

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST YEAR IN EUROPE.

ON July 15, 1801, Napoleon concluded with Pius VII. the Concordat. Naturally, the first victim offered on the restored altar was Theophilanthropy. I have called Paine the founder of this Society, because it arose amid the controversy excited by the publication of "Le Siècle de la Raison," its manual and tracts reproducing his ideas and language; and because he gave the inaugural discourse. Theism was little known in France save as iconoclasm, and an assault on the Church: Paine treated it as a Religion. But, as he did not speak French, the practical organization and management of the Society were the work of others, and mainly of a Russian named Hauëy. There had been a good deal of odium incurred at first by a society which satisfied neither the pious nor the freethinkers, but it found a strong friend on the Directory. This was Larévellière-Lépeaux, whose secretary, Antoine Vallée, and young daughter, had become interested in the movement. This statesman never joined the Society, but he had attended one of its meetings, and, when a distribution of religious edifices was made, Theophilanthropy was assigned ten parish churches. It is said that when Larevéllière-

Lépeaux mentioned to Talleyrand his desire for the spread of this Society, the diplomat said: "All you have to do is to get yourself hanged, and revive the third day." Paine, who had pretty nearly fulfilled that requirement, saw the Society spread rapidly, and he had great hopes of its future. But Pius VII. also had an interested eye on it, and though the Concordat did not go into legal operation until 1802, Theophilanthropy was offered as a preliminary sacrifice in October, 1801.

The description of Paine by Walter Savage Landor, and representations of his talk, in the "Imaginary Conversations," so mix up persons, times, and places, that I was at one time inclined to doubt whether the two had met. But Mr. J. M. Wheeler, a valued correspondent in London, writes me: "Landor told my friend Mr. Birch of Florence that he particularly admired Paine, and that he visited him, having first obtained an interview at the house of General Dumouriez. Landor declared that Paine was always called 'Tom,' not out of disrespect, but because he was a jolly good fellow." An interview with Paine at the house of Dumouriez could only have occurred when the General was in Paris, in 1793. This would account for what Landor says of Paine taking refuge from trouble in brandy. There had been, as, Rickman testifies, and as all the facts show, nothing of this kind since that period. It would appear therefore that Landor must have mixed up at least two interviews with Paine, one in the time of Dumouriez, the other in that of Napoleon. Not even such an artist as Landor could invent the language

ascribed to Paine concerning the French and Napoleon.

“The whole nation may be made as enthusiastic about a salad as about a constitution ; about the colour of a cockade as about a consul or a king. You will shortly see the real strength and figure of Bonaparte. He is wilful, headstrong, proud, morose, presumptuous ; he will be guided no longer ; he has pulled the pad from his forehead, and will break his nose or bruise his cranium against every table, chair, and brick in the room, until at last he must be sent to the hospital.”

Paine prophesies that Napoleon will make himself emperor, and that “by his intemperate use of power and thirst of dominion” he will cause the people to “wish for their old kings, forgetting what beasts they were.” Possibly under the name “Mr. Normandy” Landor disguises Thomas Poole, referred to on a preceding page. Normandy’s sufferings on account of one of Paine’s books are not exaggerated. In Mrs. Sanford’s work is printed a letter from Paris, July 20, 1802, in which Poole says: “I called one morning on Thomas Paine. He is an original, amusing fellow. Striking, strong physiognomy. Said a great many quaint things, and read us part of a reply which he intends to publish to Watson’s ‘Apology.’”

Paine seems to have had no relation with the ruling powers at this time, though an Englishman who visited him is quoted by Rickman (p. 198) as remarking his manliness and fearlessness, and that he spoke as freely as ever after Bonaparte’s supremacy. One communication only to any member of the government appears ; this was to the

¹ “Thomas Poole and His Friends,” ii., p. 85.

Minister of the Interior concerning a proposed iron bridge over the Seine.¹ Political France and Paine had parted.

Under date of March 18, 1801, President Jefferson informs Paine that he had sent his manuscripts (Maritime Compact) to the printer to be made into a pamphlet, and that the American people had returned from their frenzy against France. He adds :

“ You expressed a wish to get a passage to this country in a public vessel. Mr. Dawson is charged with orders to the captain of the Maryland to receive and accommodate you back if you can be ready to depart at such short warning. Rob. R. Livingston is appointed minister plenipotentiary to the republic of France, but will not leave this till we receive the ratification of the convention by Mr. Dawson.² I am in hopes you will find us returned generally 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 long live to continue your useful labors and to reap the reward in the thankfulness of nations, is my sincere prayer. Accept assurances of my high esteem and affectionate attachment.”

