

THOMAS PAINE



Selections from His Writings

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JAMES S. ALLEN

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Author of RECONSTRUCTION: THE BATTLE FOR DEMOCRACY

and THE NEGRO QUESTION IN THE UNITED STATES



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INTRODUCTION

A MAN of all countries, although he died a man without a country, Thomas Paine endures through the years as a foremost fighter for world democracy.

“Where freedom is not, there is my country,” said Paine. And during a public career, which began when he was thirty-seven years old, he played a leading role in the American and French revolutions, inspired the democratic movement in England and contributed through his writings to the bourgeois revolutions of a whole epoch. He was that rare phenomenon—a bourgeois-democratic internationalist, a man of the people, not of any one country but of all countries where the people were engaging their foes.

The cause of America made Paine a revolutionist. Born January 29, 1737, at Thetford, Norfolk, of a Quaker father and a Church of England mother, he remained in England until 1774, working at his trade of corset-making, teaching and preaching occasionally, and serving for a time as a government excise-officer. On October 30, he arrived at Philadelphia, armed with a letter of introduction from Benjamin Franklin, who was then acting as agent for the colonies in London. He came, like many others, in search of employment; in a short time he was inspiring a nation.

On his arrival, Paine found that the quarrel with England was still confined within the limits of colonial dependence. The dominating note was conciliation, and it was considered treason among the American leaders to speak of separation from the British Crown. The appeal of the first Continental

Congress (1774) claimed for the colonies only the right to impose taxes and did not even hint at the right of political independence. In the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, of which he had become editor, Paine urged the abolition of monarchy, poverty and war, without, however, any too specific references to Britain.

Then, in rapid succession, came Concord, Lexington and Bunker Hill. Only later were these recognized as the first battles of the War of Independence; conciliation, favored even by Washington, Franklin and Jefferson, remained the policy of the colonists. A few months later, October 18, 1775, in a short note in his magazine, Paine projected sharply the idea of independence, and that in a State where the spirit of conciliation ruled. In the same note, Paine touched upon an issue just as sensitive: he hoped that the first act of Continental legislation would put a stop to the slave trade, ease the condition of the slaves and in time secure their freedom.

On January 10, 1776, *Common Sense* burst from the press. It was the Manifesto of the American Revolution. From the restricted scope of a legal quarrel directed towards the repeal of obnoxious acts, Paine broadened the struggle into a war of liberation. Little did it please the Tories and the commercial sympathizers to read this unanswerable rebuke to the conciliators, this unequivocal call to battle for independence, this logical proof that a Continental victory over the British was inevitable. The issues were clearly put, the program formulated. Within a few weeks, the pamphlet spread like wildfire. It crystallized the strong sentiment for independence among the masses and rallied them for the revolution. Paine raised for the first time the demand for a Declaration of Independence, to clarify before the world the aims of the revolution and to win allies among Britain's enemies. Six months later, Thomas Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence, based on the ideas developed in *Common*

Sense but omitting all references to slavery, became the program of the American states.

Paine now became an active revolutionary and agitator. He enlisted in the army, serving until April, 1777. It was during the retreat of Washington's forces from New York through New Jersey, that Paine wrote by campfire his first bugle-like appeal to the people. *The American Crisis*, signed "Common Sense," inspired the victory of the Continentals at Trenton, which gave the Americans new courage after a long series of defeats. This was the first of sixteen pamphlets issued at each critical point in the hard struggle for independence. Even today they remain models of vigorous and simple agitational writing. With invective, satire, clear reasoning and a militant idealism, Paine rallied the people to a revolution which, in his own words, "to the end of time must be an honor to the age that accomplished it, and which has contributed more to enlighten the world, and diffuse a spirit of freedom and liberality among mankind, than any human event that ever preceded it."

Remaining essentially the chief propagandist and agitator of the revolution, Paine's services were many. For a time he served as Secretary of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, in which capacity he did much to obtain the aid of France in the form of supplies, a large loan and military assistance. He exposed publicly the treachery of Silas Deane, who attempted to profit personally from French aid and who, as it was proved later, conspired in London with the traitor Benedict Arnold and the Royalists against the American revolution. On the instigation of Gouverneur Morris and John Jay, who were to remain his political enemies for life, Paine was tried by Congress for disclosing secrets of state, but was saved from dismissal by one vote. He helped defeat the "Conway Cabal," which sought to replace General Washington with the incompetent General Gates. When the prospects for victory

again looked very dark in 1780, Paine's fiery appeal inaugurated a drive for funds which resulted in raising \$1,500,000 for the army. While serving as clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly, he wrote the first proclamation of Negro emancipation in America when that State decreed abolition. Paine also helped to draw up the Constitution of Pennsylvania, the most democratic of state documents.

For the commercial interests who were ensconcing themselves in power at the close of the war, Paine was entirely too radical, too much a man of the people. To the relief of Alexander Hamilton and his circle of "Republican Royalists," Paine left for Europe in 1787, before the convening of the Constitutional Convention. His purpose was to seek help in perfecting a single-arched iron bridge which he envisioned across the Schuylkill at Philadelphia. But other matters soon claimed his attention; the French Revolution sent Paine flying to Paris.

Paine is considered to be the author of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, issued by the French National Assembly in 1789. This document derives its guiding principles from the American Declaration of Independence. Here was a bill of rights such as Jefferson and the American democrats fought to have included in the American Constitution and which was finally added in the form of the first ten amendments. Edmund Burke, the erstwhile friend of the American cause, but now alarmed at the spread of Jacobin principles in England, termed the French Declaration a "declaration of anarchy" in his hysterical pamphlet attacking the French Revolution. Paine took up his pen in reply and produced a polemic which deserves to be considered the political credo of a whole epoch of democratic revolutions. This work, *Rights of Man*, became as popular in England as *Common Sense* had been in the colonies. Sponsored by the militant democrats in the Constitutional Societies, the book sold over fifty thousand copies

within a few weeks, and played an important part in arousing popular support in England for the French Revolution. Burke had directed his attack as much against the English democrats as against the French upheaval; the *Rights of Man* illuminated the revolution in France only to urge it as an example for the English people to follow.

Paine now divided his time between Paris and London, active in the same cause on both sides of the Channel. King Louis had been intercepted in his flight to join the royalist emigrés and had been brought back to France. In co-operation with Condorcet and Brissot, who was later to head the "law and order" party of the Gironde, Paine wrote a manifesto, widely posted on the streets of Paris, which boldly proclaimed that France could do without a king and that the time had come for a republic. Back in London, a public meeting adopted a manifesto, written by Paine, in which he hinted that British royalty was equally useless and that the money lavished upon the court could better be used to provide for the needy.

Paine's role in the American revolution had hardly made him a hero to the British ruling class; his activities on behalf of the French Revolution and the English democratic movement had made him anathema. His associates in the London Constitutional Society were hardly considered respectable: William Godwin, the philosophical Anarchist and author of *Political Justice*; Horne Tooke, the rebel parson; Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who was to fight and die for Irish freedom; Lord Charles Stanhope, advocate of the poor; Mary Wollstonecraft, the novelist; William Blake, rebel poet.

The storm broke over Paine's head with the publication, in February, 1792, of Part II of *Rights of Man*. Its clear presentation of the theory and practice of democratic government, its attack upon British autocratic usurpations and, particularly, its frank advocacy of world revolution for the attainment of

democracy, could not be very welcome to a ruling class faced with a popular upsurge inspired by the revolution across the Channel. Having failed to prevent the publication of Part II by bribing the publisher, Premier Pitt launched a campaign against the democratic movement by striking at its foremost spokesman. The first move in the vilification and persecution of Paine was the issue of a biography, paid for by the Crown, which painted a grossly slanderous picture of the democratic leader. The book was signed by "Francis Oldys, A.M., of the University of Pennsylvania," who turned out to be one George Chalmers, a London government clerk. Then the press took up the cry against the seditious doctrines emanating from France; Court-inspired mobs burnt Paine in effigy; a royal proclamation against seditious writings put a stop to the sale of his book; and finally the author himself was indicted for sedition.

While British royalty was persecuting Paine, the French nation claimed him as their own. Three Departments chose him as their deputy to the National Assembly.

Come, friend of the people [they wrote him], to swell the number of patriots in an assembly which will decide the destiny of a great people, perhaps of the human race. The happy period you have predicted for the nation has arrived. Come! do not deceive their hopes.

In the letter of thanks to his "Fellow-Citizens of France," Paine replied:

The scene that now opens itself in France extends far beyond the boundaries of her own dominions. Every nation is becoming her colleague, and every court is becoming her enemy. It is now the cause of all nations against the cause of all courts.

Warned by the poet William Blake that he was about to be arrested, Paine departed secretly for France. He left be-

hind him a pamphlet in reply to the charges of seditious libel. In his *Letter to the Addressers*, he wrote defiantly:

If to expose the fraud and imposition of monarchy and every species of hereditary government—to lessen the oppression of taxes—to propose plans for the education of helpless infancy, and the comfortable support of the aged and distressed—to endeavor to conciliate nations to each other—to extirpate the horrid practice of war—to promote universal peace, civilization, and commerce—and to break the chains of political superstition, and raise degraded man to his proper rank;—if these things be libellous, let me live the life of a libeller, and let the name of *libeller* be engraven on my tomb!

Rights of Man also caused a great stir in the United States, where the French Revolution aroused widespread enthusiasm among the people and deep contempt among the Hamiltonian reactionaries. Thomas Jefferson was then Secretary of State; Alexander Hamilton, leader of the pro-British and anti-Democratic Federalists, was Secretary of the Treasury. The struggle between the two main tendencies which these leaders represented was just then beginning to assume titanic proportions. The Hamiltonian circles had received Burke's pamphlet with glee and would have relished seeing Paine languish in a British prison. Washington, who was cautiously supporting the pro-British party while publicly giving assurance to France, was embarrassed to find Part I of *Rights of Man* dedicated to himself. He had waited a year before politely acknowledging this dedication in a letter to Paine. When Paine sent Washington the key to the Bastille which Lafayette had presented to him, and urged him to congratulate France on the "happy example they are giving to Europe"—the President chose to ignore the suggestion for the sake of peace with England.

The excitement increased when the American edition appeared with Jefferson's letter to the printer as a preface.

I am extremely pleased [wrote the author of the Declaration of Independence] to find it will be reprinted here, and that something is at length to be publicly said against the political heresies which have sprung up among us. I have no doubt our citizens will rally a second time to the standard of Common Sense.

The pamphlet immediately reached a wide circulation, appeared serially in the press, and itself became a sharp political issue. It aroused the democratic spirit of the masses and established Jefferson in the popular mind as the outstanding leader of democracy. In his reference to "political heresies" in the preface to the pamphlet, Jefferson had in mind the anti-republicanism and even royalist aspirations of the Federalists. Vice-President John Adams, who had just written an attack upon democratic principles, felt that the barb was aimed at him. His son, John Quincy Adams, rose to the Vice President's defense in a series of articles in the Boston *Centinel*, attacking Paine's pamphlet. Particular exception was taken to the following words of Paine:

A nation has at all times an inherent indefeasible right to abolish any form of government it finds inconvenient.

It was in almost identical words that the American Declaration of Independence, signed by John Adams, had proclaimed the same right. Describing the turmoil occasioned by the publication of the pamphlet in America, Jefferson wrote Paine that the controversy had aroused the masses and had shown the "monocrats" that the people had not been converted "to the doctrine of kings, lords and commons."

While Paine was being found guilty of seditious libel before a pensioned judge and a packed jury in London, he was in person receiving a rousing reception at Calais. He proceeded at once to take his place in the Convention, which on September 22, 1792, responding to the insistent demands of the Parisian

masses, proclaimed the Republic. On September 25, in an "Address to the People of France," Paine acclaimed the great revolution and the worldwide significance of the Republic, but displayed the influence of his Girondist friends in a note of caution against the terror which, in that month, had taken a heavy toll of the Royalist conspirators in Paris. The Convention had been called primarily to formulate a new constitution and to dispose of the case of King Louis.

Together with Danton, Siéyès, Brissot, Condorcet and four others, Paine was appointed to the committee charged with the task of drawing up the Constitution.

The revolution was at a critical stage. The Prussian and Austrian armies were invading France; counter-revolutionary uprisings, organized by the Royalists, were taking place in the Vendée; King Louis had been intercepted in his flight abroad; documentary proof showed that he had been conspiring with the French emigrés and the courts of Europe to wage war against his own people. The popular party of the revolution, the Mountain (Jacobins), demanded the death of the King as a traitor to his country; the Girondists, the party which desired to put a brake upon the revolution, favored sparing the life of the King and suppressing the popular clamor for his execution. In his letter to the President of the Convention (November 20, 1792), Paine had urged that "Louis Capet" be tried for participating in the conspiracy of the "crowned brigands" against liberty. When the King was brought to trial before the Convention and found guilty, Paine voted against the death penalty, urging that Louis be banished instead to America. If Paine shared the Girondist position with regard to Louis Capet, he could hardly be accused of sharing their general conciliatory position with regard to the old ruling class of France, for he was one of the most consistent opponents of royalty and hereditary power, whether in state or in property. When he arose in the Convention to

make his plea for the life of the King, it was clear that he was motivated chiefly by the fear that this execution would provide England with a pretext for war against France, and by a sentimental attachment to the King who had supplied America abundant aid during its revolution. "Ah, Citizens," he pleaded, "give not the tyrant of England the triumph of seeing the man perish on the scaffold who had aided my much-beloved America to break his chains." Danton had to remind Paine that "revolutions are not made with rose-water"; and the Convention voted the execution of the King within twenty-four hours.

When the Girondists, behind whose backs the royalists had been hiding, were overthrown by the Mountain—the party of Danton, Marat and Robespierre—it is notable that Paine was not then arrested, although most of his former Girondist associates had been imprisoned. It was largely due to the machinations of Gouverneur Morris, the American minister to France from 1792 to 1794, that Paine was finally jailed on December 28, 1793, and spent eight months in prison. Morris, himself an ardent royalist sympathizer, who had argued for a king and a senate elected for life in the American Constitutional Convention, spent his time in Paris plotting with the Royalists against the French Republic.

To the Jacobins, who were anxious to win the support of America against Britain, he intimated that Paine had been plotting against the American republic and that the United States would be glad to see Paine removed. He made Paine's arrest possible, under a law directed against aliens of hostile nations, by denying that he was an American citizen and asserting that he was a native of England. When the Americans in Paris appealed to the Convention, and Paine wrote to Morris from prison, the American ambassador informed Robespierre that he could not acknowledge Paine as an American. Only when James Monroe, a Jeffersonian democrat,

replaced Morris as minister, was Paine's freedom obtained.

