

CHAPTER XX.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

THE blow that Paine received by the refusal of his vote at New Rochelle was heavy. Elisha Ward, a Tory in the Revolution, had dexterously gained power enough to give his old patrons a good revenge on the first advocate of independence. The blow came at a time when his means were low, and Paine resolved to apply to Congress for payment of an old debt. The response would at once relieve him, and overwhelm those who were insulting him in New York. This led to a further humiliation, and one or two letters to Congress, of which Paine's enemies did not fail to make the most.¹

¹ Paine had always felt that Congress was in his debt for his voyage to France for supplies with Col. Laurens (i., p. 171). In a letter (Feb. 20, 1782) to Robert Morris, Paine mentions that when Col. Laurens proposed that he should accompany him, as secretary, he was on the point of establishing a newspaper. He had purchased twenty reams of paper, and Mr. Izard had sent to St. Eustatia for seventy more. This scheme, which could hardly fail of success, was relinquished for the voyage. It was undertaken at the urgent solicitation of Laurens, and Paine certainly regarded it as official. He had ninety dollars when he started, in bills of exchange; when Col. Laurens left him, after their return, he had but two louis d'or. The Memorial sent by Paine to Congress (Jan. 21, 1808) recapitulated facts known to my reader. It was presented by the Hon. George Clinton, Jr., February 4, and referred to the Committee of Claims. On February 14th Paine wrote a statement concerning the \$3,000 given him (1785) by Congress, which he maintained was an indemnity for injustice done him in the Deane case. Laurens had long been dead. The Committee consulted the

The letters are those of a broken-hearted man, and it seems marvellous that Jefferson, Madison, and the Clintons did not intervene and see that some recognition of Paine's former services, by those who should not have forgotten them, was made without the ill-judged memorial. While they were enjoying their grandeur the man who, as Jefferson wrote, "steadily laboured, and with as much effect as any man living," to secure America freedom, was living—or rather dying—in a miserable lodging-house, 63 Partition Street. He had gone there for economy; for he was exhibiting that morbid apprehension about his means which is a well-known symptom of decline in those who have suffered poverty in early life. Washington, with 40,000 acres, wrote in his last year as if facing ruin. Paine had only a little farm at New Rochelle. He had for some time suffered from want of income, and at last had to sell the farm he meant for the Bonnevillees for \$10,000; but the purchaser died, and at his widow's appeal the contract was cancelled. It was at this time that he appealed to Congress. It appears, however,

President, whose reply I know not. Vice-President Clinton wrote (March 23, 1808) that "from the information I received at the time I have reason to believe that Mr. Paine accompanied Col. Laurens on his mission to France in the course of our revolutionary war, for the purpose of negotiating a loan, and that he acted as his secretary on that occasion; but although I have no doubt of the truth of this fact, I cannot assert it from my own actual knowledge." There was nothing found on the journals of Congress to show Paine's connection with the mission. The old author was completely upset by his longing to hear the fate of his memorial, and he wrote two complaints of the delay, showing that his nerves were shattered. "If," he says, March 7th, "my memorial was referred to the Committee of Claims for the purpose of losing it, it is unmanly policy. After so many years of service my heart grows cold towards America."

that Paine was not anxious for himself, but for the family of Madame Bonneville, whose statement on this point is important.

The last letter that I can find of Paine's was written to Jefferson, July 8, 1808 :

“The british Ministry have out-schemed themselves. It is not difficult to see what the motive and object of that Ministry were in issuing the orders of Council. They expected those orders would force all the commerce of the United States to England, and then, by giving permission to such cargoes as they did not want for themselves to depart for the Continent of Europe, to raise a revenue out of those countries and America. But instead of this they have lost revenue ; that is, they have lost the revenue they used to receive from American imports, and instead of gaining all the commerce they have lost it all.

“This being the case with the british Ministry it is natural to suppose they would be glad to tread back their steps, if they could do it without too much exposing their ignorance and obstinacy. The Embargo law empowers the President to suspend its operation whenever he shall be satisfied that our ships can pass in safety. It therefore includes the idea of empowering him to use means for arriving at that event. Suppose the President were to authorise Mr. Pinckney to propose to the british Ministry that the United States would negotiate with France for rescinding the Milan Decree, on condition the English Ministry would rescind their orders of Council ; and in that case the United States would recall their Embargo. France and England stand now at such a distance that neither can propose any thing to the other, neither are there any neutral powers to act as mediators. The U. S. is the only power that can act.

“Perhaps the british Ministry if they listen to the proposal will want to add to it the Berlin decree, which excludes english commerce from the continent of Europe ; but this we have nothing to do with, neither has it any thing to do with the Embargo. The british Orders of Council and the Milan decree are parallel cases, and the cause of the Embargo. Yours in friendship.”