¹ “ THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR TO THOMAS PAINE : I have received, Citizen, the observations that you have been so good as to address to me upon the construction of iron bridges. They will be of the greatest utility to us when the new kind of construction goes to be executed for the first time. With pleasure I assure you, Citizen, that you have rights of more than one kind to the gratitude of nations, and I give you, cordially, the expression of my particular esteem.—CHAPTAL.”

It is rather droll, considering the appropriation of his patent in England, and the confiscation of a thousand pounds belonging to him, to find Paine casually mentioning that at this time a person came from London with plans and drawings to consult with him about an iron arch of 600 feet, over the Thames, then under consideration by a committee of the House of Commons.

² “ Beau Dawson,” an eminent Virginia Congressman.

The subjoined notes are from letters of Paine to Jefferson :

Paris, June 9, 1801. "Your very friendly letter by Mr. Dawson gave me the real sensation of happy satisfaction, and what served to increase it was that he brought it to me himself before I knew of his arrival. I congratulate America on your election. There has been no circumstance with respect to America since the times of her revolution that excited so much attention and expectation in France, England, Ireland, and Scotland as the pending election for President of the United States, nor any of which the event has given more general joy :

"I thank you for the opportunity you give me of returning by the *Maryland*, but I shall wait the return of the vessel that brings Mr. Livingston."

Paris, June 25, 1801. "The *Parliamentaire*, from America to Havre, was taken in going out, and carried into England. The pretence, as the papers say, was that a Swedish Minister was on board for America. If I had happened to have been there, I suppose they would have made no ceremony in conducting me on shore."

Paris, March 17, 1802. "As it is now Peace, though the definitive Treaty is not yet signed, I shall set off by the first opportunity from Havre or Dieppe, after the equinoctial gales are over. I continue in excellent health, which I know your friendship will be glad to hear of.—Wishing you and America every happiness, I remain your former fellow-labourer and much obliged fellow-citizen.

Paine's determination not to return to America in a national vessel was owing to a paragraph he saw in a Baltimore paper, headed "Out at Last." It stated that Paine had written to the President, expressing a wish to return by a national ship, and that "permission was given." There was here an indication that Jefferson's invitation to Paine by the Hon. John Dawson had become

known to the President's enemies, and that Jefferson, on being attacked, had apologized by making the matter appear an act of charity. Paine would not believe that the President was personally responsible for the apologetic paragraph, which seemed inconsistent with the cordiality of the letter brought by Dawson; but, as he afterwards wrote to Jefferson, "it determined me not to come by a national ship."¹ His request had been made at a time when any other than a national American ship was pretty certain to land him in an English prison. There was evidently no thought of any *éclat* in the matter, but no doubt a regard for economy as well as safety.

The following to the eminent deist lecturer in New York, Elihu Palmer, bears the date, "Paris, February 21, 1802, since the Fable of Christ":

"DEAR FRIEND, I received, by Mr. Livingston, the letter you wrote me, and the excellent work you have published ["The Principles of Nature"]. I see you have thought deeply on the subject, and expressed your thoughts in a strong and clear style. The hinting and intimating manner of writing that was formerly used on subjects of this kind, produced skepticism, but not conviction. It is necessary to be bold. Some people can be reasoned into sense, and others must be shocked into it. Say a bold thing that will stagger them, and they will begin to think.

¹ It was cleared up afterwards. Jefferson had been charged with sending a national ship to France for the sole purpose of bringing Paine home, and Paine himself would have been the first to condemn such an assumption of power. Although the President's adherents thought it right to deny this, Jefferson wrote to Paine that he had nothing to do with the paragraph. "With respect to the letter [offering the ship] I never hesitate to avow and justify it in conversation. In no other way do I trouble myself to contradict anything which is said. At that time, however, there were anomalies in the motions of some of our friends which events have at length reduced to regularity."

“There is an intimate friend of mine, Colonel Joseph Kirkbride of Bordentown, New Jersey, to whom I would wish you to send your work. He is an excellent man, and perfectly in our sentiments. You can send it by the stage that goes partly by land and partly by water, between New York and Philadelphia, and passes through Bordentown.

