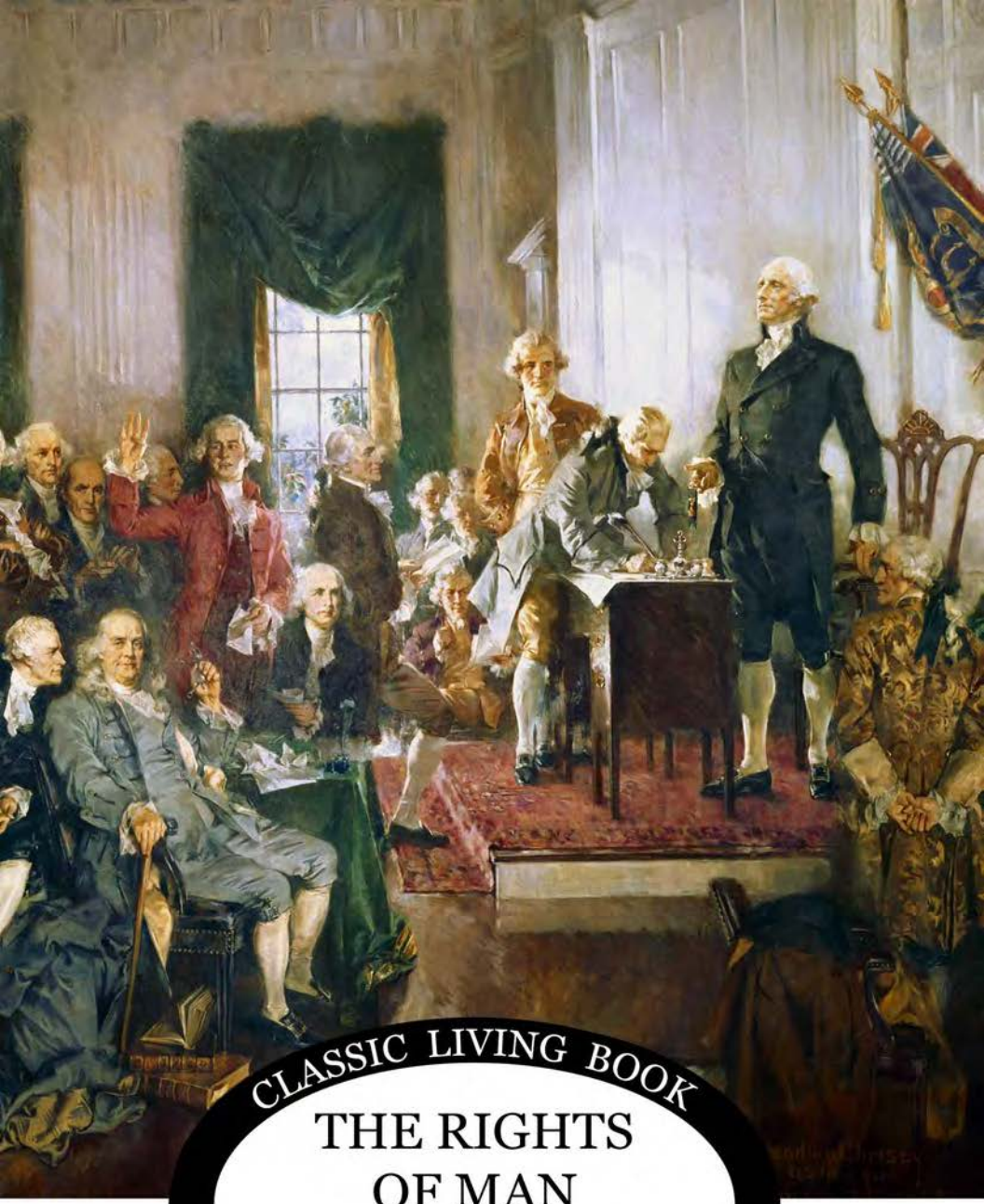

CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

THE RIGHTS OF MAN

Thomas Paine

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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by

