aaron Burr, hypercrititical in such matters, as a gentleman; and the sense in which he was so may be understood from a passage in one of Lord Edward Fitzgerald's letters from Paris to his mother,—"I lodge with my friend Paine; we breakfast, dine, and sup together. The more I see of his interior the more I like and respect him. I cannot express how kind he has been to me. There is a simplicity of manner, a goodness of heart, and a strength of mind in him that I never knew a man before to possess." Paine was, however, deficient in the dexterities of general society; he could not comprehend the pride that infuses what is called loyalty, nor such transmitted instincts as those which make the moral accent of words like infidel and miscreant. That was good arable soil to him which to some around him was burning lava,—for instance to that young aristocrat, Captain Grimstone, who once leaped from the table at a dinner-party and struck him on the head, calling him an incendiary and traitor to his country. The old man of sixty only resented this by saving the young man's life—it being punishable with death to strike a deputy—and providing him with money to leave the country.

This was not the only instance of Paine's personal kindness to members of the high English circle, whose ordinary toast in those days was "Damnation to Thomas Paine!" He gave £200 to General O'Hara, who was his fellow-prisoner. These incidents, however, made little impressions in his favor, and it was, perhaps, the only glad tidings which had reached the ruling class in England from Paris for many a day when it was announced by the London journals that Paine had been guillotined. The fact that Paine must have suffered under sentence of revolutionists for mercy to a fallen monarch seemed only to sweeten their revenge.

Coming as the rumor of his death did along with the terrible *Age of Reason,* it was easily shown to be a divine judgment. But, in fact, it was Paine who could felicitate himself on providential intervention. The facts are sufficiently striking. Neither soldiering under Washington, agitating revolutions, nor lionising at republican courts, had destroyed the Quaker of Thetford; and when it was proposed to execute the King, it was he who rose up in the French Convention and testified against capital punishment, begging them to kill the King, but spare the man. He pleaded that Louis Capet should be banished to America—for his education! "He may learn from the constant aspect of public prosperity that the true system of government consists not in kings, but in fair, equal and honorable representation." The angry radicals of the Robespierre faction were utterly unable to comprehend this language in the supposed arch-firebrand of America, and it looks as if they suspected that the English had bought him; at any rate, after he had been thrown into prison, the Americans in Paris went in a body to demand his release, and were refused on the ground that Paine was an English citizen.

It was also stated to the American deputation that the American Minister, Morris, had taken no interest in the case, which unhappily was true. Paine could understand that; there were private reasons for the hostility of Morris; but neither he nor any American in Europe doubted that when the tidings had reached the United States that nation would be indignant, and that Washington, now President, would instantly demand his friend's release. In that, too, he was disappointed. Washington gave no sign, but left Paine to languish in prison for nearly a year. This was equivalent to a death sentence coming from Washington. Though Monroe came as Minister, superseding Morris, and exerted himself to the utmost to secure Paine's release, it was soon discovered by Robespierre that he had brought no instruction favorable to Paine; and the sentence of death was passed. On the night when a chalk-mark was put on the door of each prisoner who was to be executed in the morning, Paine's door happened to be open, so that when closed the mark was on the inside. By this accident his life was preserved. A few days after, Robespierre fell. But though that fall occurred on the 27th July, it was not until the 4th November (1794) that Paine was set at liberty—the continued silence of Washington causing the belief that the imprisonment was agreeable to him.

This was a terrible humiliation. Washington was now a hero in the eyes of all Europe, and his published praises of Paine were known to the world. Paine had dedicated to Washington his first work on the *Rights of Man*, and to Lafayette his second; and it was to him that Lafayette had entrusted the key of the Bastile to be presented to Washington. After all this Washington delivers him up silently to death! Whatever may have been the cause, no one can wonder at the bitterness of the letter which Paine wrote to Washington after it, and it would seem to require a great deal of partiality to judge the passionate words of the aggrieved prisoner *au pied de la lettre,* while putting indulgent constructions on the deliberate and never-explained action of Washington.