Paine was recalled to the Convention and offered a pension, which he refused. He made his last appearance at the Convention, when it was already under the domination of the party of "law and order"—after the 9th Thermidor (July 27, 1794), when the Mountain was overthrown—to take part in the debate on the new constitution. A short time before, the people of Paris had invaded the Convention to demand cheap bread and the universal franchise. In the new constitution the bourgeois republicans proposed to restrict the franchise to men of property, and Paine spoke from the tribune in behalf of the masses to demand universal suffrage without property restrictions. The following October, Napoleon put an end to the Convention.

Although Paine decried the reaction which set in with the Directory, he continued to render full support to France as the country which was inaugurating the new era of the democratic transformation of feudalism and autocracy. In his *Rights of Man* he had written: "When France shall be surrounded by revolution, she will be in peace and safety." He realized that Napoleon could not restore the ancient regime in France and that, even if democracy was not developing in that country as ideally as he had pictured, the fundamental advances made by the revolution in destroying the feudal privileges were permanent. In the realm of foreign policy, therefore, he remained consistently anti-British, for Britain was the bulwark of reaction in Europe. To the French Directory he submitted his plan for a military expedition against England, with the purpose of overthrowing the monarchy and helping the people proclaim a democratic republic. For a time, Bonaparte interested himself in Paine's proposal, and visited him to discuss the possibilities. Although always poor, Paine contributed funds towards the expedition, which never materialized. He wrote the committee:

There will be no lasting peace for France, nor for the world, until the tyranny and corruption of the English government be abolished, and England, like Italy, become a sister republic.

It was due to the pro-British policy of Washington that Paine definitely turned against him. The notorious treaty with England, negotiated by John Jay, was foisted upon the American people behind their backs. The Federalists, then in power, feared the fury of the people who were aroused over Britain's arrogance on the sea and were solidly behind France. When news of the treaty leaked out, Jay was burnt in effigy and enthusiastic demonstrations in support of France took place throughout the country. By terms of this treaty, in return for the abandonment of the English military stations in America, great commercial concessions were granted Great Britain, while the alliance with France, which Paine had been so instrumental in obtaining, was sacrificed. Although this passed by the much abused name of neutrality, the American policy could be interpreted only as pro-British and anti-French.

With Jefferson and his followers, Paine shared the view that the United States owed it to the cause of democracy to aid France in its epochal struggle against the courts of the world. Washington's capitulation to the Hamiltonian reactionaries and his indifference to his former comrade-in-arms deeply disturbed Paine. In a letter to the President (February 22, 1795), he declared that Washington's indifference left him "but one mode of explanation, which is, that everything is not as it ought to be amongst you, and that the presence of a man who might disapprove, and who had credit enough with the country to be heard and believed, was not wished for." From afar, he surmised correctly that his presence in America would hardly have been welcomed by the party then in power.

Paine's last major work, *The Age of Reason* (1794-95), has been so vilified by the enemies of democracy for the purpose

of attacking Paine and the movement which he represented that their slander has persisted down through the ages. A century after Paine's death, Theodore Roosevelt could still characterize him as a "filthy little atheist." In reality, *The Age of Reason* is a mature product of the eighteenth century enlightenment, upon which Paine was nourished.

In philosophy, he drew his inspiration from that school of idealism branching directly from John Locke's sensationalist theory of knowledge, which supplied the basis for the philosophy of common sense. From the same source, the great French Encyclopedist Diderot, who died on the eve of the French Revolution, had developed philosophy far along towards the path of the contemporary materialism which was founded by Marx and Engels. Of Diderot, Paine makes no mention in his writings, although he does show in his philosophical sections of *The Age of Reason* the influence of the French school of materialism. In Voltaire, Paine admired the exposure and ridicule of the "superstition which priestcraft, united with statecraft, had interwoven with governments." He was well acquainted with the writings of Montesquieu, although he found his criticism of despotism too moderate and disapproved of his partiality for the British constitutional system. In Rousseau and the Abbé Raynal, Paine admired "a loveliness of sentiment in favor of liberty," but complained that they left the "mind in love with an object, without describing the means of possessing it." With the writings of the founders of bourgeois political economy—Adam Smith in England, and Quesnay and Turgot in France—he found fault because they were directed to the reform of the administration of government rather than at the system of government itself.

In the field of science, Paine kept abreast of the latest developments. When he sat down to write his *Age of Reason*, Paine simply applied all the discoveries in the field of knowl-

edge to the body of ancient superstition as expressed in the Bible. He was doing something for the English world, which had already been accomplished in France. With Jefferson and the other enlightened leaders of the democratic movement of his time, Paine believed in a pure and simple Deism, the counterpart in the field of philosophy and religion of the bourgeois revolution in society. Deism, as Paine pointed out in his book, could not answer the purpose of despotic government because it offered no organized church to be used as an engine of power; and for the same reason it removed the foundation from under the structure of priestcraft. It was directed alike against the connection of Church and State and the organized superstition which men called knowledge before the development of science. Although not an atheist, Paine believed that Deism "must have been the first [religion], and will probably be the last, that man believes,"—which came very close to Diderot's dictum that Deism "gave God his passport and conducted him politely to the frontier." The true theology which Paine believed in was "natural philosophy, embracing the whole circle of science."

It was precisely because *The Age of Reason* attacked one of the principal bulwarks of feudal despotism that it aroused the fury of royalists and reactionaries. It offered the English ministry a welcome occasion to renew the attack upon him. Volumes were written in reply; the publisher of the work was found guilty of blasphemy; the book was suppressed and the orgy of burnings repeated. The imprisonment of the publisher was followed by the persecution of anyone who distributed, read or discussed *The Age of Reason*; and several were even arrested for displaying the portrait of the author. The chief critics of the French Revolutionary Terror instituted a Terror in England against all democrats and free-thinkers.

In his other writings at this time, Paine clearly indicated that he saw beyond the limits of the bourgeois revolution, cer-

tainly much further than the middle class leaders who were paving the way for the Consulate and Empire in France. In his essay on *Agrarian Justice* (winter of 1795-96), he developed further his proposals, contained in Part II of the *Rights of Man*, for limiting the accumulation of property. Paine started from the axiom that landed property and private property generally were made possible only by the operation of society and were the source of the evils of society. God opened no land office, he said, from which perpetual deeds to the earth should be issued. He boldly declared:

I advocate the right, and interest myself in the hard case, of all those who have been thrown out of their natural inheritance by the introduction of the system of landed property.

He proposed a plan, which today would be called a system of social insurance, for the taxation of accumulated property to permit the state to give each man and woman reaching twenty-one the sum of fifteen pounds, and every person fifty years of age or over ten pounds per year.

What he had to say about private property, neither the French, British nor American middle class reformers found much to their liking.

Personal property [he wrote] is, in many instances, the effect of paying too little for the labor that produced it; the consequences of which is, that the working hand perishes in old age, and the employer abounds in affluence.

At that time, there could have been no more direct challenge to the basic principle of capitalist society. In the French edition of the same essay, he approved of the Babeuf insurrection (May, 1796), as being correctly aimed at the removal of social inequalities in property, although he decried its violent aspects. His support of the communistic aspects of Babeuf's teachings recalls his famous aphorism in one of the letters to his English persecutors:

When the rich plunder the poor of his rights, it becomes an example to the poor to plunder the rich of his property.

Although Paine was not molested under the Consulate, his support of the Haitian revolution led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, his agitation against the slave trade, and his radical democratic views were not such as to please the man who was later to make himself emperor. On the other hand, while he longed to return to the United States, he did not expect to be welcomed while the democracy-hating Federalists were supreme. On his election to the Presidency, Jefferson hastened to invite Paine to America. Risking capture at sea by the British, he arrived in the United States on October 30, 1802, again to become the center of political turmoil.

He was received with open arms by Jefferson and the democrats. The Federalists, the reactionary clergy, the commercial interests and the pro-slavery men organized a vile attack upon him. Reactionary newspapers embarked upon an orgy of name-calling. The *New England Palladium* attacked Jefferson for daring to welcome a "lying, drunken, brutal infidel, who rejoiced in the opportunity of basking and wallowing in the confusion, bloodshed, rapine, and murder in which his soul delights." One enraged editor bellowed: "Let Jefferson and his blasphemous crony dangle from the same gallows!" The Federalists, who had been barely defeated in the recent Presidential elections, resented Paine's militant democracy and his criticism of their policies. In one of his articles, published soon after his return to America, Paine wrote:

While I beheld with pleasure the dawn of liberty rising in Europe, I saw with regret the luster of its fading in America. In less than two years from the time of my departure some distant symptoms painfully suggested the idea that the principles of the revolution were expiring on the soil that produced them.

Paine refused to accept any public office, although it is to the credit of Jefferson that he was ready to offer a post to the outstanding and most vilified spokesman of the political creed they held in common. At the hands of the American "royalists" he received no better reception than from the British court crowd. The homes of the respectable citizens were closed to him; he was burned in effigy in the country which he helped found; the commercial interests organized demonstrations against him. In the homes of the lowly he was revered as the friend of the people; and the immigrant laborers were the ones who sought him out and paid him homage. But he suffered the greatest affront a country which he had aroused to nationhood could offer, when the Federalists in control at New Rochelle, New York, disfranchised him on the ground that he was not an American citizen! The Morris conspiracy in Paris had followed him to America.

The last few years of his life, Paine lived in New York, passing some of his most enjoyable days with Robert Fulton, the militant democrat and inventor, watching his steamboat experiments on the Hudson. One of Paine's last political services to this country was his advice and help to Jefferson in the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France, which almost doubled the size of the United States and opened the way for the rounding out of the continent.

On June 8, 1809, almost entirely deserted, the great revolutionary democrat died in New York, in a small house on the site of what is now 59 Grove Street. He was buried on his farm at New Rochelle. But the remains of this restless fighter for a free world was not even vouchsafed a resting place. Twenty years later, William Cobbett, the English radical reformer, seeking to atone for his earlier reactionary activities, stole Paine's bones with the purpose of providing an adequate tomb for them in England. Somehow, the remains disappeared.

If Tom Paine does not yet receive the full homage that is his due, it is because the "economic royalists" of the present age have perpetuated the old royalist conspiracy against him. That Paine's writings and his historic role should today be popularized by Labor is a commentary upon the ease—and pleasure—with which the bourgeoisie sometimes forgets its greatest heroes. It also is significant of the fact that the true fighters for democracy, today as in the past, belong to the most advanced movement of the age. The two hundredth anniversary of Paine's birthday passed almost unnoticed by the very people who owe their ascendancy to the republican battles fought by Paine. Only the Popular Front government of France, during its brief existence, gave official recognition to Paine by erecting his statue in Paris on the occasion of the anniversary. And yet, if there is a time that tries men's souls, such a time is today, when mankind is fighting battles as great in their significance for world history as the battles of *The Age of Reason*.

The writings of Paine included in this booklet have been selected from his four major works: *Common Sense*, *The American Crisis*, *Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*. Each section is preceded by a short preface, in which the editor tells something of the circumstances under which each work was written, states its significance and describes briefly the work as a whole. It is hoped that these selections will offer the reader an opportunity to acquaint himself at first hand with the great role of Paine and his work.

James S. Allen

I.

COMMON SENSE

COMMON SENSE can be considered the Manifesto of the American War of Independence. The first published pamphlet of Thomas Paine, it was issued at Philadelphia on January 10, 1776, and immediately reached an extraordinary circulation. Overnight it established Paine as the chief propagandist and agitator of the revolution.

The great contribution of the pamphlet was that for the first time it projected independence clearly and sharply as the immediate slogan of the revolt against England. It was mere folly, Paine said, to "pay a Bunker-hill price" for a simple lawsuit as many still considered the status of the quarrel with England, although the first shots had already been fired at Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill. Reconciliation had become a "falacious dream"; nothing less than independence was on the order of the day; immediate and concerted action was necessary: "The present winter is worth an age if rightly employed."

Through Common Sense, the idea and program of independence became the common property of the masses. Here Paine for the first time raised the demand for a Declaration of Independence, which, drafted by Thomas Jefferson, was issued six months after the publication of the pamphlet.

Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs

IN the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense: and have no other preliminaries to settle with the Reader, than that he will divest himself of prejudice and prepossession, and suffer his reason and his feelings to determine for themselves:

that he will put *on*, or rather that he will not put *off*, the true character of a man, and generously enlarge his views beyond the present day.

Volumes have been written on the subject of the struggle between England and America. Men of all ranks have embarked in the controversy, from different motives, and with various designs; but all have been ineffectual, and the period of debate is closed. Arms as the last resource decide the contest: the appeal was the choice of the King, and the Continent has accepted the challenge.

It hath been reported of the late Mr. Pelham (who tho' an able minister was not without his faults) that on his being attacked in the House of Commons on the score that his measures were only of a temporary kind, replied: "*they will last my time.*" Should a thought so fatal and unmanly possess the Colonies in the present contest, the name of ancestors will be remembered by future generations with detestation.

The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a City, a Country, a Province or a Kingdom; but of a Continent—of at least one eighth part of the habitable Globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time by the proceedings now. Now is the seed time of Continental union, faith, and honor. The least fracture now, will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the wound will enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.

By referring the matter from argument to arms, a new era for politics is struck—a new method of thinking hath arisen. All plans, proposals, &c. prior to the 19th of April, *i.e.*, to the commencement of hostilities,* are like the almanacks of

* April 19, 1775, was when the Battle of Lexington, Mass., took place.—*Ed.*

COMMON SENSE;

ADDRESSED TO THE

INHABITANTS

O F

A M E R I C A,

On the following interesting

S U B J E C T S.

- I. Of the Origin and Design of Government in general, with concise Remarks on the English Constitution.
- II. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession.
- III. Thoughts on the present State of American Affairs.
- IV. Of the present Ability of America, with some miscellaneous Reflections.

Man knows no Master save creating HEAVEN,
Or those whom choice and common good ordain.

THOMSON,

PHILADELPHIA;

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MDCCCLXXVI.

the last year; which tho' proper then, are superseded and useless now. Whatever was advanced by the advocates on either side of the question then, terminated in one and the same point, *viz.*, a union with Great Britain; the only difference between the parties, was the method of effecting it; the one proposing force, the other friendship; but it hath so far happened that the first hath failed, and the second hath withdrawn her influence.

As much hath been said of the advantages of reconciliation, which, like an agreeable dream, hath passed away and left us as we were, it is but right, that we should examine the contrary side of the argument, and inquire into some of the many material injuries which these colonies sustain, and always will sustain, by being connected with, and dependent on Great Britain. To examine that connection and dependence on the principles of nature and common sense, to see what we have to trust to if separated, and what we are to expect if dependent.

I have heard it asserted by some, that as America hath flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, that the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness and will always have the same effect—Nothing can be more fallacious than this kind of argument:—we may as well assert that because a child hath thrived upon milk, that it is never to have meat, or that the first twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty. But even this is admitting more than is true, for I answer, roundly, that America would have flourished as much, and probably much more had no European power taken any notice of her. The commerce by which she hath enriched herself are the necessaries of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom of Europe.