Paine's last letters to the President are characteristic. One pleads for American intervention to stay the hand of French oppression among the negroes in St. Domingo; for the colonization of Louisiana with free negro laborers; and his very last letter is an appeal for mediation between France and England for the sake of peace.

Nothing came of these pleadings of Paine; but perhaps on his last stroll along the Hudson, with his friend Fulton, to watch the little steamer, he may have recognized the real mediator beginning its labors for the federation of the world.

Early in July, 1808, Paine removed to a comfortable abode, that of Mrs. Ryder, near which Madame Bonneville and her two sons resided. The house was on Herring Street (afterwards 293 Bleecker), and not far, he might be pleased to find, from "Reason Street." Here he made one more attempt to wield his pen,—the result being a brief letter "To the Federal Faction," which he warns that they are endangering American commerce by abusing France and Bonaparte, provoking them to establish a navigation act that will exclude American ships from Europe. "The United States have flourished, unrivalled in commerce, fifteen or sixteen years. But it is not a permanent state of things. It arose from the circumstances of the war, and most probably will change at the close of the present war. The Federalists give provocation enough to promote it."

Apparently this is the last letter Paine ever sent to the printer. The year passed peacefully away; indeed there is reason to believe that from the middle of July, 1808, to the end of January, 1809, he

fairly enjoyed existence. During this time he made acquaintance with the worthy Willett Hicks, watchmaker, who was a Quaker preacher. His conversations with Willett Hicks—whose cousin, Elias Hicks, became such an important figure in the Quaker Society twenty years later—were fruitful.

Seven serene months then passed away. Towards the latter part of January, 1809, Paine was very feeble. On the 18th he wrote and signed his Will, in which he reaffirms his theistic faith. On February 1st the Committee of Claims reported unfavorably on his memorial, while recording, "That Mr. Paine rendered great and eminent services to the United States during their struggle for liberty and independence cannot be doubted by any person acquainted with his labours in the cause, and attached to the principles of the contest." On February 25th he had some fever, and a doctor was sent for. Mrs. Ryder attributed the attack to Paine's having stopped taking stimulants, and their resumption was prescribed. About a fortnight later symptoms of dropsy appeared. Towards the end of April Paine was removed to a house on the spot now occupied by No. 59 Grove Street, Madame Bonneville taking up her abode under the same roof. The owner was William A. Thompson, once a law partner of Aaron Burr, whose wife, *née* Maria Holdron, was a niece of Elihu Palmer. The whole of the back part of the house (which was in a lot, no street being then cut) was given up to Paine.¹ Reports of neglect of Paine by Madame Bonneville

¹ The topographical facts were investigated by John Randel, Jr., Civil Engineer, at the request of David C. Valentine, Clerk of the Common Council, New York, his report being rendered April 6, 1864.

have been credited by some, but are unfounded. She gave all the time she could to the sufferer, and did her best for him. Willett Hicks sometimes called, and his daughter (afterwards Mrs. Cheese-man) used to take Paine delicacies. The only procurable nurse was a woman named Hedden, who combined piety and artfulness. Paine's physician was the most distinguished in New York, Dr. Romaine, but nurse Hedden managed to get into the house one Dr. Manly, who turned out to be Cheetham's spy. Manly afterwards contributed to Cheetham's book a lying letter, in which he claimed to have been Paine's physician. It will be seen, however, by Madame Bonnevillie's narrative to Cobbett, that Paine was under the care of his friend, Dr. Romaine. As Manly, assuming that he called as many did, never saw Paine alone, he was unable to assert that Paine recanted, but he converted the exclamations of the sufferer into prayers to Christ.¹

The god of wrath who ruled in New York a hundred years, through the ministerial prerogatives, was guarded by a Cerberean legend. The three alternatives of the heretic were, recantation, special judgment, terrible death. Before Paine's arrival

¹ Another claimant to have been Paine's physician has been cited. In 1876 (*N. Y. Observer*, Feb. 17th) Rev. Dr. Wickham reported from a late Dr. Matson Smith, of New Rochelle, that he had been Paine's physician, and witnessed his drunkenness. Unfortunately for Wickham he makes Smith say it was on his farm where Paine "spent his latter days." Paine was not on his farm for two years before his death. Smith could never have attended Paine unless in 1803, when he had a slight trouble with his hands,—the only illness he ever had at New Rochelle,—while the guest of a neighbor, who attests his sobriety. Finally, a friend of Dr. Smith is living, Mr. Albert Willcox, who writes me his recollection of what Smith told him of Paine. Neither drunkenness, nor any item of Wickham's report is mentioned. He said Paine was afraid of death, but could only have heard it.

