

CHAPTER XII.

FRIENDSHIPS.

BARON PICHON, who had been a sinuous Secretary of Legation in America under Genêt and Fauchet, and attached to the Foreign Office in France under the Directory, told George Ticknor, in 1837, that "Tom Paine, who lived in Monroe's house at Paris, had a great deal too much influence over Monroe."¹ The Baron, apart from his prejudice against republicanism (Talleyrand was his master), knew more about American than French politics at the time of Monroe's mission in France. The agitation caused in France by Jay's negotiations in England, and rumors set afloat by their secrecy,—such secrecy being itself felt as a violation of good faith—rendered Monroe's position unhappy and difficult. After Paine's release from prison, his generous devotion to France, undiminished by his wrongs, added to the painful illness that reproached the Convention's negligence, excited a chivalrous enthusiasm for him. The tender care of Mr. and Mrs. Monroe for him, the fact that this faithful friend of France was in their house, were circumstances of international importance. Of Paine's fidelity to republican principles,

¹ "Life of George Ticknor," ii., p. 113.

and his indignation at their probable betrayal in England, there could be no doubt in any mind. He was consulted by the French Executive, and was virtually the most important *attaché* of the United States Legation. The "intrigue" of which Thibaudeau had spoken, in Convention, as having driven Paine from that body, was not given to the public, but it was well understood to involve the American President. If Paine's suffering represented in London Washington's deference to England, all the more did he stand to France as a representative of those who in America were battling for the Alliance. He was therefore a tower of strength to Monroe. It will be seen by the subjoined letter that while he was Monroe's guest it was to him rather than the Minister that the Foreign Office applied for an introduction of a new Consul to Samuel Adams, Governor of Massachusetts—a Consul with whom Paine was not personally acquainted. The general feeling and situation in France at the date of this letter (March 6th), and the anger at Jay's secret negotiations in England, are reflected in it :

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Mr. Mozard, who is appointed Consul, will present you this letter. He is spoken of here as a good sort of man, and I can have no doubt that you will find him the same at Boston. When I came from America it was my intention to return the next year, and I have intended the same every year since. The case I believe is, that as I am embarked in the revolution, I do not like to leave it till it is finished, notwithstanding the dangers I have run. I am now almost the only survivor of those who began this revolution, and I know not how it is that I have escaped. I know however that I owe nothing to the government of America. The

executive department has never directed either the former or the present Minister to enquire whether I was dead or alive, in prison or in liberty, what the cause of the imprisonment was, and whether there was any service or assistance it could render. Mr. Monroe acted voluntarily in the case, and reclaimed me as an American citizen ; for the pretence for my imprisonment was that I was a foreigner, born in England.

“ The internal scene here from the 31 of May 1793 to the fall of Robespierre has been terrible. I was shut up in the prison of the Luxembourg eleven months, and I find by the papers of Robespierre that have been published by the Convention since his death, that I was designed for a worse fate. The following memorandum is in his own handwriting : ‘ D mander que Thomas Paine soit d cr t  d’accusation pour les int r ts de l’Am rique autant que de la France.’

“ You will see by the public papers that the successes of the French arms have been and continue to be astonishing, more especially since the fall of Robespierre, and the suppression of the system of Terror. They have fairly beaten all the armies of Austria, Prussia, England, Spain, Sardignia, and Holland. Holland is entirely conquered, and there is now a revolution in that country.

“ I know not how matters are going on your side the water, but I think everything is not as it ought to be. The appointment of G. Morris to be Minister here was the most unfortunate and the most injudicious appointment that could be made. I wrote this opinion to Mr. Jefferson at the time, and I said the same to Morris. Had he not been removed at the time he was I think the two countries would have been involved in a quarrel, for it is a fact, that he would either have been ordered away or put in arrestation ; for he gave every reason to suspect that he was secretly a British Emissary.

“ What Mr. Jay is about in England I know not ; but is it possible that any man who has contributed to the Independence of America, and to free her from the tyranny of the British Government, can read without shame and indignation the note of Jay to Grenville ? That the *United States has no other resource than in the justice and magnanimity of his Majesty*, is a satire upon the Declaration of Independence, and exhibits [such] a spirit of meanness on the part of America, that, were

it true, I should be ashamed of her. Such a declaration may suit the spaniel character of Aristocracy, but it cannot agree with manly character of a Republican.