On his way to prison Paine had managed to call at the rooms of one of the most eminent American writers of that time, Joel Barlow, and entrust to him the manuscript of a work on which he had for some time been engaged—the *Age of Reason.* Even in childhood, Paine tells us, he had rebelled against some features of the popular theology; but the long struggle with poverty, the American revolution, political controversies, prevented his giving much attention to the subjects treated in the *Age of Reason* until later life; and there are evidences in his earlier works that, while abandoning the more familiar dogmas of orthodoxy, he had not specially considered such subjects as supernaturalism and the general value of the Bible until after the American revolution had ceased. There was, indeed, in most of the political leaders in that revolution a sceptical spirit, as was only natural when it is remembered that George III. was the visible head of the Church. The late Hon. Jared Sparks, while President of Harvard University, showed me some letters which passed between Jefferson and Paine on religious subjects. I believe they are still withheld from the public, and no doubt more for the sake of the great Virginian's reputation than for that of Paine, who, as I remember, was by no means the more unorthodox of the two. It was indeed the earnest way in which Paine regarded all matters of human interest, his religious sense of the duty of testifying against what he considered public errors and wrongs, even at such cost as Fox, Barclay, and other saints of the Thetford household had paid before him, which led to the *Age of Reason* and the author's impalement. Even as regards positive beliefs, Paine was nearer to the received standards than many who now join in the hue and cry against him. On the first page of his denounced work he says,—"I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. I believe the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy." There is no action or word in Paine's life or writings which impeaches the sincerity of this creed. But he further believed what many liberal thinkers yet do not, that "it is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe." The negative positions of the *Age of Reason* are still exercising a profound influence on innumerable minds, despite the repeated announcement that the book is dead and buried. It would be difficult to find in any modern work more forcible popular statements than those found on nearly every page. "Admitting that something has been revealed to a certain person, it is revelation to the first person only and hearsay to every other." "The trinity of gods was no other than a reduction of the former plurality, which was about twenty or thirty thousand; the statue of Mary succeeded the statue of Diana of Ephesus; the deification of heroes changed into the canonisation of saints; the mythologists had gods for everything; the Christian mythologists had saints for everything; the Church became as crowded with the one as the Pantheon had been with the other; and Rome was the place of both." "The morality that he (Christ) preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind; and though similar systems of morality had been preached by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before, by the Quakers since, and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any." "The Christian mythologists tell us that then Satan made war against the Almighty, who defeated him and confined him afterwards . . . . in a pit; . . . . the fable of Jupiter and the Giants was told many hundred years before that of Satan." "They represent him (Satan) as having compelled the Almighty to the direct necessity either of surrendering the whole of the creation to the govenment and sovereignty of this Satan, or of capitulating for its redemption by coming down upon earth, and exhibiting himself upon a cross in the shape of a man. . . . . They make the transgressor triumph and the Almighty fall." "Is the gloomy pride of man become so intolerable, that nothing can flatter it but a sacrifice of the Creator?" "When we contemplate the immensity of that Being who directs and governs the incomprehensible WHOLE, of which the utmost ken of human sight can discover but a part, we ought to feel shame at calling such paltry stories (*e.g.* that of Samson and Delilah, the foxes, &c.) the Word of God." "It (the Church) has set up a religion of pomp and of revenue, in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty." "The Word of God is the Creation we behold . . . . which no human invention can counterfeit or alter." "The Creation speaketh an universal language."

What homage should we have heard if, in any orthodox work of the last century, had occurred the far-seeing astronomic speculations of the *Age of Reason!* It was from the humble man who in early life studied his globes, purchased at cost of many a dinner, and attended the lectures of Martin, Ferguson, and Bevis, that there came twenty-one years before Herschel's famous paper on the Nebulæ, the sentence,—"The probability, therefore, is that each of those fixed stars is also a sun, round which another system of worlds or planets, though too remote for us to discover, performs its revolutions."