in America, the excitement on his approach had tempted a canny Scot, Donald Fraser, to write an anticipated "Recantation" for him, the title-page being cunningly devised so as to imply that there had been an actual recantation. On his arrival in New York, Paine found it necessary to call Fraser to account. The Scotchman pleaded that he had vainly tried to earn a living as fencing-master, preacher, and school-teacher, but had got eighty dollars for writing the "Recantation." Paine said: "I am glad you found the expedient a successful shift for your needy family; but write no more concerning Thomas Paine. I am satisfied with your acknowledgment—try something more worthy of a man."¹ The second mouth of Cerberus was noisy throughout the land; revivalists were describing in New Jersey how some "infidel" had been struck blind in Virginia, and in Virginia how one was struck dumb in New Jersey. But here was the very head and front of what they called "infidelity," Thomas Paine, who ought to have gathered in his side a sheaf of thunderbolts, preserved by more marvellous "providences" than any sectarian saint. Out of one hundred and sixty carried to the guillotine from his prison, he alone was saved, by the accident of a chalk mark affixed to the wrong side of his cell door. On two ships he prepared to return to America, but was prevented; one sank at sea, the other was searched by the British for him particularly. And at the very moment when New Rochelle disciples were calling down fire on his head, Christopher

¹ Dr. Francis' "Old New York," p. 139.

Dederick tried vainly to answer the imprecation ; within a few feet of Paine, his gun only shattered the window at which the author sat. " Providence must be as bad as Thomas Paine," wrote the old deist. This amounted to a sort of contest like that of old between the prophets of Baal and those of Jehovah. The deists were crying to their antagonists : " Perchance he sleepeth." It seemed a test case. If Paine was spared, what heretic need tremble ? But he reached his threescore years and ten in comfort ; and the placard of Satan flying off with him represented a last hope.

Skepticism and rationalism were not understood by pious people a hundred years ago. In some regions they are not understood yet. Renan thinks he will have his legend in France modelled after Judas. But no educated Christian conceives of a recantation or extraordinary death-bed for a Darwin, a Parker, an Emerson. The late Mr. Bradlaugh had some fear that he might be a posthumous victim of the " infidel's legend." In 1875, when he was ill in St. Luke's Hospital, New York, he desired me to question the physicians and nurses, that I might, if necessary, testify to his fearlessness and fidelity to his views in the presence of death. But he has died without the " legend," whose decline dates from Paine's case ; that was its crucial challenge.

The whole nation had recently been thrown into a wild excitement by the fall of Alexander Hamilton in a duel with Aaron Burr. Hamilton's worldliness had been notorious, but the clergymen (Bishop Moore and the Presbyterian John Mason)

reported his dying words of unctuous piety and orthodoxy. In a public letter to the Rev. John Mason, Paine said :

“Between you and your rival in communion ceremonies, Dr. Moore of the Episcopal church, you have, in order to make yourselves appear of some importance, reduced General Hamilton’s character to that of a feeble-minded man, who in going out of the world wanted a passport from a priest. Which of you was first applied to for this purpose is a matter of no consequence. The man, sir, who puts his trust and confidence in God, that leads a just and moral life, and endeavors to do good, does not trouble himself about priests when his hour of departure comes, nor permit priests to trouble themselves about him.”

The words were widely commented on, and both sides looked forward, almost as if to a prize-fight, to the hour when the man who had unmade thrones, whether in earth or heaven, must face the King of Terrors. Since Michael and Satan had their legendary combat for the body of Moses, there was nothing like it. In view of the pious raids on Paine’s death-bed, freethinkers have not been quite fair. To my own mind, some respect is due to those humble fanatics, who really believed that Paine was approaching eternal fires, and had a frantic desire to save him.¹

Paine had no fear of death ; Madame Bonneville’s narrative shows that his fear was rather of

¹ Nor should it be forgotten that several liberal Christians, like Hicks, were friendly towards Paine at the close of his life, whereas his most malignant enemies were of his own “Painite” household, Carver and Cheetham. Mr. William Erving tells me that he remembers an English clergyman in New York, named Cunningham, who used to visit his (Erving’s) father. He heard him say that Paine and he were friends ; and that “the whole fault was that people hectored Paine, and made him say things he would never say to those who treated him as a gentleman.”