“Mr. Mozard is this moment come for this letter, and he sets off directly.—God bless you, remember me among the circle of our friends, and tell them how much I wish to be once more among them.

“THOMAS PAINE.”¹

There are indications of physical feebleness as well as haste in this letter. The spring and summer brought some vigor, but, as we have seen by Monroe's letter to Judge Jones, he sank again, and in the autumn seemed nearing his end. Once more the announcement of his death appeared in England, this time bringing joy to the orthodox. From the same quarter, probably, whence issued, in 1793, “Intercepted Correspondence from Satan to Citizen Paine,” came now (1795) a folio sheet: “Glorious News for Old England. The British Lyon rous'd; or John Bull for ever.

“The Fox has lost his Tail
— The Ass has done his Brayng,
The Devil has got Tom Paine.”

Good-hearted as Paine was, it must be admitted that he was cruelly persistent in disappointing these British obituaries. Despite anguish, fever, and abscess—this for more than a year eating into his side,—he did not gratify those prayerful expectations by becoming a monument of divine retribution. Nay, amid all these sufferings he had managed to finish Part Second of the “Age of Reason,” write the “Dissertation on Government,” and give

¹ Mr. Spofford, Librarian of Congress, has kindly copied this letter for me from the original, among the papers of George Bancroft.

the Address before the Convention. Nevertheless when, in November, he was near death's door, there came from England tidings grievous enough to crush a less powerful constitution. It was reported that many of his staunchest old friends had turned against him on account of his heretical book. This report seemed to find confirmation in the successive volumes of Gilbert Wakefield in reply to the two Parts of Paine's book. Wakefield held Unitarian opinions, and did not defend the real fortress besieged by Paine. He was enraged that Paine should deal with the authority of the Bible, and the orthodox dogmas, as if they were Christianity, ignoring unorthodox versions altogether. This, however, hardly explains the extreme and coarse vituperation of these replies, which shocked Wakefield's friends.¹ Although in his thirty-eighth year at this time, Wakefield was not old enough to escape the *sequelæ* of his former clericalism. He had been a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, afterwards had a congregation, and had continued his connection with the English Church after he was led, by textual criticism, to adopt Unitarian opinions. He had great reputation as a linguist, and wrote Scriptural expositions and retranslations. But few read his books, and he became a tutor in a dissenting college at Hackney, mainly under influence of the Unitarian leaders,

¹ "The office of 'castigation' was unworthy of our friend's talents, and detrimental to his purpose of persuading others. Such a contemptuous treatment, even of an unfair disputant, was also too well calculated to depreciate in the public estimation that benevolence of character by which Mr. Wakefield was so justly distinguished."—"Life of Gilbert Wakefield," 1804, ii., p. 33.

Price and Priestley. Wakefield would not condescend to any connection with a dissenting society, and his career at Hackney was marked by arrogant airs towards Unitarians, on account of a university training, then not open to dissenters. He attacked Price and Priestley, his superiors in every respect, apart from their venerable position and services, in a contemptuous way; and, in fact, might be brevetted a prig, with a fondness for coarse phrases, sometimes printed with blanks. He flew at Paine as if he had been waiting for him; his replies, not affecting any vital issue, were displays of linguistic and textual learning, set forth on the background of Paine's page, which he blackened. He exhausts his large vocabulary of vilification on a book whose substantial affirmations he concedes; and it is done in the mean way of appropriating the credit of Paine's arguments.

Gilbert Wakefield was indebted to the excitement raised by Paine for the first notice taken by the general public of anything he ever wrote. Paine, however, seems to have been acquainted with a sort of autobiography which he had published in 1792. In this book Wakefield admitted with shame that he had subscribed the Church formulas when he did not believe them, while indulging in flings at Price, Priestley, and others, who had suffered for their principles. At the same time there were some things in Wakefield's autobiography which could not fail to attract Paine: it severely attacked slavery, and also the whole course of Pitt towards France. This was done with talent and courage. It was consequently a shock when Gilbert Wake-

field's outrageous abuse of himself came to the invalid in his sick-room. It appeared to be an indication of the extent to which he was abandoned by the Englishmen who had sympathized with his political principles, and to a large extent with his religious views. This acrimonious repudiation added groans to Paine's sick and sinking heart, some of which were returned upon his Socinian assailant, and in kind. This private letter my reader must see, though it was meant for no eye but that of Gilbert Wakefield. It is dated at Paris, November 19, 1795.