It has been so often said as to have become a general belief, that the *Age of Reason* is a mass of ribaldry. The work, however, is a very serious one, and the sentences I have quoted are characteristic of its spirit. In patiently going through the Old and New Testaments, and examining narratives for which literal inspiration was claimed, it was impossible not to point out primitive features which seem grotesque when made salient amid modern customs and ideas. There are a few instances in which Paine dwells upon the absurdity which is presented to his mind,—in one or two cases with questionable taste, as in his picture of the people coming out of their graves and walking about Jerusalem, according to Matthew,—but I know of no similar investigation in which the writer's mind is so generally fixed upon the simple question of truth and falsehood, and so rarely addicted to ridicule. Few will deny the difficulty, however reverent the reciter, of relating the story of Jonah and the whale without causing a smile. Paine's smile is in two sentences; in one place he says it would have been nearer to the idea of a miracle if

Jonah had swallowed the whale, elsewhere that if credulity could swallow Jonah and the whale it could swallow anything. But after this, for him, unusual approach to the ribaldry of which he is so freely accused, Paine gives over three pages of criticism on the Book of Jonah, not only grave and careful, but presenting perhaps the earliest appreciation of the moral elevation and large aim of that much-neglected legend.

A great many sneers have been directed against Paine because of the fact mentioned by himself, with his usual *naiveté*, that when he wrote Part I. of the *Age of Reason* he had not a copy of the Bible in his room. But the circumstance is not without its more impressive significance. Paine had already received intimation that his arrest was certain and near. The guillotine was within the shadow closing about him. There was but one anxiety it brought—the remembrance that he had not yet written a sentence of that testimony against superstition, which had been gathering the importance of his final duty to mankind. For ordinary purposes he had no need of a Bible; he had been in all his early life fed on little else; he had now to run a race with the faction of Robespierre. This book was written during the few days of liberty remaining to him, and six hours after the last sentence was penned he was on his way to prison. He addressed it "to the protection of the citizens of the United States," managed to get it into the hands of Joel Barlow, and so soon as he could get pen and paper began in prison Part II. of the same work. The greater part, therefore, of the book was written by a man who believed that death was near and certain. Part II. was destined, however, to be published when he had become free, and was able to refer to chapter and verse with a fulness and accuracy which his opponents liked far less than the more vague and reserved allusions of the first production. Mr. Yorke, a well-known Englishman of the time, who visited him in Paris, wrote: "The Bible is the only book which he has studied, and there is not a verse in it that is not familiar to him."

Paine's life abounds in such curious incidents, and instances of luck, that at a somewhat earlier period he would probably have been supposed under the protection of the devil for a term. The incident of the chalk mark which had saved him from the guillotine was followed by a long fever, during which his insensibility for a month prevented further proceedings against him; and, when he was at liberty, he engaged a passage for America in a vessel commanded by Commodore Barney, but was detained by some slight circumstance which saved his life, for the vessel sank at sea.

Paine had become utterly disgusted with French politics. He was receiving every day reproaches from England because of his *Age of Reason*, many of his former friends having turned against him. The echoes from America were as yet few. The neglect of him in his distress by Washington was counterbalanced by the friendship of the new President, Jefferson, who had offered him an American ship in which to return. The sufferings and fever which he had undergone in prison had seriously impaired his health and strength; indeed he never recovered them again. He more than ever pictured America as the one perfect land. To a lady who wrote to him from New York, he replied:—"You touch me on a very tender point when you say that my friends on your side of the water cannot be reconciled to the idea of my abandoning America, even for my native England. They are right. I had rather see my horse, Button, eating the grass of Bordertown, or Morrisiana, than see all the pomp and show of Europe." But a terrible disenchantment awaited him. When he returned to America it was to find most of his old friends turned to enemies. The very lady who had so written, and her husband, refused to receive the author of the *Age of Reason*, which now had become the horror of every pulpit; Samuel Adams, Benjamin Rush, and of course Washington, would have nothing to do with him. The Federalists of the North who wished to make the United States another England, and hated everything French, dreaded him; the slaveholders of the South had been alarmed at his having written about the abolition of slavery—"We must push that matter further on your side of the water. I wish that a few well-instructed negroes could be sent among their brethren in bondage; for until they are enabled to take their own part, nothing will be done."* The nation which he had left glorified by enthusiasm