living too long. But he had some such fear as that of Voltaire when entering his house at Fernay after it began to lighten. He was not afraid of the lightning, he said, but of what the neighboring priest would make of it should he be struck. Paine had some reason to fear that the zealots who had placarded the devil flying away with him might fulfil their prediction by body-snatching. His unwillingness to be left alone, ascribed to superstitious terror, was due to efforts to get a recantation from him, so determined that he dare not be without witnesses. He had foreseen this. While living with Jarvis, two years before, he desired him to bear witness that he maintained his theistic convictions to the last. Jarvis merrily proposed that he should make a sensation by a mock recantation, but the author said, "Tom Paine never told a lie." When he knew that his illness was mortal he solemnly reaffirmed these opinions in the presence of Madame Bonneville, Dr. Romaine, Mr. Haskin, Captain Pelton, and Thomas Nixon.¹ The nurse Hedden, if the Catholic Bishop of Boston (Fenwick) remembered accurately thirty-seven years later, must have conspired to get him into the patient's room, from which, of course, he was stormily expelled. But the Bishop's story is so like a pious novelette that, in the absence of any mention of his visit by Madame Bonneville, herself a Catholic, one cannot be sure that the interview he waited so long to report did not take place in some slumberous episcopal chamber in Boston.²

¹ See the certificate of Nixon and Pelton to Cobbett (Vale, p. 177).

² Bishop Fenwick's narrative (*U. S. Catholic Magazine*, 1846) is quoted in the *N. Y. Observer*, September 27, 1877. (Extremes become friends when a freethinker is to be crucified.)

It was rumored that Paine's adherents were keeping him under the influence of liquor in order that he might not recant,—so convinced, at heart, or enamoured of Calvinism was this martyr of Theism, who had published his "Age of Reason" from the prison where he awaited the guillotine.¹

Of what his principles had cost him Paine had near his end a reminder that cut him to the heart. Albert Gallatin had remained his friend, but his connections, the Fews and Nicholsons, had ignored the author they once idolized. The woman for whom he had the deepest affection, in America, had been Kitty Nicholson, now Mrs. Few. Henry Adams, in his biography of Gallatin, says: "When confined to his bed with his last illness he [Paine] sent for Mrs. Few, who came to see him, and when they parted she spoke some words of comfort and religious hope. Poor Paine only turned his face to the wall, and kept silence." What is Mr. Adams' authority for this? According to Rickman, Sherwin, and Vale, Mr. and Mrs. Few came of their own accord, and "Mrs. Few expressed a wish to renew their former friendship." Paine said to her, "very impressively, 'You have neglected me, and I beg that you will leave the room.' Mrs. Few went into the garden and wept bitterly." I doubt this tradition also, but it was cruelly tantali-

¹ Engineer Randel (orthodox), in his topographical report to the Clerk of the City Council (1864), mentions that the "very worthy mechanic," Amasa Wordsworth, who saw Paine daily, told him "there was no truth in such report, and that Thomas Paine had declined saying anything on that subject [religion]." "Paine," testifies Dr. Francis, "clung to his infidelity to the last moment of his natural life." Dr. Francis (orthodox) heard that Paine yielded to King Alcohol, but says Cheetham wrote with "settled malignity," and suspects "sinister motives" in his "strictures on the fruits of unbelief in the degradation of the wretched Paine."

zing for his early friend, after ignoring him six years, to return with Death.

If, amid tortures of this kind, the annoyance of fanatics and the "Painites" who came to watch them, and the paroxysms of pain, the sufferer found relief in stimulants, the present writer can only reflect with satisfaction that such resource existed. For some time no food would stay on his stomach. In such weakness and helplessness he was for a week or so almost as miserable as the Christian spies could desire, and his truest friends were not sorrowful when the peace of death approached. After the years in which the stories of Paine's wretched end have been accumulating, now appears the testimony of the Catholic lady,—persons who remember Madame Bonneville assure me that she was a perfect lady,—that Paine's mind was active to the last, that shortly before death he made a humorous retort to Dr. Romaine, that he died after a tranquil night.

Paine died at eight o'clock on the morning of June 8, 1809. Shortly before, two clergymen had invaded his room, and so soon as they spoke about his opinions Paine said: "Let me alone; good morning!" Madame Bonneville asked if he was satisfied with the treatment he had received in her house, and he said "Oh yes." These were the last words of Thomas Paine.

On June 10th Paine's friends assembled to look on his face for the last time. Madame Bonneville took a rose from her breast and laid it on that of her dead benefactor. His adherents were busy men, and mostly poor; they could not undertake

the then difficult journey (nearly twenty-five miles) to the grave beyond New Rochelle. Of the *cortège* that followed Paine a contemptuous account was printed (Aug. 7th) in the *London Packet*:

“ Extract of a letter dated June 20th, Philadelphia, written by a gentleman lately returned from a tour: ‘ On my return from my journey, when I arrived near Harlem, on York island, I met the funeral of Tom Paine on the road. It was going on to East Chester. The followers were two negroes, the next a carriage with six drunken Irishmen, then a riding chair with two men in it, one of whom was asleep, and then an Irish Quaker on horseback. I stopped my sulkey to ask the Quaker what funeral it was; he said it was Paine, and that his friends as well as his enemies were all glad that he was gone, for he had tired his friends out by his intemperance and frailties. I told him that Paine had done a great deal of mischief in the world, and that, if there was any purgatory, he certainly would have a good share of it before the devil would let him go. The Quaker replied, he would sooner take his chance with Paine than any man in New York, on that score. He then put his horse on a trot, and left me.’ ”