But she has protected us, say some. That she hath engrossed us is true, and defended the Continent at our ex-

pense as well as her own is admitted; and she would have defended Turkey from the same motive, *viz.*, the sake of trade and dominion.

Alas! we have been long led away by ancient prejudices and made large sacrifices to superstition. We have boasted the protection of Great Britain, without considering, that her motive was *interest* not *attachment*; and that she did not protect us from *our enemies on our account*, but from *her enemies on her own account*, from those who had no quarrel with us on any *other account*, and who will always be our enemies on the *same account*. Let Britain waive her pretensions to the Continent, or the Continent throw off the dependence, and we should be at peace with France and Spain were they at war with Britain. The miseries of Hanover's last war ought to warn us against connections.

It hath lately been asserted in parliament, that the colonies have no relation to each other but through the parent country, *i.e.*, that Pennsylvania and the Jerseys and so on for the rest, are sister colonies by the way of England; this is certainly a very roundabout way of proving relationship, but it is the nearest and only true way of proving enemyship, if I may so call it. France and Spain never were, nor perhaps ever will be our enemies as *Americans* but as our being the *subjects of Great Britain*.

But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families; wherefore the assertion if true, turns to her reproach; but it happens not to be true, or only partly so, and the phrase, *parent* or *mother country*, hath been jesuitically adopted by the King and his parasites, with a low papistical design of gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds. Europe and not England is the parent country of America. This new world hath been the asylum for the

persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from *every part* of Europe. Hither have they fled, not from the tender embraces of the mother, but from the cruelty of the monster; and it is so far true of England, that the same tyranny which drove the first emigrants from home, pursues their descendants still.

In this extensive quarter of the Globe, we forget the narrow limits of three hundred and sixty miles (the extent of England) and carry our friendship on a larger scale; we claim brotherhood with every European Christian, and triumph in the generosity of the sentiment.

It is pleasant to observe by what regular gradations we surmount the force of local prejudice, as we enlarge our acquaintance with the World. A man born in any town of England divided into parishes, will naturally associate most with his fellow parishioners (because their interests in many cases will be common) and distinguish him by the name of *neighbor*: if he meet him but a few miles from home, he drops the narrow idea of a street, and salutes him by the name of *townsman*: if he travel out of the country and meet him in any other, he forgets the minor divisions of street and town, and calls him *countryman*, *i.e.*, county man: but if in their foreign excursions they should associate in France, or any other part of *Europe*, their local remembrance would be enlarged into that of *Englishmen*. And by a just parity of reasoning, all Europeans meeting in America, or any other quarter of the Globe, are *countrymen*; for England, Holland, Germany, or Sweden, when compared with the whole, stand in the same places on the larger scale, which the divisions of street, town, and county do on the smaller ones; distinctions too limited for Continental minds. Not one third of the inhabitants, even of this province,* are of English descent. Wherefore, I reprobate the phrase of parent or

* Pennsylvania.—*Ed.*

mother country applied to England only, as being false, selfish, narrow and ungenerous.

But admitting that we were all of English descent, what does it amount to? Nothing. Britain being now an open enemy, extinguishes every other name and title: and to say that reconciliation is our duty is truly farcical. The first King of England, of the present line (William the Conqueror) was a Frenchman, and half the Peers of England are descendants from the same country; wherefore, by the same method of reasoning, England ought to be governed by France.

Much hath been said of the united strength of Britain and the Colonies, that in conjunction, they might bid defiance to the world: but this is mere presumption, the fate of war is uncertain, neither do the expressions mean anything, for this Continent would never suffer itself to be drained of inhabitants, to support the British arms in either Asia, Africa, or Europe.

Besides, what have we to do with setting the world at defiance? Our plan is commerce and that, well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe, because it is the interest of all Europe to have America a *free port*. Her trade will always be a protection, and her barrenness of gold and silver secure her from invaders.

I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation to show a single advantage that this Continent can reap, by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge, not a single advantage is derived. Our corn will fetch its price in any market in Europe, and our imported goods must be paid for, buy them where we will.

But the injuries and disadvantages we sustain by that connection are without number, and our duty to mankind at large, as well as to ourselves, instruct us to renounce the alliance: because any submission to, or dependence on Great Britain, tends directly to involve this Continent in European

wars and quarrels. As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no partial connection with any part of it. 'Tis the true interest of America to steer clear of European contentions, which she never can do, while by her dependence on Britain, she is made the make-weight in the scale of British politics.

Europe is too thickly planted with kingdoms, to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, *because of her connection with Britain*. The next war may not turn out like the last, and should it not, the advocates for reconciliation now, will be wishing for separation then, because neutrality in that case, would be a safer convoy than a man of war. Every thing that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'TIS TIME TO PART. Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America is a strong and natural proof, that the authority of the one over the other was never the design of heaven. The time likewise at which the Continent was discovered adds weight to the argument, and the manner in which it was peopled encreases the force of it—The Reformation was preceded by the discovery of America; As if the Almighty graciously meant to open a sanctuary to the persecuted in future years, when home should afford neither friendship nor safety

The authority of Great Britain over this Continent is a form of government which sooner or later must have an end: And a serious mind can draw no true pleasure by looking forward, under the painful and positive conviction, that what he calls "the present constitution," is merely temporary. As parents, we can have no joy, knowing that *this government* is not sufficiently lasting to insure any thing which we may bequeath to posterity: And by a plain method of argument, as we are running the next generation into debt,

we ought to do the work of it, otherwise we use them meanly and pitifully. In order to discover the line of our duty rightfully, we should take our children in our hand, and fix our station a few years farther into life; that eminence will present a prospect, which a few present fears and prejudices conceal from our sight.

Tho' I would carefully avoid giving unnecessary offence, yet I am inclined to believe, that all those who espouse the doctrine of reconciliation, may be included within the following descriptions. Interested men who are not to be trusted, weak men who *cannot* see, prejudiced men who *will not* see, and a certain set of moderate men who think better of the European world than it deserves; and this last class, by an ill-judged deliberation, will be the cause of more calamities to this Continent, than all the other three.

It is the good fortune of many to live distant from the scene of present sorrow; the evil is not sufficiently brought to *their* doors to make *them* feel the precariousness with which all American property is possessed. But let our imaginations transport us a few moments to Boston; that seat of wretchedness will teach us wisdom, and instruct us for ever to renounce a power in whom we can have no trust. The inhabitants of that unfortunate city who but a few months ago were in ease and affluence have now no other alternative than to stay and starve, or turn out to beg. Endangered by the fire of their friends if they continue within the city, and plundered by the government if they leave it. In their present condition they are prisoners without the hope of redemption, and in a general attack for their relief, they would be exposed to the fury of both armies.

Men of passive tempers look somewhat lightly over the offences of Britain, and still hoping for the best are apt to call out, "*Come, come, we shall be friends again for all this.*" But examine the passions and feelings of mankind: Bring the

doctrine of reconciliation to the touchstone of nature, and then tell me, whether you can hereafter love, honour, and faithfully serve the power that hath carried fire and sword into your land? If you cannot do all these, then are you only deceiving yourselves, and by your delay bringing ruin upon posterity. Your future connection with Britain whom you can neither love nor honour will be forced and unnatural, and being formed only on the plan of present convenience, will in a little time fall into a relapse more wretched than the first. But if you say, you can still pass the violations over, then I ask, Hath your house been burnt? Hath your property been destroyed before your face? Are your wife and children destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on? Have you lost a parent or a child by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If you have not, then are you not a judge of those who have. But if you have, and can still shake hands with the murderers, then are you unworthy the name of husband, father, friend, or lover, and whatever may be your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward, and the spirit of a sycophant.

This is not inflaming or exaggerating matters, but trying them by those feelings and affections which nature justifies, and without which we should be incapable of discharging the social duties of life, or enjoying the felicities of it. I mean not to exhibit horror for the purpose of provoking revenge, but to awaken us from fatal and unmanly slumbers, that we may pursue determinately some fixed object. 'Tis not in the power of England or of Europe to conquer America, if she doth not conquer herself by *delay* and *timidity*. The present winter is worth an age if rightly employed, but if lost or neglected, the whole Continent will partake of the misfortune; and there is no punishment which that man doth not deserve, be he who, or what, or where he will, that may be the means of sacrificing a season so precious and useful.

'Tis repugnant to reason, to the universal order of things, to all examples from former ages, to suppose that this Continent can long remain subject to any external power. The most sanguine in Britain doth not think so. The utmost stretch of human wisdom cannot at this time compass a plan, short of separation, which can promise the Continent even a year's security. Reconciliation is *now* a fallacious dream. Nature hath deserted the connection, and Art cannot supply her place. For, as Milton wisely expresses, "never can true reconciliation grow where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep."

Every quiet method for peace hath been ineffectual. Our prayers have been rejected with disdain; and hath tended to convince us that nothing flatters vanity or confirms obstinacy in Kings more than repeated petitioning—and nothing hath contributed more, than that very measure, to make the Kings of Europe absolute. Witness Denmark and Sweden. 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 be cutting throats under the violated unmeaning names of parent and child.

To say, they will never attempt it again is idle and visionary: we thought so at the repeal of the stamp act, yet a year or two undeceived us; as well may we suppose that nations which have been once defeated will never renew the quarrel.

As to government matters, 'tis not in the power of Britain to do this Continent justice: the business of it will soon be too weighty and intricate to be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience, by a power so distant from us, and so very ignorant of us; for if they cannot conquer us, they cannot govern us. To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, which when obtained requires five or six more to explain it in, will in a few years be looked upon as folly

and childishness—there was a time when it was proper, and there is a proper time for it to cease.

Small islands not capable of protecting themselves are the proper objects for government to take under their care; but there is something absurd, in supposing a Continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet, and as England and America with respect to each other reverse the common order of nature, it is evident they belong to different systems. England to Europe: America to itself.

I am not induced by motives of pride, party, or resentment to espouse the doctrine of Separation and independence; I am clearly, positively, and conscientiously persuaded that 'tis the true interest of this Continent to be so; that everything short of *that* is mere patchwork, that it can afford no lasting felicity—that it is leaving the sword to our children, and shrinking back at a time, when, a little more, a little farther, would have rendered this Continent the glory of the earth.

As Britain hath not manifested the least inclination towards a compromise, we may be assured that no terms can be obtained worthy the acceptance of the Continent, or any ways equal to the expence of blood and treasure we have been already put to.

The object contended for, ought always to bear some just proportion to the expense. The removal of North,* or the whole detestable junto, is a matter unworthy the millions we have expended. A temporary stoppage of trade was an inconvenience, which would have sufficiently balanced the repeal of all the acts complained of, had such repeals been obtained; but if the whole Continent must take up arms, if every man must be a soldier, 'tis scarcely worth our while to fight against a contemptible ministry only. Dearly, dearly, do we pay for the repeal of the acts, if that is all we fight for;

* Lord North headed the British Ministry.—*Ed.*

for, in a just estimation, 'tis as great a folly to pay a Bunker-hill price for law as for land. As I have always considered the independency of this Continent, as an event which sooner or later must arrive, so from the late rapid progress of the Continent to maturity, the event could not be far off: Wherefore, on the breaking out of hostilities, it was not worth the while to have disputed a matter, which time would have finally redressed, unless we meant to be in earnest: otherwise it is like wasting an estate on a suit at law, to regulate the trespasses of a tenant, whose lease is just expiring. No man was a warmer wisher for a reconciliation than myself, before the fatal 19th of April, 1775, but the moment the event of that day was made known, I rejected the hardened, sullen tempered Pharaoh of England for ever; and disdain the wretch, that with the pretended title of FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter, and composedly sleep with their blood upon his soul.

But admitting that matters were now made up, what would be the event? I answer, the ruin of the Continent. And that for several reasons.

First. The powers of governing still remaining in the hands of the King, he will have a negative over the whole legislation of this Continent. And as he hath shown himself such an inveterate enemy to liberty, and discovered such a thirst for arbitrary power, Is he, or is he not, a proper man to say to these Colonies, "*You shall make no laws but what I please*"? And is there any inhabitant of America so ignorant, as not to know, that according to what is called the *present constitution*, that this Continent can make no laws but what the King gives leave to; and is there any man so unwise as not to see, that (considering what has happened) he will suffer no law to be made here, but such as suits *his* purpose? We may be as effectually enslaved by the want of laws in America, as by submitting to laws made for us in England.

After matters are made up (as it is called) can there be any doubt, but the whole power of the crown will be exerted to keep this Continent as low and humble as possible? Instead of going forward we shall go backward, or be perpetually quarreling, or ridiculously petitioning.—We are already greater than the King wishes us to be, and will he not hereafter endeavor to make us less? To bring the matter to one point, Is the power who is jealous of our prosperity, a proper power to govern us? Whoever says *No* to this question is an *Independent*, for independency means no more than whether we shall make our own laws, or, whether the King, the greatest enemy this Continent hath, or can have, shall tell us "*there shall be no laws but such as I like.*"

But the King, you'll say, hath a negative in England; the people there can make no laws without his consent. In point of right and good order, there is something very ridiculous, that a youth of twenty-one (which hath often happened) shall say to several millions of people older and wiser than himself, "I forbid this or that act of yours to be law." But in this place I decline this sort of reply, tho' I will never cease to expose the absurdity of it, and only answer, that England being the King's residence, and America not so, makes quite another case. The King's negative here is ten times more dangerous and fatal than it can be in England, for *there* he will scarcely refuse his consent to a bill for putting England into as strong a state of defence as possible, and here he would never suffer such a bill to be passed.

America is only a secondary object in the system of British politics. England consults the good of *this* country no farther than it answers her *own* purpose. Wherefore, her own interest leads her to suppress the growth of *ours* in every case which doth not promote *her* advantage, or in the least interferes with it. A pretty state we should soon be in, under such a second-hand government, considering what has happened!

Men do not change from enemies to friends by the alteration of a name: And in order to shew that reconciliation *now* is a dangerous doctrine, I affirm, *that it would be policy in the King at this time to repeal the acts for the sake of re-instating himself in the government of the provinces; in order that HE MAY ACCOMPLISH BY CRAFT AND SUBTLETY, IN THE LONG RUN, WHAT HE CANNOT DO BY FORCE AND VIOLENCE IN THE SHORT ONE.* Reconciliation and ruin are nearly related.

Secondly. That as even the best terms which we can expect to obtain can amount to no more than a temporary expedient, or a kind of government by guardianship, which can last no longer than till the colonies come of age, so the general face and state of things in the interim will be unsettled and unpromising. Emigrants of property will not choose to come to a country whose form of government hangs but by a thread, and who is every day tottering on the brink of commotion and disturbance: and numbers of the present inhabitants would lay hold of the interval to dispose of their effects, and quit the Continent.

