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THOMAS PAINE'S

SECOND APPEARANCE IN THE UNITED STATES.

"Nay, so far did he carry his obstinacy, that he absolutely invited a professed Anti-Diluvian from the Gallic Empire, who illuminated the whole country with his principles and his nose."—SALMAGUNDI.

WE lukewarm moderns can hardly conceive the degree of violence and bitterness reached by party-feeling in the early years of the United States Constitution. A Mississippi member of Congress listening to a Freesoil speech is mild in demeanor and expression, if we compare his ill-nature with the spiteful fury of his predecessors in legislation sixty years ago. The same temper was visible throughout the land. Nobody stood aloof. Two hostile camps were pitched over against each other, and every man in Israel was to be found in his tent. Our great experiment was a new one; on its success depended the personal welfare of every citizen, and naturally every citizen was anxious to train up that experiment in the way which promised to his reason or to his feelings the best result.

The original Federalists of 1787 were in favor of effacing as much as possible the boundary-lines of the Thirteen Colonies, and of consolidating them into a new, united, and powerful people, under a strong central government. The first

Anti-Federalists were made up of several sects: one branch, sincere republicans, were fearful that the independence of the States was in danger, and that consolidation would prepare the way for monarchy; another, small, but influential, still entertained the wish for reunion with England, or, at least, for the adoption of the English form of government,—and, hoping that the dissensions of the old Confederation might lead to some such result, drank the health of the Bishop of Osnaburg in good Madeira, and objected to any system which might place matters upon a permanent republican basis; and a third party, more numerous and noisy than either, who knew by long experience that the secret of home popularity was to inspire jealousy of the power of Congress, were unwilling to risk the loss of personal consequence in this new scheme of centralization, and took good care not to allow the old local prejudices and antipathies to slumber. The two latter classes of patriots are well described by Franklin in his "Comparison of the Ancient Jews

with the Modern Anti-Federalists,"—a humorous allegory, which may have suggested to the Senator from Ohio his excellent conceit of the Israelite with Egyptian principles. "Many," wrote Franklin, "still retained an affection for Egypt, the land of their nativity, and whenever they felt any inconvenience or hardship, though the natural and unavoidable effect of their change of situation, exclaimed against their leaders as the authors of their trouble, and were not only for returning into Egypt, but for stoning their deliverers. . . . Many of the chiefs thought the new Constitution might be injurious to their particular interests,—that the profitable places would be engrossed by the families and friends of Moses and Aaron, and others, equally well born, excluded."

Time has decided this first point in favor of the Unionists. None of the evils prophesied by their opponents have as yet appeared. The independence of the individual States remains inviolate, and, although the central executive has grown yearly more powerful, a monarchy seems as remote as ever. Local distinctions are now little prized in comparison with federal rank. It is not every man who can recollect the name of the governor of his own State; very few can tell that of the chief of the neighboring Commonwealth. The old boundaries have grown more and more indistinct; and when we look at the present map of the Union, we see only that broad black line known as Mason and Dixon's, on one side of which are neatness, thrift, enterprise, and education,—and on the other, whatever the natives of that region may please to call it.

After 1789, the old Egypt faction ceased to exist, except as grumblers; but the States-Rights men, though obliged to acquiesce in the Constitution, endeavored, by every means of "construction" their ingenuity could furnish, to weaken and restrict the exercise and the range of its power. The Federalists, on the other hand, held that want of strength

was the principal defect of the system, and were for adding new buttresses to the Constitutional edifice. It is curious to remark that neither party believed in the permanency of the Union. Then came into use the mighty adjectives "constitutional" and "unconstitutional,"—words of vast import, doing equally good service to both parties in furnishing a word to express their opinion of the measures they urged and of those they objected to. And then began to be strained and frayed that much-abused piece of parchment which Thomas Paine called the political Bible of the American people, and foolishly thought indispensable to liberty in a representative government. "Ask an American if a certain act be constitutional," says Paine, "he pulls out his pocket volume, turns to page and verse, and gives you a correct answer in a moment." Poor Mr. Paine! if you had lived fifty years longer, you would have seen that paper constitutions, like the paper money you despised so justly, depend upon honesty and confidence for their value, and are at a sad discount in hard times of fraud and corruption. Unprincipled men find means of evading the written agreement upon their face by ingenious subterfuges or downright repudiation. An arbitrary majority will construe the partnership articles to suit their own interests, and *stat pro constitutione voluntas*. It is true that the *littera scripta* remains, but the meaning is found to vary with the interpreter.

In 1791, when the two parties were fairly formed and openly pitted against each other, a new element of discord had entered into politics, which added the bitterness of class-feeling to the usual animosity of contention. Society in the Middle and Southern States had been composed of a few wealthy and influential families, and of a much more numerous lower class who followed the lead of the great men. These lesser citizens had now determined to set up for themselves, and had enlisted in the ranks of the Anti-Federalists, who soon assumed the name and style of

Democrats, an epithet first bestowed upon them in derision, but joyfully adopted, — one of the happiest hits in political nomenclature ever made. *In hoc verbo vinces*: In that word lay victory. If any one be tempted, in this age, to repeat the stupid question, "What's in a name?" let him be answered,—Everything: place, power, pelf, perhaps we may add speculation. "The Barons of Virginia," chiefs of State-Rights, who at home had been in favor of a governor and a senate for life, and had little to fear from any lower class in their own neighborhood, saw how much was to be gained by "taking the people into partnership," as Herodotus phrases it, and commenced that alliance with the proletaries of the North which has proved so profitable to Southern leaders. In New England, the land of industry, self-control, and superior cultivation, (for the American Parnassus was then in Connecticut, either in Hartford, or on Litchfield Hill,) there was, comparatively speaking, no lower class. The Eastern men, whose levelling spirit and equality of ranks had been so much disliked and dreaded by the representatives from other Colonies in the Ante-Revolutionary Congresses, had undergone little or no social change by the war, and probably had at that period a more correct idea of civil liberty and free government than any other people on the face of the earth. General Charles Lee wrote to an English friend, that the New-Englanders were the only Americans who really understood the meaning of republicanism, and many years later De Tocqueville came to nearly the same opinion:—"C'est dans la Nouvelle-Angleterre que se sont combinées les deux ou trois idées principales, qui aujourd'hui forment les bases de la théorie sociale des États-Unis." In this region Federalism reigned supreme. The New-Englanders desired a strong, honest, and intelligent government; they thought, with John Adams, that "true equality is to do as you would be done by," and agreed with Hamilton, that "a government in which every man may aspire to any office was

free enough for all purposes"; and judging from what they saw at home, they looked upon Anti-Federalism not only as erroneous in theory, but as disreputable in practice. "The name of Democrat," writes a fierce old gentleman to his son, "is despised; it is synonymous with infamy." Out of New England a greater social change was going forward. Already appeared that impatience of all restraint which is so alarming a symptom of our times. Every rogue, "who felt the halter draw," wanted to know if it was for tyranny like this that the Colonies had rebelled. "Such a monster of a government has seldom or never been known on earth. A blessed Revolution, a blessed Revolution, indeed!—but farmers, mechanics, and laborers had no share in it. We are the asses who pay." This was the burden of the Democratic song.

