

THE LIFE OF THOMAS PAINE

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CALVIN BLANCHARD

THE LIFE OF THOMAS PAINE



Thomas Paine

THE LIFE
OF
THOMAS PAINE;

MOVES OF THE "DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE," SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS UNDER THE
FIRST AMERICAN CONGRESS; MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL CONVENTION OF FRANCE; AUTHOR OF
"COMMON SENSE," "THE CRISIS," "RIGHTS OF MAN," "AGE OF REASON," &c., &c.

THE MAN,

WHOSE MOTTO WAS,

"THE WORLD IS MY COUNTRY; TO DO GOOD, MY RELIGION."

EMBRACING

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS;

DEMONSTRATING THAT

MAN TENDS IRREPRESSIBLY TO ACTUAL FREEDOM;

AND SHOWING

A LIBERTY-AIM CONNECTION

IN THE ACTION OF THE WORLD'S

THREE GREAT AUTHOR-HEROES,—

ROUSSEAU, PAINE, AND COMTE.

By the Author of "The Religion of Science."

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INTRODUCTION.

A full and impartial history of THOMAS PAINE alone can supply that, the omission of which falsifies every work pretending to give an account of the war for the national independence of the United States.

The American Revolution of 1776, of which THOMAS PAINE was the author-hero, was the prelude to that far more sanguinary struggle against oppression and wrong which overturned, or irreparably shook, every throne in Western Europe; including, in the category, even the chair of St. Peter; and of which struggle the most prominent author-hero was JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

This is generally understood. But a truth incalculably more important has hitherto been either wholly overlooked, or but glimmeringly perceived; it is this: — Both the American and French Revolutions were but prominent incidents, or *crisis-stages*, in the irrepressible struggle for human rights which commenced when nature implanted in her highest organism, man, that instinct which points to the goal of *development*; that unconquerable desire for *perfect and sufficiently-lasting* or "eternal" happiness, which indicates the *common aim and attainable end* of science, of art, and of *all* natural, materialistic, or *intelligible* activities: — that thirst for liberty which can be satisfied by nothing short of *the* revolution which will *remove all constraint*—which will *accomplish* revolution—and thus justify LUTHER, ROUSSKAU, PAINE, FOCHIER, and all other revolutionists. Of this crowning revolution, the text-book is "*The Positive Philosophy*" of AUGUSTE COMTE.

Had Thomas Paine been seconded as valiantly when he made priestcraft howl, as he was when he hurled defiance against kings, despotism by this time would *really*, instead of only nominally, have lain as low as did its minions at Trenton and Yorktown. The land over which the star-spangled banner waves would not have become the prey of corrupt, spoil-seeking demagogues, nor would Europe now tremble at the nod of a military dictator.

Not but that priestcraft itself has a substructure, *all but* "super-naturally" profound, which must be sapped before justice can be more than a mockery, freedom aught but a mere abstraction, or happiness little else than an *ignis fatuus*. But man should have continued the great battle for his rights when the soldiers and author-heroes of liberty were in the full flush of victory; instead of making that vain, mischievous and ridiculous (*except as provisional*) compromise with the human inclinations, called *duty*; and falling back on that miserable armistice between the wretched poor and the rich.

happy rich, for the conditions of which, consult that refinement of treachery, misnamed a *constitution*, and that opaque entanglement, absurdly entitled *law*. Can right be done and peace be maintained, under institutions whose ultimatum is to give half a breakfast to the million, and half a million or so to the balance of mankind, conditioned on such anxiety on the part of the latter, lest they be added to the million before dinner-time, that dyspepsia, rather than nutrition, "waits on appetite?" Is man irremediably doomed to a condition which, at shorter and shorter intervals, forces him to seek relief in one of those saturnalias of carnage and devastation which throws progress aback, menaces civilization even, and yet but partially and temporarily mitigates human ills? Is this the whole sum, substance and end of revolution? It appears to me, that they who believe this, and who admire and commend Thomas Paine from their stand-point, dishonour his memory far more than his professed enemies do or can.