“I expect to arrive in America in May next. I have a third part of the *Age of Reason* to publish when I arrive, which, if I mistake not, will make a stronger impression than any thing I have yet published on the subject.

“I write this by an ancient colleague of mine in the French Convention, the citizen Lequinio, who is going [as] Consul to Rhode Island, and who waits while I write.¹ Yours in friendship.”

The following, dated July 8, 1802, to Consul Rotch, is the last letter I find written by Paine from Paris :

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—The bearer of this is a young man that wishes to go to America. He is willing to do anything on board a ship to lessen the expense of his passage. If you know any captain to whom such a person may be usefull I will be obliged to you to speak to him about it.

“As Mr. Otte was to come to Paris in order to go to America, I wanted to take a passage with him, but as he stays in England to negociate some arrangements of Commerce, I have given up that idea. I wait now for the arrival of a person from England whom I want to see,² after which, I shall bid adieu to restless and wretched Europe. I am with affectionate esteem to you and Mrs. Rotch,

“Yours,

“THOMAS PAINE.”

The President's cordial letter had raised a happy vision before the eyes of one sitting amid the ruins

¹ J. M. Lequinio, author of “*Prejudices Destroyed*,” and other rationalistic works, especially dealt with in Priestley's “*Letters to the Philosophers of France*.”

² No doubt Clio Rickman.

of his republican world. As he said of Job, he had "determined, in the midst of accumulating ills, to impose upon himself the hard duty of contentment." Of the comrades with whom he began the struggle for liberty in France but a small circle remained. As he wrote to Lady Smith,—from whom he must now part,—"I might almost say like Job's servant, 'and I only am escaped.'" Of the American and English friends who cared for him when he came out of prison few remain.

The President's letter came to a poor man in a small room, furnished only with manuscripts and models of inventions. Here he was found by an old friend from England, Henry Redhead Yorke, who, in 1795, had been tried in England for sedition. Yorke has left us a last glimpse of the author in "wretched and restless Europe." The "rights of man" had become so antiquated in Napoleon's France, that Yorke found Paine's name odious on account of his antislavery writings, the people "ascribing to his espousal of the rights of the negroes of St. Domingo the resistance which Leclercq had experienced from them." He found Paine in No. 4 Rue du Théâtre Français. A "jolly-looking woman" (in whom we recognize Madame Bonneville) scrutinized Yorke severely, but was smiling enough on learning that he was Paine's old friend. He was ushered into a little room heaped with boxes of documents, a chaos of pamphlets and journals. While Yorke was meditating on the contrast between this habitation of a founder of two great republics and the mansions of their rulers,

his old friend entered, dressed in a long flannel gown.

“Time seemed to have made dreadful ravages over his whole frame, and a settled melancholy was visible on his countenance. He desired me to be seated, and although he did not recollect me for a considerable time, he conversed with his usual affability. I confess I felt extremely surprised that he should have forgotten me ; but I resolved not to make myself known to him, as long as it could be avoided with propriety. In order to try his memory, I referred to a number of circumstances which had occurred while we were in company, but carefully abstained from hinting that we had ever lived together. He would frequently put his hand to his forehead, and exclaim, ‘Ah ! I know that voice, but my recollection fails !’ At length I thought it time to remove his suspense, and stated an incident which instantly recalled me to his mind. It is impossible to describe the sudden change which this effected ; his countenance brightened, he pressed me by the hand, and a silent tear stole down his cheek. Nor was I less affected than himself. For some time we sat without a word escaping from our lips. ‘Thus are we met once more, Mr. Paine,’ I resumed, ‘after a long separation of ten years, and after having been both of us severely weather-beaten.’ ‘Aye,’ he replied, ‘and who would have thought that we should meet in Paris?’ He then enquired what motive had brought me here, and on my explaining myself, he observed with a smile of contempt, ‘They have shed blood enough for liberty, and now they have it in perfection. This is not a country for an honest man to live in ; they do not understand any thing at all of the principles of free government, and the best way is to leave them to themselves. You see they have conquered all Europe, only to make it more miserable than it was before.’ Upon this, I remarked that I was surprised to hear him speak in such desponding language of the fortune of mankind, and that I thought much might yet be done for the Republic. ‘Republic !’ he exclaimed, ‘do you call this a Republic ? Why they are worse off than the slaves of Constantinople ; for there, they expect to be bashaws in heaven by submitting to be slaves below, but

here they believe neither in heaven nor hell, and yet are slaves by choice. I know of no Republic in the world except America, which is the only country for such men as you and I. It is my intention to get away from this place as soon as possible, and I hope to be off in the autumn; you are a young man and may see better times, but I have done with Europe, and its slavish politics.'