But the most powerful of all arguments is, that nothing but independence, *i.e.*, a Continental form of government, can keep the peace of the Continent and preserve it inviolate from civil wars. I dread the event of a reconciliation with Britain *now*, as it is more than probable, that it will be followed by a revolt some where or other, the consequences of which may be far more fatal than all the malice of Britain.

Thousands are already ruined by British barbarity (thousands more will probably suffer the same fate). Those men have other feelings than us who have nothing suffered. All they *now* possess is liberty: what they before enjoyed is sacrificed to its service, and having nothing more to lose, they disdain submission. Besides, the general temper of the colonies, towards a British government, will be like that of a youth, who is nearly out of his time; they will care very

little about her: And a government which cannot preserve the peace, is no government at all, and in that case we pay our money for nothing; and pray what is it that Britain can do, whose power will be wholly on paper, should a civil tumult break out the very day after reconciliation? I have heard some men say, many of whom I believe spoke without thinking, that they dreaded an independence, fearing that it would produce civil wars: It is but seldom that our first thoughts are truly correct, and that is the case here; for there are ten times more to dread from a patched up connection than from independence. I make the sufferer's sake my own, and I protest, that were I driven from house and home, my property destroyed, and my circumstances ruined, that as a man sensible of injuries, I could never relish the doctrine of reconciliation, or consider myself bound thereby. . . .

Ye that tell us of harmony and reconciliation, can ye restore to us the time that is past? Can ye give to prostitution its former innocence? Neither can ye reconcile Britain and America. The last cord now is broken, the people of England are presenting addresses against us. There are injuries which nature cannot forgive; she would cease to be nature if she did. As well can the lover forgive the ravisher of his mistress, as the Continent forgive the murders of Britain. The Almighty hath implanted in us these unextinguishable feelings for good and wise purposes. They are the Guardians of his Image in our hearts. They distinguish us from the herd of common animals. The social compact would dissolve, and justice be extirpated from the earth, or have only a casual existence, were we callous to the touches of affection. The robber and the murderer would often escape unpunished, did not the injuries which our tempers sustain, provoke us into justice.

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only

the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is over-run with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the Globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her.—Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

Of the Present Ability of America

With Some Miscellaneous Reflections

...TO CONCLUDE, however strange it may appear to some, or however unwilling they may be to think so, matters not, but many strong and striking reasons may be given to shew, that nothing can settle our affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined Declaration for Independence. Some of which are,

First.—It is the custom of Nations, when any two are at war, for some other powers not engaged in the quarrel, to step in as Mediators and bring about the preliminaries of a Peace: but while America calls herself the Subject of Great Britain, no power however well disposed she may be, can offer her mediation. Wherefore, in our present state we may quarrel on for ever.

Secondly.—It is unreasonable to suppose, that France or Spain will give us any kind of assistance, if we mean only to make use of that assistance for the purpose of repairing the breach, and strengthening the connection between Britain and America; because, those powers would be sufferers by the consequences.

Thirdly.—While we profess ourselves the Subjects of Britain, We must in the eye of foreign Nations, be considered as Rebels. The precedent is somewhat dangerous to *their peace*, for men to be in arms under the name of Sub-

jects: we on the spot can solve the paradox; but to unite resistance and subjection, requires an idea much too refined for common understanding.

Fourthly.—Were a manifesto to be published, and dispatched to foreign Courts, setting forth the miseries we have endured, and the peaceable methods we had ineffectually used for redress, declaring at the same time, that not being able any longer to live happily or safely, under the cruel disposition of the British Court, we have been driven to the necessity of breaking off all connections with her; at the same time, assuring all such Courts of our peaceable disposition toward them, and of our desire of entering into trade with them: such a memorial would produce more good effects to this Continent, than if a ship were freighted with petitions to Britain.

Under our present denomination of British Subjects, we can neither be received nor heard abroad: the custom of all Courts is against us, and will be so, until by an Independence we take rank with other Nations.

These proceedings may at first appear strange and difficult, but, like all other steps which we have already passed over, will in a little time become familiar and agreeable: and until an Independence is declared, the Continent will feel itself like a man who continues putting off some unpleasant business from day to day, yet knows it must be done, hates to set about it, wishes it over, and is continually haunted with the thoughts of its necessity.

II.

THE AMERICAN CRISIS

AT EVERY critical point during the long and difficult struggle against England, a new pamphlet came from Paine's pen to explain the turn of events and to agitate for the next necessary step. Paine wrote sixteen pamphlets in the series which he entitled The American Crisis and signed them "Common Sense." These pamphlets served the role of national agitational organ of the revolutionary forces. In them Paine turned sharp invective and biting sarcasm against England and the Tories at home; mocked at British arms and roused renewed confidence in the colonials by exposing the internal and military weaknesses of the enemy; rallied the lagging states, urging united effort and more centralized control; proposed Congressional taxation of imports and state taxes on landed property and houses to meet the expenses of war; launched a drive for funds with which to revive the starving and ill-clad army; favored alliance with France and Spain against England; showed always that the victory of the revolution was inevitable.

After a defeat at arms, Paine could rally the Americans with a ringing phrase such as, "'The United States of America,' will sound as pompously in the world or in history, as 'the kingdom of Great Britain.'" At all times, he pictured the epoch-shaping nature of the struggle, referring to the revolution as "a period which has given birth to a new world, and erected a monument to the folly of the old." "We fight," he wrote, "not to enslave, but to set a country free, and to make room upon the earth for honest men to live in." Paine could make his fellow fighters feel the grandeur of the movement they were engaged in: "We have crowded the business of an age into the compass of a few months."

With those who vacillated he had no patience. "Here is the touchstone to try men by," the revolutionary pamphleteer wrote. "He

that is not a supporter of the independent State of America . . . is, in the American sense of the word, A TORY; and the instant that he endeavors to bring his toryism into practice, he becomes a TRAITOR," *He placed great emphasis upon the need for united national action and centralized government as against the particularism of the separate states, pointing out that "the union of America is the foundation-stone of her independence."* Some of the articles were addressed to the English people and in these Paine explained the issues at stake, showed how they were related to the struggle of the English democrats against the autocracy, and called upon the people to follow the example of the United States by risking a revolution and calling a Congress.

Crisis I was written on a drum-head by campfire while Paine was accompanying General Washington's forces during their retreat across New Jersey. The revolution seemed at its lowest ebb; everything appeared lost. The Crisis, No. I—"These are the times that try men's souls," it began—inspired the Americans to their much-needed victory against overwhelming forces at Trenton and aroused the continent. Crisis, No. XIII, written after the surrender of Cornwallis and the recognition by the British of American independence, is of added interest today because it contains one of the earliest, clearly formulated attacks upon the theory of states rights and sectional interest as opposed to centralized government.

Number I

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

every thing its value. Heaven knows how to set a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared, that she has a right (*not only to TAX* but) "to BIND *us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER,*" and if being *bound in that manner* is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the expression is impious, for so unlimited a power can belong only to God.

Whether the Independence of the Continent was declared too soon, or delayed too long, I will not now enter into as an argument; my own simple opinion is that had it been eight months earlier, it would have been much better. We did not make a proper use of last winter, neither could we, while we were in a dependent state. However, the fault, if it were one, was all our own; we have none to blame but ourselves.* But no great deal is lost yet; all that Howe † has been doing for this month past is rather a ravage than a conquest, which the spirit of the Jerseys a year ago would have quickly repulsed, and which time and a little resolution will soon recover.

I have as little superstition in me as any man living, but my secret opinion has ever been, and still is, that God Almighty will not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them unsupportedly to perish, who had so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could invent. Neither have I so much of the infidel in me, as to suppose that He

* "The present winter (meaning the last) is worth an age, if rightly employed, but if lost, or neglected, the whole Continent will partake of the misfortune; and there is no punishment which that man doth not deserve, be he who, or what, or where he will, that may be the means of sacrificing a season so precious and useful."—*Common Sense*.

† Commander-in-chief of the British forces in America.—*Ed.*

has relinquished the government of the world, and given us up to the care of devils; and as I do not, I cannot see on what grounds the king of Britain can look up to heaven for help against us: a common murderer, a highwayman, or a house-breaker, has as good a pretence as he.

'Tis surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. All nations and ages have been subject to them. Britain has trembled like an ague at the report of a French fleet of flatbottomed boats; and in the fourteenth century the whole English army, after ravaging the kingdom of France, was driven back like men petrified with fear; and this brave exploit was performed by a few broken forces collected and headed by a woman, Joan of Arc. Would that Heaven might inspire some Jersey maid to spirit up her countrymen, and save her fair fellow sufferers from ravage and ravishment! Yet panics, in some cases, have their uses; they produce as much good as hurt. Their duration is always short; the mind soon grows thro' them, and acquires a firmer habit than before. But their peculiar advantage is that they are the touchstones of sincerity and hypocrisy, and bring things and men to light, which might otherwise have lain forever undiscovered. In fact, they have the same effect on secret traitors, which an imaginary apparition would have upon a private murderer. They sift out the hidden thoughts of man, and hold them up in public to the world. Many a disguised Tory has lately shewn his head, that shall penitentially solemnize with curses the day on which Howe arrived upon the Delaware.

As I was with the troops at Fort Lee, and marched with them to the edge of Pennsylvania, I am well acquainted with many circumstances, which those who live at a distance know but little or nothing of. Our situation there was exceedingly cramped, the place being on a narrow neck of land between the North River and the Hackensack. Our force was incon-

siderable, being not one fourth so great as Howe could bring against us. We had no army at hand to have relieved the garrison, had we shut ourselves up and stood on our defence. Our ammunition, light artillery, and the best part of our stores had been removed, on the apprehension that Howe would endeavor to penetrate the Jerseys, in which case Fort Lee could be of no use to us; for it must occur to every thinking man, whether in the army or not, that these kind of field forts are only for temporary purposes, and last in use no longer than the enemy directs his force against the particular object, which such forts are raised to defend.

Such was our situation and condition at Fort Lee on the morning of the 20th of November, when an officer arrived with information, that the enemy with 200 boats had landed about seven miles above; Major General Green, who commanded the garrison immediately ordered them under arms, and sent express to General Washington at the town of Hackensack, distant by the way of a ferry—six miles. Our first object was to secure the bridge over the Hackensack, which laid up the river between the enemy and us, about six miles from us, and three from them. General Washington arrived in about three-quarters of an hour, and marched at the head of the troops towards the bridge, which place I expected we should have a brush for; however, they did not choose to dispute it with us, and the greatest part of our troops went over the bridge, the rest over the ferry, except some which passed at a mill on a small creek, between the bridge and the ferry, and made their way through some marshy grounds up to the town of Hackensack, and there passed the river. We brought off as much baggage as the waggons could contain, the rest was lost. The simple object was to bring off the garrison, and to march them till they could be strengthened by the Jersey or Pennsylvania militia, so as to be enabled to make a stand. We staid

four days at Newark, collected in our out-posts with some of the Jersey militia, and marched out twice to meet the enemy on information of their being advancing, tho' our numbers were greatly inferiour to theirs. Howe, in my little opinion, committed a great error in generalship in not throwing a body of forces off from Staten Island through Amboy, by which means he might have seized all our stores at Brunswick, and intercepted our march into Pennsylvania; but if we believe the power of hell to be limited, we must likewise believe that their agents are under some providential control.

I shall not now attempt to give all the particulars of our retreat to the Delaware; suffice it for the present to say, that both officers and men, tho' greatly harassed and fatigued, frequently without rest, covering, or provision, the inevitable consequences of a long retreat, bore it with a manly and martial spirit. All their wishes centred in one, which was that the country would turn out and help them to drive the enemy back. Voltaire has remarked that king William never appeared to full advantage but in difficulties and in action; the same remark may be made on General Washington, for the character fits him. There is a natural firmness in some minds which cannot be unlocked by trifles, but which, when unlocked, discovers a cabinet of fortitude; and I reckon it among those kind of public blessings, which we do not immediately see, that God hath blessed him with uninterrupted health, and given him a mind that can even flourish upon care.

I shall conclude this paper with some miscellaneous remarks on the state of our affairs; and shall begin with asking the following question, Why is it that the enemy have left the New-England provinces, and made these middle ones the seat of war? The answer is easy: New England is not infested with Tories, and we are. I have been tender in raising the cry against these men, and used numberless argu-

ments to shew them their danger, but it will not do to sacrifice a world either to their folly or their baseness. The period is now arrived, in which either they or we must change our sentiments, or one or both must fall. And what is a Tory? Good God! what is he? I should not be afraid to go with an hundred Whigs against a thousand Tories, were they to attempt to get into arms. Every Tory is a coward, for a servile, slavish, self-interested fear is the foundation of Toryism; and a man under such influence, though he may be cruel, never can be brave.

But, before the line of irrecoverable separation be drawn between us, let us reason the matter together: Your conduct is an invitation to the enemy, yet not one in a thousand of you has heart enough to join him. Howe is as much deceived by you as the American cause is injured by you. He expects you will all take up arms, and flock to his standard, with muskets on your shoulders. Your opinions are of no use to him, unless you support him personally, for 'tis soldiers, and not Tories, that he wants.

I once felt all that kind of anger, which a man ought to feel, against the mean principles that are held by the Tories: A noted one, who kept a tavern at Amboy, was standing at his door, with as pretty a child in his hand, about eight or nine years old, as I ever saw, and after speaking his mind as freely as he thought was prudent, finished with this unfatherly expression, "*Well! give me peace in my day.*" Not a man lives on the Continent but fully believes that a separation must some time or other finally take place, and a generous parent would have said, "*If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace*"; and this single reflection, well applied, is sufficient to awaken every man to duty. Not a place upon earth might be so happy as America. Her situation is remote from all the wrangling world, and she has nothing to do but to trade with them.

A man may easily distinguish in himself between temper and principle, and I am as confident, as I am that God governs the world, that America will never be happy till she gets clear of foreign dominion. Wars, without ceasing, will break out till that period arrives, and the Continent must in the end be conquered; for though the flame of liberty may sometimes cease to shine, the coal can never expire.