But to enable all to understandingly form their own conclusions, I shall give all the essential facts with respect to the history before us, with which a long and careful search, under most favourable circumstances, has made me acquainted. For, *let facts be fairly stated, and truth be fully known*, is the correlate of the proposition (the correctness of which I demonstrated in a former work "*The Religion of Science*") that nature; simple, scientific and artistic, will prove all-sufficient; and neither needs, nor admits the possibility of, a superior: that man, therefore, requires nothing more than what nature is capable of being developed into producing; nor can he know aught beyond nature, or form what can intelligibly be called an idea of any happiness or good, superior to that which, by means of the substantial, including of course, man himself, can be procured.

There needs but to have the light of truth shine fully upon the *real* character of Thomas Paine, to prove him to have been a far greater man than his most ardent admirers have hitherto given him credit for being. Paine's history is so intimately connected with that of progress both before and since his time, that it will necessarily embrace a very wide range of liberal information.

I am not unmindful that there have been hundreds, perhaps thousands of author-heroes and heroines. Bacon, Locke, Luther, Voltaire,* Fourier and Robert Owen were prominently of the former, and Mary Wollstonecraft and Frances Wright were decidedly among the latter. But it appears to me, that none of their writings have been *quite* such text-books of revolution, as those of Rousseau and Paine *were*, and those of Comte *now are*.

* Schlosser, in his "*History of the Eighteenth Century*," whilst speaking of Voltaire, Shaftesbury, and "the numerous deists who were reproachfully called *atheists*," says, that they "wielded the weapons" which Locke "had forged."

L I F E

OF

THOMAS PAINE.

PERIOD FIRST.

1737—1774.

FROM MR. PAINE'S BIRTH, TO HIS ARRIVAL IN AMERICA.

THOMAS PAINE was born in Thetford, Norfolk county, England, on the 29th of January, 1737.

His father was a member of the society of Friends, and a staymaker by trade ; his mother professed the faith of the church of England.

At the age of about thirteen years, he left the common school, in which, in addition to the branches of education usually taught therein, he had learned the rudiments of Latin, and went to work with his father. But his school teacher, who had been chaplain on board a man-of-war, had infused into his young and ardent mind such an enthusiasm for the naval service, that after reluctantly toiling about three years at his not very lucrative or promising calling, he left home, evidently resolved to "seek the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth," and to pursue his fortune through such chances as the war then imminent between his country and France, might offer.

Dreadful must have been the conflict between his compassionate nature and his necessities and ambition. Arrived in London, without friends or money, he, nevertheless, strove by every means in his power to settle himself honorably in the world, without embracing the dreadful profession he had been both constituted and educated to look upon with horror : he even hesitated so far as to return to his old occupation.

After working a few weeks for Mr. Morris, in Hanover-street, Long Acre, he went to Dover, where he also worked a short time for a Mr Grace.

War between England and France had now been declared ; our hero was in all the buoyancy of youth, being not yet seventeen years old ; fortune and glory were possible on the one hand, poverty and toil inevitable on the other.

War is murder, 'tis true ; murder, all the more heinous for being gloried in ; murder, all the more abominable for the magnificence of the scale on which it is perpetrated ; murder, which touches the lowest depths of cowardice, in being carried on by vast armies and immense fleets, instead of by smaller and bolder gangs of pirates, and by more venturesome banditti. But its infernal craft would sail, and its death-dealing cannon be manned, equally with or without him ; and the place which he refused would be taken, probably by some one with far less tenderness for a wounded or surrendered foe.

On board the privateer "Terrible," Captain Death, enlisted, probably in the capacity of a sailor or marine, the man who was afterwards the soul of a revolution which extended elective government over the most fertile portion of the globe, including an area more than twenty times larger than that of Great Britain, and who had the unprecedented honor to be called, though a foreigner, to the legislative councils of the foremost nation in the world.

For some unexplained cause, Paine left the "Terrible" almost immediately, and shipped on board the "King of Prussia." But the affectionate remonstrances of his father soon induced him to quit privateering altogether.

In the year 1759, he settled at Sandwich, as a master staymaker. There he became acquainted with a young woman of considerable personal attractions, whose name was Mary Lambert, to whom he was married about the end of the same year.

His success in business not answering his expectations, he, in the year 1760, removed to Margate. Here his wife died.

From Margate he went to London ; thence back again to his native town ; where, through the influence of Mr. Cock-sedge, the recorder, he, towards the end of 1763, obtained a situation in the excise.

Under the pretext of some trifling fault, but really, as *there is every reason for supposing, because he was too conscientious to connive at the villainies which were practiced*