Thomas Paine

Editor's Introduction

When Thomas Paine sailed from America for France, in April, 1787, he was perhaps as happy a man as any in the world. His most intimate friend, Jefferson, was Minister at Paris, and his friend Lafayette was the idol of France. His fame had preceded him, and he at once became, in Paris, the centre of the same circle of savants and philosophers that had surrounded Franklin. His main reason for proceeding at once to Paris was that he might submit to the Academy of Sciences his invention of an iron bridge, and with its favorable verdict he came to England, in September. He at once went to his aged mother at Thetford, leaving with a publisher (Ridgway), his *Prospects on the Rubicon*. He next made arrangements to patent his bridge, and to construct at Rotherham the large model of it exhibited on Paddington Green, London. He was welcomed in England by leading statesmen, such as Lansdowne and Fox, and above all by Edmund Burke, who for some time had him as a guest at Beaconsfield, and drove him about in various parts of the country. He had not the slightest revolutionary purpose, either as regarded England or France. Towards Louis XVI he felt only gratitude for the services he had rendered America, and towards George III he felt no animosity whatever. His four months' sojourn in Paris had convinced him that there was approaching a reform of that country after the American model, except that the Crown would be preserved, a compromise he approved, provided the throne should not be hereditary. Events in France travelled more swiftly than he had anticipated, and Paine was summoned by Lafayette, Condorcet, and others, as an adviser in the formation of a new constitution.

Such was the situation immediately preceding the political and literary duel between Paine and Burke, which in the event turned out a tremendous war between Royalism and Republicanism in Europe. Paine was, both in France and in England, the inspirer of moderate counsels. Samuel Rogers relates that in early life he dined at a friend's house in London with Thomas Paine, when one

of the toasts given was the "memory of Joshua,"—in allusion to the Hebrew leader's conquest of the kings of Canaan, and execution of them. Paine observed that he would not treat kings like Joshua. "I'm of the Scotch parson's opinion," he said, "when he prayed against Louis XIV—'Lord, shake him over the mouth of hell, but don't let him drop!' " Paine then gave as his toast, "The Republic of the World,"—which Samuel Rogers, aged twenty-nine, noted as a sublime idea. This was Paine's faith and hope, and with it he confronted the revolutionary storms which presently burst over France and England.

Until Burke's arraignment of France in his parliamentary speech (February 9, 1790), Paine had no doubt whatever that he would sympathize with the movement in France, and wrote to him from that country as if conveying glad tidings. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* appeared November 1, 1790, and Paine at once set himself to answer it. He was then staying at the Angel Inn, Islington. The inn has been twice rebuilt since that time, and from its contents there is preserved only a small image, which perhaps was meant to represent "Liberty,"—possibly brought from Paris by Paine as an ornament for his study. From the Angel he removed to a house in Harding Street, Fetter Lane. Rickman says *Part First* of *Rights of Man* was finished at Versailles, but probably this has reference to the preface only, as I cannot find Paine in France that year until April 8. The book had been printed by Johnson, in time for the opening of Parliament, in February; but this publisher became frightened after a few copies were out (there is one in the British Museum), and the work was transferred to J. S. Jordan, 166 Fleet Street, with a preface sent from Paris (not contained in Johnson's edition, nor in the American editions). The pamphlet, though sold at the same price as Burke's, three shillings, had a vast circulation, and Paine gave the proceeds to the Constitutional Societies which sprang up under his teachings in various parts of the country.

Soon after appeared Burke's *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*. In this Burke quoted a good deal from *Rights of Man*, but

replied to it only with exclamation points, saying that the only answer such ideas merited was "criminal justice." Paine's *Part Second* followed, published February 17, 1792. In *Part First* Paine had mentioned a rumor that Burke was a masked pensioner (a charge that will be noticed in connection with its detailed statement in a further publication); and as Burke had been formerly arraigned in Parliament, while Paymaster, for a very questionable proceeding, this charge no doubt hurt a good deal. Although the government did not follow Burke's suggestion of a prosecution at that time, there is little doubt that it was he who induced the prosecution of *Part Second*. Before the trial came on, December 18, 1792, Paine was occupying his seat in the French Convention, and could only be outlawed.