AMERICA did not, nor does not, want force; but she wanted a proper application of that force. Wisdom is not the purchase of a day, and it is no wonder that we should err at the first setting off. From an excess of tenderness, we were unwilling to raise an army, and trusted our cause to the temporary defence of a well meaning militia. A summer's experience has now taught us better; yet with those troops, while they were collected, we were able to set bounds to the progress of the enemy, and thank God! they are again assembling. I always considered a militia as the best troops in the world for a sudden exertion, but they will not do for a long campaign. Howe, it is probable, will make an attempt on this city; * should he fail on this side the Delaware, he is ruined. If he succeeds, our cause is not ruined. He takes all on his side against a part on ours; admitting he succeeds, the consequence will be that armies from ends of the Continent will march to assist their suffering friends in the middle states; for he cannot go everywhere, it is impossible. I consider Howe as the greatest enemy the Tories have; he is bringing a war into their country, which, had it not been for him and partly for themselves, they had been clear of. Should he now be expelled, I wish, with all the devotion of a Christian, that the names of Whig and Tory may never be mentioned; but should the Tories give him encouragement to come, or assistance if he comes, I as sincerely wish that our next year's arms may expel them from the Continent, and

* Philadelphia.—*Ed.*

the Congress appropriate their possessions to the relief of those who have suffered in well doing. A single successful battle next year will settle the whole. America could carry on a two years war by the confiscation of the property of disaffected persons, and be made happy by their expulsion. Say not that this is revenge, call it rather the soft resentment of a suffering people, who, having no object in view but the good of ALL, have staked their OWN ALL upon a seemingly doubtful event. Yet it is folly to argue against determined hardness; eloquence may strike the ear, and the language of sorrow draw forth the tear of compassion, but nothing can reach the heart that is steeled with prejudice.

QUITTING this class of men, I turn with the warm ardor of a friend to those who have nobly stood, and are yet determined to stand the matter out: I call not upon a few, but upon all; not on THIS State or THAT State, but on EVERY State; up and help us; lay your shoulders to the wheel; better have too much force than too little, when so great an object is at stake. Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet and to repulse it. Say not that thousands are gone, turn out your tens of thousands; throw not the burden of the day upon Providence, but "*shew your faith by your works,*" that God may bless you. It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home counties and the back, the rich and the poor, will suffer or rejoice alike. The heart that feels not now, is dead: The blood of his children shall curse his cowardice, who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole, and made *them* happy. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink;

but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. My own line of reasoning is to myself as straight and clear as a ray of light. Not all the treasures of the world, so far as I believe, could have induced me to support an offensive war, for I think it murder; but if a thief break into my house, burn and destroy my property, and kill or threaten to kill me, or those that are in it, and to "*bind me in all cases whatsoever*" to his absolute will, am I to suffer it? What signifies it to me, whether he who does it is a king or a common man; my countryman or not my countryman? whether it be done by an individual villain, or an army of them? If we reason to the root of things we shall find no difference; neither can any just cause be assigned why we should punish in the one case, and pardon in the other. Let them call me rebel and welcome, I feel no concern from it; but I should suffer the misery of devils, were I to make a whore of my soul by swearing allegiance to one whose character is that of a sottish, stupid, stubborn, worthless, brutish man. I conceive likewise a horrid idea in receiving mercy from a being, who at the last day shall be shrieking to the rocks and mountains to cover him, and fleeing with terror from the orphan, the widow, and the slain of America.

THERE are cases which cannot be overdone by language, and this is one. There are persons too who see not the full extent of the evil which threatens them; they solace themselves with hopes that the enemy, if they succeed, will be merciful. It is the madness of folly to expect mercy from those who have refused to do justice; and even mercy, where conquest is the object, is only a trick of war: the cunning of the fox is as murderous as the violence of the wolf; and we ought to guard equally against both. Howe's first object is, partly by threats and partly by promises, to terrify or seduce the people to deliver up their arms, and receive mercy. The

ministry recommended the same plan to Gage,* and this is what the Tories call making their peace, "*a peace which passeth all understanding*" indeed! A peace which would be the immediate forerunner of a worse ruin than any we have yet thought of. Ye men of Pennsylvania, do reason upon those things! Were the back counties to give up their arms, they would fall an easy prey to the Indians, who are all armed: This perhaps is what some Tories would not be sorry for. Were the home counties to deliver up their arms, they would be exposed to the resentment of the back counties, who would then have it in their power to chastise their defection at pleasure. And were any one State to give up its arms, THAT State must be garrisoned by all Howe's army of Britons and Hessians to preserve it from the anger of the rest. Mutual fear is a principal link in the chain of mutual love, and woe be to that State that breaks the compact. Howe is mercifully inviting you to barbarous destruction, and men must be either rogues or fools that will not see it. I dwell not upon the vapours of imagination; I bring reason to your ears, and in language, as plain as A, B, C, hold up truth to your eyes.

I thank God, that I fear not. I see no real cause for fear, I know our situation well, and can see the way out of it. While our army was collected, Howe dared not risk a battle, and it is no credit to him that he decamped from the White Plains, and waited a mean opportunity to ravage the defenceless Jerseys; but it is great credit to us, that, with an handful of men, we sustained an orderly retreat for near an hundred miles, brought off our ammunition, all our field pieces, the greatest part of our stores, and had four rivers to pass. None can say that our retreat was precipitate, for we were near three weeks in performing it, that the country

* Commander of the British troops at Boston when hostilities began.

might have time to come in. Twice we marched back to meet the enemy, and remained out till dark. The sign of fear was not seen in our camp, and had not some of the cowardly and disaffected inhabitants spread false alarms, thro' the country, the Jerseys had never been ravaged. Once more we are again collected and collecting; our new army at both ends of the Continent is recruiting fast, and we shall be able to open the next campaign with sixty thousand men, well armed and clothed. This is our situation, and who will may know it. By perseverance and fortitude we have the prospect of a glorious issue; by cowardice and submission, the sad choice of a variety of evils—a ravaged country—a depopulated city—habitations without safety, and slavery without hope—our homes turned into barracks and bawdy-houses for Hessians, and a future race to provide for, whose fathers we shall doubt of. Look on this picture and weep over it! and if there yet remains one thoughtless wretch who believes it not, let him suffer it unlamented.

COMMON SENSE.

The American Crisis, Philadelphia, December 19, 1776.

Number XIII

THE TIMES that tried men's souls" * are over—and the greatest and completest revolution the world ever knew, gloriously and happily accomplished.

But to pass from the extremes of danger to safety—from the tumult of war, to the tranquillity of peace, though sweet in contemplation, requires a gradual composure of the senses to receive it. Even calmness has the power of stunning, when it opens too instantly upon us. The long and raging hurricane

* See p. 44 of this volume.—*Ed.*

that should cease in a moment would leave us in a state rather of wonder than enjoyment; and some moments of recollection must pass, before we could be capable of tasting the felicity of repose. There are but few instances, in which the mind is fitted for sudden transitions: it takes in its pleasures by reflection and comparison and those must have time to act, before the relish for new scenes is complete.

In the present case—the mighty magnitude of the object—the various uncertainties of fate it has undergone—the numerous and complicated dangers we have suffered or escaped—the eminence we now stand on, and the vast prospect before us, must all conspire to impress us with contemplation.

To see it in our power to make a world happy—to teach mankind the art of being so—to exhibit on the theatre of the universe, a character hitherto unknown—and to have, as it were, a new creation intrusted to our hands, are honors that command reflection, and can neither be too highly estimated, nor too gratefully received.

In this pause then for recollection—while the storm is ceasing, and the long agitated mind vibrating to a rest, let us look back on the scenes we have passed, and learn from experience what is yet to be done.

Never, I say, had a country so many openings to happiness as this. Her setting out into life, like the rising of a fair morning, was unclouded and promising. Her cause was good. Her principles just and liberal. Her temper serene and firm. Her conduct regulated by the nicest steps, and everything about her wore the mark of honor. It is not every country (perhaps there is not another in the world) that can boast so fair an origin. Even the first settlement of America corresponds with the character of the revolution. Rome, once the proud mistress of the universe, was originally a band of ruffians. Plunder and rapine made her rich, and her oppression of millions made her great. But America need never be

ashamed to tell her birth, nor relate the stages by which she rose to empire.

The remembrance then of what is past, if it operates rightly, must inspire her with the most laudable of all ambition, that of adding to the fair fame she began with. The world has seen her great in adversity. Struggling without a thought of yielding beneath accumulated difficulties. Bravely, nay proudly, encountering distress, and rising in resolution as the storm increased. All this is justly due to her, for her fortitude has merited the character. Let then the world see that she can bear prosperity: and that her honest virtue in time of peace, is equal to the bravest virtue in time of war.

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

It would be a circumstance ever to be lamented and never to be forgotten, were a single blot, from any cause whatever, suffered to fall on a revolution, which to the end of time must be an honor to the age that accomplished it: and which has contributed more to enlighten the world, and diffuse a spirit of freedom and liberality among mankind, than any human event (if this may be called one) that ever preceded it.

It is not among the least of the calamities of a long continued war, that it unhinges the mind from those nice sensations which at other times appear so amiable. The continual spectacle of woe, blunts the finer feelings, and the necessity of bearing with the sight renders it familiar. In like manner, are many of the moral obligations of society weakened, till

the custom of acting by necessity becomes an apology, where it is truly a crime. Yet let but a nation conceive rightly of its character, and it will be chastely just in protecting it. None ever began with a fairer than America, and none can be under a greater obligation to preserve it.

The debt which America has contracted, compared with the cause she has gained, and the advantages to flow from it, ought scarcely to be mentioned. She has it in her choice to do, and to live, as happily, as she pleases. The world is in her hands. She has no foreign power to monopolize her commerce, perplex her legislation, or control her prosperity. The struggle is over, which must one day have happened, and, perhaps, never could have happened at a better time.*

* That the revolution began at the exact period of time best fitted to the purpose is sufficiently proved by the event. But the great hinge on which the whole machine turned is the UNION OF STATES: and this union was naturally produced by the inability of any one state to support itself against any foreign enemy without the assistance of the rest.

Had the states severally been less able than they were when the war began, their united strength would not have been equal to the undertaking, and they must in all human probability have failed. And, on the other hand, had they severally been more able, they might not have seen, or, what is more, might not have felt, the necessity of uniting: and, either by attempting to stand alone or in small confederacies would have been separately conquered.

Now, as we cannot see a time (and many years must pass away before it can arrive) when the strength of any one state, or several united, can be equal to the whole of the present United States, and as we have seen the extreme difficulty of collectively prosecuting the war to a successful issue, and preserving our national importance in the world, therefore, from the experience we have had, and the knowledge we have gained, we must, unless we make a waste of wisdom, be strongly impressed with the advantage, as well as the necessity of strengthening that happy union which has been our salvation, and without which we should have been a ruined people.

While I was writing this note, I cast my eye on the pamphlet, *Com-*

And instead of a domineering master, she has gained an *ally*, whose exemplary greatness, and universal liberality, have extorted a confession even from her enemies.

With the blessings of peace, independence, and an universal commerce, the states, individually and collectively, will have leisure and opportunity to regulate and establish their domestic concerns, and to put it beyond the power of calumny to throw the least reflection on their honor. Character is much easier kept than recovered, and that man, if any such there be, who, from sinister views, or littleness of soul, lends unseen his hand to injure it, contrives a wound it will never be in his power to heal.

As we have established an inheritance for posterity, let that inheritance descend, with every mark of an honorable conveyance. The little it will cost, compared with the worth of the states, the greatness of the object, and the value of the national character, will be a profitable exchange.

But that which must more forcibly strike a thoughtful,

mon Sense, from which I shall make an extract, as it exactly applies to the case. It is as follows:

"I have never met with a man, either in England or America, who has not confessed it as his opinion that a separation between the countries would take place one time or other; and there is no instance in which we have shewn less judgment, than in endeavoring to describe what we call the ripeness or fitness of the continent for independence.

"As all men allow the measure, and differ only in their opinion of the time, let us, in order to remove mistakes, take a general survey of things, and endeavor, if possible, to find out the VERY TIME. But we need not go far, the inquiry ceases at once, for, THE TIME HAS FOUND US. The general concurrence, the glorious union of all things prove the fact.

"It is not in numbers, but in a union, that our great strength lies. The continent is just arrived at that pitch of strength, in which no single colony is able to support itself, and the whole, when united, can accomplish the matter; and either more or less than this, might be fatal in its effects."

penetrating mind, and which includes and renders easy all inferior concerns, is the UNION OF THE STATES. On this, our great national character depends. It is this which must give us importance abroad and security at home. It is through this only that we are, or can be nationally known in the world. It is the flag of the United States which renders our ships and commerce safe on the seas, or in a foreign port. Our Mediterranean passes must be obtained under the same style. All our treaties whether of alliance, peace or commerce, are formed under the sovereignty of the United States, and Europe knows us by no other name or title.

The division of the empire into states is for our own convenience, but abroad this distinction ceases. The affairs of each state are local. They can go no further than to itself. And were the whole worth of even the richest of them expended in revenue, it would not be sufficient to support sovereignty against a foreign attack. In short, we have no other national sovereignty than as United States. It would even be fatal for us if we had—too expensive to be maintained and impossible to be supported. Individuals or individual states, may call themselves what they please; but the world, and especially the world of enemies, is not to be held in awe by the whistling of a name. Sovereignty must have power to protect all the parts that compose and constitute it: and as UNITED STATES we are equal to the importance of the title, but otherwise we are not. Our union, well and wisely regulated and cemented, is the cheapest way of being great—the easiest way of being powerful, and the happiest invention in government which the circumstances of America can admit of. Because it collects from each state, that which, by being inadequate, can be of no use to it, and forms an aggregate that serves for all.

The states of Holland are an unfortunate instance of the effects of individual sovereignty. Their disjointed condition exposes them to numerous intrigues, losses, calamities, and

enemies; and the almost impossibility of bringing their measures to a decision, and that decision into execution, is to them, and would be to us, a source of endless misfortune.

It is with confederated states as with individuals in society; something must be yielded up to make the whole secure. In this view of things we gain by what we give, and draw an annual interest greater than the capital—I ever feel myself hurt when I hear the union, that great palladium of our liberty and safety, the least irreverently spoken of. It is the most sacred thing in the constitution of America, and that which every man should be most proud and tender of. Our citizenship in the United States is our national character. Our citizenship in any particular state is only our local distinction. By the latter we are known at home, by the former to the world. Our great title is AMERICANS—our inferior one varies with the place.

So far as my endeavors could go, they have all been directed to conciliate the affections, unite the interests and draw and keep the mind of the country together; and the better to assist in this foundation-work of the revolution, I have avoided all places of profit or office, either in the state I live in, or in the United States; kept myself at a distance from all parties and party connections, and even disregarded all private and inferior concerns: and when we take into view the great work which we have gone through, and feel, as we ought to feel, the just importance of it, we shall then see, that the little wranglings and indecent contentions of personal parley, are as dishonorable to our characters, as they are injurious to our repose.

It was the cause of America that made me an author. The force with which it struck my mind, and the dangerous condition the country appeared to me in, by courting an impossible and an unnatural reconciliation with those who were determined to reduce her, instead of striking out into the only

line that could cement and save her, A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, made it impossible for me, feeling as I did, to be silent: and if, in the course of more than seven years, I have rendered her any service, I have likewise added something to the reputation of literature, by freely and disinterestedly employing it in the great cause of mankind, and shewing that there may be genius without prostitution.