“DEAR SIR,—When you prudently chose, like a starved apothecary, to offer your eighteenpenny antidote to those who had taken my two-and-sixpenny Bible-purge,¹ you forgot that although my dose was rather of the roughest, it might not be the less wholesome for possessing that drastick quality; and if I am to judge of its salutary effects on your infuriate polemic stomach, by the nasty things it has made you bring away, I think you should be the last man alive to take your own panacea. As to the collection of words of which you boast the possession, nobody, I believe, will dispute their amount, but every one who reads your answer to my ‘Age of Reason’ will wish there were not so many scurrilous ones among them; for though they may be very usefull in emptying your gall-bladder they are too apt to move the bile of other people.

“Those of Greek and Latin are rather foolishly thrown away, I think, on a man like me, who, you are pleased to say, is ‘*the greatest ignoramus in nature*’: yet I must take the liberty to tell you, that wisdom does not consist in the mere knowledge of language, but of things.

“You recommend me to *know myself*,—a thing very easy to advise, but very difficult to practice, as I learn from your own book; for you take yourself to be a meek disciple of Christ, and yet give way to passion and pride in every page of its composition.

¹ These were the actual prices of the books.

“ You have raised an ant-hill about the roots of my sturdy oak, and it may amuse idlers to see your work ; but neither its body nor its branches are injured by you ; and I hope the shade of my Civic Crown may be able to preserve your little contrivance, at least for the season.

“ When you have done as much service to the world by your writings, and suffered as much for them, as I have done, you will be better entitled to dictate : but although I know you to be a keener politician than Paul, I can assure you, from my experience of mankind, that you do not much commend the Christian doctrines to them by announcing that it requires the labour of a learned life to make them understood.

“ May I be permitted, after all, to suggest that your truly vigorous talents would be best employed in teaching men to preserve their liberties exclusively,—leaving to that God who made their immortal souls the care of their eternal welfare.

“ I am, dear Sir,

“ Your true well-wisher,

“ THO. PAINE.

“ TO GILBERT WAKEFIELD, A. B.”

After a first perusal of this letter has made its unpleasant impression, the reader will do well to read it again. Paine has repaired to his earliest Norfolkshire for language appropriate to the coarser tongue of his Nottinghamshire assailant ; but it should be said that the offensive paragraph, the first, is a travesty of one written by Wakefield. In his autobiography, after groaning over his books that found no buyers, a veritable “starved apothecary,” Wakefield describes the uneasiness caused by his pamphlet on “Religious Worship” as proof that the disease was yielding to his “potion.” He says that “as a physician of spiritual maladies” he had seconded “the favourable operation of the first prescription,”—and so forth. Paine, in using the simile, certainly allows the drugs and

phials of his sick-room to enter it to a disagreeable extent, but we must bear in mind that we are looking over his shoulder. We must also, by the same consideration of its privacy, mitigate the letter's egotism. Wakefield's ant-hill protected by the foliage, the "civic crown," of Paine's oak which it has attacked,—gaining notice by the importance of the work it belittles,—were admirable if written by another; and the egotism is not without some warrant. It is the rebuke of a scarred veteran of the liberal army to the insults of a subaltern near twenty years his junior. It was no doubt taken to heart. For when the agitation which Gilbert Wakefield had contributed to swell, and to lower, presently culminated in handcuffs for the circulators of Paine's works, he was filled with anguish. He vainly tried to resist the oppression, and to call back the Unitarians, who for twenty-five years continued to draw attention from their own heresies by hounding on the prosecution of Paine's adherents.¹ The prig perished; in his place stood

