THOMAS PAINE: FATHER OF REPUBLICS

By Paul Desjardins

I HAVE been attempting to learn some true details concerning Thomas Paine, and I will explain my motive for doing so as clearly as I am able. After satisfying myself as to the real meaning of the word "republic," I wished to discover the reason why I am a republican: Is it because of certain influences or on account of a certain intellectual necessity? Then I asked myself in what sense and to what degree are all thinking men of the present day republicans, and at what point do they cease to agree and begin to quarrel on the subject. Afterwards I formulated the modern idea of "republic," and wrote it down in the three closely connected propositions which follow:

The greatest possible liberty should be desired for the greatest possible number of men, and no liberty should be assured to anyone which is not assured to all. A principle of justice.

This equal extension of every liberty, won for everybody by the law, can only be sheltered from usurpation when all equally concur in making the law. A lesson of experience.
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But this power of making the law is only guaranteed to all, even to the weak, when the force which executes the law is controlled by all. Rejecting, then, the government of a single individual, we try to found by a written contract, or Constitution, mutual government, as rightly conceived by moderns, under the ancient name of republic. An arrangement also suggested by experience.

The first two propositions have long been regarded as almost truths of common sense. Posted in every French primary school in the very words of the decree of the Constituent Assembly of 1792, they have been inoculated into every people, during the century which has closed, along with our Western civilization. The third is regarded as an opinion rather than an absolute truth, but it is an opinion that is growing, an opinion that is embraced in a blind, yet vigorous kind of fashion by four out of every five Frenchmen.

Such, then, is the idea whose origin I have been seeking. Now, it is clear that I cannot find the origin of the first proposition in the ancient world, for, although it has given us the word republic, it assigned to it a different significance. The Greek and Roman cities were built up by means of a scaffolding of classes with slavery as a foundation. The fine discipline to which the
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Youth of these cities was subjected owed its perfection to the refusal to see that an isolated person had any rights against the despotism of the community. Even conscience was not sheltered against public ordinances, for religion was also the concern of the state. So far was the republic from guaranteeing the "rights of man" and of the citizen, that it exacted their sacrifice. And this was not really an outrage, because the desire of independence was either not felt at all or was considered the mark of a bad citizen. Thus the Republicans of 1792, when they believed themselves to be the successors of those of Rome or Sparta, were altogether mistaken. "I must endeavor," I said to myself, "to gain a more accurate conception of the matter."

Apparently, the idea of a state that protects the "rights of man" supposes that man has rights actually, and then that he has a destination, for what is the use of a permit to travel except it is given to a traveler who is going somewhere? But this idea, that man is traveling somewhere was introduced, as we all know, by a great prophet, who said: "Father, Thy kingdom come!" and filled hearts with the expectation of future justice. We are thus induced to believe that
there is a Christian source of liberty, and we must push our inquiries in this direction.

As to the other republican thesis, that of equality, it also assumes the belief in a God who is not nature; for in nature there is no equality, and we improve nature in order to restore to the weak their place in life. In presence of the mind of God, visible grandeurs have no value, while invisible ones exist, perhaps, where their existence is least suspected; and so from fear of making a wrong estimate of the value of some particular man, we are driven to the conclusion that one man is as good as another, and that equality is justice. Thus we are obliged to have recourse to a Christian source again.

In fact, no book takes so little notice of social hierarchies as the Gospels do. At no period has a sincerer effort been made at equality than during the early times of Christianity; and, still later, wherever the spirit of Christ breathes freely, emancipated from Roman imperialism, little fraternities have been formed, real republics in which election and universal suffrage were the only source of power.

After the Reformation of the Seventeenth Century, these republican organizations were multiplied and secularized. Puritans and Quak-
ers, especially, establish mutual government, draw up constitutions, compacts, covenants or agreements, supported by a declaration of the "rights of man," on whatever coasts they select for their settlements: in Holland, in Cromwell’s England for a moment, on the virgin shores of America permanently. And America is probably the teacher—a teacher but half understood—of modern France, who, in her turn, is teaching Europe.

Such was the bird’s-eye view which I took of the idea now covered by the word republic. To verify this hypothesis, it became necessary to find out who were the men that, either as discoverers or imitators, had transplanted the idea from England to America, from America to France, and from the order of religious doctrines to the order of secular facts.

Now, Thomas Paine suddenly struck across the path of my investigation as the mediator I had been seeking; not, indeed, the only one, but the chief. He was born an Englishman and belonged to the sect of Quakers; he emigrated to America, and when the colonies were still hesitating as to their action in their quarrel with the mother country, he spoke out plainly for autonomy, and then for a republic.
Finally, he came to France, and there, too, when, during the Legislative Assembly, men were disconcerted in presence of an incredible crisis, he spoke out plainly for a republic; he suggested doubtless to his friend Condorcet the plan of the first republican Constitution; he sat himself, although a foreigner, in the National Convention and on the Constitutional Committee, and he did not abandon the French Revolution until it had degenerated into the Terror, demagogism and, at last, the Empire. His career makes me think of those insects that fecundate flowers by transporting the pollen through space. If we had a really good biography of him it would, I imagine, contain a complete epitomized genealogy of the modern idea of a republic.

The name of "Payne" is frequently mentioned by the historians of the French Revolution, and always in such relations as prove that in the opinion of his contemporaries it was a very great name indeed. He figures among the eighteen illustrious foreign philosophers upon whom the Legislative Assembly conferred on August 6, 1792, the title of French citizen, for "having prepared the enfranchisement of peoples"; Wilberforce, Washington and Schiller are on the
same list. He is elected to the Convention by four Departments, although neither a Frenchman nor a candidate, and absent.

Just imagine the popularity a foreign author would need to have to-day to win in this fashion the senatorial electors of a province! Would even Tolstoi succeed in doing so? The landing of Paine at Calais might be compared to that of President Krüger some time ago at Marseilles, with its salvos of artillery, its banquets, flags and orations.

He was manifestly regarded as the real liberator of America. Danton said to him: "What you have done for the happiness and liberty of your country, I have in vain tried to do for mine." Brissot declared that the despots of Europe feared Paine more than an army. Later on, M. J. Chenier says: "He is endeared to all the friends of humanity"; Bonaparte, on his return from Italy, believes it his duty to visit him in his room, where he tells him that his Droits de l'homme has been the companion of his pillow, and that the author of such a work deserves a statue of gold.

And now, in the midst of all this, what is the action really exercised by this living idol? I no longer find any traces of it. What has he ac-
complished in the legislative work of the Revolution? We do not know. He is always to be found among the small group of the doctrinaire republicans of 1792, Condorcet, Brissot, Grégoire; he is their friend; we should, however, like to know if he is their inspirer. But what remains on the morrow of a conversation, a phrase, a word, which, perhaps on the evening before has solved a difficulty and lit up the entire path? Is anyone ever truly acquainted with the first author of a thought?

As to the famous books of Paine, "Common Sense," the "Crisis," the "Rights of Man," "The Age of Reason," at first they have a sale of hundreds of thousands of copies, and are translated into all languages. The first of these books is bound with the Contrat social of Rousseau in the same French edition, like a Bible in two parts. Furthermore, in 1832, the Sociétés des droits de l'homme et du citoyen draw from it a Catéchisme républicain for the political education of young Frenchmen. Then, according as the republican thesis begins to make its way, these republican writings lose their luster and their audacity. Nobody cares to look at them, because everyone knows what they are. Not being poems, but agents of revolution, their very
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success puts them out of fashion, for they are no longer useful. Which of us can say he has read them to-day?

In countries where the English language is spoken, these writings, with their robust eloquence, should, one would imagine, have remained popular. But in these countries Tom Paine has lost his reputation; and this is very natural; he has offended every prejudice to which the people of the Bible and of Custom cling with a sort of fierce timidity. Tom Paine has proved faithless to the mother country, then to the religion of his ancestors; he sneers at English traditions, denies the divinity of Christ—so Great Britain will have nothing to do with him; he is rude to Washington—so America will have nothing to do with him; he votes against the death of Louis XVI, so the French revolutionists will have nothing to do with him.

Finally, he does not belong to any compact group. He is an outsider, let him take the consequences. For all these reasons, he is bound to be, then, a wicked man, a drunkard, an atheist, a sort of antichrist. Even the Quakers repudiate him. During his lifetime tracts are published prophesying that he will be soon carried off by his boon companion Satan. While waiting for
this catastrophe, the members of certain pious clubs burn him in effigy; he is caricatured, and has the ears of an ass on plates and beer-mugs; honest citizens have the initials T. P. stamped on the soles of their boots so that they can always trample on this heretic and renegade to his country. On the news of his death, patriots sing in the taverns:

The Fox has lost his tail,
The Ass has stopped his braying,
The Devil has carried off Tom Paine—
John Bull forever!

Never has a friend of the people suffered so much from the people's hatred. Consequently, his books and his fame have been flung into the same common ditch, as usually happens to those whom society repudiates. This is doubtless the reason why, in my conversations with Englishmen and Americans, I have never been able to bring the singular personage whose attraction I felt out of the darkness that envelops him.