But the real issue between the two parties, which underlay all their proposed measures and professed principles, was the old struggle of classes, modified of course by the time and the place. The Democrats contended for perfect equality, political and social, and as little power as possible in the central government so long as their party was not in command. The Federalists, who held the reins, were for a strong conservative administration, and a wholesome distinction of classes. The two parties were not long in waiting for flags to rally around, and fresh fields on which to fight. The French Revolution furnished both. In its early stages it had excited a general sympathy in America; and, indeed, so has every foreign insurrection, rebellion, or riot since, no matter where or why it occurred, provided good use has been made of the sacred words Revolution and Liberty. This cry has never been echoed in this country without exciting a large body of men to mass-meetings, dinners, and other public demonstrations, who do not stop to consider what it means, or whether, in the immediate instance, it has any meaning at all. John Adams said in his "Defence of American Constitutions," "Our countrymen will

never run delirious after a word or a name." Mr. Adams was much mistaken. If, according to the Latin proverb, a word is sufficient for a wise man, so, in another sense, it is all that is needful for fools. But as the Revolution advanced in France towards republicanism, the Federalists, who thought the English system, less the king and the hereditary lords, the best scheme of government, began to grow lukewarm. When it became evident that the New Era was to end in bloodshed, instead of universal peace and good-will towards men,—that the Rights of Man included murder, confiscation, and atheism,—that the Sovereignty of the People meant the rule of King Mob, who seemed determined to carry out to the letter Diderot's famous couplet,—

"Et des boyaux du dernier prêtre
Serrez le cou du dernier des rois,"—

then the adjective *French* became in Federal mouths an epithet of abhorrence and abuse; up went the flag of dear Old England, the defender of the faith and of social order. The opposition party, on the contrary, saw in the success of the French people, in their overthrow of kings and nobles, a cheerful encouragement to their own struggle against the aristocratic Federalists, and would allow no sanguinary irregularities to divert their sympathy from the great Democratic triumph abroad. The gay folds of the tricolor which floated over them seemed to shed upon their heads a mild influence of that Gallic madness that led them into absurdities we could not now believe, were they not on record. The fashions, sartorial and social, of the French were affected; amiable Yankees called each other *citizen*, invented the feminine *citess*, and proposed changing our old calendar for the Ventose and Fructidor arrangement of the one and indivisible republic. (We wish they had adopted their admirable system of weights and measures.) Divines are said to have offered up thanks to the Supreme Being for the success of the good *Sans-culottes*. At all events, their victories were celebrated by civic

festivals and the discharge of cannon; the English flag was burned as a sacrifice to the Goddess of Liberty; a French frigate took a prize off the Capes of the Delaware, and sent her in to Philadelphia; thousands of the populace crowded the wharves, and, when the British colors were seen reversed, and the French flying over them, burst into exulting hurrahs. When a report came that the Duke of York was a prisoner and shown in a cage in Paris, all the bells of Philadelphia rang peals of joy for the downfall of tyrants. Here is the story of a civic *fête* given at Reading, in Massachusetts, which we extract from a newspaper of the time as a specimen of the Gallo-Yankee absurdities perpetrated by our grandfathers:—

"The day was ushered in by the ringing of the bells, and a salute of fifteen discharges from a field-piece. The American flag waved in the wind, and the flag of France over the British in inverted order. At noon a large number of respectable citizens assembled at Citizen Raynor's, and partook of an elegant entertainment. After dinner, Captain Emerson's military company in uniform assembled and escorted the citizens to the meeting-house, where an address pertinent to the occasion was delivered by the Rev. Citizen Prentiss, and united prayers and praises were offered to God, and several hymns and anthems were well sung; after which they returned in procession to Citizen Raynor's, where three farmers, with their frocks and utensils, and with a tree on their shoulders, were escorted by the military company formed in a hollow square to the Common, where the tree was planted in form, as an emblem of freedom, and the Marseillaise Hymn was sung by a choir within a circle round the tree. Major Boardman, by request, superintended the business of the day, and directed the manœuvres."

In the Gallic jargon then fashionable, England was "an insular Bastille of slaves," and New England "the Vendée of America." On the other side, the Federalists returned cheer for

cheer,—looked with true British contempt on the warlike struggles of the restless Frenchman,—chuckled over the disasters which befell “his little popgun fleets,”—and damned the Democrats for a pack of poor, dirty, blasphemous cut-throats. Hate one another was the order of the day. The religious element, which always exasperates dissension, was present. French Democrats had set up the Goddess of Reason (in private life M^{me}. Momoro) as an object of worship; American Democrats were accused of making Tom Paine’s “Age of Reason” their Bible; “Atheist” and “Infidel” were added to the epithets which the Federalists discharged at their foes. So fierce and so general was the quarrel on this European ground, that a distinguished foreigner, then travelling in this country, said that he saw many French and English, but scarcely ever met with an American. Weld, a more humble tourist, put into his book, that in Norfolk, Virginia, he found half the town ready to fight the other half on the French question. Meanwhile, both French and English treated us with ill-disguised contempt, and inflicted open outrages upon our commerce. But it made little difference. One faction was willing to be kicked by England; and the other took a pleasure in being *souffleté* by France. The rival flags were kept flying until the close of the war of 1812.

An outbreak of Democratic fury bordering upon treason took place, when Senator Mason of Virginia violated the oath of secrecy, and sent a copy of Jay’s treaty with England to the “Aurora.” Meetings passed condemnatory resolutions expressed in no mild language. Jay was “a slave, a traitor, a coward, who had bartered his country’s liberties for British gold.” Mobs burned Jay in effigy, and pelted Alexander Hamilton. At a public meeting in Philadelphia, Mr. Blair threw the treaty to the crowd, and advised them to kick it to hell. They carried it on a pole in procession, and burned it before the English minister’s house. A Democratic society in

Richmond, Virginia, full of the true modern South Carolina “sound and fury,” gave public notice, that, if the treaty entered into by “that damned arch traitor, John Jay, with the British tyrant should be ratified, a petition will be presented to the next General Assembly of Virginia praying that the said State may recede from the Union, and be left under the government and protection of one hundred thousand free and independent Virginians!” A meeting at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, resolved, “that it was weary of the tardiness of Congress in not going to war with England, and that they were *almost ready* to wish for a state of revolution and the guillotine of France for a short space, in order to punish the miscreants who enervate and disgrace the government.” Mr. Jefferson’s opinion of the treaty is well known from his rhetorical letter to Rutledge, which, in two or three lines, contains the adjectives, *unnecessary, impolitic, dangerous, dishonorable, disadvantageous, humiliating, disgraceful, improper, monarchical, impeachable*. The Mazzei letter, written not long after the ratification, displays the same bitter feeling.