The funeral was going to West Chester; one of the vehicles contained Madame Bonneville and her children; and the Quaker was not an Irishman. I have ascertained that a Quaker did follow Paine, and that it was Willett Hicks. Hicks, who has left us his testimony that Paine was “ a good man, and an honest man,” may have said that Paine’s friends were glad that he was gone, for it was only humane to so feel, but all said about “ intemperance and frailties ” is doubtless a gloss of the correspondent, like the “ drunken Irishmen ” substituted for Madame Bonneville and her family.

Could the gentleman of the sulky have appreciated the historic dignity of that little *cortège* he

would have turned his horse's head and followed it. Those two negroes, travelling twenty-five miles on foot, represented the homage of a race for whose deliverance Paine had pleaded from his first essay written in America to his recent entreaty for the President's intervention in behalf of the slaughtered negroes of Domingo.¹ One of those vehicles bore the wife of an oppressed French author, and her sons, one of whom was to do gallant service to this country in the War of 1812, the other to explore the unknown West. Behind the Quaker preacher, who would rather take his chance in the next world with Paine than with any man in New York, was following invisibly another of his family and name, who presently built up Hicksite Quakerism, the real monument of Paine, to whom unfriendly Friends refused a grave.

The grand people of America were not there, the clergy were not there; but beside the negroes stood the Quaker preacher and the French Catholic woman. Madame Bonneville placed her son Benjamin—afterwards General in the United States army—at one end of the grave, and standing herself at the other end, cried, as the earth fell on the coffin: "Oh, Mr. Paine, my son stands here as testimony of the gratitude of America, and I for France!"²

¹ "On the last day men shall wear
On their heads the dust,
As ensign and as ornament
Of their lowly trust."—*Hafiz*.

² No sooner was Paine dead than the ghoul sat gloating upon him. I found in the Rush papers a letter from Cheetham (July 31st) to Benjamin Rush: "Since Mr. Paine's arrival in this city from Washington, when on his way you very properly avoided him, his life, keeping the lowest com-

The day of Paine's death was a day of judgment. He had not been struck blind or dumb ; Satan had not carried him off ; he had lived beyond his three-score years and ten and died peacefully in his bed. The self-appointed messengers of Zeus had managed to vex this Prometheus who brought fire to men, but could not persuade him to whine for mercy, nor did the predicted thunderbolts come. This immunity of Thomas Paine brought the deity of dogma into a dilemma. It could be explained only on the theory of an apology made and accepted by the said deity. Plainly there had to be a recantation somewhere. Either Paine had to recant or Dogma had to recant.

The excitement was particularly strong among pany, has been an uninterrupted scene of filth, vulgarity, and drunkenness. As to the reports, that on his deathbed he had something like compunctious visitings of conscience with regard to his deistical writings and opinions, they are altogether groundless. He resisted very angrily, and with a sort of triumphant and obstinate pride, all attempts to draw him from those doctrines. Much as you must have seen in the course of your professional practice of everything that is offensive in the poorest and most depraved of the species, perhaps you have met with nothing excelling the miserable condition of Mr. Paine. He had scarcely any visitants. It may indeed be said that he was totally neglected and forgotten. Even Mrs. Bournville [*sic*], a woman, I cannot say a Lady, whom he brought with him from Paris, the wife of a Parisian of that name, seemed desirous of hastening his death. He died at Greenwich, in a small room he had hired in a very obscure house. He was hurried to his grave with hardly an attending person. An ill-natured epitaph, written on him in 1796, when it was supposed he was dead, very correctly describes the latter end of his life. He

“ Blasphemes the Almighty, lives in filth like a hog,
Is abandoned in death and interr'd like a dog.”

The object of this letter was to obtain from Rush, for publication, some abuse of Paine ; but the answer honored Paine, save for his heresy, and is quoted by freethinkers as a tribute.

Within a year the grave opened for Cheetham also, and he sank into it branded by the law as the slanderer of a woman's honor, and scourged by the community as a traitor in public life.

the Quakers, who regarded Paine as an apostate Quaker, and perhaps felt compromised by his desire to be buried among them. Willett Hicks told Gilbert Vale that he had been beset by pleading questions. "Did thee never hear him call on Christ?" "As for money," said Hicks, "I could have had any sum." There was found, later on, a Quakeress, formerly a servant in the family of Willett Hicks, not proof against such temptations. She pretended that she was sent to carry some delicacy to Paine, and heard him cry "Lord Jesus have mercy upon me"; she also heard him declare "if the Devil has ever had any agency in any work he has had it in my writing that book [the 'Age of Reason']."¹ Few souls are now so belated as to credit such stories; but my readers may form some conception of the mental condition of the community in which Paine died from the fact that such absurdities were printed, believed, spread through the world. The Quaker servant became a heroine, as the one divinely appointed witness of Tom Paine's recantation.