It is only by a very careful examination of his biographies, and especially of his diary, that I have finally succeeded in gaining some conception of the circumstances under the influence of which his idea of a republic took form and substance. And, in the second place, a similar ex-
amination of the content of this idea will show us that it had been until then unheard of, particularly in France, and that it still holds within itself, even at the present hour, a certain significance that has been, so far, unperceived.

The work which M. Aulard has published on the *Histoire politique de la Révolution française* throws considerable light upon this second point. We can easily deduce from this book that the French people, even in 1791, disliked the very notion of a republic, and that the latter owed its realization to the abrupt shock of events, every other issue being barred, and not to the preconceived design of any of the public men of the period, save and except of the man whom I regard as its true inventor, the phlegmatic and determined man who inferred the necessity of the republic from principles independent of the hour and of casualty.

From his earliest years Paine had experienced all the miseries that crush the life out of the humble, of those who are weighed down by the enormous framework of society. As he possessed no other title but that of man upon which to base his protest against being trampled underfoot, his was a condition very favorable to the discovery that man in society has, simply as man,
certain rights. For that matter, there was not the slightest bitterness in his knowledge of the situation. He never had a thought of personal success. Gracious Heaven! success in what? He took very little interest in himself. His carelessness in this respect was perfect. Provided he had leisure to read, to meet a few friends at night at a debating club where he could have the pleasure of displaying his eloquence and the force of his logic, he was satisfied with his fate. Marvelously endowed as a dialectitian, he had no passions except intellectual ones, and all his training was received in lecture-rooms and halls of discussion.

It is by this intellectual training that, when he sails for America, at the age of thirty-eight, all his thoughts have been completely developed and have received their final form. For their expression he is gifted with an eloquence, not as yet displayed in public, but already admired by his friends. Moreover, although indigent and unknown, he is not disturbed by the loss of the years which are flying or by his failure to open a path to the modest employments which, one after another, have been shut against him. He is tranquil. He quits England, where he can no longer find means of subsistence, and he
leaves, not as an apostle of the enfranchisement of a people, but simply as a workman who hopes to earn four or five guineas a month.

Thomas Paine, then, is already a decided republican. All that future experience in political affairs can teach him is the difficulties to be overcome in establishing a republic, not the duty and necessity of establishing it.

And every idea which will be the basis of his actions has its origin in three facts: he is an Englishman, he is one of the common people, he is a Quaker, and all three combine to give him the republican temperament. Now, this republican temperament may also be recognized among several of the countrymen and contemporaries of Paine. In good truth, it is among the unbending and sturdy English spirits of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries that we encounter the pioneers of that right of resistance to oppression which is affirmed so decidedly in our French Declaration of Rights.

Paine brought to America this obstinate Britannic conviction of the intangibility of his rights, and he transported it to France. It is shown in his letter to the Committee of General Safety, written on September 19, 1794: “Citizen repre-
sentatives, I demand an inquiry. Justice is due to every man. I demand only justice.”

The same tranquil spirit of resistance also marks his opposition in 1802 to the Government of the First Consul: “I cannot live with ease in the States of Bonaparte; though he governed like an angel, the memory would always haunt me that he has perjured himself”; and, in rendering judgment, he never raises his voice; but he makes his meaning clear.

We have here, then, an authentic picture of a republican temperament furnished by old England to the new France, at a time when the latter was searching in the “Lives” of Plutarch and elsewhere for the type of man that would harmonize with free institutions. But the way had also been opened in another manner by royal old England for the modern republic; for, ever since the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, the mode of government had been discussed there, at first by the parliamentary opposition, then, among the people, by everyone.

The forums of debate were not, as in France, salons in which the fatuous self-conceit engendered by the presence of women found full satisfaction in gibes and sarcasms directed at an opponent, and in dogmatic assertion; but taverns,
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clubs, *A Society for the maintenance of the Declaration of Rights*, *A Society of Constitutional Studies*, *The Society of the Friends of the Revolution*, in which each disputant exhausted the logical bearings of every question. Let us add that the habit of theological controversies between the various sects, to which England and Scotland had been accustomed for two centuries, was also very efficacious.

Brought into collision with such influences, mere idle dogmatism is no longer tenable; the disputant must have a fixed notion in his own mind of what he believes, must define it clearly, and separate it from what he only half believes. This is why nearly all the English radicals of the Nineteenth Century are emancipated clergymen, like the Rev. John Horne Tooke, Dr. Richard Price and Dr. Joseph Priestley. They are exactly contemporaries of Thomas Paine, his collaborators, his friends. The little group which they form unite and solder together the English Revolution of 1688 to the French Revolution of 1789.

These clubs have a checkered history. They were often the antechamber of the royal prisons. But in these isolated clubs, always menaced with annihilation, certain logicians, sprung from the
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people, distilled as it were into an alembic the people's sufferings and complaints, and afterwards converted them into clear ideas. The programme of fraternal government was thus elaborated in darkness, article after article. Thus, the republican spirit, which is the spirit of free research, the spirit of criticism, applied to things political, was sharpened in the same country in which the republican temperament was steeled.

It is not, in fact, sufficient to set up a government of liberty, even though wide enough and strong enough to resist the shocks of brute force; a cool head, which is not affected by demonstrations and cannot be magnetized by words, is also needed. Now a discipline of that kind is acquired only by familiarity with scientific methods or by the habit of debate in a small club, confined to its members. As Paine was an Englishman of the Eighteenth Century, he had the benefit of the latter.

And so, no sooner has this petty custom-house clerk, this proletarian, as we may almost call him, landed on American soil than he is at once able to edit magazines, hold his own in the most complex controversies with the ablest statesmen, jurists and theologians. From a confused apperception he is able to draw the enlightening
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formula, the one fit word;—and of the important part that the nomenclator plays in a propaganda we have numerous examples: the nomenclator is the person who supplies ideas with wings.

Paine was also an adept at discussion, and, at first, discussion with himself; he knew how to extract ideas from the maze of impulsive prejudices. Shaded in a garden by some linden tree, or in the evening around the tea-cups, it is his pleasure to hold a debate, not on the chances of this party or that succeeding, which is, in his opinion only a "jockeyship," but on the need of an entire upheaval, if total justice is to be realized.

Consequently, when, later on, he will stand in presence of the Conventionals, their discourses and their plans will strike him as the vague amplifications of young collegians, gleaned by them from their desultory readings. The only persons who look to him like adult statesmen are Condorcet and Brissot, who have traveled, who have seen and reflected. The others make the same use of words that they might make of a gesture or a cry, to relieve their nerves, not to objectivize their thought. They are children. But, then, he has the advantage over the French
of two centuries of political self-cross-examination and self-possession.

This statement, however, requires some correction. Although an Englishman by temperament and education, he does not belong to the England of the classes, the England that is harsh to the poor. He is poor himself, he is one of the common people; and this fact, taken in connection with his miserable years of apprenticeship, is not, perhaps, without consequence for the future of the republic.

In the first place, he is thereby liberated from that special English characteristic which would have limited his action to his own country; for the man who has not always earned enough to insure him his dinner has, by practical experiment, learned the grievous condition of human life in every country. Diversity and non-comprehension are the concomitants of ease and comfort. Habituated to a frugal table, Paine will never change his customary fare. His food will always be of the simplest and plainest. Poverty is so much his normal condition that for him it is no longer poverty.

This ex-staymaker, who has witnessed the sale of his shabby furniture on the street before his door, will always remain on both continents the
friend of the poor, because he knows what their life is, and on account of this impoverished condition (which by the way is the natural condition of man), he is as exempt from class prejudices as from national prejudices. A few aristocrats in London had, indeed, championed the cause of equality; but with them this was an idea, a caprice; it becomes an appetite in those to whom inequality signifies the extreme difficulty of mere existence; and it is appetite alone that invigorates the will and loads the musket.

It is well to remark, in fact, that nearly all the English radical associates of Paine were born far below the middle class; they are workmen, petty shopkeepers, petty country clergymen; they have not, therefore, an atom of class pride about them. They are not at all likely to be satisfied with a middle-class government; they make very little difference between the Tories who believe in the divine right of kings, and the Whigs who believe in the divine right of the gentry; as far as they are concerned, they will be satisfied only with complete political equality for the workmen. This is no small innovation.

Recollect that the very opposite thesis has been supported by the philosophers who acted as guides to the French revolutionists: Turgot,
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Rousseau, Mably, Condorcet. Rendered distrustful by the spectacle of the destructive results of demagogism in ancient times, they exclude from the right of suffrage "the stupid and bestial populace" (Rousseau), "those dregs of humanity destined to serve only as ballast to the vessel of society" (Mably). Consequently, the democracy will be limited to property-holders alone, who have a stake in the country, and who, being fixed to the soil, participate in the stability of the nation.

This opinion will take the form of law in July, 1789, with the distinction formulated by Sieyès between active and passive citizens. Thus the Revolution will try to install the middle class in power. Certainly, the arguments alleged in favor of this are not destitute of wisdom; nevertheless, they are of too different a character and sprung too suddenly not to have been suggested by another motive, at once simple, involuntary and secret: the semi-economic, semi-intellectual prejudices of parvenus against the class of the poor and ignorant. Thus the modern republic was stopped on its road.