The Federalists had a powerful ally in William Cobbett, who signed himself Peter Porcupine, adopting for his literary *alias* a nickname bestowed by his enemies. This remarkable writer, who, like Paine, figured in the political conflicts of two nations, must have come into the world bristling with pugnacity. A more thorough game-cock never crowded in the pit. He had been a private in the English army, came to the United States about 1790, and taught French to Americans, and English to Frenchmen, (to Talleyrand among others,) until 1794, when the dogmatic Dr. Priestley arrived here, fresh from the scene of his persecutions. The Doctor losing no time in laying his case before the American public, Cobbett answered his publication, ridiculing it and the Doctor’s political career in a pamphlet which became immediately popular with the Federalists. From that time until his de-

parture for England, in 1800, Cobbett's pen was never idle. His "Little Plain English in Favor of Mr. Jay's Treaty" was altogether the best thing published on that side of the question. Cobbett had more than one point of resemblance to Paine, the object of his early invective, but later of his unqualified admiration. These two men were the best English pamphleteers of their day. In shrewdness, in practical sense, Cobbett was fully Paine's equal. He was as coarse and as pithy in expression, but with more wit, a better education, more complete command of language, and a greater variety of resources. Cobbett was a quicker and a harder hitter than Paine. His personal courage gave him a great advantage in his warfaring life. In 1796, in the hottest of the French and English fight, the well-known Porcupine opened a shop in Philadelphia. He filled his show-window with all the prints of English kings, nobles, and generals he could collect, and "then," he says, "I took down the shutters, and waited."

Party-feeling reached the boiling-point when Washington retired to Mount Vernon. Mr. Adams, his successor, had none of that divinity which hedged the Father of his Country to protect him. Under the former administration, he had been, as Senator Grayson humorously called him, "his superfluous Excellency," and out of the direct line of fire. He could easily look down upon such melancholy squibs as Freneau's "Daddy Vice" and "Duke of Braintree." But when raised above every other head by his high office, he became a mark for the most bitter personal attacks. Mr. Adams unfortunately thought too much about himself to be the successful chief of a party. He allowed his warm feelings to divert him from the main object and end of his followers. He was jealous of Hamilton,—unwilling, in fact, to seem to be governed by the opinion of any man, and half inclined to look for a reelection outside of his own party. Hamilton, the soul of the Federalists, mistrusted and disliked Mr. Adams, and made the sad mistake of

publishing his mistrust and dislike. It must be confessed that the gentlemen who directed the Administration party were no match as tacticians for such file-leaders as Jefferson and Burr. Many of their pet measures were ill-judged, to say the least. The provisional army furnished a fertile theme for fierce declamation. The black cockade became the badge of the supporters of government, so that in the streets one could tell at a glance whether friend or foe was approaching. The Alien and Sedition Laws caused much bitter feeling and did great damage to the Federalists. To read these acts and the trials under them now excites somewhat of the feeling with which we look upon some strange and clumsy engine of torture in a mediæval museum. How the temper of this people and their endurance of legal inflictions have changed since then! There was Matthew Lyon, a noted Democrat of Irish origin, who had published a letter charging the President with "ridiculous pomp, idle parade, and selfish avarice." He was found guilty of sedition, and sentenced to four months' imprisonment and a fine of one thousand dollars. There was Cooper, an Englishman, who fared equally ill for saying or writing that the President did not possess sufficient capacity to fulfil the duties of his office. What should we think of the sanity of James Buchanan, should he prosecute and obtain a conviction against some Black-Republican Luther Baldwin of 1859, for wishing that the wad of a cannon, fired in his honor, might strike an unmentionable part of his august person? What should we say, if Horace Greeley were to be arrested on a warrant issued by the Supreme Court of New York for a libel on Louis Napoleon, as was William Cobbett by Judge McKean of Pennsylvania for a libel on the King of Spain?

Piercer and more bitter waxed party-discord, and both sides did ample injustice to one another. Mr. Jefferson wrote, that men who had been intimate all their lives would cross the street and look the other way, lest they should be obliged to

touch their hats. And Gouverneur Morris gives us a capital idea of the state of feeling when he says that a looker-on, who took no part in affairs, felt like a sober man at a dinner when the rest of the company were drunk. Civil war was often talked of, and the threat of secession, which has become the rhetorical staple of the South, produced solely for exportation to the North, to be used there in manufacturing pro-slavery votes out of the timidity of men of large means and little courage or perspicacity, was then freely made by both divisions of the Union. Had we been of French or Spanish descent, there would have been barricades, *coup-d'états*, *prounciamentos*; but the English race know better how to treat the body-politic. They never apply the knife except for the most desperate operations. But where hard words were so plenty, blows could not fail. Duels were frequent, cudgellings not uncommon,—although as yet the Senate-Chamber had not been selected as the fittest scene for the use of the bludgeon. It is true that molasses-and-water was the beverage allowed by Congress in those simple times, and that charged to stationery.

What terrible fellows our ancestors were for calling names,—particularly the gentlemen of the press! If they had been natives of the Island of Frozen Sounds, along the shore of which Pantagruel and Panurge coasted, they would have stood up to their chins in scurrilous epithets. The comical sketch of their rhetoric in “Salmagundi” is literally true:—“Every day have these slangwhangers made furious attacks on each other and upon their respective adherents, discharging their heavy artillery, consisting of large sheets loaded with scoundrel, villain, liar, rascal, numskull, nincompoop, dunderhead, wiseacre, blockhead, jackass.” As single words were not always explosive enough to make a report equal to their feelings, they had recourse to compounds;—“pert and prating popinjay,” “hackneyed gut-scrafer,” “maggot of corruption,” “toad on a dung-heap,” “snivelling sophisticat-

ing hound,” are a few of the chain-shot which strike our eyes in turning over the yellow faded files. They are all quiet now, those eager, snarling editors of fifty years since, and mostly forgotten. Even the ink which records their spiteful abuse is fading away;—

“Duane no more the halter dreads,
The torrent of his lies to check;
No gallows Cheetham's dreams invades,
Nor lours o'er Holt's devoted neck.”

Emerson's saying, that involuntarily we read history as superior beings, is never so true as when we read history before it has been worked up for the public, in the raw material of letters, pamphlets, and newspapers. Feverish paragraphs, which once excited the enthusiasm of one party and the fiercest opposition of the other, lie before us as dead and as unmeaning as an Egyptian mummy. The passion which once gave them life is gone. The objects which the writers considered all-important we perceive to have been of no real significance even in their day. We read on with a good-natured pity, akin to the feeling which the gods of Epicurus might be supposed to experience when they looked down upon foolish mortals,—and when we shut the book, go out into our own world to fret, fume, and wrangle over things equally transitory and frivolous.

When it became evident that the Administration party ran the risk of being beaten in the election of 1800, their trumpeters sounded the wildest notes of alarm. “People! how long will you remain blind? Awake! be up and doing! If Mr. Jefferson is elected, the equal representation of the small States in the Senate will be destroyed, the funding system swept away, the navy abolished, all commerce and foreign trade prohibited, and the fruits of the soil left to rot on the hands of the farmer. The taxes will all fall on the landed interest, all the churches will be overturned, none but Frenchmen employed by government, and the monstrous system of liberty and equality, with all its horrid consequences, as experienced in France and St. Do-

mingo, will inevitably be introduced." Thus they shouted, and no doubt many of the shouters sincerely believed it all. Nevertheless, and in spite of these alarms, the Revolution of '99, as Mr. Jefferson liked to call it, took place without bloodshed, and in 1801 that gentleman mounted the throne.