"I have often been in company with Mr. Paine, since my arrival here, and I was not a little surprised to find him wholly indifferent about the public spirit in England, or the remaining influence of his doctrines among its people. Indeed he seemed to dislike the mention of the subject; and when, one day, in order to provoke discussion, I told him I had altered my opinions upon many of his principles, he answered, 'You certainly have the right to do so; but you cannot alter the nature of things; the French have alarmed all honest men; but still truth is truth. Though you may not think that my principles are practicable in England, without bringing on a great deal of misery and confusion, you are, I am sure, convinced of their justice.' Here he took occasion to speak in terms of the utmost severity of Mr —, who had obtained a seat in parliament, and said that 'parsons were always mischievous fellows when they turned politicians.' This gave rise to an observation respecting his 'Age of Reason,' the publication of which I said had lost him the good opinion of numbers of his English advocates. He became uncommonly warm at this remark, and in a tone of singular energy declared that he would not have published it if he had not thought it calculated to 'inspire mankind with a more exalted idea of the Supreme Architect of the Universe, and to put an end to villainous imposture.' He then broke out with the most violent invectives against our received opinions, accompanying them at the same time with some of the most grand and sublime conceptions of an Omnipotent Being, that I ever heard or read of. In the support of his opinion, he avowed himself ready to lay down his life, and said 'the Bishop of Llandaff may roast me in Smithfield if he likes, but human torture cannot shake my conviction.' He reached down a copy of the Bishop's work, interleaved with remarks upon it, which he read me; after which he admitted the liberality of the

Bishop, and regretted that in all controversies among men a similar temper was not maintained. But in proportion as he appeared listless in politics, he seemed quite a zealot in his religious creed ; of which the following is an instance. An English lady of our acquaintance, not less remarkable for her talents than for elegance of manners, entreated me to contrive that she might have an interview with Mr. Paine. In consequence of this I invited him to dinner on a day when we were to be favoured with her company. But as she is a very rigid Roman Catholic I cautioned Mr. Paine, beforehand, against touching upon religious subjects, assuring him at the same time that she felt much interested to make his acquaintance. With much good nature he promised to be *discreet*. . . . For above four hours he kept every one in astonishment and admiration of his memory, his keen observation of men and manners, his numberless anecdotes of the American Indians, of the American war, of Franklin, Washington, and even of his Majesty, of whom he told several curious facts of humour and benevolence. His remarks on genius and taste can never be forgotten by those present. Thus far everything went on as I could wish ; the sparkling champagne gave a zest to his conversation, and we were all delighted. But alas ! alas ! an expression relating to his 'Age of Reason' having been mentioned by one of the company, he broke out immediately. He began with Astronomy,—addressing himself to Mrs. Y.,—he declared that the least inspection of the motion of the stars was a convincing proof that Moses was a liar. Nothing could stop him. In vain I attempted to change the subject, by employing every artifice in my power, and even attacking with vehemence his political principles. He returned to the charge with unabated ardour. I called upon him for a song though I never heard him sing in my life. He struck up one of his own composition ; but the instant he had finished it he resumed his favourite topic. I felt extremely mortified, and remarked that he had forgotten his promise, and that it was not fair to wound so deeply the opinions of the ladies. 'Oh !' said he, 'they 'll come again. What a pity it is that people should be so prejudiced !' To which I retorted that their prejudices might be virtues. 'If so,' he replied, 'the blossoms may be beautiful to the eye, but the