At that moment, Paine and his friends on the other side of the Channel, who had at first acclaimed, in the destruction of the Bastile and the
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Declaration of the Rights of Man, the success of their long struggle, suddenly come to a halt; they had believed in a radical advance; this is but a Whig movement. They perceive that the French Revolution is not made by the entire people, that it is being developed outside the humbler classes, which it has forgotten. This conclusion is still more strongly enforced in 1792 by the fact that among the attorneys, notaries, priests and doctors who are his colleagues in the Convention, there is scarcely a single artisan except himself.

He will, then, be a supporter of equality, not less firm than Robespierre, but less ostentatious. And the reason of this is that, while Robespierre has discovered the dignity of labor in the home of the Duplains, with whom he is lodging, Tom Paine remembers that he has been a workman himself. The man who has made stays, rolled tobacco and forged bars of iron will not experience in his contact with the mobs of the faubourgs that disgust and terror at the aspect of their blackened hands, their animal faces, which drawing-room democrats, like Buzot, Madame Roland and the other Girondins cannot surmount, and which will cost them so dear, and the republic also.

Thomas Paine, then, will know how to speak
to the people like one who is of the people. He will speak with such limpid clearness that the first-comer understands all he says, for what he says reflects the experience of the listener. It is by this mark that I recognize the man of the people: he is a man intelligible to all the people; he is not a specialist in any direction, and certainly not in books, journals or other writings, which tend to accustom the mind to act on signs any emolument from it.

Now the man we are discussing exactly fits this description. In what profession shall we class him? If the nation were divided into trades and professions, he might be regarded as a type of the manual laborer or of the lower class of employees; but he would also be a type of the engineers, for, after applying his sound common sense to the study of the arched threads by means of which spiders hang their webs, he drew therefrom the plans of the first metallic bridge constructed in Europe; and of the hygienists also, for, having applied this same sound common sense to the etiology of yellow fever, he proved that it is propagated in harbors by the putrefaction of inorganic matter; and of astronomy as well, for, always exercising the same sound common sense on everything he saw, he inferred,
twenty years before Herschel, that the fixed stars are suns; finally, he might be taken as a type of the statesman and author; for his books stir up nations, although he has never made a profession of literature or thought of drawing any emolument from it.

His mind is free, because it is altogether concrete. When we read his pamphlets, we are struck by the fact that his eloquence is compounded of things rather than of words. His imagination adheres strictly to reality, it does not devote itself to expression for the purpose of ornament, but to the impression in order to render it fixed and permanent as well as vivid and naked.

He deduces the rights of man from incidents in his own biography: he sees again the Duke of Grafton passing in his carriage through the lines of the bent backs of the Thetford magistrates, the judges, in their long wigs at the Lenten assizes, hanging men and women for breaches of the game laws, and the grimaces on the pallid faces of the Dissenters, framed by the pillory at the corner of the market-place. His conclusion that the republic is "a government of justice" is not dictated to him by Plutarch's "Life of Lycurgus," but by what he has dis-
covered during his walks in the streets or in the country. Upon this groundwork of concrete and common experience he reasons, asserting that the common sense is the only authority, and that a blacksmith's apprentice is as likely to possess this common sense as a doctor of theology.

His method of reasoning is also common; there is no preliminary imitation, no technical jargon—"You have not read Plutarch? Nor Montesquieu? Nor Rousseau?—that is a pity; but it has nothing to do with my demonstration. I do not suppose that you are in possession of any fundamental principle except common sense."

"Common Sense" is precisely the title of Paine's first pamphlet, which is the first defense of the modern republic. It was absolutely necessary that the author should express himself in natural and direct language; for in it he had to give public expression to the thought of everyone, and to do so with such simple naturalness that it appeals to the humblest, who think it is what they have always been thinking themselves. Then, as evidence is piled on evidence, he manifests a sort of exultant gaiety. The logic is blended with joviality; for common sense has its source in the natural man, and so we find,
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here and there, certain hearty, downright words, that will force the honest mechanic who reads them to break into a triumphant laugh between two whiffs of his pipe. There is nothing in his discourses that resembles in the slightest degree the rhetorical abstractions of our Revolutionary orators or their melodramatic emphasis.

Thus in Thomas Paine, although he is a worker at everything, there is no specialization; he does not belong to this or that trade, or to this or that class, certainly he is not a bourgeois; neither is he an anti-bourgeois. The very real life he has led has made of him a man of the commons, in the fullest and noblest sense. But it is a religious doctrine that authorizes and consecrates this sentiment of equality, which in him has been the result of experience—in fact, a law of God. This doctrine is that of Jesus Christ and of the few who are faithful to Him. So when a modern lays down the principle that equality among men must be absolute, is essentially absolute, you can boldly conjecture that his starting-point is the Gospel, whether he knows it or not.

You may see this from the example of those English radicals of the Eighteenth Century who base the claims of the workingman on the Our Father. And among the French democrats
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who, in 1789, 1790 and 1791, oppose the pretensions of the middle class to exclusive privilege, we find that they are chiefly priests, educated in Gospel meditation: the Abbé Grégoire, who says: “It is time to honor the indigent”; the Abbé de Cournand, professor in the Collège de France, who writes that the poor: “are also our brothers, having all the same rights to the common heritage”; the Abbé Claude Fauchet, who declares: “All rights are common property in a well ordered society.”

Having now reached down to the deep religious roots of the republic, let us try to show how far religious beliefs affected the principles of Thomas Paine:

He was born a Quaker Christian, and he retained a certain Quaker bias even after he had ceased to be a Christian, which occurred at a very early age. He was hardly eight years old when his conscience revolted against the official theology; he refused to believe that a God and a Father required the bloody sacrifice of His only Son in order to appease His hatred toward humanity. His first religious impressions persisted long after he had publicly denied them, and for this reason especially: the Quakers depend on internal illumination rather than on any dogma.
or sacrament, and this was the lantern by whose light Paine had discovered the interior world; he never at any period entirely departed from his first point of view. The doctrine of his duty to fraternity had always been his religion; it was his philosophy.

Such lessons assuredly had their effect on Thomas Paine. Fortified from childhood against the glamor which begins in childhood for grown men, he weighed kings and nobles by their weight as men and no more; George III, his own prince, is, in his judgment, simply a poor madman. Later on, when our Frenchmen experience the same thrill before Louis XVI, anointed with the holy chrism, that they might before the Holy Sacrament, and afterwards, when by a natural reaction, they throw themselves on him with the fury of a profaner of the sacred Host, the ex-Quaker deliberates as composedly as if the fate of a trapped mouse was only at stake. The personage who makes a whole people tremble, now with veneration, now with fury, is for him a weak-minded, but not an ill-minded creature. He measures dukes, peers and all persons of rank with the same tranquillity. In short, there is not a fiction, not a challenge to good sense, not an obstacle to republics, that
has not been effaced from his mind by his Quaker phlegm. Even the glory and the great name of Washington do not impose upon him. Believing that the conduct of the hero has been marked in his own case by duplicity, he plainly tells him so. Thus the Quakers, respectful to God alone, were the first to break "those cords," as Pascal calls them, "which attach respect to such and such a person, and which are simply cords of the imagination."

Another inequality is that which our sympathy places between our own countrymen and the people of other lands. There again the imagination plays a part. The Quakers are too unimaginative to be "nationalists"; they find in every country the same humanity of flesh and spirit of which they feel they are members. Paine, then, passes from England to America, then to France, then back again to America without the slightest quiver of emotional leave-taking on his departure from one land for another. He is in exile nowhere, for "my country is the world," he says, after the ancient stoic. This "internationalism" of Paine, as was afterwards that of Lamartine, is offensive to the passionate plebeians, who elevate impulses to the rank of virtues. Thus, Marat, pure nationalist,
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as well as perfect demagogue (he was born at Neufchatel, but that does not disturb him) says to a friend of Paine: "The French are mad to allow foreigners to live among them. They should cut off their ears, let them bleed for a few days, then cut off their heads." Thus the hatred of Marat for Paine is a natural thing, for they are two mental structures one of which implies the negation of the other. Still, it is in France that Paine hopes to find the clearest comprehension of his humanitarian doctrine. France is a country of common sense even more than of imagination; for two centuries her philosophers have had an immense audience, and an audience not limited by frontiers; she has inaugurated her Revolution by the affirmation of principles which are essential to mankind.

As "Humanus," then, Paine attaches himself to France as the missionary of that progressive enfranchisement which he proclaims. But he does not wish her to be an armed missionary. What Paine desires is not the clash of nationalities, still less their effacement, but a federation among them, with a "Parliament of Man," in which reason, by the agency of perpetual arbitration, would organize peace. Paris should be its seat, for it is of Paris that men speak the most.
There a common flag would float composed of the flags of all nations, a veritable scarf of iris in which all the shades of the prism would succeed one another as in the celestial bow. A dream, no doubt. No matter; in the colors of the dream I recognize the mark of a mind which Christianity has liberated from all tribal fetishism. How could Quakers, who call themselves the Society of Friends, say: “Our friendship stops here; this is its exact frontier; beyond, there is a clear field for violence”? Thus the pupil of Quakers, instead of representing to himself society as a tower with stones superimposed upon one another and without any ladder, sees transitions everywhere, the possibilities of ascent everywhere, and he holds it as a sacred obligation never to prevent them, never to keep the people down.