¹ "Life and Gospel Labors of Stephen Grellet." This "valuable young Friend," as Stephen Grellet calls her, had married a Quaker named Hinsdale. Grellet, a native of France, convert from Voltaire, led the anti-Hicksites, and was led by his partisanship to declare that Elias promised him to suppress his opinions! The cant of the time was that "deism might do to live by but not to die by." But it had been announced in Paine's obituaries that "some days previous to his demise he had an interview with some Quaker gentlemen on the subject [of burial in their graveyard] but as he declined a renunciation of his deistical opinions his anxious wishes were not complied with." But ten years later, when Hick's deism was spreading, death-bed terrors seemed desirable, and Mary (Roscoe) Hinsdale, formerly Grellet's servant also, came forward to testify that the recantation refused by Paine to the "Quaker gentlemen," even for a much desired end, had been previously confided to her for no object at all! The story was published by one Charles Collins, a Quaker, who afterwards admitted to Gilbert Vale his doubts of its truth, adding "some of our *friends* believe she indulges in opiates" (Vale, p. 186).

But in the end it was that same Mary that hastened the resurrection of Thomas Paine. The controversy as to whether Mary was or was not a calumniator ; whether orthodoxy was so irresistible that Paine must needs surrender at last to a servant-girl who told him she had thrown his book into the fire ; whether she was to be believed against her employer, who declared she never saw Paine at all ; all this kept Paine alive. Such boiling up from the abysses, of vulgar credulity, grotesque superstition, such commanding illustrations of the Age of Unreason, disgusted thoughtful Christians.¹

Such was the religion which was supposed by some to have won Paine's heart at last, but which, when mirrored in the controversy over his death, led to a tremendous reaction. The division in the

¹ The excitement of the time was well illustrated in a notable caricature by the brilliant artist John Wesley Jarvis. Paine is seen dead, his pillow "Common Sense," his hand holding a manuscript, "A rap on the knuckles for John Mason." On his arm is the label, "Answer to Bishop Watson." Under him is written : "A man who devoted his whole life to the attainment of two objects—rights of man and freedom of conscience—had his vote denied when living, and was denied a grave when dead !" The Catholic Father O'Brian (a notorious drunkard), with very red nose, kneels over Paine, exclaiming, "Oh you ugly drunken beast !" The Rev. John Mason (Presbyterian) stamps on Paine, exclaiming, "Ah, Tom ! Tom ! thou 'lt get thy frying in hell ; they 'll roast thee like a herring.

" They 'll put thee in the furnace hot,
And on thee bar the door :
How the devils all will laugh
To hear thee burst and roar ! "

The Rev. Dr. Livingston kicks at Paine's head, exclaiming, "How are the mighty fallen, Right fol-de-riddle-lol !" Bishop Hobart kicks the feet, singing :

" Right fol-de-rol, let 's dance and sing,
Tom is dead, God save the king—
The infidel now low doth lie—
Sing Hallelujah—hallelujah ! "

A Quaker turns away with a shovel, saying, " I 'll not bury thee."

Quaker Society swiftly developed. In December, 1826, there was an afternoon meeting of Quakers of a critical kind, some results of which led directly to the separation. The chief speaker was Elias Hicks, but it is also recorded that "Willet Hicks was there, and had a short testimony, which seemed to be impressive on the meeting." He had stood in silence beside the grave of the man whose chances in the next world he had rather take than those of any man in New York; but now the silence is broken.¹

I told Walt Whitman, himself partly a product of Hicksite Quakerism, of the conclusion to which I had been steadily drawn, that Thomas Paine rose again in Elias Hicks, and was in some sort the origin of our one American religion. I said my visit was mainly to get his "testimony" on the subject for my book, as he was born in Hicks' region, and mentions in "Specimen Days" his acquaintance with Paine's friend, Colonel Fellows. Walt said, for I took down his words at the time :

"In my childhood a great deal was said of Paine in our neighborhood, in Long Island. My father, Walter Whitman, was

¹ Curiously enough, Mary (Roscoe) Hinsdale turned up again. She had broken down under the cross-examination of William Cobbett, but he had long been out of the country when the Quaker separation took place. Mary now reported that a distinguished member of the Hicksite Society, Mary Lockwood, had recanted in the same way as Paine. This being proved false, the hysterical Mary sank and remained in oblivion, from which she is recalled only by the Rev. Rip Van Winkle. It was the unique sentence on Paine to recant and yet be damned. This honor belies the indifference expressed in the rune taught children sixty years ago :