Burke humorously remarked to a friend of Paine and himself, "We hunt in pairs." The severally representative character and influence of these two men in the revolutionary era, in France and England, deserve more adequate study than they have received. While Paine maintained freedom of discussion, Burke first proposed criminal prosecution for sentiments by no means libellous (such as Paine's *Part First*). While Paine was endeavoring to make the movement in France peaceful, Burke fomented the league of monarchs against France which maddened its people, and brought on the Reign of Terror. While Paine was endeavoring to preserve the French throne ("phantom" though he believed it), to prevent bloodshed, Burke was secretly writing to the Queen of France, entreating her not to compromise, and to "trust to the support of foreign armies" (*Histoire de France depuis 1789*. Henri Martin, I, 151). While Burke thus helped to bring the King and Queen to the guillotine, Paine pleaded for their lives to the last moment. While Paine maintained the right of mankind to improve their condition, Burke held that "the awful Author of our being is the author of our place in the order of existence; and that, having disposed and marshalled us by a divine tactick, not according to our will, but according to his, he has, in and

by that disposition, virtually subjected us to act the part which belongs to the place assigned us." Paine was a religious believer in eternal principles; Burke held that "political problems do not primarily concern truth or falsehood. They relate to good or evil. What in the result is likely to produce evil is politically false, that which is productive of good politically is true." Assuming thus the visionary's right to decide before the result what was "likely to produce evil," Burke vigorously sought to kindle war against the French Republic which might have developed itself peacefully, while Paine was striving for an international Congress in Europe in the interest of peace. Paine had faith in the people, and believed that, if allowed to choose representatives, they would select their best and wisest men; and that while reforming government the people would remain orderly, as they had generally remained in America during the transition from British rule to self-government. Burke maintained that if the existing political order were broken up there would be no longer a people, but "a number of vague, loose individuals, and nothing more." "Alas!" he exclaims, "they little know how many a weary step is to be taken before they can form themselves into a mass, which has a true personality." For the sake of peace Paine wished the revolution to be peaceful as the advance of summer; he used every endeavor to reconcile English radicals to some *modus vivendi* with the existing order, as he was willing to retain Louis XVI as head of the executive in France: Burke resisted every tendency of English statesmanship to reform at home, or to negotiate with the French Republic, and was mainly responsible for the King's death and the war that followed between England and France in February, 1793. Burke became a royal favorite, Paine was outlawed by a prosecution originally proposed by Burke. While Paine was demanding religious liberty, Burke was opposing the removal of penal statutes from Unitarians, on the ground that but for those statutes Paine might some day set up a church in England. When Burke was retiring on a large royal pension, Paine was in prison,

through the devices of Burke's confederate, the American Minister in Paris. So the two men, as Burke said, "hunted in pairs."

So far as Burke attempts to affirm any principle he is fairly quoted in Paine's work, and nowhere misrepresented. As for Paine's own ideas, the reader should remember that *Rights of Man* was the earliest complete statement of republican principles. They were pronounced to be the fundamental principles of the American Republic by Jefferson, Madison, and Jackson—the three Presidents who above all others represented the republican idea which Paine first allied with American Independence. Those who suppose that Paine did but reproduce the principles of Rousseau and Locke will find by careful study of his well-weighed language that such is not the case. Paine's political principles were evolved out of his early Quakerism. He was potential in George Fox. The belief that every human soul was the child of God, and capable of direct inspiration from the Father of all, without mediator or priestly intervention, or sacramental instrumentality, was fatal to all privilege and rank. The universal Fatherhood implied universal Brotherhood, or human equality. But the fate of the Quakers proved the necessity of protecting the individual spirit from oppression by the majority as well as by privileged classes. For this purpose Paine insisted on surrounding the individual right with the security of the Declaration of Rights, not to be invaded by any government; and would reduce government to an association limited in its operations to the defence of those rights which the individual is unable, alone, to maintain.

From the preceding chapter it will be seen that *Part Second* of *Rights of Man* was begun by Paine in the spring of 1791. At the close of that year, or early in 1792, he took up his abode with his friend Thomas "Clio" Rickman, at No. 7 Upper Marylebone Street. Rickman was a radical publisher; the house remains still a bookbinding establishment, and seems little changed since Paine therein revised the proofs of *Part Second* on a table which Rickman marked with a plate, and which is now in possession of Mr. Edward Truelove. As

the plate states, Paine wrote on the same table other works which appeared in England in 1792.

In 1795 D. I. Eaton published an edition of *Rights of Man*, with a preface purporting to have been written by Paine while in Luxembourg prison. It is manifestly spurious. The genuine English and French prefaces are given.