Thomas Paine, then, felt in the very recesses of his soul that be belonged to a society of persons who had no authority over others, no claim to exercise power of any kind, and who were not considered entitled to any consideration whatever. And, in addition to the severities of power, they had to endure the insults of the brutal mob. On every side they found all the outlets closed against them, which, if they were open, would
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have allowed the Quakers to enjoy the ease and comfort that render men insensible to injustice. These were fortunate persecutions, and from them has sprung the determination to subordinate all other social ends to respect for the rights of man. If the affirmation of the first republican thesis is a progress of justice, this progress had to be won from the very impossibility of living otherwise, which was made manifest by innumerable errors and sufferings, since forgotten. It is the common law, already recognized by the ancient sages: "Injustice gives birth to Sorrow, and Sorrow gives birth to Justice."

I have tried to answer this question, in which, as it seemed to me, all the permanent interest of the career of Thomas Paine is contained: how did it happen that, about the year 1770, an obscure man, in a dependent position, the subject of an ancient monarchy, was able to conceive, and that with absolute assurance, a certain political system as being both desirable and realizable, which to-day appears very difficult to be realized, although dictated by sound sense, and which was then unheard of? Most decidedly, it was not a sudden and fortuitous outburst. Such a discovery was the result of long preparations under
divers influences of which some were explicit traditions and others latent instincts.

It is clear that heredity, social condition and religion acted together upon Thomas Paine, who was simultaneously an Englishman, a man of the people and a Quaker Christian. The formula, according to which these forces were tempered, was simply his own temperament. If, for example, he separated himself from the Quakers of Pennsylvania and New Jersey because their principles of non-resistance would have led them to endure everything from the Crown of England rather than resolve to stuff bullets into their muskets; if he gave, to the great scandal of these peaceful people, the signal for the battle in behalf of right, it was because another English characteristic of quite an opposite nature had tempered his Quakerism; on the other hand, there was none of the English arrogance about him which might have hindered him from becoming a naturalized French citizen, and he remained to the very end quite simply a friend of the human race; and the reason for his action in both cases is obvious: he had been as closely associated with a Christian community as he was with popular life; if, finally, he had freed himself, on attaining maturity, from the Quaker principle of passive
resistance, it was because that opulent plebeian nature of his could no longer be kept apart from the joys of efficacious activity. We may be assured, moreover, that his practical knowledge of science would in any case have conducted him to a religion of pure reason.

All this work of combination had been accomplished in him during the period which in every fecund spirit is essentially the period of fecundity: namely that of obscure, meditative groping. Such a spirit accomplishes nothing, men say; but it is accomplishing its own formation.

After his arrival in America, none of the adventures of Thomas Paine will modify his convictions, which then received their final form. From this moment his inner biography loses almost all importance, and, at the same time, his external biography begins to become singularly striking.

It is my intention to dwell only slightly on the latter.

To pass from London to New York in that day was to change from sky to sky, not from kingdom to kingdom. On the other side of the Atlantic, the English subject was still in England. There was nothing to foretell to the indigent pilgrim (nor to anyone else, either) that the
American colonies were on the eve of constituting themselves a distinct nation, and that he had just arrived in time to assist them. When he returns to his natal soil twelve years later, this American land, which he is now seeking as a temporary asylum against famine, will have become his mother country forever. That nation is our mother country really whose true destiny we have discovered and adopted as our own; who, therefore, could be more authentically American among the sons of the first settlers on the coast than this newly landed emigrant? Having first discovered in himself the goal assigned to the new nation, he is the first to point it out to all the others. He is as much American as Jeremiah is a Jew and Demosthenes an Athenian.

It was in an article, chiefly directed toward the suppression of the slave trade and signed Humanus, that he mentioned the fateful word Independence. Yet this article was not at all his political manifesto; it was the imprecation of a humanitarian Christian, revolted by the inhumanity of the world, and inclined, according to the usual custom, to blame the Government for it. Thus, Polyeucte, in the tragedy, does not believe he is giving utterance to a political
prophecy when he curses the Emperor Decius, "that tiger athirst for blood," and predicts that "his hour has come."

But, once the word "independence" had been launched, Thomas Paine is irresistibly impelled to deliver himself of his whole thought at a bound: with autonomy must be joined republicanism: all that Utopia, all that blissful dream which the plebeian Quaker used to caress last summer in the streets of London—why, a crevice has now been opened through which it can enter and meet with a probable and speedy realization! The hour is striking. Moreover, the uncertainty in which he sees other men sunk is but a halting-stage for the man who has absolute certainty. Later on, Paine will say: "It was the cause of America that suddenly made me an author." And thus "Common Sense" came into being.

"Common Sense" was like a flash from the heavens. It was just what the time and the men of the time needed. The effect was prodigious. For the first time, the colonies perceived suddenly what they wanted and that what they wanted was possible. If it be asked how could Paine, but newly arrived from England, and the American public come to such an understanding all at once, it must be remembered that community of
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origin, language, and, above all, of religious sentiment, predisposed the minds of both hemispheres to a mutual understanding. The Quakers of Pennsylvania found again their principles in the missionary whom English Quakerism had sent to them. The Non-conformists, who had emigrated of yore for the sake of religion, and whose republican temperament had been nurtured by their meditations on the Bible and by their subjection to arbitrary power, formed a ready audience for the Good Tidings.

For that matter, the writings of Paine were much more effective in winning success for his ideas than fame for himself. As he preserved his anonymity, many people, who were entirely impregnated by his opinions, knew nothing of the author. Once when he had come to a meeting where his name did not excite any attention, he had only to tell them that he was COMMON SENSE to arouse the most fiery enthusiasm in one part of his audience and cries of fury in the other. As for money, he would never touch it, and he had to contribute a certain number of guineas from his own ill-furnished purse to the expenses of the publication of the book which was soon seen in every hand.

“Common Sense” opened to the Americans a
perilous future. They committed themselves to it. Six months after Paine had spoken, the majority of them were converted to his opinion. Henceforth the ties that bound them to the mother country were loosened. The die was cast.

As for the writer who had inspired the efforts of the states, if he were now to stand apart from their cause, he would have incurred the blame of having hurled a whole people into the direst dangers. But he showed that his conviction was serious. He shouldered a musket as a simple volunteer, not having the fear of his Quaker coreligionists before his eyes, was in the retreat on the Delaware, saw with his own eyes the wretched encampments, the night marches under the rain, starvation, bleeding wounds, splendid young fellows dead or at the last gasp, saw, indeed, what were the consequence and the payment of the logical propositions which he had written down tranquilly at his work-table.

Discouragement soon spread through Washington's poorly fed and badly equipped army, and despair and lassitude were universal.

Then Paine becomes the self-constituted orator of the forces. He sets about writing, in the very bivouacs, under the stress of present ne-
cessity. In this fashion was begun that series of effective pamphlets, called severally the "Crisis," which, for intensity of accent and prompt unraveling of difficulties, may be compared to the "Philippics" of Demosthenes. These papers succeeded one another at irregular intervals, beginning on November 22, 1776, and ending on October 29, 1782. The first is a military exhortation after the manner of the ancients. Washington ordered it to be read aloud in his camp to every corporal's guard. Another is addressed to Lord Howe, warning him, in the interest of his own country, not to continue the campaign; another brings home to the American people the lamentable dearth of soldiers; the aim of another is to refute the autonomist prejudices of some of the states, and to plead for federal union; another, when the country is on the road to bankruptcy, proposes practical measures for strengthening the public credit.

Another, after the successful close of the war, thanks to French assistance, proves that it must always be America's duty to remain faithful to the ally of her evil days; the last, now that peace has been finally established, is a farewell
to the public and an outline of the organization which it is time to give the new nation.

Each of these papers, lightly thrown off, is his gift to the insurgents of a thought that is constantly lucid. And this lucidity is immediate; for Paine writes under the first shock of events. He is with Washington at Valley Forge, among those five thousand men in whom even their chief has no longer confidence, and who crouch in mud huts like beavers; he goes in a sloop to reconnoiter Fort Mifflin under an English cannonade, and he finds it nothing but a heap of ruins; thus, every day he verifies with his own eyes failure in all directions; and these are the very occasions he chooses to proclaim the approaching triumph of the cause of Independence and the near destruction of English power! And the event does not belie his prognostics.

Well, the Revolution had come to an end. It would have been natural to believe that the office of "guide for revolutions" was to come to an end also. This American Revolution had been so great and singular that it was hard to conjecture that the same men should be reserved to see another revolution still greater and still more singular.