* Written to a friend in Philadelphia from Paris, March 16, 1789.

for liberty, had sunk to the work of protecting slavery; sectarianism and dogmatism, having lost their ancient supports in the State, were industriously replacing them with a revival of intolerance before which great men were bowing who used to talk more heresy than Paine. The poor man was almost abandoned. It need hardly excite wonder if in the solitude to which he was forced, and in his enfeebled health, the old man drank enough for pious imagination to turn him into a sot. There is not the least doubt that Paine was a temperate man up to the time when, close upon seventy, his friends began to turn from him. The weakness that followed his imprisonment first led him to use stimulants in any noticeable degree, but there is no doubt that Barlow is the truest witness in saying that Paine was a temperate man "till he conceived himself neglected and despised by his former friends in the United States." But, admitting that during the closing three years of his life—he was over seventy-two at death—Paine drank more than was good for him, it is certain that it was not enough to prevent his writing during those years many able essays, and also that it would not have been heard of but for that heterodoxy which exposeth a multitude of sins. Whether the one fault which undertook this old man, Thomas Paine, so warm-hearted and faithful, casts the darker shadow over his own career or over those who gave him up to be the scape-goat demanded by defeated bigotry and oppression, is a question on which future critics may have something to say. For the present it is enough to know that Thomas Paine has been selected for special odium, not because he was an immoral man, for he was not that,—the only charge of that kind ever made recoiled on the accuser, and proved the singular generosity of the accused to a deserted family; not because he was irreligious, he was the reverse of that by episcopal testimony; not even because he was unorthodox, for he was chief founder of the society of Theo-philanthropists in Paris (1797) in opposition to the atheistic opinions which found many adherents not only there, but in England, whose fame, however, has suffered far less than that of this devout theist and admirer of Christ; but because he wrote for the people and had the power of convincing them, and this brought on a panic among those interested in the existing theological and political order. It was on the works of Paine that the battle of a free press, and that of free thought, were fought and won in England. The battle did indeed rage for many years after Paine was dead. I have before me a printed paragraph taken from an English newspaper of the year 1823, which tells a significant story:—"Some persons have, we are informed, purchased the lease of a house in Fleet Street, near St. Bride's Church, which they have underlet to Richard Carlile, for the purpose of enabling him to vend his numerous publications. This is one of the consequences of vindictive persecutions for opinions. Persecute truth, and it will be seen to flourish: persecute error, and many will be induced to embrace it from sympathy with the sufferers. Carlile was sentenced to three years' imprisonment and fines of £1,500. The three years expired in November last, and he has since been and now is held in Dorchester jail for the fine. His sister was also sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of £500. Her two years' imprisonment expired also in November, and she, who states in her petition to the House of Commons that she never possessed any property, has also been and still is detained for her fine. The consequence of these absurd persecutions has been the propagating of infidel opinions to an extent which they could not otherwise have reached, and at length to the interference of persons in a way calculated to call public attention more closely to matters which those who promoted the prosecutions wished should be suppressed. These facts speak for themselves."

Subsequent facts spoke even more loudly in the same way. The Carlisles were soon released under the feeling that Miss Carlile's petition awakened in the House of Commons and in the country, and they and their successors continued to sell the works of Paine and other heresiarchs without molestation. The recent attempts to interfere with the freedom so secured, were rendered possible by the complication of the principle with moral questions which were not involved in the original struggle; but their one success—the imprisonment of Mr. Truelove—as well as their several failures, equally confess the impregnable security of the main principle for which Paine and his comrades suffered.