¹ "But I would not forcibly suppress this book ["Age of Reason"]; much less would I punish (O my God, be such wickedness far from me, or leave me destitute of thy favour in the midst of this perjured and sanguinary generation!) much less would I punish, by fine or imprisonment, from any possible consideration, the publisher or author of these pages."—Letter of Gilbert Wakefield to Sir John Scott, Attorney General, 1798. For evidence of Unitarian intolerance see the discourse of W. J. Fox on "The Duties of Christians towards Deists" (Collected Works, vol. i.). In this discourse, October 24, 1819, on the prosecution of Carlile for publishing the "Age of Reason," Mr. Fox expresses his regret that the first prosecution should have been conducted by a Unitarian. "Goaded," he says, "by the calumny which would identify them with those who yet reject the Saviour, they have, in repelling so unjust an accusation, caught too much of the tone of their opponents, and given the most undesirable proof of their affinity to other Christians by that unfairness towards the disbeliever which does not become any Christian." Ultimately Mr. Fox became the champion of all the principles of "The Age of Reason" and "The Rights of Man."

a martyr of the freedom bound up with the work he had assailed. Paine's other assailant, the Bishop of Llandaff, having bent before Pitt, and episcopally censured the humane side he once espoused, Gilbert Wakefield answered him with a boldness that brought on him two years' imprisonment. When he came out of prison (1801) he was received with enthusiasm by all of Paine's friends, who had forgotten the wrong so bravely atoned for. Had he not died in the same year, at the age of forty-five, Gilbert Wakefield might have become a standard-bearer of the freethinkers.

Paine's recovery after such prolonged and perilous suffering was a sort of resurrection. In April (1796) he leaves Monroe's house for the country, and with the returning life of nature his strength is steadily recovered. What to the man whose years of anguish, imprisonment, disease, at last pass away, must have been the paths and hedgerows of Versailles, where he now meets the springtide, and the more healing sunshine of affection! Risen from his thorny bed of pain—

“The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening paradise.”

So had it been even if nature alone had surrounded him. But Paine had been restored by the tenderness and devotion of friends. Had it not been for friendship he could hardly have been saved. We are little able, in the present day, to

appreciate the reverence and affection with which Thomas Paine was regarded by those who saw in him the greatest apostle of liberty in the world. Elihu Palmer spoke a very general belief when he declared Paine "probably the most useful man that ever existed upon the face of the earth." This may sound wild enough on the ears of those to whom Liberty has become a familiar drudge. There was a time when she was an ideal Rachel, to win whom many years of terrible service were not too much; but now in the garish day she is our prosaic Leah,—a serviceable creature in her way, but quite unromantic. In Paris there were ladies and gentlemen who had known something of the cost of Liberty,—Colonel and Mrs. Monroe, Sir Robert and Lady Smith, Madame Lafayette, Mr. and Mrs. Barlow, M. and Madame De Bonneville. They had known what it was to watch through anxious nights with terrors surrounding them. He who had suffered most was to them a sacred person. He had come out of the succession of ordeals, so weak in body, so wounded by American ingratitude, so sore at heart, that no delicate child needed more tender care. Set those ladies and their charge a thousand years back in the poetic past, and they become Morgan le Fay, and the Lady Nimue, who bear the wounded warrior away to their Avalon, there to be healed of his grievous hurts. Men say their Arthur is dead, but their love is stronger than death. And though the service of these friends might at first have been reverential, it had ended with attachment, so great was Paine's power, so wonderful and pathetic his

memories, so charming the play of his wit, so full his response to kindness.

One especially great happiness awaited him when he became convalescent. Sir Robert Smith, a wealthy banker in Paris, made his acquaintance, and he discovered that Lady Smith was no other than "The Little Corner of the World," whose letters had carried sunbeams into his prison.¹ An intimate friendship was at once established with Sir Robert and his lady, in whose house, probably at Versailles, Paine was a guest after leaving the Monroes. To Lady Smith, on discovering her, Paine addressed a poem,—“The Castle in the Air to the Little Corner of the World”:

“In the region of clouds, where the whirlwinds arise,
My Castle of Fancy was built ;
The turrets reflected the blue from the skies,
And the windows with sunbeams were gilt.

“The rainbow sometimes, in its beautiful state,
Enamelled the mansion around ;
And the figures that fancy in clouds can create
Supplied me with gardens and ground.