Moncure Daniel Conway

PART FIRST

Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution

Dedication

George Washington
President Of The United States Of America

Sir—
I present you a small treatise in defence of those principles of freedom which your exemplary virtue hath so eminently contributed to establish. That the Rights of Man may become as universal as your benevolence can wish, and that you may enjoy the happiness of seeing the New World regenerate the Old, is the prayer of

Sir,
Your much obliged, and
Obedient humble Servant,
Thomas Paine

Paine's Preface to the English Edition

From the part Mr. Burke took in the American Revolution, it was natural that I should consider him a friend to mankind; and as our acquaintance commenced on that ground, it would have been more agreeable to me to have had cause to continue in that opinion than to change it.

At the time Mr. Burke made his violent speech last winter in the English Parliament against the French Revolution and the National Assembly, I was in Paris, and had written to him but a short time before to inform him how prosperously matters were going on.[1] Soon after this I saw his advertisement of the Pamphlet he intended to publish: As the attack was to be made in a language but little studied, and less understood in France, and as everything suffers by translation, I promised some of the friends of the Revolution in that country that whenever Mr. Burke's Pamphlet came forth, I would answer it. This appeared to me the more necessary to be done, when I saw the flagrant misrepresentations which Mr. Burke's Pamphlet contains; and that while it is an outrageous

1 My efforts to discover this letter have failed. The following is from Croly's *Life of Burke*: "Among his [Paine's] earliest missives was a letter [from Paris] to Burke, whom he eagerly urged to introduce Revolution into England, by its established name of 'Reform.' Burke threw back the temptation, or the insult, at once. 'Do you *really* imagine, Mr. Paine,' was his reply, 'that the constitution of this kingdom requires such innovations, or *could exist with them*, or *that any reflecting man would seriously engage in them*? You are aware that I have, all my life, opposed such schemes of reform, because *I know them not to be Reform*.' Paine, however, continued his ill-received correspondence; and whether from the delight of molesting Burke, or the expectation of making him a convert to a side which had the grand charm for the conviction of his own profligate heart, plunder; he sent him narratives of the rapidly recurring triumphs of democracy. In one of those he stated that the Reformers had already determined on the total overthrow of the [French] monarchy, etc." This letter is said by the reverend biographer to have been written "exactly three days before the storming of the Bastille." —Conway

abuse on the French Revolution, and the principles of Liberty, it is an imposition on the rest of the world.

I am the more astonished and disappointed at this conduct in Mr. Burke, as (from the circumstances I am going to mention) I had formed other expectations.

I had seen enough of the miseries of war, to wish it might never more have existence in the world, and that some other mode might be found out to settle the differences that should occasionally arise in the neighbourhood of nations. This certainly might be done if courts were disposed to set honestly about it, or if countries were enlightened enough not to be made the dupes of courts. The people of America had been bred up in the same prejudices against France, which at that time characterised the people of England; but experience and an acquaintance with the French Nation have most effectually shown to the Americans the falsehood of those prejudices; and I do not believe that a more cordial and confidential intercourse exists between any two countries than between America and France.

When I came to France, in the spring of 1787, the Archbishop of Thoulouse was then Minister, and at that time highly esteemed. I became much acquainted with the private Secretary of that Minister, a man of an enlarged benevolent heart; and found that his sentiments and my own perfectly agreed with respect to the madness of war, and the wretched impolicy of two nations, like England and France, continually worrying each other, to no other end than that of a mutual increase of burdens and taxes. That I might be assured I had not misunderstood him, nor he me, I put the substance of our opinions into writing and sent it to him; subjoining a request, that if I should see among the people of England, any disposition to cultivate a better understanding between the two nations than had hitherto prevailed, how far I might be authorised to say that the same disposition prevailed on the part of France? He answered me by letter in the most unreserved manner, and that not for himself only, but for the Minister, with whose knowledge the letter was declared to be written.

I put this letter into the hands of Mr. Burke almost three years ago, and left it with him, where it still remains; hoping, and at the same time naturally expecting, from the opinion I had conceived of him, that he would find some opportunity of making good use of it, for the purpose of removing those errors and prejudices which two neighbouring nations, from the want of knowing each other, had entertained, to the injury of both.