After this struggle was over, the Federalists, some from conviction and some from disgust at being beaten, gave up the country as lost. Worthy New-Englanders, like Cabot, Fisher Ames, and Wolcott, had no longer hope. They sank into the position of mere grumblers, with one leading principle,—admiration of England, and a willingness to submit to any insults which England in her haughtiness might please to inflict. "We are sure," says the "Boston Democrat," "that George III. would find more desperately devoted subjects in New England than in any part of his dominions." The Democrats, of course, clung to their motto, "Whatever is in France is right," and even accepted the arbitrary measures of Bonaparte at home as a mere change of system, and abroad as forced upon him by British pirates. It is curious to read the high Federalist papers in the first days of their sorrow. In their contradictory fault-finding sulkiness, they give some color of truth to Mr. Jefferson's accusation, that the Federal leaders were seeking to establish a monarchy,—a charge well known to be unfounded, as Washington said at the time. "What is the use of celebrating the Fourth of July?" they asked. "Freedom is a stale, narcotic topic. The Declaration of Independence a useless, if not an odious libel upon a friendly nation connected with us by the silken band of amity." Fenno, in his paper, said the Declaration was "a placard of rebellion, a feeble production, in which the spirit of rebellion prevailed over the love of order." Dennie, in the "Portfolio," anticipating Mr. Choate, called it "an incoherent accumulation of indigestible and impracticable political dogmas, dangerous to the peace of the world, and seditious in its local tendency, and, as a

composition, equally at variance with the laws of construction and the laws of regular government." The Federalist opinion of the principles of the Administration party was avowed with equal frankness in their papers. "A democracy is the most absurd constitution, productive of anarchy and mischief, which must always happen when the government of a nation depends upon the caprice of the ignorant, harebrained vulgar. All the miseries of men for a long series of years grew out of that infamous mode of polity, a democracy; which is to be reckoned to be only the corruption and degeneracy of a republic, and not to be ranked among the legitimate forms of government. If it be not a legitimate government, we owe it no allegiance. He is a blind man who does not see this truth; he is a base man who will not assert it. Democratic power is tyranny, in the principle, the beginning, the progress, and the end. It is on its trial here, and the issue will be civil war, desolation, and anarchy." These and other foolish excerpts were kept before their readers by the "Aurora" and "Boston Chronicle," leading Democratic organs, and served to sweeten their triumph and to seal the fate of the unlucky Federalists.

The difference between the tone of these extracts and that of our present journalists, when they touch upon the abstract principles of government, may indicate to us the firm hold which the Democratic theory has taken of our people. As that conquering party marched onward, the opposition was forced to follow after, and to encamp upon the ground their powerful enemy left behind him. To-day when we see gentlemen who consider themselves Conservatives in the ranks of the Democrats, we may suppose that the tour of the political circle is nearly completed.

A momentary lull had followed the storm of the election, when Mr. Jefferson boldly threw down another "bone for the Federalists to gnaw." He wrote to Thomas Paine, inviting him to America, and offering him a passage home in a

national vessel. "You will, in general, find us," he added, "returned to sentiments worthy of former times; in these it will be your glory to have steadily labored, and with as much effect as any man living. That you may live long, to continue your useful labors and reap the reward in the thankfulness of nations, is my sincere prayer. Accept the assurance of my high esteem and affectionate attachment." Mr. Jefferson went even farther. He openly announced his intention of giving Paine an office, if there were one in his gift suitable for him. Now, although Paine had been absent for many years, he had not been forgotten by the Americans. The echo of the noise he made in England reached our shores; and English echoes were more attentively listened to then even than at present. His "Rights of Man" had been much read in this country. Indeed, it was asserted, and upon pretty good authority, that Jefferson himself, when Secretary of State, had advised and encouraged the publication of an American edition as an antidote to the "Davila" of Mr. Adams. Even the "Age of Reason" had obtained an immense circulation from the great reputation of the author. It reminded the Rev. Mr. Goodrich, and other Orthodox New-Englanders, of Milton's description of Death,—

"Black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell."

Yet numbers of people, nothing frightened, would buy and read. "No work," Dr. Francis tells us, "had a demand for readers comparable to that of Paine. The 'Age of Reason,' on its first appearance in New York, was printed as an orthodox book by orthodox publishers,—doubtless deceived," the charitable Doctor adds, "by the vast renown which the author of 'Common Sense' had obtained, and by the prospects of sale." Paine's position in the French Convention, his long imprisonment, poverty, slovenly habits, and fondness for drink, were all well known and well talked over. William Cobbett, for one, never lost an opportunity of dressing up Paine

as a filthy monster. He wrote his life for the sake of doing it more thoroughly. The following extract, probably much relished at the time, will give some idea of the tone and temper of this performance:—

"How Tom gets a living now, or what brothel he inhabits, I know not, nor does it much signify. He has done all the mischief he can do in this world; and whether his carcass is at last to be suffered to rot on the earth, or to be dried in the air, is of very little consequence. Wherever or wherever he breathes his last, he will excite neither sorrow nor compassion; no friendly hand will close his eyes, not a groan will be uttered, not a tear will be shed. Like Judas, he will be remembered by posterity; men will learn to express all that is base, malignant, treacherous, unnatural, and blasphemous by the single monosyllable of Paine."

Cobbett also wrote an *ante-mortem* epitaph, a fit inscription for the life he had composed. It ends thus:—

"He is crammed in a dungeon and preaches
up Reason;
Blasphemes the Almighty, lives in filth like
a hog;
Is abandoned in death, and interred like a
dog."

This brutal passage does not exaggerate the opinion of Paine's character held by the good people of America. He was an object of horror to them,—a rebel against government and against God,—a type of Jacobinism, a type of Infidelity, and, with what seemed to them, no doubt, a beautiful consistency, a type of all that was abandoned and vile. Thomas Paine, a Massachusetts poet of *ci-devant* celebrity, petitioned the General Court for permission to call himself Robert Treat Paine, on the ground that he had no Christian name. In New England, Christianity and Federalism were looked upon as intimately connected, and Democracy as a wicked thing, born of Tom Paine, Tom Jefferson, and the Father of Lies. In this Trinity of Evil, Thomas Paine stood first.

During the struggle for the Presidency, Mr. Jefferson had been accused, from every Federal stump, of the two unpardonable sins to Yankee minds,—namely, that his notes could be bought for five shillings in the pound, and that he did not believe in Revelation. Since his election, he had been daily reminded of his religious short-comings by keen newspaper attacks. He knew that he strengthened the hands of his enemies by inviting home the Arch-Infidel. We are and were then a religious people, in spite of the declaration in Mr. Adams's Tripolitan treaty, that the government of the United States was "not in any sense founded on the Christian religion," and Paine could find few admirers in any class. Mr. Jefferson, too, was well aware that the old man was broken, that the fire had gone out of him, and that his presence in the United States could be of no use whatever to the party. But he thought that Paine's services in the Revolution had earned for him an asylum, and their old acquaintance made him hasten to offer it. We think that the invitation to Paine was one of the meanest acts of Jefferson's life.