Independence always appeared to me practicable and probable; provided the sentiment of the country could be formed and held to the object: and there is no instance in the world, where a people so extended, and wedded to former habits of thinking, and under such a variety of circumstances, were so instantly and effectually pervaded, by a turn in politics, as in the case of independence, and who supported their opinion, undiminished, through such a succession of good and ill fortune, till they crowned it with success.

But as the scenes of war are closed, and every man preparing for home and happier times, I therefore take my leave of the subject. I have most sincerely followed it from beginning to end, and through all its turns and windings: and whatever country I may hereafter be in, I shall always feel an honest pride at the part I have taken and acted, and a gratitude to Nature and Providence for putting it in my power to be of some use to mankind.

COMMON SENSE.

Philadelphia, April 19, 1783.

III.

RIGHTS OF MAN

IF COMMON SENSE was the manifesto of the American Revolution of 1776, the Rights of Man was the political credo of a whole epoch of bourgeois democratic revolutions. Here was presented the case for the modern democratic republic as against monarchial-feudal despotism. The book was written as a spirited defense of the French Revolution and its principles. It was occasioned by Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings of Certain Societies in London Relative to That Event (1790)—a venomous attack against not only the French but also the English revolutionary democrats. During the War of Independence, Burke had shown sympathy for the American cause, but when the French Revolution threatened to engulf England in the democratic movement, he poured forth, in the words of Paine, "everything which rancor, prejudice, ignorance, or knowledge could suggest . . . in the copious fury of near four hundred pages."

Part I of Rights of Man, dedicated to George Washington, was published in London, February, 1791, and was immediately translated into French. Part II, inscribed to Lafayette, followed in February, 1792. The work received popular acclaim on both sides of the Channel and in America. But it was considered of such great danger to the British autocracy that on the appearance of Part II, a campaign was launched against the author as the outstanding proponent of "seditious doctrines."

In Part I, Paine ridiculed Burke's theory of government which assumed "the right or power of binding and controlling posterity to the 'end of time,'" reviewed the history of British royalty and its abuses, contrasting the darkness of England to the enlightenment of the American and French revolutions.

The issues at stake in France were clarified, the development of

the revolution described and its aims explained. Included is the famous "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens" by the National Assembly of France, the authorship of which is generally attributed to Paine. In the concluding chapter, the author envisions, in "an age of revolutions, in which everything may be looked for," a confederation of nations to abolish war and "an European Congress, to patronize the progress of free government, and promote the civilization of nations."

Part II of Rights of Man is devoted to an exposition of the theory and practice of democratic representative republics, based upon the "natural" rights of man and the "religion of humanity." While much of what is written here has become outdated by subsequent developments, this part of the work reveals the principles which guided the democratic revolutionists at the turn of the eighteenth century. Moreover, it serves to emphasize those rights which lay at the heart of the democratic revolutions and which are again threatened today by international reaction.

In other sections of the work Paine advocated social measures some of which proved far in advance of his day. These included a system of progressive taxation which would relieve the burden from the poor and place it upon the rich, public education, old-age pensions, state aid to the youth, a form of unemployment relief, soldiers' bonus, abolition of primogeniture and limiting the acquisition of property, the independence of South America from Spain, and mutual disarmament.

Part I

...FROM his violence and his grief, his silence on some points, and his excess on others, it is difficult not to believe that Mr. Burke is sorry, extremely sorry, that arbitrary power, the power of the Pope, and the Bastille, are pulled down.

Not one glance of compassion, not one commiserating reflection, that I can find throughout his book, has he bestowed on those who lingered out the most wretched of lives, a life without hope, in the most miserable of prisons.

It is painful to behold a man employing his talents to corrupt himself. Nature has been kinder to Mr. Burke than he is to her. He is not affected by the reality of distress touching his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird.

Accustomed to kiss the aristocratical hand that hath purloined him from himself, he degenerates into a composition of art, and the genuine soul of nature forsakes him. His hero or his heroine must be a tragedy-victim expiring in show, and not the real prisoner of mystery, sliding into death in the silence of a dungeon.

As Mr. Burke has passed over the whole transaction of the Bastille (and his silence is nothing in its favour), and has entertained his readers with reflections on supposed facts distorted into real falsehoods, I will give, since he has not, some account of the circumstances which preceded that transaction. They will serve to shew that less mischief could scarcely have accompanied such an event, when considered with the treacherous and hostile aggravations of the enemies of the Revolution.

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

The National Assembly, before and at the time of taking the Bastille, was sitting at Versailles, twelve miles distant from Paris. About a week before the rising of the Parisians and their taking the Bastille, it was discovered that a plot was forming, at the head of which was the Count d'Artois, the King's youngest brother, for demolishing the National Assembly, seizing its members, and thereby crushing, by a *coup de main*, all hopes and prospects of forming a free government. For the sake of humanity, as well as of freedom, it is well this plan did not succeed. Examples are not wanting to shew how dreadfully vindictive and cruel are all old governments, when they are successful against what they call a revolt.

This plan must have been some time in contemplation; because, in order to carry it into execution, it was necessary to collect a large military force round Paris, and to cut off the communication between that city and the National Assembly at Versailles. The troops destined for this service were chiefly the foreign troops in the pay of France, and who, for this particular purpose, were drawn from the distant provinces where they were then stationed. When they were collected, to the amount of between twenty-five and thirty thousand, it was judged time to put the plan into execution.

The Ministry who were then in office, and who were friendly to the Revolution, were instantly dismissed, and a new Ministry formed of those who had concerted the project; among whom was Count de Broglio, and to his share was given the command of those troops. The character of this man, as described to me in a letter which I communicated to Mr. Burke before he began to write his book, and from an authority which Mr. Burke well knows was good, was that of "an high-flying aristocrat, cool, and capable of every mischief."

While these matters were agitating, the National Assembly

stood in the most perilous and critical situation that a body of men can be supposed to act in. They were the devoted victims, and they knew it. They had the hearts and wishes of their country on their side, but military authority they had none. The guards of Broglio surrounded the hall where the Assembly sat, ready, at the word of command, to seize their persons, as had been done the year before to the parliament of Paris. Had the National Assembly deserted their trust, or had they exhibited signs of weakness or fear, their enemies had been encouraged, and the country depressed. When the situation they stood in, the cause they were engaged in, and the crisis then ready to burst (which was to determine their personal and political fate, and that of their country, and probably of Europe) are taken into one view, none but a heart callous with prejudice, or corrupted by dependence, can avoid interesting itself in their success.

The archbishop of Vienne was at this time president of the National Assembly; a person too old to undergo the scene that a few days, or a few hours, might bring forth. A man of more activity, and greater fortitude, was necessary; and the National Assembly chose—under the form of a vice-president (for the presidency still resided in the archbishop), M. de la Fayette; and this is the only instance of a vice-president being chosen. It was at the moment that this storm was pending (July 11) that a declaration of rights was brought forward by M. de la Fayette. . . . * It was hastily drawn up, and makes only a part of a more extensive declaration of rights, agreed upon and adopted afterwards by the National Assembly. The particular reason for bringing it

* Paine refers to proposals for a declaration of rights submitted by Lafayette three days before the taking of the Bastille. Among other things Lafayette wrote: "For a nation to love liberty, it is sufficient that she knows it; and to be free, it is sufficient that she wills it."
—Ed.

forward at this moment (M. de la Fayette has since informed me) was, that if the National Assembly should fall in the threatened destruction that then surrounded it, some traces of its principles might have the chance of surviving the wreck.

Everything now was drawing to a crisis. The event was to be freedom or slavery. On one side, an army of nearly thirty thousand men; on the other, an unarmed body of citizens: for the citizens of Paris, on whom the National Assembly must then immediately depend, were as unarmed and as undisciplined as the citizens of London are now. The French guards had given strong symptoms of their being attached to the national cause; but their numbers were small, not a tenth part of the force that Broglio commanded, and their officers were in the interests of Broglio.

Matters being now ripe for execution, the new Ministry made their appearance in office. The reader will carry in his mind that the Bastille was taken the 14th of July: the point of time I am now speaking to, is the 12th. Immediately on the news of the change of ministry reaching Paris, in the afternoon, all the play-houses and places of entertainment, shops and houses, were shut up. The change of ministry was considered as the prelude of hostilities, and the opinion was rightly founded.

The foreign troops began to advance towards the city. The Prince de Lambesc, who commanded a body of German cavalry, approached by the Place of Louis XV, which connects itself with some of the streets. In his march, he insulted and struck an old man with his sword. The French are remarkable for their respect to old age, and the insolence with which it appeared to be done, uniting with the general fermentation they were in, produced a powerful effect, and a cry of *To arms! to arms!* spread itself in a moment over the city.

Arms they had none, nor scarcely any who knew the use of them: but desperate resolution, when every hope is at stake, supplies, for a while, the want of arms. Near where the Prince de Lambesc was drawn up, were large piles of stones collected for building the new bridge, and with these the people attacked the cavalry. A party of the French guards, upon hearing the firing, rushed from their quarters and joined the people; and night coming on, the cavalry retreated.

The streets of Paris, being narrow, are favorable for defence; and the loftiness of the houses, consisting of many stories, from which great annoyance might be given, secured them against nocturnal enterprises; and the night was spent in providing themselves with every sort of weapon they could make or procure: guns, swords, blacksmith's hammers, carpenter's axes, iron crows, pikes, halberds, pitchforks, spits, clubs, etc., etc. The incredible numbers in which they assembled the next morning, and the still more incredible resolution they exhibited, embarrassed and astonished their enemies. Little did the new ministry expect such a salute. Accustomed to slavery themselves, they had no idea that Liberty was capable of such inspiration, or that a body of unarmed citizens would dare to face the military force of thirty thousand men. Every moment of this day was employed in collecting arms, concerting plans, and arranging themselves into the best order which such an instantaneous movement could afford. Broglio continued lying round the city, but made no farther advances this day, and the succeeding night passed with as much tranquillity as such a scene could possibly admit.

But defence only was not the object of the citizens. They had a cause at stake, on which depended their freedom or their slavery. They every moment expected an attack, or to hear of one made on the National Assembly; and in such

a situation, the most prompt measures are sometimes the best.

The object that now presented itself was the Bastille; and the *éclat* of carrying such a fortress in the face of such an army could not fail to strike a terror into the new ministry, who had scarcely yet had time to meet. By some intercepted correspondence this morning, it was discovered, that the Mayor of Paris, M. de Flesselles, who appeared to be in the interest of the citizens, was betraying them; and from this discovery, there remained no doubt that Broglio would reinforce the Bastille the ensuing evening. It was therefore necessary to attack it that day; but before this could be done, it was first necessary to procure a better supply of arms than they were then possessed of.

There was, adjoining to the city a large magazine of arms deposited at the Hospital of the Invalids, which the citizens summoned to surrender; and as the place was not defensible, nor attempted much defence, they soon succeeded. Thus supplied, they marched to attack the Bastille; a vast mixed multitude of all ages, and of all degrees, and armed with all sorts of weapons. Imagination would fail in describing to itself the appearance of such a procession, and of the anxiety for the events which a few hours or a few minutes might produce. What plans the ministry was forming, were as unknown to the people within the city, as what the citizens were doing was unknown to the ministry; and what movements Broglio might make for the support or relief of the place, were to the citizens equally as unknown. All was mystery and hazard.

That the Bastille was attacked with an enthusiasm of heroism, such only as the highest animation of liberty could inspire, and carried in the space of a few hours, is an event which the world is fully possessed of. I am not undertaking a detail of the attack; but bringing into view the conspiracy

against the nation which provoked it, and which fell with the Bastille. The prison to which the new ministry were dooming the National Assembly, in addition to its being the high altar and castle of despotism, became the proper object to begin with. This enterprise broke up the new ministry, who began now to fly from the ruin they had prepared for others. The troops of Broglio dispersed, and himself fled also.

Mr. Burke has spoken a great deal about plots, but he has never once spoken of this plot against the National Assembly, and the liberties of the nation; and that he might not, he has passed over all the circumstances that might throw it in his way. The exiles who have fled from France, whose case he so much interests himself in, from whom he has had his lesson, fled in consequence of a miscarriage of this plot. No plot was formed against them: they were plotting against others; and those who fell, met, not unjustly, the punishment they were preparing to execute. But will Mr. Burke say, that if this plot, contrived with the subtlety of an ambuscade, had succeeded, the successful party would have restrained their wrath so soon? Let the history of all old governments answer the question.

Whom has the National Assembly brought to the scaffold? None. They were themselves the devoted victims of this plot, and they have not retaliated; why then are they charged with revenge they have not acted? In the tremendous breaking forth of a whole people, in which all degrees, tempers and characters are confounded, and delivering themselves, by a miracle of exertion, from the destruction meditated against them, is it to be expected that nothing will happen? When men are sore with the sense of oppressions, and menaced with the prospect of new ones, is the calmness of philosophy, or the palsy of insensibility, to be looked for? Mr. Burke exclaims against outrage; yet the greatest is that which himself has committed. His book is a volume of outrage,

not apologized for by the impulse of a moment, but cherished through a space of ten months; yet Mr. Burke had no provocation—no life, no interest at stake.

More of the citizens fell in this struggle than of their opponents: but four or five persons were seized by the populace, and instantly put to death: the Governor of the Bastille, and the Mayor of Paris, who was detected in the act of betraying them; and afterwards Foulon, one of the new ministry, and Berthier, his son-in-law, who had accepted the office of Intendant of Paris. Their heads were stuck upon spikes, and carried about the city; and it is upon this mode of punishment that Mr. Burke builds a great part of his tragic scene. Let us therefore examine how men came by the idea of punishing in this manner.

They learn it from the governments they live under, and retaliate the punishments they have been accustomed to behold. The head stuck upon spikes, which remained for years upon Temple Bar, differed nothing in the horror of the scene from those carried about upon spikes at Paris; yet this was done by the English government. It may perhaps be said that it signifies nothing to a man what is done to him after he is dead; but it signifies much to the living: it either tortures their feelings, or hardens their hearts; and in either case, it instructs them how to punish when power falls into their hands.

Lay then the axe to the root, and teach governments humanity. It is their sanguinary punishments which corrupt mankind. In England, the punishment in certain cases is by *hanging*, *drawing* and *quartering*; the heart of the sufferer is cut out, and held up to the view of the populace. In France, under the former government, the punishments were not less barbarous. Who does not remember the execution of Damien, torn to pieces by horses? The effect of those cruel spectacles exhibited to the populace, is to destroy tenderness,

or excite revenge; and by the base and false idea of governing men by terror, instead of reason, they become precedents. It is over the lowest class of mankind that government by terror is intended to operate, and it is on them that it operates to the worst effect. They have sense enough to feel they are the objects aimed at; and they inflict in their turn the examples of terror they have been instructed to practice.