root is weak.' One of the most extraordinary properties belonging to Mr. Paine is his power of retaining everything he has written in the course of his life. It is a fact that he can repeat word for word every sentence in his 'Common Sense,' 'Rights of Man,' etc., etc. The Bible is the only book which he has studied, and there is not a verse in it that is not familiar to him. In shewing me one day the beautiful models of two bridges he had devised he observed that Dr. Franklin once told him that 'books are written to please, houses built for great men, churches for priests, but no bridges for the people.' These models exhibit an extraordinary degree not only of skill but of taste; and are wrought with extreme delicacy entirely by his own hands. The largest is nearly four feet in length; the iron works, the chains, and every other article belonging to it, were forged and manufactured by himself. It is intended as the model of a bridge which is to be constructed across the Delaware, extending 480 feet with only one arch. The other is to be erected over a lesser river, whose name I forget, and is likewise a single arch, and of his own workmanship, excepting the chains, which, instead of iron, are cut out of pasteboard, by the fair hand of his correspondent the 'Little Corner of the World,' whose indefatigable perseverance is extraordinary. He was offered £3000 for these models and refused it. The iron bars, which I before mentioned that I noticed in a corner of his room, were also forged by himself, as the model of a crane, of a new description. He put them together, and exhibited the power of the lever to a most surprising degree."¹

About this time Sir Robert Smith died, and another of the ties to Paris was snapped. His beloved Bonneville promised to follow him to the New World. His old friend Rickman has come over to see him off, and observed that "he did not drink spirits, and wine he took moderately; he even objected to any spirits being laid in as a part of his

¹ "Letters from France," etc., London, 1804, 2 vols., 8vo. Thirty-three pages of the last letter are devoted to Paine.

sea-stock." These two friends journeyed together to Havre, where, on September 1st, the way-worn man begins his homeward voyage. Poor Rickman, the perpetually prosecuted, strains his eyes till the sail is lost, then sits on the beach and writes his poetical tribute to Jefferson and America for recalling Paine, and a touching farewell to his friend:

" Thus smooth be thy waves, and thus gentle the breeze,
As thou bearest my Paine far away ;
O waft him to comfort and regions of ease,
Each blessing of freedom and friendship to seize,
And bright be his setting sun's ray."

Who can imagine the joy of those eyes when they once more beheld the distant coast of the New World! Fifteen years have passed,—years in which all nightmares became real, and liberty's sun had turned to blood,—since he saw the happy land fading behind him. Oh, America, thine old friend who first claimed thy republican independence, who laid aside his Quaker coat and fought for thy cause, believing it sacred, is returning to thy breast! This is the man of whom Washington wrote: " His writings certainly had a powerful effect on the public mind,—ought they not then to meet an adequate return? He is poor! He is chagrined!" It is not money he needs now, but tenderness, sympathy; for he comes back from an old world that has plundered, outlawed, imprisoned him for his love of mankind. He has seen his dear friends sent to the guillotine, and others are pining in British prisons for publishing his " Rights of Man,"—principles pronounced by President

Jefferson and Secretary Madison to be those of the United States. Heartsore, scarred, white-haired, there remains to this veteran of many struggles for humanity but one hope, a kindly welcome, a peaceful haven for his tempest-tossed life. Never for an instant has his faith in the heart of America been shaken. Already he sees his friend Jefferson's arms extended; he sees his old comrades welcoming him to their hearths; he sees his own house and sward at Bordentown, and the beautiful Kirkbride mansion beside the Delaware,—river of sacred memories, soon to be spanned by his graceful arch. How the ladies he left girls,—Fanny, Kitty, Sally,—will come with their husbands to greet him! How will they admire the latest bridge-model, with Lady Smith's delicate chain-work for which (such is his estimate of friendship) he refused three thousand pounds, though it would have made his mean room palatial! Ah, yes, poor heart, America will soothe your wounds, and pillow your sinking head on her breast! America, with Jefferson in power, is herself again. They do not hate men in America for not believing in a celestial Robespierre. Thou stricken friend of man, who hast appealed from the god of wrath to the God of Humanity, see in the distance that Maryland coast, which early voyagers called Avalon, and sing again your song when first stepping on that shore twenty-seven years ago:

“ I come to sing that summer is at hand,
The summer time of wit, you 'll understand;
Plants, fruits, and flowers, and all the smiling race
That can the orchard or the garden grace;

The Rose and Lily shall address the fair,
And whisper sweetly out, ' My dears, take care : '
With sterling worth the Plant of Sense shall rise,
And teach the curious to philosophize !'
The frost returns? We 'll garnish out the scenes
With stately rows of Evergreens,
Trees that will bear the frost, and deck their tops
With everlasting flowers, like diamond drops."¹

¹ " The Snowdrop and Critic," *Pennsylvania Magazine*, 1775. Couplets are omitted between those given.