

reverence, the laws their authority. The body of the people must not find the principles of natural subordination by art rooted out of their minds. They must respect that property of which they cannot partake. *They must labor to obtain what by labor can be obtained; and when they find, as they commonly do, the success disproportioned to the endeavor, they must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice.* Of this consolation, which ever deprives them, deadens their industry, and strikes at the root of acquisition as of all conservation. He that does this, is the cruel oppressor, the merciless enemy, of the poor and wretched; at the same time that, by wicked speculations, he exposes the fruits of successful industry, and accumulations of fortune, (ah! there's the rub)⁸ to the plunder of the negligent, the disappointed, and the unprosperous."

This is contemptible hard-hearted sophistry, in the specious form of humanity, and submission to the will of Heaven.—It is, Sir, *possible* to render the poor happier in this world, without depriving them of the consolation which you gratuitously grant them in the next. They have a right to more comfort than they at present enjoy; and more comfort might be afforded them, without encroaching on the pleasures of the rich: not now waiting to encroach, whether the rich have any right to exclusive pleasures. What do I say, encroaching! No; if an intercourse were established between them, it would impart the only true pleasure that can be snatched in this land of shades, this hard school of moral discipline.

I know, indeed, that there is often something disgusting in the distance of poverty, at which the imagination revolts, and starts back to exercise itself in the more attractive Arcadia of fiction. The rich man builds a house, and taste give it the highest finish. His gardens are planted, and the trees grow to recreate the fancy of the planter, though the temperature of the climate may rather force him to avoid the dangerous damps they exhale; he seeks the umbrageous retreat. Every thing on the estate is cherished to man;—yet, to contribute to the happiness of man, is the most sublime of enjoyments. But if, instead of sweeping pleasure-grounds, obelisks, temples, and elegant cottages,⁹ as *objects* for the eye, the heart was allowed to be true to nature, decent farms would be scattered over the estate, and plenty smile around. Instead of the poor being subject to the gripping hand of an avaricious steward, they would be watched over with fatherly solicitude by the man whose duty and pleasure it was to guard their happiness, and shield from rapacity the beings who, by the sweat of their brow, exalted him above his fellows.

I could almost imagine I see a man thus gathering blessings as he mounted the hill of life; or consolation, in those days when the spirits of the tired heart find no pleasure in them. It is not by squandering abundance that the poor can be relieved, or improved—it is the fostering sun of habit, the wisdom that finds them employments calculated to give the fruits of virtue, that meliorates their condition. Love is only the fruit of love; condescension and authority may produce the obedience you applaud; but he has lost his heart of flesh who can see a fellow-creature humbled before him, and trembling at the frown of a being, whose heart is supple

the more vital current, and whose pride ought to be checked by a consciousness of having the same infirmities.

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THOMAS PAINE

Though he was born and lived his first thirty-seven years in England, Thomas Paine (1747–1809) enters the debate as a visitor from America, where by writing *Common Sense* (1776) and the sixteen *Crisis* pamphlets, beginning "These are the times that try men's souls" (1776–83), he had served as the most effective propagandist for American independence. His *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Speech on the French Revolution*, published in March 1791 with a dedication "To George Washington, President of the United States of America," has the full weight of an American revolutionary experience behind it and is the strongest statement of hereditary monarchy of any of the works replying to Burke in this "war of ideas." Paine published a second part of *Rights of Man* the following year and, charged with treason by the British, fled to France, where he was made a citizen and a member of the Convention. With the fall of the more moderate Girondists, and imprisoned by the Jacobins for a year in 1793–94, during which he wrote his famous work, *The Age of Reason* (1794).

From Rights of Man

By the inequalities by which nations or individuals provoke and irritate each other, Mr. Burke's pamphlet on the French Revolution is an extraordinary instance. Neither the people of France, nor the National Assembly, were obliging themselves about the affairs of England, or the English Parliament; yet Mr. Burke should commence an unprovoked attack upon them, both in parliament and in public, is a conduct that cannot be pardoned on the score of manners, nor justified on that of policy.

There is scarcely an epithet of abuse to be found in the English language in which Mr. Burke has not loaded the French nation and the National Assembly. Every thing which rancor, prejudice, ignorance or knowledge might suggest, are poured forth in the copious fury of near four hundred columns to the strain and on the plan Mr. Burke was writing, he might have written to as many thousands. When the tongue or the pen is let loose in a frenzy of passion, it is the man, and not the subject, that becomes polluted. Mr. Burke has been mistaken and disappointed in the opinions that formed the affairs of France; but such is the ingenuity of his hope, and the fluency of his despair, that it furnishes him with new pretences to