When the matter became public, there arose a long, loud cry of abuse, which rang from Massachusetts Bay to Washington City. Anarchy, confusion, and the downfall of not only church, but state, were declared to be the unavoidable consequences of Paine's return to our shores,—that impious apostate! that Benedict Arnold, once useful, and then a traitor! The "United States Gazette" had ten leaders on the text of Tom Paine and Jefferson, "whose love of liberty was neither more rational, generous, or social, than that of the wolf or the tiger." The "New England Palladium" fairly shrieked:—"What! invite to the United States that lying, drunken, brutal infidel, who rejoices in the opportunity of basking and wallowing in the confusion, devastation, bloodshed, rapine, and murder, in which his soul delights?" Why, even the French called him the English orang-outang! He was exposed with a monkey and a bear in a cage in Paris.

In 1792, he was forbidden to haunt the White-Bear Tavern in London. He subsisted for eight years on the charity of booksellers, who employed him in the morning to correct proofs; in the afternoon he was too drunk. He lodged in a cellar. He helped the *poissardes* to clean fish and open oysters. He lived in misery, filth, and contempt. Not until Livingston went to France did any respectable American call upon him. Livingston's attentions to him not only astonished, but disgusted the First Consul, and gave him a very mean opinion of Livingston's talents. The critical Mr. Dennie caused his "Portfolio" to give forth this solemn strain: "If, during the present season of national abasement, infatuation, folly, and vice, any portent could surprise, sober men would be utterly confounded by an article current in all our newspapers, that the loathsome Thomas Paine, a drunken atheist and the scavenger of faction, is invited to return in a national ship to America by the first magistrate of a free people. A measure so enormously preposterous we cannot yet believe has been adopted, and it would demand firmer nerves than those possessed by Mr. Jefferson to hazard such an insult to the moral sense of the nation. If that rebel rascal should come to preach from his Bible to our populace, it would be time for every honest and insulted man of dignity to flee to some Zoar as from another Sodom, to shake off the very dust of his feet and to abandon America." "He is coming," wrote Noah Webster, ("the mender and murderer of English,") "to publish in America the third part of the 'Age of Reason.'" And the epigrammatists, such as they were, tried their goose-quills on the subject:—

"He passed his forces in review,
Smith, Cheetham, Jones, Duane:
'Dull rascals,—these will never do,'
Quoth he,—'I'll send for Paine.'

"Then from his darling den in France
To tempt the wretch to come,
He made Tom's brain with flattery dance
And took the tax from rum."

The Administration editors held their tongues;—the religious side of the question was too strong for them.

Paine was unable to accept the passage offered him in the frigate, and returned in a merchant-vessel in the autumn of the next year (1802). The excitement had not subsided. Early in October, the "Philadelphia Gazette" announced that "a kind of tumultuous sensation was produced in the city yesterday evening in consequence of the arrival of the ship Benjamin Franklin from Havre. It was believed, for a few moments, that the carcass of Thomas Paine was on board, and several individuals were seen disgracing themselves by an impious joy. It was finally understood that Paine had missed his passage by this vessel and was to sail in a ship to New York. Under the New York news-head we perceive a vessel from Havre reported. Infidels! hail the arrival of your high-priest!"

A few days later, the infidel Tom Paine, otherwise Mr. Paine, arrived safely at Baltimore and proceeded thence to Washington. The journalists gave tongue at once: "Fire! Age of Reason! Look at his nose! He drank all the brandy in Baltimore in nine days! What a dirty fellow! Invited home by a brother Tom! Let Jefferson and his blasphemous crony dangle from the same gallows." The booksellers, quietly mindful of the opportunity, got out an edition of his works in two volumes.

As soon as he was fairly on shore, Paine took sides with his host, and commenced writing "Letters to the People of the United States." He announced in them that he was a genuine Federalist,—not one of that disguised faction which had arisen in America, and which, losing sight of first principles, had begun to contemplate the people as hereditary property: No wonder that the author of the "Rights of Man" was attacked by this faction: His arrival was to them like the sight of water to canine madness: He served them for a standing dish of abuse: The leaders during the Reign of Terror in France and during the late despotism

in America were the same men in character; for how else was it to be accounted for that he was persecuted by both at the same time? In every part of the Union this faction was in the agonies of death, and, in proportion as its fate approached, gnashed its teeth and struggled: He should lose half his greatness when they ceased to lie. Mr. Adams, as the late chief of this faction, met with harsh and derisive treatment in these letters, and did not attempt to conceal his irritation in his own later correspondence.

Paine's few defenders tried to back him with weak paragraphs in the daily papers: His great talents, his generous services, "in spite of a few indiscreet writings about religion," should make him an object of interest and respect. The "Aurora's" own correspondent sent to his paper a favorable sketch of Paine's appearance, manner, and conversation: He was "proud to find a man whom he had admired free from the contaminations of debauchery and the habits of inebriety which have been so grossly and falsely sent abroad concerning him." But the enemy had ten guns to Paine's one, and served them with all the fierceness of party-hate. A shower of abusive missiles rattled incessantly about his ears. However thick-skinned a man may be, and protected over all by the *as triplex* of self-sufficiency, he cannot escape being wounded by furious and incessant attacks. Paine felt keenly the neglect of his former friends, who avoided him, when they did not openly cut him. Mr. Jefferson, it is true, asked him to dinners, and invited the British minister to meet him; at least, the indignant Anglo-Federal editors said so. Perhaps he offered him an office. If he did, Paine refused it, preferring "to serve as a disinterested volunteer." Poor old man! his services were no longer of much use to anybody. The current of American events had swept past him, leaving him stranded, a broken fragment of a revolutionary wreck.

When the nine days of wonder had expired in Washington, and the inhabi-

tants had grown tired of staring at Paine and of pelting him with abuse, he betook himself to New York. On his way thither, he met with an adventure which shows the kind of martyrdom suffered by this political and religious heretic. He had stopped at Bordentown, in New Jersey, to look at a small place he owned there, and to visit an old friend and correspondent, Colonel Kirkbride. When he departed, the Colonel drove him over to Trenton to take the stage-coach. But in Trenton the Federal and Religious party had the upperhand, and when Paine applied at the booking-office for a seat to New York the agent refused to sell him one. Moreover, a crowd collected about his lodgings, who groaned dismally when he drove away with his friend, while a band of musicians, provided for the occasion, played the Rogue's March.