“I had grottos, and fountains, and orange-tree groves,
I had all that enchantment has told ;
I had sweet shady walks for the gods and their loves,
I had mountains of coral and gold.

“But a storm that I felt not had risen and rolled,
While wrapped in a slumber I lay ;
And when I looked out in the morning, behold,
My Castle was carried away.

¹ Sir Robert Smith (Smythe in the Peerage List) was born in 1744, and married, first, Miss Blake of London (1776). The name of the second Lady Smith, Paine's friend, before her marriage I have not ascertained.

“ It passed over rivers and valleys and groves,
The world it was all in my view ;
I thought of my friends, of their fates, of their loves,
And often, full often, of YOU.

“ At length it came over a beautiful scene,
That nature in silence had made ;
The place was but small, but 't was sweetly serene,
And chequered with sunshine and shade.

“ I gazed and I envied with painful good will,
And grew tired of my seat in the air ;
When all of a sudden my Castle stood still,
As if some attraction were there.

“ Like a lark from the sky it came fluttering down,
And placed me exactly in view,
When whom should I meet in this charming retreat,
This corner of calmness, but—YOU.

“ Delighted to find you in honour and ease,
I felt no more sorrow nor pain ;
But the wind coming fair, I ascended the breeze,
And went back with my Castle again.”

Paine was now a happy man. The kindness that rescued him from death was followed by the friendship that beguiled him from horrors of the past. From gentle ladies he learned that beyond the Age of Reason lay the forces that defeat Giant Despair.

“ To reason [so he writes to Lady Smith] against feelings is as vain as to reason against fire : it serves only to torture the torture, by adding reproach to horror. All reasoning with ourselves in such cases acts upon us like the reasoning of another person, which, however kindly done, serves but to insult the misery we suffer. If Reason could remove the pain, Reason would have prevented it. If she could not do

the one, how is she to perform the other? In all such cases we must look upon Reason as dispossessed of her empire, by a revolt of the mind. She retires to a distance to weep, and the ebony sceptre of Despair rules alone. All that Reason can do is to suggest, to hint a thought, to signify a wish, to cast now and then a kind of bewailing look, to hold up, when she can catch the eye, the miniature shaded portrait of Hope; and though dethroned, and can dictate no more, to wait upon us in the humble station of a handmaid."

The mouth of the rescued and restored captive was filled with song. Several little poems were circulated among his friends, but not printed; among them the following :

"CONTENTMENT ; OR, IF YOU PLEASE, CONFESSION. *To Mrs. Barlow, on her pleasantly telling the author that, after writing against the superstition of the Scripture religion, he was setting up a religion capable of more bigotry and enthusiasm, and more dangerous to its votaries—that of making a religion of Love.*

"O could we always live and love,
And always be sincere,
I would not wish for heaven above,
My heaven would be here.

"Though many countries I have seen,
And more may chance to see,
My Little Corner of the World
Is half the world to me.

"The other half, as you may guess,
America contains ;
And thus, between them, I possess
The whole world for my pains.

"I 'm then contented with my lot,
I can no happier be ;
For neither world I 'm sure has got
So rich a man as me.

“ Then send no fiery chariot down
To take me off from hence,
But leave me on my heavenly ground—
This prayer is *common sense*.

“ Let others choose another plan,
I mean no fault to find ;
The true theology of man
Is happiness of mind.”

Paine gained great favor with the French government and fame throughout Europe by his pamphlet, “The Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance,” in which he predicted the suspension of the Bank of England, which followed the next year. He dated the pamphlet April 8th, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs is shown, in the Archives of that office, to have ordered, on April 27th, a thousand copies. It was translated in all the languages of Europe, and was a terrible retribution for the forged assignats whose distribution in France the English government had considered a fair mode of warfare. This translation “into all the languages of the continent” is mentioned by Ralph Broome, to whom the British government entrusted the task of answering the pamphlet.¹ As Broome’s answer is dated June 4th, this circulation in six or seven weeks is remarkable. The proceeds were devoted by Paine to the relief of prisoners for debt in Newgate, London.²

¹ “ Observations on Mr. Paine’s Pamphlet,” etc. Broome escapes the charge of prejudice by speaking of “ Mr. Paine, whose abilities I admire and deprecate in a breath.” Paine’s pamphlet was also replied to by George Chalmers (“ Oldys ”) who had written the slanderous biography.