" Poor Tom Paine ! there he lies :
 Nobody laughs and nobody cries :
 Where he has gone or how he fares,
 Nobody knows and nobody cares !"

rather favorable to Paine. I remember hearing Elias Hicks preach ; and his look, slender figure, earnestness, made an impression on me, though I was only about eleven. He died in 1830. He is well represented in the bust there, one of my treasures. I was a young man when I enjoyed the friendship of Col. Fellows,—then a constable of the courts ; tall, with ruddy face, blue eyes, snowy hair, and a fine voice ; neat in dress, an old-school gentleman, with a military air, who used to awe the crowd by his looks ; they used to call him ‘Aristides.’ I used to chat with him in Tammany Hall. It was a time when, in religion, there was as yet no philosophical middle-ground ; people were very strong on one side or the other ; there was a good deal of lying, and the liars were often well paid for their work. Paine and his principles made the great issue. Paine was double-damnably lied about. Col. Fellows was a man of perfect truth and exactness ; he assured me that the stories disparaging to Paine personally were quite false. Paine was neither drunken nor filthy ; he drank as other people did, and was a high-minded gentleman. I incline to think you right in supposing a connection between the Paine excitement and the Hicksite movement. Paine left a deep, clear-cut impression on the public mind. Col. Fellows told me that while Paine was in New York he had a much larger following than was generally supposed. After his death a reaction in his favor appeared among many who had opposed him, and this reaction became exceedingly strong between 1820 and 1830, when the division among the Quakers developed. Probably William Cobbett’s conversion to Paine had something to do with it. Cobbett lived in the neighborhood of Elias Hicks, in Long Island, and probably knew him. Hicks was a fair-minded man, and no doubt read Paine’s books carefully and honestly. I am very glad you are writing the Life of Paine. Such a book has long been needed. Paine was among the best and truest of men.”

Paine’s risen soul went marching on in England also. The pretended recantation proclaimed there was exploded by William Cobbett, and the whole controversy over Paine’s works renewed. One after another deist was sent to prison for publishing

Paine's works, the last being Richard Carlile and his wife. In 1819, the year in which William Cobbett carried Paine's bones to England, Richard Carlile and his wife, solely for this offence, were sent to prison,—he for three years, with fine of £1,500, she for two years, with fine of £500.¹ This was a suicidal victory for bigotry. When these two came out of prison they found that wealthy gentlemen had provided for them an establishment in Fleet Street, where these books were thenceforth sold unmolested. Mrs. Carlile's petition to the House of Commons awakened that body and the whole country. When Richard Carlile entered prison it was as a captive deist; when he came out the freethinkers of England were generally atheists.

But what was this atheism? Merely another Declaration of Independence. Common sense and common justice were entering into religion as they were entering into government. Such epithets as "atheism," "infidelity," were but labels of outlawry which the priesthood of all denominations

¹ I have before me an old fly-leaf picture, issued by Carlile in the same year. It shows Paine in his chariot advancing against Superstition. Superstition is a snaky-haired demoness, with poison-cup in one hand and dagger in the other, surrounded by instruments of torture, and treading on a youth. Behind her are priests, with mask, crucifix, and dagger. Burning faggots surround them with a cloud, behind which are worshippers around an idol, with a priest near by, upholding a crucifix before a man burning at the stake. Attended by fair genii, who uphold a banner inscribed, "Moral Rectitude." Paine advances, uplifting in one hand the mirror of Truth, in the other his "Age of Reason." There are ten stanzas describing the conflict, Superstition being described as holding

"in vassalage a doating World,
Till Paine and Reason burst upon the mind,
And Truth and Deism their flag unfurled."

pronounced upon men who threatened their throne, precisely as "sedition" was the label of outlawry fixed by Pitt on all hostility to George III. In England, atheism was an insurrection of justice against any deity diabolical enough to establish the reign of terror in that country or any deity worshipped by a church which imprisoned men for their opinions. Paine was a theist, but he arose legitimately in his admirer Shelley, who was punished for atheism. Knightly service was done by Shelley in the struggle for the Englishman's right to read Paine. If any enlightened religious man of to-day had to choose between the godlessness of Shelley and the godliness that imprisoned good men for their opinions, he would hardly select the latter. The genius of Paine was in every word of Shelley's letter to Lord Ellenborough on the punishment of Eaton for publishing the "Age of Reason."¹

In America "atheism" was never anything but the besom which again and again has cleared the