Among the editorial celebrities of 1803, James Cheetham, in New York, was almost as famous as Duane of the "Aurora." Cheetham, like many of his contemporaries, Gray, Carpenter, Callender, and Duane himself, was a British subject. He was a hatter in his native land; but a turn for politics ruined his business and made expatriation convenient. In the United States, he had become the editor of the "American Citizen," and was at that time busily engaged in attacking the Federalists and Burr's "Little Band," for their supposed attempt to elect Mr. Burr in the place of Mr. Jefferson. To Cheetham, accordingly, Paine wrote, requesting him to engage lodgings at Lovett's, afterwards the City Hotel. He sent for Cheetham, on the evening of his arrival. The journalist obeyed the summons immediately. This was the first interview between Paine and the man who was to hang, draw, and quarter his memory in a biography. This libellous performance was written shortly after Paine's death. It was intended as a peace-offering to the English government. The ex-hatter had made up his mind to return home, and he wished to prove the sincerity of his conversion from radicalism by trampling on the remains

of its high-priest. So long as Cheetham remained in good standing with the Democrats, Paine and he were fast friends; but when he became heretical and schismatic on the Embargo question, some three or four years later, and was formally read out of the party, Paine laid the rod across his back with all his remaining strength. He had vigor enough left, it seems, to make the "Citizen" smart, for Cheetham cuts and stabs with a spite which shows that the work was as agreeable to his feelings as useful to his plans. His reminiscences must be read *multis cum granis*.

In New York Paine enjoyed the same kind of second-rate ovation as in Washington. A great number of persons called upon him, but mostly of the laboring class of emigrants, who had heard of the "Rights of Man," and, feeling disposed to claim as many rights as possible in their new country, looked with reverence upon the inventor of the system. The Democratic leaders, with one or two exceptions, avoided Paine. Respectabilities shunned him as a contamination. Grant Thorburn was suspended from church-membership for shaking hands with him. To the boys he was an object of curious attention; his nose was the burden of their songs.

Cheetham carried round a subscription-list for a public dinner. Sixty or seventy of Paine's admirers attended. It went off brilliantly, and was duly reported in the "American Citizen." Then the effervescence of New York curiosity subsided; Paine became an old story. He left Lovett's Hotel for humble lodgings in the house of a free-thinking farrier. Thenceforward the tale of his life is soon told. He went rarely to his farm at New Rochelle; he disliked the country and the trouble of keeping house; and a bullet which whizzed through his window one Christmas Eve, narrowly missing his head, did not add agreeable associations to the place. In the city he moved his quarters from one low boarding-house to another, and generally managed to quarrel with the blacksmiths, bakers, and butchers, his landlords. Unable to en-

joy society suited to his abilities and large experience of life, Paine called in low company to help him bear the burden of existence. To the men who surrounded him, his opinions on all subjects were conclusive, and his shrewd sayings revelations. Among these respectful listeners, he had to fear neither incredulity nor disputation. Like his friend Elihu Palmer, and the celebrated Dr. Priestley, Paine would not tolerate contradiction. To differ with him was, in his eyes, simply to be deficient in understanding. He was like the French lady who naïvely told Dr. Franklin, "*Je ne trouve que moi qui aie toujours raison.*" Professing to adore Reason, he was angry, if anybody reasoned with him. But herein he was no exception to the general rule,—that we find no persons so intolerant and illiberal as men professing liberal principles.

His occupation and amusement was to write for the papers articles of a somewhat caustic and personal nature. Whatever subject occupied the public mind interested Paine and provoked his remarks. He was bitter in his attacks upon the Federalists and Burrists for attempting to jockey Jefferson out of the Presidency. Later, when Burr was acquitted of treason, Paine found fault with Chief-Justice Marshall for his rulings during the trial, and gave him notice, that he (Marshall) was "a suspected character." He also requested Dr. Mitchell, then United States Senator for New York, to propose an amendment to the Constitution, authorizing the President to remove a judge, on the address of a majority of both houses of Congress, for reasonable cause, when sufficient grounds for impeachment might not exist. General Miranda's filibustering expedition against Caracas, a greater failure even than the Lopez raid on Cuba, furnished Paine with a theme. He wrote a sensible paper on the yellow fever, by request of Jefferson, and one or two on his iron bridge. He was ardent in the defence of Mr. Jefferson's pet scheme of a gun-boat navy, and ridiculed the idea of fortifying New York. "The cheapest

way," he said, "to fortify New York will be to banish the scoundrels that infest it." The inhabitants of that city would do well, if they could find an engineer to fortify their island in this way.

When the Pennsylvanians called a Convention in 1805 to amend the Constitution of the State, Paine addressed them at some length, giving them a summary of his views on Government, Constitutions, and Charters. The Creoles of Louisiana sent to Congress a memorial of their "rights," in which they included the importation of African slaves. Paine was indignant at this perversion of his favorite specific for all political ailments, and took the Franco-Americans soundly to task:—"How dare you put up a petition to Heaven for such a power, without fearing to be struck from the earth by its justice?" It is manifest that Paine could not be a Democrat in good standing now. Mingled with these graver topics were side-blows at the emissary Cullen, *alias* Carpenter, an Englishman, who edited a Federal paper,—replies to Cheetham, reprimands to Cheetham, and threats to prosecute Cheetham for lying, "unless he makes a public apology,"—and three letters to Governor Morgan Lewis, who had incensed Paine by bringing an action for political libel against a Mr. Thomas Farmer, laying his damages at one hundred thousand dollars.

Among his last productions were two memorials to the House of Representatives. One can see in these papers that old age had weakened his mind, and that harsh treatment had soured his feelings towards the land of his adoption.

"Ma république à jamais grande et libre,
Cette terre d'amour et d'égalité,"

no longer seemed to him as lovely as when he composed these verses for a Fourth-of-July dinner in Paris. He claimed compensation for his services in Colonel Laurens's mission to France in 1781. For his works he asked no reward. "All the civilized world knows," he writes, "I have been of great service to the United States, and have generously given away talents that would have made

me a fortune. The country has been benefited, and I make myself happy in the knowledge of it. It is, however, proper for me to add, that the mere independence of America, were it to have been followed by a system of government modelled after the corrupt system of the English government, would not have interested me with the unabated ardor it did." "It will be convenient to me to know what Congress will decide on, because it will determine me, whether, after so many years of generous services and that in the most perilous times, and after seventy years of age, I shall continue in this country, or offer my services to some other country. It will not be to England, unless there should be a revolution."

The memorial was referred to the Committee on Claims. When Paine heard of its fate, he addressed an indignant letter to the Speaker of the House. "I know not who the Committee on Claims are; but if they were men of younger standing than 'the times that tried men's souls,' and consequently too young to know what the condition of the country was at the time I published 'Common Sense,'—for I do not believe that independence would have been declared, had it not been for the effect of that work,—they are not capable of judging of the whole of the services of Thomas Paine. If my memorial was referred to the Committee on Claims for the purpose of losing it, it is unmanly policy. After so many years of service, my heart grows cold towards America."

His heart was soon to grow cold to all the world. In the spring of 1809, it became evident to Paine's attendants that his end was approaching. As death drew near, the memories of early youth arose vividly in his mind. He wished to be buried in the cemetery of the Quakers, in whose principles his father had educated him. He sent for a leading member of the sect to ask a resting-place for his body in their ground. The request was refused.