² Richard Carlile’s sketch of Paine, p. 20. This large generosity to English sufferers appears the more characteristic beside the closing paragraph of

The concentration of this pamphlet on its immediate subject, which made it so effective, renders it of too little intrinsic interest in the present day to delay us long, especially as it is included in all editions of Paine's works. It possesses, however, much biographical interest as proving the intellectual power of Paine while still but a convalescent. He never wrote any work involving more study and mastery of difficult details. It was this pamphlet, written in Paris, while "Peter Porcupine," in America, was rewriting the slanders of "Oldys," which revolutionized Cobbett's opinion of Paine, and led him to try and undo the injustice he had wrought.

It now so turned out that Paine was able to repay all the kindnesses he had received. The relations between the French government and Monroe, already strained, as we have seen, became in the spring of 1796 almost intolerable. The Jay treaty seemed to the French so incredible that, even after it was ratified, they believed that the Representatives would refuse the appropriation needed for its execution. But when tidings came that this effort of the House of Representatives had been crushed by a menaced *coup d'état*, the ideal America fell in France, and was broken in

Paine's pamphlet, "As an individual citizen of America, and as far as an individual can go, I have revenged (if I may use the expression without any immoral meaning) the piratical depredations committed on American commerce by the English government. I have retaliated for France on the subject of finance: and I conclude with retorting on Mr. Pitt the expression he used against France, and say, that the English system of finance 'is on the verge, nay even in the gulf of bankruptcy.'"

Concerning the false French assignats forged in England, see Louis Blanc's "History of the Revolution," vol. xii., p. 101.

fragments. Monroe could now hardly have remained save on the credit of Paine with the French. There was, of course, a fresh accession of wrath towards England for this appropriation of the French alliance. Paine had been only the first sacrifice on the altar of the new alliance; now all English families and all Americans in Paris except himself were likely to become its victims. The English-speaking residents there made one little colony, and Paine was sponsor for them all. His fatal blow at English credit proved the formidable power of the man whom Washington had delivered up to Robespierre in the interest of Pitt. So Paine's popularity reached its climax; the American Legation found through him a *modus vivendi* with the French government; the families which had received and nursed him in his weakness found in his intimacy their best credential. Mrs. Joel Barlow especially, while her husband was in Algeria, on the service of the American government, might have found her stay in Paris unpleasant but for Paine's friendship. The importance of his guarantee to the banker, Sir Robert Smith, appears by the following note, written at Versailles, August 13th :

“CITIZEN MINISTER: The citizen Robert Smith, a very particular friend of mine, wishes to obtain a passport to go to Hamburg, and I will be obliged to you to do him that favor. Himself and family have lived several years in France, for he likes neither the government nor the climate of England. He has large property in England, but his Banker in that country has refused sending him remittances. This makes it necessary for him to go to Hamburg, because from there he can draw

his money out of his Banker's hands, which he cannot do whilst in France. His family remains in France.—*Salut et fraternité.*

“ THOMAS PAINE.”¹

Amid his circle of cultured and kindly friends Paine had dreamed of a lifting of the last cloud from his life, so long overcast. His eyes were strained to greet that shining sail that should bring him a response to his letter of September to Washington, in his heart being a great hope that his apparent wrong would be explained as a miserable mistake, and that old friendship restored. As the reader knows, the hope was grievously disappointed. The famous public letter to Washington (August 3d), which was not published in France, has already been considered, in advance of its chronological place. It will be found, however, of more significance if read in connection with the unhappy situation, in which all of Paine's friends, and all Americans in Paris, had been brought by the Jay treaty. From their point of view the deliverance of Paine to prison and the guillotine was only one incident in a long-planned and systematic treason, aimed at the life of the French republic. Jefferson in America, and Paine in France, represented the faith and hope of republicans that the treason would be overtaken by retribution and reversal.

¹ Soon after Jefferson became President Paine wrote to him, suggesting that Sir Robert's firm might be safely depended on as the medium of American financial transactions in Europe.