When the French Revolution broke out, it certainly afforded to Mr. Burke an opportunity of doing some good, had he been disposed to it; instead of which, no sooner did he see the old prejudices wearing away, than he immediately began sowing the seeds of a new inveteracy, as if he were afraid that England and France would cease to be enemies. That there are men in all countries who get their living by war, and by keeping up the quarrels of nations, is as shocking as it is true; but when those who are concerned in the government of a country, make it their study to sow discord and cultivate prejudices between nations, it becomes the more unpardonable.

With respect to a paragraph in this work alluding to Mr. Burke's having a pension, the report has been some time in circulation, at least two months; and as a person is often the last to hear what concerns him the most to know, I have mentioned it, that Mr. Burke may have an opportunity of contradicting the rumour, if he thinks proper.

Thomas Paine

Paine's Preface to the French Edition[2]

The astonishment which the French Revolution has caused throughout Europe should be considered from two different points of view: first as it affects foreign peoples, secondly as it affects their governments.

The cause of the French people is that of all Europe, or rather of the whole world; but the governments of all those countries are by no means favorable to it. It is important that we should never lose sight of this distinction. We must not confuse the peoples with their governments; especially not the English people with its government.

The government of England is no friend of the revolution of France. Of this we have sufficient proofs in the thanks given by that weak and witless person, the Elector of Hanover, sometimes called the King of England, to Mr. Burke for the insults heaped on it in his book, and in the malevolent comments of the English Minister, Pitt, in his speeches in Parliament.

In spite of the professions of sincerest friendship found in the official correspondence of the English government with that of France, its conduct gives the lie to all its declarations, and shows us clearly that it is not a court to be trusted, but an insane court, plunging in all the quarrels and intrigues of Europe, in quest of a war to satisfy its folly and countenance its extravagance.

The English nation, on the contrary, is very favorably disposed

2 Part I, translated by F. Soulès, was published in Paris in May, 1791. This Preface has not appeared in any American edition, but a translation was given in Carlile's edition, 1819. The present translation is from the original French. F. Lanthenas translated Parts I and II in 1792. —Conway

towards the French Revolution, and to the progress of liberty in the whole world; and this feeling will become more general in England as the intrigues and artifices of its government are better known, and the principles of the revolution better understood. The French should know that most English newspapers are directly in the pay of government, or, if indirectly connected with it, always under its orders; and that those papers constantly distort and attack the revolution in France in order to deceive the nation. But, as it is impossible long to prevent the prevalence of truth, the daily falsehoods of those papers no longer have the desired effect.

To be convinced that the voice of truth has been stifled in England, the world needs only to be told that the government regards and prosecutes as a libel that which it should protect.[3] This outrage on morality is called *law*, and judges are found wicked enough to inflict penalties on truth.

The English government presents, just now, a curious phenomenon. Seeing that the French and English nations are getting rid of the prejudices and false notions formerly entertained against each other, and which have cost them so much money, that government seems to be placarding its need of a foe; for unless it finds one somewhere, no pretext exists for the enormous revenue and taxation now deemed necessary.

Therefore it seeks in Russia the enemy it has lost in France, and appears to say to the universe, or to say to itself: "If nobody will be so kind as to become my foe, I shall need no more fleets nor armies, and shall be forced to reduce my taxes. The American war enabled me to double the taxes; the Dutch business to add more; the Nootka humbug gave me a pretext for raising three millions sterling more; but unless I can make an enemy of Russia the harvest from wars will end. I was the first to incite Turk against Russian, and now I hope to reap a fresh crop of taxes."

If the miseries of war, and the flood of evils it spreads over a

3 The main and uniform maxim of the judges is, the greater the truth the greater the libel.

country, did not check all inclination to mirth, and turn laughter into grief, the frantic conduct of the government of England would only excite ridicule. But it is impossible to banish from one's mind the images of suffering which the contemplation of such vicious policy presents. To reason with governments, as they have existed for ages, is to argue with brutes. It is only from the nations themselves that reforms can be expected. There ought not now to exist any doubt that the peoples of France, England, and America, enlightened and enlightening each other, shall henceforth be able, not merely to give the world an example of good government, but by their united influence enforce its practice.