When the news got abroad that the Arch-Infidel was dying, foolish old wom-

en and kindred clergymen, who "knew no way to bring home a wandering sheep but by worrying him to death," gathered together about his bed. Even his physician joined in the hue-and-cry. It was a scene of the Inquisition adapted to North America,—a Protestant *auto da fé*. The victim lay helpless before his persecutors; the agonies of disease supplied the place of rack and fagot. But nothing like a recantation could be wrung from him. And so his tormentors left him alone to die, and his freethinking smiths and cobblers rejoiced over his fidelity to the cause.

He was buried on his farm at New Rochelle, according to his latest wishes. "Thomas Paine. Author of 'Common Sense,'" the epitaph he had fixed upon, was carved upon his tomb. A better one exists from an unknown hand, which tells, in a jesting way, the secret of the sorrows of his later life :—

"Here lies Tom Paine, who wrote in liberty's defence,
And in his 'Age of Reason' lost his 'Common Sense.'"

Ten years after, William Cobbett, who had left England in a fit of political disgust and had settled himself on Long Island to raise hogs and ruta-bagas, resolved to go home again. Cobbett had become an admirer, almost a disciple of Paine. The "Constitution-grinder" of '96 was now "a truly great man, a truly philosophical politician, a mind as far superior to Pitt and Burke as the light of a flambeau is superior to that of a rush-light." Above all, Paine had been Cobbett's teacher on financial questions. In 1803, Cobbett read his "Decline and Fall of the English System," and then "saw the whole matter in its true light; and neither pamphleteers nor speech-makers were after that able to raise a momentary puzzle in his mind." Perhaps Cobbett thought he might excite a sensation in England and rally about him the followers of Paine, or it may be that he wished to repair the gross injustice he had done him by some open act of adherence; at all events, he exhumed

Paine's body and took the bones home with him in 1819, with the avowed intention of erecting a magnificent monument to his memory by subscription. In the same manner, about two thousand two hundred and fifty years ago, the bones of Theseus, the mythical hero of Democracy, were brought from Skyros to Athens by some Attic *Κοββέτης*. The description of the arrival in England we quote from a Liverpool journal of the day:—"When his last trunk was opened at the Custom-House, Cobbett observed to the surrounding spectators, who had assembled in great numbers,—'Here are the bones of the late Thomas Paine.' This declaration excited a visible sensation, and the crowd pressed forward to see the contents of the package. Cobbett remarked,—'Great, indeed, must that man have been whose very bones attract such attention!' The officer took up the coffin-plate inscribed, 'Thomas Paine, Aged 72. Died January 8, 1809,' and, having lifted up several of the bones, replaced the whole and passed them. They have since been forwarded from this town to London."

At a public dinner given to Cobbett in Liverpool, Paine was toasted as "the Noble of Nature, the Child of the Lower Orders"; but the monument was never raised, and no one knows where his bones found their last resting-place.

Cobbett himself gained nothing by this resurrectionist performance, except an additional couplet in the party-songs of the day:—

Let Cobbett of borough-corruption complain,
And go to the De'il with the bones of Tom Paine."

The two were classed together by English Conservatives, as "pestilent fellows" and "promoters of sedition."

It is now fifty years since Paine died; but the *nil de mortuis* is no rule in his case. The evil associations of his later days have pursued him beyond the grave. A small and threadbare sect of "liberals," as they call themselves,—men in whom

want of skill, industry, and thrift has produced the usual results,—have erected an altar to Thomas Paine, and, on the anniversary of his birth, go through with a pointless celebration, which passes unnoticed, unless in an out-of-the-way corner of some newspaper. In this class of persons, irreligion is a mere form of discontent. They have no other reason to give for the faith which is not in them. They like to ascribe their want of success in life to something out of joint in the thoughts and customs of society, rather than to their own shortcomings or incapacity. In France, such persons would be Socialists and *Rouges*; in this country, where the better classes only have any reason to rebel, they cannot well conspire against government, but attack religion instead, and pride themselves on their exemption from prejudice. The "Age of Reason" is their manual. Its bold, clear, simple statements they can understand; its shallowness they are too ignorant to perceive; its coarseness is in unison with their manners. Thus the author has become the Apostle of Free-thinking tinkers and the Patron Saint of unwashed Infidelity.

To this generation at large, he is only an indistinct shadow,—a faint reminiscence of a red nose,—an ill-flavored name, redolent of brandy and of brimstone, his beverage in life and his well-earned punishment in eternity, which suggests to the serious mind dirt, drunkenness, and hopeless damnation. Mere worldlings call him "Tom Paine," in a tone which combines derision and contempt. A bust of him, by Jarvis, in the possession of the New York Historical Society, is kept under lock and key, because it was defaced and defiled by visitors, while a dozen other plaster worthies that decorate the institution remained intact. Nevertheless, we suspect that most of our readers, if they cannot date back to the first decade of the century, will find, when they sift their information, that they have only a speaking acquaintance with Thomas Paine, and can give no good reason for their dislike of him.

And it is not easy for the general reader to become intimate with him. He will find him, of course, in Biographical Dictionaries, Directories of the City of the Great Dead, which only tell you where men lived, and what they did to deserve a place in the volume; but as to a life of him, strictly speaking, there is none. Oldys and Cobbett tried to flay him alive in pamphlets; Sherwin and Clio Rickman were prejudiced friends and published only panegyrics. All are out of print and difficult to find. Cheetham's work is a political libel; and the attempt of Mr. Vail of the "Beacon" to canonize him in the "Infidel's Calendar," cannot be recommended to intelligent persons. We might expect to meet with him in those books of lives so common with us,—collections in which a certain number of deceased gentlemen are bound up together, so resembling each other in feature that one might suppose the narratives ground out by some obituary-machine and labelled afterward to suit purchasers. Even this "sign-post biography," as the "Quarterly" calls it, Paine has escaped. He was not a marketable commodity. There was no demand for him in polite circles. The implacable hand of outraged orthodoxy was against him. Hence his memory has lain in the gutter. Even his friend Joel Barlow left him out of the "Columbiad," to the great disgust of Clio Rickman, who thought his name should have appeared in the Fifth Book between Washington and Franklin. Surely Barlow might have found room for him in the following "Epic List of Heroes":—

"Wythe, Mason, Pendleton, with Henry joined,
 Rush, Rodney, Langdon, friends of human-kind,
 Persuasive Dickinson, the farmer's boast,
 Recording Thompson, pride of all the host,
 Nash, Jay, the Livingstons, in council great,
 Rutledge and Laurens, held the rolls of fate."

But no! Neither author nor authorling liked to have his name seen in company with Thomas Paine. And when a curious compiler has taken him up, he has held him at arm's length, and, after eye-

ing him cautiously, has dropped him like some unclean and noxious animal.