There is in all European countries, a large class of people of that description which in England is called the "*mob*." Of this class were those who committed the burnings and devastations in London in 1780,* and of this class were those who carried the heads upon spikes in Paris. Foulon and Berthier were taken up in the country, and sent to Paris, to undergo their examination at the Hotel de Ville; for the National Assembly, immediately on the new ministry coming into office, passed a decree, which they communicated to the King and the Cabinet, that they (the National Assembly) would hold the ministry, of which Foulon was one, responsible for the measures they were advising and pursuing; but the mob, incensed at the appearance of Foulon and Berthier, tore them from their conductors before they were carried to the Hotel de Ville, and executed them on the spot. Why then does Mr. Burke charge outrages of this kind on a whole people? As well may he charge the riots and outrages of 1780 on all the people of London, or those in Ireland on all his countrymen.

But everything we see or hear offensive to our feelings and derogatory to the human character, should lead to other reflections than those of reproach. Even the beings who com-

* The "Gordon riots," which reached their peak on June 7, 1780, arose from the opposition of the people to the suppressive policies of the North ministry. The homes of the prominent reactionaries were destroyed and prisons set afire. The demonstrations were suppressed by troops.—*Ed.*

mit them have some claim to our consideration. How then is it that such vast classes of mankind as are distinguished by the appellation of the vulgar, or the ignorant mob, are so numerous in all old countries? The instant we ask ourselves this question, reflection finds an answer. They arise, as an unavoidable consequence, out of the ill construction of all old governments in Europe, England included with the rest. It is by distortedly exalting some men, that others are distortedly debased, till the whole is out of nature. A vast mass of mankind are degradedly thrown into the background of the human picture, to bring forward with greater glare, the puppet-show of state and aristocracy. In the commencement of a Revolution, those men are rather the followers of the *camp* than of the *standard* of liberty, and have yet to be instructed how to reverence it.

I give to Mr. Burke all his theatrical exaggerations for facts, and I then ask him, if they do not establish the certainty of what I here lay down? Admitting them to be true, they shew the necessity of the French Revolution, as much as any one thing he could have asserted. These outrages were not the effect of the principles of the Revolution, but of the degraded mind that existed before the Revolution, and which the Revolution is calculated to reform. Place them then to their proper cause, and take the reproach of them to your own side.

It is to the honor of the National Assembly, and the city of Paris, that during such a tremendous scene of arms and confusion, beyond the control of all authority, they have been able, by the influence of example and exhortation, to restrain so much. Never were more pains taken to instruct and enlighten mankind, and to make them see that their interest consisted in their virtue, and not in their revenge, than have been displayed in the Revolution of France. . . .

Conclusion

...FROM the revolutions of America and France, and the symptoms that have appeared in other countries, it is evident that the opinion of the world is changed with respect to systems of Government, and that revolutions are not within the compass of political calculations. The progress of time and circumstances, which men assign to the accomplishment of great changes, is too mechanical to measure the force of the mind, and the rapidity of reflection, by which revolutions are generated: All the old governments have received a shock from those that already appear, and which were once more improbable, and are a greater subject of wonder, than a general revolution in Europe would be now.

When we survey the wretched condition of man under the monarchical and hereditary systems of Government, dragged from his home by one power, driven by another, and impoverished by taxes more than by enemies, it becomes evident that those systems are bad, and that a general revolution in the principle and construction of Governments is necessary.

What is government more than the management of the affairs of a Nation? It is not, and from its nature cannot be, the property of any particular man or family, but of the whole community, at whose expense it is supported; and though by force or contrivance it has been usurped into an inheritance, the usurpation cannot alter the right of things. Sovereignty as a matter of right appertains to the Nation only, and not to any individual; and a Nation has at all times an inherent indefeasible right to abolish any form of Government it finds inconvenient, and establish such as accords with its interest, disposition, and happiness. The romantic and barbarous distinction of men into Kings and subjects, though

it may suit the condition of courtiers, cannot that of citizens; and is exploded by the principle upon which Governments are now founded. Every citizen is a member of the Sovereignty, and, as such, can acknowledge no personal subjection; and his obedience can be only to the laws.

When men think of what Government is, they must necessarily suppose it to possess a knowledge of all the objects and matters upon which its authority is to be exercised. In this view of Government, the republican system, as established by America and France, operates to embrace the whole of a Nation; and the knowledge necessary to the interest of all its parts, is to be found in the center, which the parts by representation form: But the old Governments are on a construction that excludes knowledge as well as happiness; Government by Monks, who know nothing of the world beyond the walls of a Convent, is as consistent as Government by Kings.

What were formerly called Revolutions were little more than a change of persons, or an alteration of local circumstances. They rose and fell like things of course, and had nothing in their existence or their fate that could influence beyond the spot that produced them. But what we now see in the world, from the Revolutions of America and France, is a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles as universal as truth and the existence of man, and combining moral with political happiness and national prosperity.

I. Men are born and always continue free and equal in respect of their rights. Civil distinctions, therefore, can be founded only on public utility.

II. The end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man; and these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance of oppression.

III. *The Nation is essentially the source of all Sovereignty; nor can any INDIVIDUAL, or, ANY BODY OF MEN, be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it.**

In these principles, there is nothing to throw a Nation into confusion by inflaming ambition. They are calculated to call forth wisdom and abilities, and to exercise them for the public good, and not for the emolument or aggrandizement of particular descriptions of men or families. Monarchical sovereignty, the enemy of mankind, and the source of misery, is abolished; and sovereignty itself is restored to its natural and original place, the Nation. Were this the case throughout Europe, the cause of wars would be taken away.

It is attributed to Henry IV of France, a man of an enlarged and benevolent heart, that he proposed, about the year 1610, a plan for abolishing war in Europe. The plan consisted in constituting an European Congress, or as the French Authors style it, a pacific Republic; by appointing delegates from the several Nations, who were to act as a Court of Arbitration in any disputes that might arise between nation and nations.

Had such a plan been adopted at the time it was proposed, the taxes of England and France, as two of the parties, would have been at least ten millions sterling annually to each Nation less than they were at the commencement of the French Revolution.

To conceive a cause why such a plan has not been adopted, (and that instead of a Congress for the purpose of preventing war, it has been called only to *terminate* a war, after a fruitless expense of several years), it will be necessary to consider

* The first three articles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens, adopted by the National Assembly of France on August 26, 1789.—*Ed.*

the interest of Governments as a distinct interest to that of Nations.

Whatever is the cause of taxes to a Nation, becomes also the means of revenue to a Government. Every war terminates with an addition of taxes, and consequently with an addition of revenue; and in any event of war, in the manner they are now commenced and concluded, the power and interest of Governments are increased. War, therefore, from its productiveness, as it easily furnishes the pretence of necessity for taxes and appointments to places and offices, becomes a principal part of the system of old Governments; and to establish any mode to abolish war, however advantageous it might be to Nations, would be to take from such Government the most lucrative of its branches. The frivolous matters upon which war is made, shew the disposition and avidity of Governments to uphold the system of war, and betray the motives upon which they act.

Why are not Republics plunged into war, but because the nature of their Government does not admit of an interest distinct from that of the Nation? Even Holland, though an ill-constructed Republic, and with a commerce extending over the world, existed nearly a century without war: and the instant the form of Government was changed in France, the republican principles of peace and domestic prosperity and economy arose with the new Government; and the same consequences would follow the same causes in other Nations.

As war is the system of Government on the old construction, the animosity which Nations reciprocally entertain, is nothing more than what the policy of their Governments excites, to keep up the spirit of the system. Each government accuses the other of perfidy, intrigue, and ambition, as a means of heating the imagination of their respective Nations, and increasing them to hostilities. Man is not the enemy of man, but through the medium of a false system of Government. 6

Instead, therefore, of exclaiming against the ambition of Kings, the exclamation should be directed against the principle of such Governments; and instead of seeking to reform the individual, the wisdom of a Nation should apply itself to reform the system.

Whether the forms and maxims of Governments which are still in practice, were adapted to the condition of the world at the period they were established, is not in this case the question. The older they are, the less correspondence can they have with the present state of things. Time, and change of circumstances and opinions, have the same progressive effect in rendering modes of Government obsolete, as they have upon customs and manners. Agriculture, commerce, manufactures, and the tranquil arts, by which the prosperity of Nations is best promoted, require a different system of Government, and a different species of knowledge to direct its operations, than what might have been required in the former condition of the world.

As it is not difficult to perceive, from the enlightened state of mankind, that hereditary Governments are verging to their decline, and that Revolutions on the broad basis of national sovereignty, and Government by representation, are making their way in Europe, it would be an act of wisdom to anticipate their approach, and produce Revolutions by reason and accommodation, rather than commit them to the issue of convulsions.

From what we now see, nothing of reform on the political world ought to be held improbable. It is an age of Revolutions, in which every thing may be looked for. The intrigue of Courts, by which the system of war is kept up, may provoke a confederation of Nations to abolish it: and an European Congress, to patronize the progress of free Government, and promote the civilization of Nations with each other, is an

event nearer in probability, than once were the Revolutions and alliance of France and America.

Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, Jordan edition, London, 1791, pp. 26-38, 165-171.

Introduction to Part II

WHAT Archimedes said of the mechanical powers may be applied to Reason and Liberty: "*Had we,*" said he, "*a place to stand upon, we might raise the world.*"

The revolution of America presented in politics what was only theory in mechanics. So deeply rooted were all the governments of the old world, and so effectually had the tyranny and the antiquity of habit established itself over the mind, that no beginning could be made in Asia, Africa, or Europe, to reform the political condition of man. Freedom had been hunted round the globe; reason was considered as rebellion; and the slavery of fear had made men afraid to think.

But such is the irresistible nature of truth, that all it asks, and all it wants, is the liberty of appearing. The sun needs no inscription to distinguish him from darkness; and no sooner did the American governments display themselves to the world than despotism felt a shock, and man began to contemplate redress.

The independence of America, considered merely as a separation from England, would have been a matter but of little importance, had it not been accompanied by a revolution in the principles and practice of governments. She made a stand, not for herself only, but for the world, and looked beyond the advantages herself could receive. Even the Hes-

sian, though hired to fight against her, may live to bless his defeat; and England, condemning the viciousness of its government, rejoice in its miscarriage.

As America was the only spot in the political world, where the principles of universal reformation could begin, so also was it the best in the natural world. An assemblage of circumstances conspired, not only to give birth, but to add gigantic maturity to its principles.

The scene which that country presents to the eye of a spectator, has something in it which generates and encourages great ideas. Nature appears to him in magnitude. The mighty objects he beholds, act upon his mind by enlarging it, and he partakes of the greatness he contemplates. Its first settlers were emigrants from different European nations, and of diversified professions of religion, retiring from the governmental persecutions of the old world, and meeting in the new, not as enemies, but as brothers. [The wants which necessarily accompany the cultivation of a wilderness produced among them a state of society, which countries, long harassed by the quarrels and intrigues of governments, had neglected to cherish. In such a situation man becomes what he ought. He sees his species, not with the inhuman idea of a natural enemy, but as kindred; and the example shows to the artificial world, that man must go back to Nature for information.]

From the rapid progress which America makes in every species of improvement, it is rational to conclude, that if the governments of Asia, Africa, and Europe had begun on a principle similar to that of America, or had not been very early corrupted therefrom, that those countries must, by this time, have been in a far superior condition to what they are. Age after age has passed away, for no other purpose than to behold their wretchedness.—Could we suppose a spectator who knew nothing of the world, and who was put

into it merely to make his observations, he would take a great part of the old world to be new, just struggling with the difficulties and hardships of an infant settlement. He could not suppose that the hordes of miserable poor, with which old countries abound, could be any other than those who had not yet had time to provide for themselves. Little would he think they were the consequence of what in such countries is called government.

If, from the more wretched parts of the old world, we look at those which are in an advanced stage of improvement, we still find the greedy hand of government thrusting itself into every corner and crevice of industry, and grasping the spoil of the multitude. Invention is continually exercised, to furnish new pretenses for revenue and taxation. It watches prosperity as its prey, and permits none to escape without tribute.

As revolutions have begun, (and the probability is always greater against a thing beginning, than of proceeding after it has begun), it is natural to expect that other revolutions will follow. The amazing and still increasing expenses with which old governments are conducted, the numerous wars they engage in or provoke, the embarrassment they throw in the way of universal civilization and commerce, and the oppression and usurpation they practice at home, have wearied out the patience, and exhausted the property of the world. In such a situation, and with the examples already existing, revolutions are to be looked for. They are become subjects of universal conversation, and may be considered as the *Order of the day*.

If systems of government can be introduced, less expensive, and more productive of general happiness, than those which have existed, all attempts to oppose their progress will in the end be fruitless. Reason, like time, will make its own way, and prejudice will fall in a combat with interest. If

universal peace, civilization, and commerce, are ever to be the happy lot of man, it cannot be accomplished but by a revolution in the system of governments. All the monarchical governments are military. War is their trade, plunder and revenue their objects. While such governments continue, peace has not the absolute security of a day. What is the history of all monarchical governments, but a disgusting picture of human wretchedness, and the accidental respite of a few years' repose? [Wearied with war, and tired with human butchery, they sat down to rest, and called it peace.]...

The revolutions which formerly took place in the world, had nothing in them that interested the bulk of mankind. They extended only to a change of persons and measures, but not of principles, and rose or fell among the common transactions of the moment. What we now behold, may not improperly be called a "*counter-revolution*."

Conquest and tyranny, at some early period, dispossessed man of his rights, and he is now recovering them. And as the tide of all human affairs has its ebb and flow in directions contrary to each other, so also is it in this. Government founded on a moral theory, on a system of universal peace, on the indefeasible, hereditary Right of Man, is now revolving from west to east, by a stronger impulse than the government of the sword revolved from east to west. It interests not particular individuals, but nations, in its progress, and promises a new era to the human race.

The danger to which the success of revolutions is most exposed, is that of attempting them before the principles on which they proceed, and the advantages to result from them are sufficiently seen and understood. Almost everything appertaining to the circumstances of a nation, has been absorbed and confounded under the general and mysterious word *government*. Though it avoids taking to its account the errors it commits, and the mischiefs it occasions, it fails not to arro-

gate to itself whatever has the appearance of prosperity. It robs industry of its honours, by pedantically making itself the cause of its effects; and purloins from the general character of man, the merits that appertain to him as a social being.

It may therefore be of use, in this day of revolutions, to discriminate between those things which are the effect of government, and those which are not. This will best be done by taking a review of society and civilization, and the consequences resulting therefrom, as things distinct from what are called governments. By beginning with this investigation, we shall be able to assign effects to their proper cause, and analyze the mass of common errors.