It was simply the wish to consult the Acad-
emy of Sciences in Paris on the construction of an iron arch five hundred feet wide that led Thomas Paine back to the old continent. He arrived in Paris at the beginning of summer, 1787. Note this date, and you will recognize the man fated to land always at the point where the tocsin is sounding. However, he is at first occupied with questions not requiring any special activity.

He frequents the company of certain philosophers who are friends of Franklin and are adepts in mechanical science. As he does not speak French, his circle is necessarily limited. But this small circle is, as we know to-day, the first nucleus of the republican party in France. Those who form it are persons equally ready to discuss in English the mechanism of an iron bridge or the Constitution of the United States. In addition to the Marquis and Marquise de la Fayette, patrons of all Americans, there are the Marquis de Condorcet, geometer, philosopher, statesman and free thinker, and his wife, an enthusiast about Paine and now busy with a translation of his works; Brissot, later on to be the leader of the Gironde, who had traveled in America and has lately founded a Société des Amis des Noirs that is trying to interest fashion-
able people in a cause of which Paine is the prophet; Danton, who is soon a very intimate friend of Paine, and a few others, all devout disciples of "Common Sense," and they all know English.

In fact, we have here the staff, all united and ready, of Le Républicain, the journal that in some years will have its own rôle in the Revolution but will expire with its fourth number. I consider this moment of contact between Paine's mind and theirs solemn. It is now that the grafting begins to take hold on the old tree.

When the year 1790 is about to expire, Paine, the engineer, is in England, anxious concerning the success of his iron bridge, a model of which is exposed in one of the suburbs of London. It was at the very moment when Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France" appeared. The entire spirit of conservatism is there unfolded with the superb eloquence and arrogance of a master in statesmanship rebuking his pupils. The mixture of contempt for man and respect for established power that marked the entire work, the blending of that political optimism and philosophic pessimism which are the characteristic qualities of the authoritative and well-contented conservative, was but too well known.
to Paine as the deadly enemy of every effort to attain enfranchisement.

It was necessary to speak, the more so as Burke had disdainfully passed aside as unworthy of notice the marks of sympathy given to the French revolutionists by Priestley, Price, and the radical associations, and, as the "Reflections" were immediately translated, and went through five editions in France in a single year, it was evident that, if no Englishman replied to them, the idea would spread through France that all England was indifferent to the agonies of justice. How could the misunderstandings between the two peoples ever be dissipated if this belief was established?

Paine for the second time in his life heard a sudden call. Hardly had he finished the last page of the "Reflections" at the Red Lion in Islington before he asked for pen and ink, and set about composing his reply in the inn itself. In this fashion, was dashed off, in less than three months, the first part of the "Rights of Man."

It is a strange book. Burke is there bantered, parodied, caricatured by his friend of a few years before. The most insulting abuse is heaped on the monarchy of George III, with its venal, incoherent Parliament, with the jobberies
and mania for every sort of oppression of its unprincipled government, and above all, with the decay and rottenness which are the natural consequences of heredity of office and heredity of royalty. Then the journalist, transforming himself into the historian, gives what he regards as a just estimate of the American Revolution, based on his personal reminiscences, and proceeds to relate, on the testimony of his Parisian friends, the beginnings of the French Revolution. Finally, with all the serenity of the philosopher, he lays down dogmatically the principles which must guide any government that wishes to bestow effective protection on equality of rights.

The tone of the entire work is outspoken and rough; it bears no resemblance to the gorgeous and stately drapery, fashioned after the antique, in which the eloquence of Burke is grabbed; we must rather find its parallel in the coarse cotton homespun out of which are made the shirts of the workman. Not only was the delicate epidermis of the literary classes excoriated, but the entire English people shuddered, fairly quivered with rage; for it is a people obstinately smitten with its venerable servitude, and the least revolutionary that has ever existed.

Who, then, is this public disturber who would
throw everything into confusion? Is he even qualified to speak? No, he is a bad Englishman, who glorifies all that is done on the other side of the water. Let him take himself off to France, if he find more reason there than we have here! And, as the writer’s face is not well known, a supposed effigy of him is incased in stays by workingmen, before being burned, in memory of the trade Paine once followed at Thetford. This little feature, this mockery of the artisan’s condition by a crowd composed of artisans, proves to what a degree a long habit of slavery may deform and degrade the human mind. Such is the support supplied by the poor to their defenders.

Burke himself, disconcerted by the attack, declared with a shrug of the shoulders, that the only refutation worthy of the “Rights of Man” was that of criminal justice. And, in fact, all the agencies of criminal justice were put in motion against Paine. But before they could reach him he was safe in Paris.

Certainly, the position of Paine, first as an accused traitor, then as a proscribed exile, greatly enhanced his prestige in France. Among the Frenchmen who applauded with transports at Calais, Amiens and Paris there were few who
ever saw the pages of "Common Sense" and the "Rights of Man." They hailed him, above all, because he was "the man who had suffered for the cause." It is enough in France to make a man popular, and, at electioneering time, to make him a deputy. Thomas Paine was elected, then, deputy to the National Convention in four Departments. So, from being an enthusiastic but distant spectator of the French Revolution, lo, all of a sudden, he becomes an actor in it.

All France doubtless knew that he was a republican. Not only had thousands of translations of his "Common Sense" and the "Rights of Man" been sold, but the author had assumed the attitude of a champion of republicanism more than a year previously on two notable occasions: on the first of July, 1791, by the publication of a manifesto, and on the eighth of July, by a public discussion with Sieyès on the principles of government. The first was placarded on the walls of Paris immediately after the King's return from Varennes.

It is true the denunciation of this manifesto was almost universal. One deputy said: "It is ridiculous to take the trouble of censuring an opinion so wild and extravagant." Another: "The author of this manifesto is a lunatic, and
should be handed over to the care of his relatives”; a third jeers at “the ridiculous chimera of a French republic.” Robespierre is disgusted: “I will not,” he says, “deign to answer certain imputations of republicanism which some persons would attach to the cause of justice and truth.” Thus all denounce as vain and delirious the prophecy of an event that will be realized in less than fifteen months in the midst of unanimous applause. So true it is that the people, far from marching of their own accord toward the future, have to be dragged toward it backwards, and then they fall into it.

However, the flight to Varennes had started the question of a monarchy or a republic. On the sixth of July Sieyès published an article in the Moniteur, wherein he attempted to demonstrate, with his usual dogmatism, that men are freer in a monarchy than in a republic. Paine entered the lists against him with open vizor. He addressed a long letter to him which the Moniteur published, with Sieyès’s reply.

Paine declared himself the frank and intrepid enemy of the form of government known as monarchy, and he did so, taking his stand on the principles of humanity, fraternity and liberty for all, which are exactly the principles of the
“Rights of Man.” He demanded, therefore, a representative government, but such a government would not be sincere except with an executive elected by the people and dependent on the people. And this fact was being every day demonstrated by the experience of England. Such a proposition plainly bound together mutual government and the rights of man, the third proposition of the republican thesis added to the first two, which were approved of by Sieyès himself. Sieyès retorted that the republic of Paine was a “poliarchie” which would disintegrate national unity, and, at the same time, would compromise the division of powers, and, as a necessary consequence, would compromise liberty. This might be true, but it was to change the question.

Such, then, was this controversy, to which I have reason for believing the five “republican” friends of Paine brought a concerted plan, for on the same day on which Paine’s letter appeared in the Moniteur, Condorcet published in the Républicain a scathing sarcasm upon monarchical prejudice. But what were these five republicans among a nation that had been monarchical for ten centuries? They were not listened to. Their time had not come.
A year later, however, events have taken a rapid turn; the country is "in danger"; it looks as if the royal war-lord has failed in his duty; and the urgent character of the peril has forced the nation to decide on governing itself or else abandoning itself to the fate to which it has been abandoned by its sovereign; and the phantom of royal power has vanished on the tenth of August. I am not surprised that, on this occasion, more than one person called to mind the republican declarations which had made him shrug his shoulders the year preceding. On the republic discovering that the republic was a fact, the mass of Frenchmen became republican, republican because of their very conservatism, as is the way with Frenchmen generally, or rather because of the principle of gravitation that exists in every mass of human beings. So, the opinions of the day have at last exactly coincided with those expressed in the manifesto of Paine. It is recognized that he has uttered the word which solves the problem. And so, with the help of some who lately fought against him, Thomas Paine is elected to the Convention as the standard-bearer of the republic. I have already explained that the persecution of the English Government had already rendered him popular in France. To
vote for this foreigner, therefore, becomes the act of a patriot.

When our honest friend took his seat in the Salle du Manège, where the Convention at first held its sessions; when he saw himself lost among those seven hundred emphatic, gesticulating Frenchmen, I imagine he must have felt not altogether comforted by the success of his principles. On the twenty-first of September, the formula of the fateful break with the past was enunciated, after a philippic from Grégoire: “The National Convention decrees unanimously that Royalty is abolished in France.” And then there were cries and applause and fraternal kisses and arms lifted up, waving pocket handkerchiefs and canes and hats, even in the lobbies and galleries. All this must have disgusted Paine not a little.