Sixty years ago, Paine's friends used to say, that, "in spite of some indiscreet writings on the subject of religion," he deserved the respect and thanks of Americans for his services. We think that he deserves something more at the present day than this absolute neglect. There is stuff enough in him for one volume at least. His career was wonderful, even for the age of miraculous events he lived in. In America, he was a Revolutionary hero of the first rank, who carried letters in his pocket from George Washington, thanking him for his services. And he managed besides to write his radical name in large letters in the History of England and of France. As a mere literary workman, his productions deserve notice. In mechanics, he invented and put up the first iron bridge of large span in England; the boldness of the attempt still excites the admiration of engineers. He may urge, too, another claim to our attention. In the legion of "most remarkable men" these United States have produced or imported, only three have achieved infamy: Arnold, Burr, and Paine. What are Paine's titles to belong to this trio of disreputables? Only these three: he wrote the "Age of Reason"; was a Democrat, perhaps an unusually dirty one; and drank more brandy than was good for him. The "Age of Reason" is a shallow deistical essay, in which the author's opinions are set forth, it is true, in a most offensive and irreverent style. As Dr. Hopkins wrote of Ethan Allen,—

"One hand was clenched to batter noses,
 While t'other scrawled 'gainst Paul and Moses."

But who reads it now? On the other hand, no one who has studied Paine's career can deny his honesty and his disinterestedness; and every unprejudiced reader of his works must admit not merely his great ability in urging his opinions, but that he sincerely believed all he wrote. Let us, then, try to forget the

carbuncled nose, the snuffy waistcoat, the unorthodox sneer. We should wipe out his later years, cut his life short at 1796, and take Paine when he wrote "Common Sense," Paine when he lounged at the White Bear in Piccadilly, talking over with Horne Tooke the answer to Mr. Burke's "Reflections," and Paine, when, as "foreign benefactor of the species," he took his seat in the famous French Convention.

It would repay some capable author to dig him up, wash him, and show him to the world as he was. A biography of him would embrace the history of the struggle which established the new theory of politics in government. He is the representative man of Democracy in both hemispheres,—a good subject in the hands of a competent artist; and the time has arrived, we think, when justice may be done him. As a general rule, it is yet too soon to write the History of the United States since 1784. Half a century has not been sufficient to wear out the bitter feeling excited by the long struggle of Democrats and Federalists. Respectable gentlemen, who, more pious than Æneas, have undertaken to carry their grandfathers' remains from the ruins of the past into the present era, seem to be possessed with the same demon of discord that agitated the deceased ancestors. The quarrels of the first twenty years of the Constitution have become chronic ink-feuds in certain families. A literary *vendetta* is carried on to this day, and a stab with the steel pen, or a shot from behind the safe cover of a periodical, is certain to be received by any one of them who offers to his enemy the glorious opportunity of a book. Where so

much temper exists, impartial history is out of the question.

Our authors, too, as a general rule, have inherited the political jargon of the last century, and abound in "destiny of humanity," "inalienable rights," "virtue of the sovereign people," "base and bloody despots," and all that sort of phrase, earnest and real enough once, but little better than cant and twaddle now. They seem to take it for granted that the question is settled, the rights of man accurately defined, the true and only theory of government found,—and that he who doubts is blinded by aristocratic prejudice or is a fool. We must say, nevertheless, that Father Time has not yet had years enough to answer the great question of governing which was proposed to him in 1789. Some of the developments of our day may well make us doubt whether the last and perfect form, or even theory, is the one we have chosen. "*Les monarchies absolues avaient deshonoré le despotisme : prenons garde que les républiques démocratiques ne le réhabilitent.*" But Paine's part in the history of this country after 1783 is of so small importance, that in a life of him all such considerations may be safely waived. The democratic movement of the last eighty years, be it a "finality," or only a phase of progress towards a more perfect state, is the grand historical fact of modern times, and Paine's name is intimately connected with it. One is always ready to look with lenity on the partiality of a biographer,—whether he urge the claims of his hero to a niche in the Valhalla of great men, or act as the *Advocatus Diaboli* to degrade his memory.

OF BOOKS AND THE READING THEREOF.

BEING A THIRD LETTER FROM PAUL POTTER, OF NEW YORK, IN THE CITY AND COUNTY OF NEW YORK, ESQ., TO THE DON ROBERTO WAGONERO, OF WASHINGTON, *olim*, BUT *nunc* OF NOWHEREINPARTICULAR.

IF any person, O my Bobus, had foretold that all these would go by before I should again address you, he would have exhibited prescient talent great enough to establish twenty "mediums" in a flourishing cabalistic business. Alas! they have been to me months of fathomless distress, immensurate and immeasurable sorrow, and blank, blind, idiotic indifference, even to books and friends, which, next to the nearest and dearest, are the world's most priceless possession. But now that I have a little thrown off the stupor, now that kindly Time has a little balméd my cruel wounds, I come back to my books and to you,—to the *animi remissionem* of Cicero,—to these gentle sympathizers and faithful solacements,—to old studies and ancient pursuits. There is a Latin line, I know not whose, but Swift was fond of quoting it,—

"Vertiginosus, inops, surdus, male gratus amicis,"—

which I have whispered to myself, with prophetic lips, in the long, long watches of my lonesome nights. Do you remember—but who that has read it does not?—that affecting letter, written upon the death of his wife, by Sir James Mackintosh to Dr. Parr? "Such was she whom I have lost; and I have lost her when her excellent natural sense was rapidly improving, after eight years of struggle and distress had bound us fast together and moulded our tempers to each other,—when a knowledge of her worth had refined my youthful love into friendship, before age had deprived it of much of its original ardor. I lost her, alas! (the choice of my youth, and the partner of

my misfortunes,) at a moment when I had the prospect of her sharing my better days."

But if I am getting old, although perhaps prematurely, I must be casting about for the *subsidia senectuti*. Swift wrote to Gay, that these were "two or three servants about you and a convenient house"; justly observing that, "when a man grows hard to please, few people care whether he be pleased or no"; and adding, sadly enough, "I should hardly prevail to find one visitor, if I were not able to hire him with a bottle of wine"; and so the sorrowful epistle concludes with the sharpest grief of all: "My female friends, who could bear with me very well a dozen years ago, have now forsaken me." It is odd that Montaigne should have hit upon the wine also as among the *subsidia senectuti*; although the sage Michael complains, as you will remember, that old men do not relish their wine, or at least the first glass, because "the palate is furred with phlegms." But I care little either for the liquor or the lackeys, and not much, I fear, at present, for "the female friends." I have, then, nothing left for it but to take violently to books; for I doubt not I shall find almost any house convenient, and I am sure of one at last which I can claim by a title not to be disturbed by all the precedents of Cruise, and in which no mortal shall have a contingent remainder.

To books, then, I betake myself,—to books, "the immortal children" of "the understanding, courage, and abilities" of the wise and good,—ay! and to inane, drivelling, doting books, the bastard progeny of vanity and ignorance,—books over which one dawdles in an amusing dream and pleasant spasm of amazement, and which teach us wisdom as tipsy Helots taught the Spartan boys sobriety. Montaigne "never travelled without books, either in peace or war"; and as I found