¹ "Whence is any right derived, but that which power confers, for persecution? Do you think to convert Mr. Eaton to your religion by embittering his existence? You might force him by torture to profess your tenets, but he could not believe them except you should make them credible, which perhaps exceeds your power. Do you think to please the God you worship by this exhibition of your zeal? If so the demon to whom some nations offer human hecatombs is less barbarous than the Deity of civilized society. . . . Does the Christian God, whom his followers eulogize as the deity of humility and peace—he, the regenerator of the world, the meek reformer—authorise one man to rise against another, and, because lictors are at his beck, to chain and torture him as an infidel? When the Apostles went abroad to convert the nations, were they enjoined to stab and poison all who disbelieved the divinity of Christ's mission? . . . The time is rapidly approaching—I hope that you, my Lord, may live to behold its arrival—when the Mahometan, the Jew, the Christian, the Deist, and the Atheist will live together in one community, equally sharing the benefits which arrive from its association, and united in the bonds of charity and brotherly love."

human mind of phantasms represented in outrages on honest thinkers. In Paine's time the phantasm which was called Jehovah represented a grossly ignorant interpretation of the Bible; the revelation of its monstrous character, represented in the hatred, slander, falsehood, meanness, and superstition, which Jarvis represented as crows and vultures hovering near the preachers kicking Paine's dead body, necessarily destroyed the phantasm, whose pretended power was proved nothing more than that of certain men to injure a man who out-reasoned them. Paine's fidelity to his unanswered argument was fatal to the consecrated phantasm. It was confessed to be ruling without reason, right, or humanity, like the King from whom "Common Sense," mainly, had freed America, and not by any "Grace of God" at all, but through certain reverend Lord Norths and Lord Howes. Paine's peaceful death, the benevolent distribution of his property by a will affirming his Theism, represented a posthumous and potent conclusion to the "Age of Reason."

Paine had aimed to form in New York a Society for Religious Inquiry, also a Society of Theophilanthropy. The latter was formed, and his posthumous works first began to appear, shortly after his death, in an organ called *The Theophilanthropist*. But his movement was too cosmopolitan to be contained in any local organization. "Thomas Paine," said President Andrew Jackson to Judge Hertell, "Thomas Paine needs no monument made by hands; he has erected a monument in the hearts of all lovers of liberty." The like may

be said of his religion : Theophilanthropy, under a hundred translations and forms, is now the fruitful branch of every religion and every sect. The real cultivators of skepticism,—those who ascribe to deity biblical barbarism, and the savagery of nature,—have had their day.

The removal and mystery of Paine's bones appear like some page of Mosaic mythology.¹ An English caricature pictured Cobbett seated on Paine's coffin, in a boat named RIGHTS OF MAN, rowed by NEGRO SLAVES.

“A singular coincidence [says Dr. Francis] led me to pay a visit to Cobbett at his country seat, within a couple of miles of the city, on the island, on the very day that he had exhumed the bones of Paine, and shipped them for England. I will here repeat the words which Cobbett gave utterance to at the friendly interview our party had with him. ‘I have just performed a duty, gentlemen, which has been too long delayed : you have neglected too long the remains of Thomas Paine. I have done myself the honor to disinter his bones. I have removed them from New Rochelle. I have dug them up ; they are now on their way to England. When I myself return, I shall cause them to speak the common sense of the

¹ The bones of Thomas Paine were landed in Liverpool November 21, 1819. The monument contemplated by Cobbett was never raised. There was much parliamentary and municipal excitement. A Bolton town-crier was imprisoned nine weeks for proclaiming the arrival. In 1836 the bones passed with Cobbett's effects into the hands of a Receiver (West). The Lord Chancellor refusing to regard them as an asset, they were kept by an old day-laborer until 1844, when they passed to B. Tilley, 13 Bedford Square, London, a furniture dealer. In 1849 the empty coffin was in possession of J. Chennell, Guildford. The silver plate bore the inscription “Thomas Paine, died June 8, 1809, aged 72.” In 1854, Rev. R. Ainslie (Unitarian) told E. Truelove that he owned “the skull and the right hand of Thomas Paine,” but evaded subsequent inquiries. The removal caused excitement in America. Of Paine's gravestone the last fragment was preserved by his friends of the Bayeaux family, and framed on their wall. In November, 1839, the present marble monument at New Rochelle was erected.

great man ; I shall gather together the people of Liverpool and Manchester in one assembly with those of London, and those bones will effect the reformation of England in Church and State.' ”

Mr. Badeau, of New Rochelle, remembers standing near Cobbett's workmen while they were digging up the bones, about dawn. There is a legend that Paine's little finger was left in America, a fable, perhaps, of his once small movement, now stronger than the loins of the bigotry that refused him a vote or a grave in the land he so greatly served. As to his bones, no man knows the place of their rest to this day. His principles rest not. His thoughts, untraceable like his dust, are blown about the world which he held in his heart. For a hundred years no human being has been born in the civilized world without some spiritual tincture from that heart whose every pulse was for humanity, whose last beat broke a fetter of fear, and fell on the throne of thrones.