He was present at the debates, but to a certain extent outside them, for his ignorance of French kept him beyond the magnetic circle of words. He sat calmly on his bench, with that vague, enigmatic smile we see on the lips of the deaf and dumb which chills the spectator. Yet everyone turned toward him as toward the living statue of liberty. The enfranchisement of America consecrated him. Moreover, his presence in the midst of Frenchmen, with that of Anacharsis Clootz,
the Prussian, seemed to signify that the Convention had its ramifications in every country, and this was congenial to its pretension to legislate for all humanity.

On the eleventh of October, Paine was named on the Constitutional Committee. Among the eight members elected with him, he found his friends Condorcet, Brissot, Danton, who would serve him as interpreters, and his old antagonist, Sieyès. We do not know exactly what part he took in the labors of the Committee; but it is pretty certain that he had a good deal to do with the project of Condorcet.

If we analyze this project, we shall discover some of the English, plebeian and Quaker ideas which I have already expounded. Universal suffrage was definitely consecrated, contrary to the doctrine of the Constituents and in accordance with that of the radical supporters of equality; the principle, not of toleration in the religious order, but of respect for convictions, was affirmed in the terms of the Puritans; liberty of the press and of all manifestations of opinion was guaranteed; universal instruction was promulgated as the debt of society to its members; all heredity in functions were abolished as absurd and tyrannical; finally, the censorship of the people over the
acts of the national representation was minutely organized: any citizen could protest against the whole system of assemblies that went on, ever widening, around him; all he had to do was first to win over fifty citizens, then a primary assembly, then the primary assemblies of a commune, then those of a department, and finally those of the entire republic.

Now this system of concentric waves was, as I have pointed out before, exactly that of the Quaker meetings. Certainly Condorcet could have found a model for it nowhere else. And let us say, by the way, that this Constitution is the most purely republican constitution that has ever been drafted in France.

You know that it was not voted. There were others, in which, however, the paragraphs which exhibited a frank confidence in the intelligence of the people were prudently altered, and religious liberty was restricted from fear of the plots of refractory priests; the Quaker system of popular initiative was destroyed. Whatever was democratic in the edifice was borrowed from the project of Paine's friend Condorcet.

But no sooner is the republic established than it begins to be very apparent indeed that the fear of the past has not vanished. The past has
been killed, but, then, no one is fully sure, and it is necessary to bury it speedily, and so deep that it can never return. Penalties are multiplied feverishly, like shovelfuls of earth. That most deadly enemy of liberty, the panic of crowds, has taken hold of the Assembly. There are shrieks of treason. Death to the traitors!

Thomas Paine knew better than anyone could know from mere hearsay what this sort of patriotic delirium foreshadowed. The madmen who had sacked the house of his friend Priestley, and who glutted their hatred by burning manikins supposed to resemble himself were still busy on the other side of the Channel; mobs of the same character he saw now, always ready to rise against reason and liberty. He recognized them: he was not under the illusion of all, or nearly all, the members of the Convention that these anarchists were republicans. He did everything in his power to resist them, in harmony with that Quaker prayer of his in which he asks to be enabled to serve the people in spite of themselves! All that man could do to save the life of the de-throned monarch he did.

The arguments of Thomas Paine fell under two categories: that of policy and that of justice. He invoked the experience of English history,
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which points to the return of the Stuarts after the beheading of Charles I; while, with the simple banishment of James II, it was all over with their dynasty. To kill the man is not, therefore, to kill royalty, and the younger brother of Louis XVI, who was beyond the frontiers, would find himself invested, by the death of his elder brother and the captivity of his nephew, with that royal prestige which would be a force in the ranks of the enemies of France. This fault, he declares, must be avoided. And if anyone advances the interests of justice as an argument for a different procedure, it can be answered that the culpability ought to be shared between Louis and the National Assembly, which, after his voluntary disappearance and his return from Varennes, restored him, in spite of himself, to the throne.

In fine, capital punishments may be needed to prop up old monarchies, but are repugnant to a government of reason. The only real way to destroy royalty is to destroy also the governing methods of royalty and, first of all, the penalty of death.

We know that the vote was for death. Even Sieyès, who had, a short time before, defended the monarchy against Paine, voted for death, calmly and with a shrug of his shoulders. Thomas
Paine alone, when his name was called, rose, and, in a distinct voice, and in French uttered these words:

I vote for the seclusion of Louis until the end of the war, and for perpetual banishment after the war.

We understand to-day the consequences of the execution of Louis XVI, that deed of weakness and anger, and we know the appalling events which followed it, so that sympathetic spectators beyond the borders of France, who had hoped that the definite overthrow of a régime of handcuffs and arbitrary imprisonment was the herald of the closure of the zoological period of human history, came to believe that even despotism is better than the anarchy of a murderous populace. Even Paine, with all his robust optimism, was plunged into despair by the bankruptcy of his ardently desired republic. He has ingenuously confessed that he drank rum to distract him from the scenes around him. He was seen more than once looking wild and absent-minded; this was enough, in the eyes of some, to justify them in branding his name with the stain of an ugly vice. However, that he did not lose his lucidity, his letters, written at that period, clearly demonstrate.
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Meanwhile, the Revolution continued to march in the same direction into which the weight of its first errors had necessarily dragged it. After the National Guard has demanded and obtained by menaces from the Assembly its consent to the death of twenty-nine of its own members, Robespierre requires a law to be passed "against foreigners."

Paine employed whatever prestige was left him in saving some of these foreigners. He spent the whole summer of 1793 in retirement; he lodged in an old abandoned residence of Madame de Pompadour. However, certain persons soon began to recall the fact that Paine himself was not to the manor born; he came from somewhere else. His origin, name, language, all proclaimed the foreigner. Then, he was the friend of the Girondists, and the dregs of the Parisian populace were convinced that the Girondists had plotted against the national unity, because they hated Paris.

The month of October, 1793, was one long crisis. A decree of the Convention enacted on the third that the Girondists, "as agents of the English faction," should be tried before the Revolutionary Tribunal. In his report, the Conventionnel Amar denounced Thomas Paine as equal-
ly guilty—that very Thomas Paine whom England had, notwithstanding, proscribed. "He had," said Amar, "dishonored himself during the trial of Capet by supporting Brissot and daring to talk about the dissatisfaction of the United States of America." But Robespierre, having caught the Girondists in his net, was contented, and scorned to support an accusation against the author of the "Rights of Man" for the present. However, on the tenth of October, it was decreed that all Englishmen should be arrested; several young republicans from across the Channel fled stealthily, first to Paine, then beyond the frontier. Now, on the very day upon which the decree was issued, Paine, on his side, was writing to Jefferson, advising the United States to take the initiative in convoking a congress of peace at The Hague, the object of which should be to guarantee freedom of commerce and to reconcile hostile nations: it was the sole chance of saving the rights of man—with innocent internationalism on one side, venomous nationalism on the other, and both of them manifesting themselves simultaneously. You see how far apart the gulf had grown between Paine and the Revolution.

However, he sees that Brissot and his other friends have been cut off from the land of the

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living. The benches around him in the Convention were empty, and the Terrorists soon returned to the charge against Paine himself. Bourdon de l'Oise denounced him in the Convention on the twenty-sixth of December. The accusation, as might naturally have been expected, was based on his "connivance with the foreigners," and this "connivance" was wrapped up in deep mystery. "I know," said Bourdon, "that he has been intriguing with an ex-agent of the Foreign Office." That was all; the accusation was of the vaguest, and therefore, the more impossible to meet. When Paine became aware of it, he was somewhat taken aback by the strange methods of discussion adopted by his "Nationalist" opponents. "I should have wished," he said, in his honest simplicity, "that Bourdon de l'Oise had taken the trouble to make himself better acquainted with the facts, before rising to speak against me." Barrère defended the thesis upon which Bourdon had founded his charge. "It is necessary that the French people should understand how injurious to its interests is the decree that allows foreigners to form a part of the national representation." Robespierre was silent, but the Assembly divined his wishes. It showed its docility by decreeing that "no foreigner could be permitted
to represent the French people.” So Thomas Paine and the Prussian humanitarian, Anacharsis Clootz, found themselves excluded from the Assembly.

Two days afterwards, the Committee of General Safety ordered them both to be arrested. Paine had passed the night with a few American friends, and, in the morning, was awakened by a commissary of police and some of the National Guards. A perquisition was made in his domicile in his presence, and he was then conducted to the prison of the Luxembourg, where he remained for more than eleven months, escaping the guillotine by a miracle.

At all events, this tedious incarceration was a benefit to him in one respect: he was not caught up in the deluge of tyranny that followed. He was really freer in a dungeon than he would have been outside, for he was, at least, sheltered from informers. And then, during the spring of 1794, France had to submit to a régime that was, in every respect, directly opposed to his doctrine of the equality of rights and of a real republic: there was not a single liberty for which he had struggled that was not flouted and crushed.