Chapter IV

ON CONSTITUTIONS

THAT MEN mean distinct and separate things when they speak of constitutions and of governments, is evident; or, why are those terms distinctly and separately used? A constitution is not the act of a government, but of a people constituting a government; and government without a constitution, is power without a right.

All power exercised over a nation must have some beginning. It must be either delegated, or assumed. There are no other sources. All delegated power is trust, and all assumed power is usurpation. Time does not alter the nature and quality of either.

In viewing this subject, the case and circumstances of America present themselves as in the beginning of a world; and our inquiry into the origin of government is shortened, by referring to the facts that have arisen in our own day. We have no occasion to roam for information into the obscure

field of antiquity, nor hazard ourselves upon conjecture. We are brought at once to the point of seeing government begin, as if we had lived in the beginning of time. The real volume, not of history, but of facts, is directly before us, unmutilated by contrivance, or the errors of tradition.

I will here concisely state the commencement of the American constitutions; by which the difference between constitutions and government will sufficiently appear.

It may not be improper to remind the reader, that the United States of America consist of thirteen separate states, each of which established a government for itself, after the declaration of independence, done the fourth of July, 1776. Each state acted independently of the rest, in forming its government; but the same general principle pervades the whole. When the several state governments were formed, they proceeded to form the federal government, that acts over the whole in all matters which concern the interest of the whole, or which relate to the intercourse of the several states with each other, or with foreign nations. I will begin with giving an instance from one of the state governments, (that of Pennsylvania), and then proceed to the federal government.

The state of Pennsylvania, though nearly of the same extent of territory as England, was then divided into only twelve counties. Each of those counties had elected a committee at the commencement of the dispute with the English government; and as the city of Philadelphia, which also had its committee, was the most central for intelligence, it became the center of communication to the several county committees. When it became necessary to proceed to the formation of a government, the committee of Philadelphia proposed a conference of all the county committees, to be held in that city, and which met the latter part of July, 1776.

Though these committees had been elected by the people, they were not elected expressly for the purpose, nor invested

with the authority of forming a constitution; and as they could not, consistently with the American idea of rights, assume such a power, they could only confer upon the matter, and put it into a train of operation. The conferees, therefore, did no more than state the case, and recommended to the several counties to elect six representatives for each county, to meet in convention at Philadelphia, with powers to form a constitution, and propose it for public consideration.

This convention, of which Benjamin Franklin was president, having met and deliberated, and agreed upon a constitution, they next ordered it to be published, not as a thing established, but for the consideration of the whole people, their approbation or rejection, and then adjourned to a stated time.

When the time of adjournment was expired, the convention re-assembled; and as the general opinion of the people in approbation of it was then known, the constitution was signed, sealed, and proclaimed on the *authority of the people* and the original instrument deposited as a public record. The convention then appointed a day for the general election of the representatives who were to compose the government, and the time it should commence; and having done this, they dissolved, and returned to their several homes and occupations.

In this constitution were laid down, first, a declaration of rights. Then followed the form which the government should have, and the powers it should possess—the authority of the courts of judicature, and of juries—the manner in which elections should be conducted, and the proportion of representatives to the number of electors—the time which each succeeding assembly should continue, which was one year—the mode of levying, and of accounting for the expenditure, of public money—of appointing public officers, etc., etc., etc.

No article of this constitution could be altered or infringed at the discretion of the government that was to ensue. It was to that government a law. But as it would have been unwise

to preclude the benefit of experience, and in order also to prevent the accumulation of errors, if any should be found, and to preserve a unison of government with the circumstances of the state at all times, the constitution provided, that, at the expiration of every seven years, a convention should be elected, for the express purpose of revising the constitution, and making alterations, additions, or abolitions therein, if any such should be found necessary.

Here we see a regular process—a government issuing out of a constitution, formed by the people in their original character; and that constitution serving, not only as an authority, but as a law of control to the government. It was the political bible of the state. Scarcely a family was without it. Every member of the government had a copy; and nothing was more common, when any debate arose on the principle of a bill, or on the extent of any species of authority, than for the members to take the printed constitution out of their pocket, and read the chapter with which such matter in debate was connected.

Having thus given an instance from one of the states, I will show the proceedings by which the federal constitution of the United States arose and was formed.

Congress, at its two first meetings, in September 1774, and May 1775, was nothing more than a deputation from the legislatures of the several provinces, afterwards states; and had no other authority than what arose from common consent, and the necessity of its acting as a public body. In every thing which related to the internal affairs of America, congress went no farther than to issue recommendations to the several provincial assemblies, who at discretion adopted them or not.

Nothing on the part of congress was compulsive; yet, in this situation, it was more faithfully and affectionately obeyed, than was any government in Europe. This instance, like that of the national assembly of France, sufficiently shows, that

the strength of government does not consist in any thing *within* itself, but in the attachment of a nation, and the interest which the people feel in supporting it. When this is lost, government is but a child in power; and though, like the old government of France, it may harass individuals for a while, it but facilitates its own fall.

After the declaration of independence, it became consistent with the principle on which representative government is founded, that the authority of congress should be defined and established. Whether that authority should be more or less than congress then discretionally exercised, was not the question. It was merely the rectitude of the measure.

For this purpose, the act, called the act of confederation (which was a sort of imperfect federal constitution), was proposed, and after long deliberation, was concluded in the year 1781. It was not the act of congress, because it is repugnant to the principles of representative government that a body should give power to itself. Congress first informed the several states, of the powers which it conceived were necessary to be invested in the union, to enable it to perform the duties and services required from it; and the states severally agreed with each other, and concentrated in congress those powers.

It may not be improper to observe, that in both those instances (the one of Pennsylvania, and the other of the United States), there is no such thing as the idea of a compact between the people on one side, and the government on the other. The compact was that of the people with each other, to produce and constitute a government. To suppose that any government can be a party in a compact with the whole people, is to suppose it to have existence before it can have a right to exist. The only instance in which a compact can take place between the people and those who exercise the

government is that the people shall pay them, while they choose to employ them.

Government is not a trade which any man or body of men has a right to set up and exercise for his own emolument, but is altogether a trust, in right of those by whom that trust is delegated, and by whom it is always resumable. It has of itself no rights; they are altogether duties.

Having thus given two instances of the original formation of a constitution, I will shew the manner in which both have been changed since their first establishment.

The powers vested in the governments of the several states, by the state constitutions, were found, upon experience, to be too great; and those vested in the federal government, by the act of confederation, too little. The defect was not in the principle, but in the distribution of power.

Numerous publications, in pamphlets and in the newspapers, appeared, on the propriety and necessity of new modelling the federal government. After some time of public discussion, carried on through the channel of the press, and in conversations, the state of Virginia, experiencing some inconvenience with respect to commerce, proposed holding a continental conference; in consequence of which, a deputation from five or six of the state assemblies met at Annapolis in Maryland, in 1786.

This meeting, not conceiving itself sufficiently authorized to go into the business of a reform, did no more than state their general opinions of the propriety of the measure, and recommended that a convention of all the states should be held the year following.

This convention met at Philadelphia in May 1787, of which General Washington was elected president. He was not at that time connected with any of the state governments, or with congress. He delivered up his commission when the war ended, and since then had lived a private citizen. The

convention went deeply into all the subjects; and having, after a variety of debate and investigation, agreed among themselves upon the several parts of a federal constitution, the next question was, the manner of giving it authority and practise.

For this purpose, they did not, like a cabal of courtiers, send for a Dutch Stadtholder, or a German Elector; * but they referred the whole matter to the sense and interest of the country.

They first directed, that the proposed constitution should be published. Secondly, that each state should elect a convention, expressly for the purpose of taking it into consideration, and of ratifying or rejecting it; and that as soon as the approbation and ratification of any nine states should be given, that those states should proceed to the election of their proportion of members to the new federal government; and that the operation of it should then begin, and the former federal government cease.

The several states proceeded accordingly to elect their conventions. Some of those conventions ratified the constitution by very large majorities, and two or three unanimously. In others there were much debate and division of opinion. In the Massachusetts convention, which met at Boston, the majority was not above nineteen or twenty, in about three hundred members, but such is the nature of representative government, that it quietly decided all matters by majority. After the debate in the Massachusetts convention was closed, and the vote taken, the objecting members rose, and declared, "*That though they had argued and voted against it, because certain parts appeared to them in a different light to what they appeared to other members: yet, as the vote had decided in favor of the constitution as*

* The reference is to the kings of England—William III, who came from Holland; and George I, who was from Hanover.—*Ed.*

proposed, they should give it the same practical support as if they had voted for it."

As soon as nine states had concurred (and the rest followed in order their conventions were elected), the old fabric of the federal government was taken down, and the new one erected, of which General Washington is president. In this place I cannot help remarking, that the character and services of this gentleman are sufficient to put all those men called kings to shame.

While they are receiving from the sweat and labors of mankind, a prodigality of pay, to which neither their liabilities nor their services can entitle them, he is rendering every service in his power, and refusing every pecuniary reward. He accepted no pay as commander-in-chief, he accepts none as president of the United States.

After the new federal constitution was established, the state of Pennsylvania conceiving that some parts of its own constitution required to be altered, elected a convention for that purpose. The proposed alterations were published, and the people concurring therein, they were established.

In forming those constitutions, or in altering them, little or no inconvenience took place. The ordinary course of things was not interrupted, and the advantages have been much. It is always the interest of a far greater number of people in a nation to have things right, than to let them remain wrong; and when public matters are open to debate, and the public judgment free, it will not decide wrong, unless it decides too hastily.

In the two instances of changing the constitutions, the governments then in being were not actors either way. Government has no right to make itself a party in any debates respecting the principles or modes of forming, or of changing, constitutions.

It is not for the benefit of those who exercise the powers of government, that constitutions, and the governments issuing from them, are established. In all those matters, the right of judging and acting are in those who pay, and not in those who receive.

A constitution is the property of a nation, and not of those who exercise the government. All the constitutions of America are declared to be established on the authority of the people. In France, the word nation is used instead of the people; but in both cases, a constitution is a thing antecedent to the government, and always distinct therefrom. . . .

It is perhaps impossible to establish any thing that combines principles with opinions and practise, which the progress of circumstances, through a length of years, will not in some measure derange, or render inconsistent; and therefore, to prevent inconveniences accumulating, till they discourage reformation or provoke revolutions, it is best to provide the means of regulating them as they occur. The Rights of Man are the rights of all generations of men, and cannot be monopolized by any. That which is worth following, will be followed for the sake of its worth; and it is in this that its security lies, and not in any conditions with which it may be encumbered. When a man leaves property to his heirs, he does not connect it with an obligation that they shall accept it. Why then should we do otherwise with respect to constitutions?

The best constitution that could now be devised, consistent with the condition of the present moment, may be far short of that excellence which a few years may afford. There is a morning of reason rising upon man on the subject of government, that has not appeared before. As the barbarism of the present old governments expires, the moral condition of the nations with respect to each other will be changed. Man will not be brought up with the savage idea of considering his

species as his enemy, because the accident of birth gave the individuals existence in countries distinguished by different names; and as constitutions have always some relation to external as well as to domestic circumstances, the means of benefitting by every change, foreign or domestic, should be a part of every constitution.

We already see an alteration in the national disposition of England and France towards each other, which, when we look back only a few years, is itself a revolution. Who could have foreseen, or who would have believed, that a French National Assembly would ever have been a popular toast in England, or that a friendly alliance of the two nations should become the wish of either.*

It shews, that man, were he not corrupted by governments, is naturally the friend of man, and that human nature is not of itself vicious. That spirit of jealousy and ferocity, which the governments of the two countries inspired, and which they rendered subservient to the purpose of taxation, is now yielding to the dictates of reason, interest, and humanity.

The trade of courts is beginning to be understood, and the affectation of mystery, with all the artificial sorcery by which they imposed upon mankind, is on the decline. It has received its death wound; and though it may linger, it will expire.

Government ought to be as much open to improvement as anything which appertains to man, instead of which it has been monopolized from age to age, by the most ignorant and vicious of the human race. Need we any other proof of their wretched management, than the excess of debt and taxes with which every nation groans, and the quarrels into which they have precipitated the world?

* Paine here refers not to the attitude of the British Government which was inimical to the French Revolution, but to the popular acclaim with which the English people received the new republic.—*Ed.*

Just emerging from such a barbarous condition, it is too soon to determine to what extent of improvement government may yet be carried. For what we can foresee, all Europe may form but one great republic, and man be free of the whole.

IV.

THE AGE OF REASON

THE AGE OF REASON (1794-1795), *the last book of Thomas Paine, was seized upon by the enemies of democracy to arouse religious prejudices against the leading revolutionary democrats of the age. The work is an application of "common sense" to the Bible, in the light of the Newtonian principles of science. It is devoted principally to a detailed analysis of the revelations, prophecies and stories contained in that book.*

Paine was not an atheist, as can be seen from the "Profession of Faith" with which he opens his book and which is reprinted here. Together with many other leaders of the bourgeois enlightenment, Paine was a Deist, who believed in "a God of moral truth, and not a God of mystery or obscurity." Writing before the discoveries of the evolutionists, although well grounded in the science of his day, he conceived of God as the "first cause, the cause of all things," the laws and essence of which could be discovered by man only through science. Organized religion, he wrote, was "set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit." He believed that "Every preacher ought to be a philosopher . . . and every house of devotion a school of science."

Author's Profession of Faith

IT HAS been my intention, for several years past, to publish my thoughts upon religion. I am well aware of the difficulties that attend the subject; and from that consideration, had reserved it to a more advanced period of life. I intended it to be the last offering I should make to my

fellow-citizens of all nations, and that at a time when the purity of the motive that induced me to it, could not admit of a question, even by those who might disapprove the work. The circumstance that has now taken place in France of the total abolition of the whole national order of priesthood, and of everything appertaining to compulsive systems of religion, and compulsive articles of faith, has not only precipitated my intention, but rendered a work of this kind exceedingly necessary; lest, in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government, and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true.

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

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

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

But lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work, declare the things I do not believe, and my reasons for not believing them.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish Church, by the Roman Church, by the Greek Church, by the Turkish Church, by the Protestant Church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church.

All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.

I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who

believe otherwise. They have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man, that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving: it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind, as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and in order to *qualify* himself for that trade, he begins with a perjury. Can we conceive any thing more destructive to morality than this?

Soon after I had published the pamphlet COMMON SENSE in America, I saw the exceeding probability that a revolution in the System of Government would be followed by a revolution in the System of Religion. The adulterous connection of church and state, wherever it has taken place, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, has so effectually prohibited, by pains and penalties, every discussion upon established creeds, and upon first principles of religion, that until the system of government should be changed, those subjects could not be brought fairly and openly before the world: but that whenever this should be done, a revolution in the system of religion would follow. Human inventions and priest-craft would be detected: and man would return to the pure, unmixed, and unadulterated belief of one God, and no more.

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