Yet, for all that, in the midst of all the terrible forces that had been let loose, Thomas Paine
was quietly philosophizing in his prison. He was arranging methodically his ideas upon religion. It was not solely in order to distract his mind from dwelling on external events that he was doing so; he was too much of a journalist to allow his thoughts to loosen their hold on the actual; and, in fact, the question of religious belief was as actual at this period as anything well could be. As a result of the maxims of the Terror, fetichism began to have a new and flourishing life. The origin of all the deadly errors of the time lay in a certain confused theology which went back many centuries behind the Declaration of Rights, and which was, in all respects, the downright contradiction of every principle embodied in that document. For the universal, humanitarian, rational God to whom Voltaire said: "Thou hast not given us hearts to hate or hands to butcher one another; grant that all men may hold in horror the tyranny that would constrain the soul!" was gradually substituted an ancient, tribal God, jealous and murderous.

He was not known as God, but as La Patrie (the Fatherland), and sometimes even as Liberty, officially as Reason, or rather as the Supreme Being. But, by whatever name He might be styled, He was actually a god like the Yavah of
Deborah and Gideon, and His devotees, the "patriots," felt themselves bound by an inexorable rule, a rule obeyed without examination, to use the saber and the knife of the guillotine against "incivism," I was almost going to say, against the "uncircumcized." All the servants of this deity had to swear to love certain objects and to hate certain other objects. The wives, children and relatives of the accused were all involved in the same destruction; sepulchers were violated; war was waged against stones, for men spoke in the Convention the language that is found on a Moabite or Assyrian stela, talked of razing rebellious cities, like Toulon and Lyons, to the ground, and of abolishing their very names, so as to kill them even in the memory of men. And this new religion has a whole liturgy of rites—those rites that have always characterized holy wars, or the wars of "the pure with the impure"—before God was conceived as one and universal.

The time had arrived, therefore, for the grand idea of the Eighteenth Century, Humanity, to be resuscitated, if the new aberration was to be successfully confronted.

And this is just what Paine endeavored to do in his "Age of Reason." A government emancipated from tyranny—and that was the sole form
of government he favored—could be maintained only among a people that had arrived at the "age of reason"; that is to say, at the age of free thought. The man who does not flatter himself that he possesses definite truth, but who modestly seeks to see clearer, and who has learned the habit of self-criticism, is alone preserved from wishing to tyrannize over consciences; he alone has the republican spirit. But Robespierre and his acolytes, being disciples of Rousseau, proved that they were incapable of thinking freely. Did they even know what sort of a thing free thought was? In their natural religion, they dogmatized, they excommunicated, just as the Pope did in his literal religion.

Paine had observed this phenomenon, he had noted that the intolerant spirit of ecclesiastical persecution had been transported into politics, and that the Revolutionary Tribunal had taken the place of the Inquisition. No one would have expected that the Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard would have given birth to such servitude. Thomas Paine has the same beliefs as the Vicaire Savoyard, but his method is very different. He is not like the village priest, an "Orpheus singing primal hymns"; he is an utilitarian who consults experience. Instead of setting
forth as primary truths his own inner illuminations, he finds the marks of the truth of a religion in the proofs it is able to show of its capacity for insuring the general happiness of mankind. A religion which stimulates men to hate and slaughter one another cannot help being false. The true divine is the human.

True religion, then, does not consist in pure good will, which simply renders the individual himself blameless, but in carefully planned and efficacious beneficence. It is the imitation of God as Creator and Father, as Reason and Love. Far from this true religion having been revealed to us by the agency of a primitive instinct and afterwards again discovered in the recesses of our souls "in the silence of prejudices," it is a recent acquisition of experience, valuable in proportion to the high price paid for it, and in proportion to its salutary consequences. It is necessary to preserve this acquisition and to increase it still further.

Thus the conscience of the modern man is really a product of history; but its authority is not the less sure on that account; the very reverse is the case, for as it is the authority of an authentic experiment prosecuted from age to age, this modern conscience has the right to
sit in judgment on the religious conceptions of the past; in the Bible, it makes selections; it retains all that is conformable to reason and promotes praternity; it rejects all the irrational marvels, all the "Christian mythology," and it particularly thrusts aside the barbarous commandments given by the national Jewish God to His people. The exclusivism of the synagogue is certainly detestable, and it is necessary to deprive it of the prestige it has gained by a pretended conformity to the will of God. The philanthropist Jesus did his best, because of his natural goodness, to free his contemporaries from this notion; but he was the victim of the kindliness of his heart, a victim well worthy of pity and still an object of veneration.

Such is a summary of the ideas of Paine on religion; they are, in my opinion, much nearer to those of Voltaire than to those of Rousseau; but they differ from Voltaire in tone and accent, and are far more popular, serious and tender.

None of the pamphlets of Paine won him more enemies than this little book of rational theology. He touched the English reader on his sensitive point, his reverence for the "Holy Scriptures." From that moment, the malignant hatred of the pious met him at every turn.
and blackened his character with indefatigable zeal.

Yet, it had never been his intention to wound the feelings of anybody; all his purpose was to render testimony to the truth as he saw it. He had written the "Age of Reason" with profound conviction: it was to be his last will and testament. He completed it in prison, in daily expectation of death, which everything predicted to be inevitable. From the cells next his own, he saw the departure, in tumbril after tumbril, of Héroult de Séchelles, Clootz, Camille Desmoulins, Danton, etc., all gagged by their judges, as had been the Girondists. In a single night, 168 prisoners were dragged from the Luxembourg, and of these 160 were guillotined the next day. What chance had Paine, then, of surviving them? Doubtless he was an American citizen; but Gouverneur Morris, the official representative of the United States, had abandoned him. Some of his fellow-citizens settled in France addressed, indeed, a petition to the Convention (January 27, 1794) praying for his liberation; but at that very moment, Vadier, one of the accusers of the man they were trying to save, was president of the Assembly; Vadier, instead of answering yes or no, buried the protest under a heap of mean-
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ingless phrases. Paine was, therefore, to all appearances, lost. He was undisturbed, devoting all his care to the preservation of his papers and the composition of a farewell dedication to his fellow-citizens of North America.

The circumstance which saved his life was quite fortuitous: it was simply the negligence of his jailers. The door of his cell was open and thrown back against the wall of the corridor on the night when a keeper went round to chalk on it the death sign for the following morning. In a fit of absent-mindedness he wrote the name of Paine on the inside of the door. The commissary who, before daybreak, passed along the corridor, ordering the condemned prisoners to come out of their cells, saw nothing on one particular door, and went on. Then came the ninth Thermidor, the downfall of the Terror and the general jail delivery.

Yes, delivery for the other captives; Paine, who had been forgotten by the executioners, was now forgotten by the liberators. He wrote to the Convention on the nineteenth Thermidor, reminding it that he was still in existence and demanding his release; the communication never reached the Legislature, so he continued to crouch in that Luxembourg cell of his the whole autumn;
he was very ill, exhausted by the bad air and the bad food, and suffering from an abscess in the hip which was rapidly undermining his health. Fortunately for him, his friend Monroe had replaced his personal enemy, Morris, as United States Minister. Monroe at once interfered, and Paine was restored to freedom. The author of the "Age of Reason" was, then, again among the living. The decree excluding him from the Convention being annulled, he again took his seat in it on the eighth of December, like the pallid ghost of the days, already far distant, when the republic had been inaugurated with shouts and hurrahs. Of the nine members of the Constitutional Committee only two were left: Sieyès, who owed his safety to his pliancy, and Paine, who never bent to anything or anybody.

After the Terror had been once banished, it was the terror of the Terror that governed. The pendulum had swung backward. Just as in 1792, all imaginable measures were adopted to prevent the slightest possibility of the revival of royal despotism and of the past, so, two years later, all energies were devoted to the task of rendering the existence of a new Robespierre forever impossible and of killing forever the recent past, more hated than that of old. The longing for
security, after months of chaotic confusion, is likely to reach a degree of savage exasperation in the bosom of the honest bourgeois.

So Thomas Paine, who preserved his normal serenity, found that he had to pass once more from the right to the left. A while ago, an "aristocrat" in the eyes of the Terrorists, he is now a democrat from the standpoint of the Thermidorians. But it was not because he really oscillated. It was his opinion that principles which could be influenced by circumstances had no genuine foundation in the heart. He pardoned everybody. Why not? None of the people had done him wrong. The experience he had undergone had not in the slightest degree shaken his confidence in the people. It was not, he believed, the people that had imprisoned and persecuted him, but a faction that had usurped the popular power. The people is, and not the less on that account, the legitimate sovereign, the only sovereign that has the right to establish a government by the election of representatives, who are delegated, not to issue decrees suggested by passing whims, but to enact general and durable laws.

If the Constitution had been obeyed, these acts of arbitrary power which now revolted everyone would have been rendered impossible. What
constitution? That of Condorcet or that of Hé- rault? It did not make any difference, provided that it was a written, printed constitution, containing a certain number of articles, a constitution which each citizen could carry in his pocket. Despotism arises only when people place themselves at the mercy of events. The evil is that the republic has no stable defensive organization, that liberty is not regulated. This thesis was developed with great force by Paine in his dissertations on the “First Principles of Government,” published in July, 1795, just when the Constitution of the Year III was the subject of deliberation. It was a liberal constitution enough, but it was never popular. It was a prudent return to the vote by qualification, to the régime of the middle classes.

Because the poor have brandished their pikes during the past riotous days, the poor are to be deprived of the right of voting. A strange but yet natural mode of reasoning! Boissy expounds it in explicit terms: “We ought to be governed by the best. The best are the best educated and those most interested in the maintenance of the laws. Now, with very few exceptions, you will find such persons only amongst those who possess property. A country gov-
erned by men of property is in the social order.” It was, in all its nakedness, the society of classes against which Paine had always protested. He could not permit such a theory to be advanced without raising his voice against it. Although enfeebled by sickness, he forced himself to come to the Convention (seventh of July, 1795). He remained standing in the tribune while the secretary read a translation of his discourse. After apologizing for his long, involuntary absence, he affirmed the constancy of his republicanism, and recalled the initial meaning of the French Revolution as indicated by the Declaration of Rights.

Now, the proposed constitution was completely out of harmony with the latter; by withdrawing universal suffrage from the people, it showed that it was not truly republican. To introduce political right as an attribute of property was to strike with inertia a system of government whose very essence was life and movement. Important words these, but they were not listened to. Paine seemed not to understand the situation. The Constitution was a confiteor that the Convention knew itself to be unpopular, that it was about to disappear, and that its only chance of returning to power was to conciliate the respectable classes. The speech of Paine was heard
with deference, but found no echo; the French translation was not even published.

It was the last time that the champion of the Republic was to intervene in the affairs of France. The Convention was dissolved on the twenty-sixth of October, 1795, and Thomas Paine became a private citizen.

He continued to vegetate in Paris under the Directory, surrounded by a few faithful disciples and forgotten by the public. Yet he still tried to contribute, for the sake of a distant future, to the progress of republican morals and republican religion, the want of which had just made the Revolution a failure. He had a French translation published of the "Age of Reason," the book in which the modern conscience first dared, without indirection and without sarcasm, to set itself up as the judge of Christian traditions, and laid the basis of a purified religion, reduced to the only beliefs which appeared necessary as a foundation of fraternity among men.

Naturally he was one of the first adherents, if he was not the instigator, of Theophilanthropy. This new religion, in fact, owed its origin to England. David Williams, that friend of Paine who had presented him to Franklin, had invented a Liturgy founded on the universal
principles of reason and morality, and he had gathered together a number of free-thinkers in a chapel in London, in order that they might strengthen one another by their mutual sympathy. The Theophilanthropists simply tried to naturalize this institution in France. They succeeded at first. Certain fathers of families, anxious that their children should have a moral training; certain philosophers who, although disciples of reason, required an outlet for their spiritual emotions, such as Thomas Paine, Grégoire, Marie Joseph Chénier, Bernardin Saint-Pierre, became naturally and eagerly its adherents.

For those who did not incline to any particular form of worship, the Theophilanthropist meetings offered a substitute; for the faithful of some other church it was a help to listen to exhortations which urged them to make their conduct conform to their faith. All religious and political polemics were forbidden, as well as all attempts at proselytism. The simple influence of a pure and practical system of morals was of itself calculated to rally free spirits to this free church. The first meeting, on the sixteenth of January, 1797, opened with a lay homily from Thomas Paine on the existence of God. After a demonstration analogous to that of the Vicaire
Savoyard, the orator went on to insist on the peril of plunging into mysticism and on the necessity of keeping the mind in a condition of rational and scientific lucidity. But he did not remain long with the Theophilanthropists. The latter, fearing to wound the sympathies of anyone, avoided stating categorically what they did not believe. This reticence by no means suited the taste of Thomas Paine, who was always frank and outspoken.

Nevertheless the followers of this religion were gaining some footing, and eighteen churches were abandoned to them. They even installed themselves in Notre Dame for a time. Then came the Concordat, and the Theophilanthropists, with other non-conformists, had to vanish into obscurity.

When the priests returned openly and the peals of the bells again rang out in triumph, the temper of Thomas Paine was not at all in tune with the change. In his passing freak of ill-humor, he even wrote to Camille Jordan, who was in favor of toleration, a letter of protest. The kind of worship that commended itself to Paine was of the silent, meditative order: no bells or organs or trumpets for him! No manifestations that are likely to arouse hostility, either. Have
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not recent experiences taught us to distrust whatever tends to overexcite the sensitive element in man's nature? The influence which is gained over him by such methods is neither legitimate nor prudent: he is led like a somnambulist, it may be to misery, it may be to crime. He must be liberated from such a yoke; every religion which has any end in view except the happiness of humanity is a public peril, etc.

But apparently the First Consul had not the least intention of liberating his fellow-citizens.

Paine had at first believed in Bonaparte. The latter, on his return from Italy, had caressed and cajoled him with the skill of which he alone had the secret. What if this Bonaparte was predestined to destroy all antiquated despotisms? Perhaps even William Pitt would find his match in him! For it was just the moment when rumors were abroad that the conqueror of Italy was meditating a descent on England. At this news the old English radical fairly quivered with hope: why should a general of the French Revolution land in Britain if not to emancipate the English people, and at last bring to them that long-desired republic which could alone procure peace?

The abandonment of this fine plan for the
liberation of England and the departure of Bonaparte for Egypt cruelly deceived Thomas Paine. But if the departure of the First Consul was a disappointment, how much more so was his return! After the eighteenth Brumaire, France no longer offered any field of activity to a counselor of the people, for the people no longer influenced events. They were politely dispensed from the trouble of watching over their own interests. And, should any of them exhibit a tendency to meddle with public affairs notwithstanding, he encountered a diligent police and a determined censorship that quickly brought him to his senses. “The love of order,” has become, according to the formula of Fouché, “the first of public virtues.” Woe to the man who shows himself devoid of it! And so Nicholas de Bonneville, Paine’s host and good friend, is locked up in prison and his journal, Le Bien Informé, is suspended, because he has compared Bonaparte to Cromwell. The Terror has apparently come to life again, not more cruel, but chronic, regular, and with every chance of surviving.

It was the rebound of the rock of Sisyphus. This time Thomas Paine gave it up. All his dreams had been vanquished, and he was beginning to feel the weight of his advanced years—
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he was near seventy. So he wanted rest, wanted a holiday, the society of dumb nature. A longing to till the land, to live on his farm at New Rochelle, took hold of him, and he bade a last farewell to the feverish agitations of unhappy Europe.

He embarked at Havre on the first of September, 1802, and, on the thirtieth of October, after an absence of fifteen years, years filled with strife and trouble, he again saw the shores of America.

The United States, after its pacification, seemed a good country to die in. Having no longer any enemies, the American people, at their ease on the wide continent, were safe from that patriotic fever which rendered the old nations of Europe unfit for fraternal government. Ah, yes, but another fever was agitating them, religious zeal. "The enemy" here was not the man on the other side of the river, but Satan himself. The sacred fetish was no longer the flag, the cockade; it was the Bible. The Bible was still considered inviolable among this primitive people to whom Voltaire was unknown. Now Thomas Paine had spoken in a very free and easy manner of the Bible, and he was soon made to feel the result.
Doubtless, in gratitude for old services, Common Sense was amicably received by Jefferson, the successor of Washington in the Presidency of the United States. He was permitted to enter into possession of his lands, and make a home for himself. But the “Age of Reason” had been dedicated to the people of America, and had reached its address. And the people of America left no one in doubt as to the nature of their reply: the reprobation of the clergy and of all the simple hearts in the community fell on the head of the daring innovator. Nor were the Quakers less indignant with their former coreligionist. The number of those who had read the book was very restricted; the number of those who would not for the world have consented to read it, and who anathematized it all the same, was immense. The people in Paine’s neighborhood expected every day to see the devil spring down through the chimney of his cottage and bear away the soul of his servant. A cab-driver, who was also blest with saving faith, refused to drive him, because he knew if he did so, a thunderbolt would surely fall from heaven and shatter his cab to pieces.

The archaic sentiment known as the imprecation of the impure assumed at this period the
form of a political proscription. For to interdict the communion of saints to a person who had, of his own free will, withdrawn from it long before, to devote to the infernal gods a man who did not believe in them, was like brandishing a wooden sword at an enemy. But to refuse to accept the vote he had just deposited in the urn under the pretext, invented on the spur of the moment, that the emancipator of America was not regularly an American citizen—that, indeed, was to attack him in a weak point, for it was to attack the rights to which he clung with all his energy, it was to make a mockery of the very principles which his enemies knew to be his most sacred possession. Yet this the political adversaries of Paine did at New Rochelle in 1806, for they had the well-grounded persuasion that the compact majority of the people would sustain this outlawry of the friend and ally of Satan.

Yet, unawed by excommunication and anathema, and rather amused at the attempts of some worthy clergymen to convert him, Paine lived on tranquilly until 1809. He died, with perfect calmness and perfect resignation, on the ninth of June, and not a single clap of thunder was heard, and not a single spark of flame shot
upwards from the bowels of the earth on the occasion.

France, and even America herself, both being at that time, and for a considerable time afterwards, plunged in barbarism, forgot the inventor of the Republic, whose hour had not yet come.