

Thomas Paine

Independence is my happiness, and I view things as they are, without regard to place or person; my country is the world, and my religion is to do good.

It is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself.

It is not our belief or disbelief that can make or unmake the fact.

It is easy to tell a lie, but it is difficult to support the lie after it is told.

My own mind is my own church.

I believe that religion consists not in believing or disbelieving, but in doing justice, loving mercy and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy

Youth is the seed-time of good habits as well in nations as in individuals.

Suspicion is the companion of mean souls, as well as the bane of all good society.

When we are planning for posterity, we ought to remember that virtue is not hereditary.

Wisdom is not the purchase of a day.

It is folly to argue against determined hardness; eloquence may strike the ear, and the language of sorrow draw forth the tear of compassion, but nothing can reach the heart that is steeled with prejudice.

I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death.

Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it.

To argue with a man who has renounced the use and authority of reason, and whose philosophy consists in holding humanity in contempt, is like administering medicine to the dead.

Why do men continue to practise on themselves the absurdities they despise in others?

Certain, as I am, that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.

There is perhaps no condition from which a man conscious of his own uprightness cannot derive consolation; for it is in itself a consolation for him to find that he can bear that condition with calmness and fortitude.

An army of principles will penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot; it will succeed where diplomatic management would fail: it is neither the Rhine, the Channel, nor the ocean that can arrest its progress: it will march on the horizon of the world, and it will conquer.

When the valleys laugh and sing, it is not the farmer only, but all creation that rejoices. It is a prosperity that excludes all envy; and this cannot be said of anything else.

The mind once enlightened cannot again become dark.

It ought not to be, that because we cannot do everything, that we ought not to do what we can.

Where knowledge is a duty, ignorance is a crime.

What renders us kind and humane? Is it not sympathy, the power which I have of putting myself in my neighbor's place?

Let us be careful not to promote the cause of delusion and falsehood.

We may as well attempt to unite truth and falsehood as inspiration and contradiction.

Morality is injured by prescribing to it duties that are impossible to be performed.

Sensible men should never guess.

Errors or caprices of the temper can be pardoned and forgotten; but a cold deliberate crime of the heart is not to be washed away.

It is an affront to truth to treat falsehood with complaisance.

Every lie is welcome that suits its purpose.

The ear can commit no crime, but the tongue may.

None can feel like those who suffer.

A man may often see reason, and he has, too, always the right of changing his opinion; but this liberty does not extend to matters of fact.

It is not because right principles have been violated that they are to be abandoned.

Public money ought to be touched with the most scrupulous consciousness of honor. It is not the produce of riches only, but of the hard earnings of labor and poverty. It is drawn even from the bitterness of want and misery. Not a beggar passes, or perishes in the streets, whose mite is not in that mass.

A long habit of not thinking a thing *wrong*, gives it a superficial appearance of being *right*.

The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind.

Here then is the origin and rise of government; namely, a mode rendered necessary by the inability of moral virtue to govern the world; here too is the design and end of government, viz. freedom and security.

This remissness will point out the necessity of establishing some form of government to supply the defect of moral virtue....

In this first parliament every man by natural right will have a seat.

Prudence will point out the propriety of having elections often.

The more simple anything is, the less liable it is to be disordered, and the easier repaired when disordered.

When the world was overrun with tyranny the least removed therefrom was a glorious rescue.

Time makes more converts than reason.

I know it is difficult to get over local or long standing prejudices.

It will always happen that the nicest construction that words are capable of, when applied to the description of something which either cannot exist, or is too incomprehensible to be within the compass of description, will be words of sound only, and though they may amuse the ear, they cannot inform the mind.

We are never in a proper condition of doing justice to others, while we continue under the influence of some leading partiality, so neither are we capable of doing it to ourselves while we remain fettered by any obstinate prejudice.

Mankind being originally equals in the order of creation, the equality could only be destroyed by some subsequent circumstance.

How impious is the title of sacred majesty applied to a worm, who in the midst of his splendor is crumbling into dust!

Evils which when once established is not easily removed.

Men who look upon themselves born to reign, and others to obey, soon grow insolent.

Sudden transitions of temper are seldom lasting.

When republican virtues fail, slavery ensues.

Of more worth is one honest man to society, ... than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.

'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom; but of a continent -- of at least one eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time, by the proceedings now.

Now is the seed-time of continental union, faith and honor. The least fracture now will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the wound would enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.

It is pleasant to observe by what regular gradations we surmount the force of local prejudices, as we enlarge our acquaintance with the world.

Hath your property been destroyed before your face? Are your wife and children destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on? Have you lost a parent or a child by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If you have not, then are you not a judge of those who have. But if you have, and can still shake hands with the murderers, then are you unworthy the name of husband, father, friend, or lover, and whatever may be your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward, and the spirit of a sycophant.

There was a time when it was proper, and there is a proper time for it to cease.

In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet; and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverse the common order of nature, it is evident that they belong to different systems. England to Europe: America to itself.

Men do not change from enemies to friends by the alteration of a name.

It is but seldom that our first thoughts are truly correct.

Where there are no distinctions there can be no superiority; perfect equality affords no temptation.

There are injuries which nature cannot forgive.

Can we but leave posterity with a settled form of government, an independent constitution of its own, the purchase at any price will be cheap.

O! Ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

'Tis not in numbers but in unity that our great strength lies.

Common sense will tell us, that the power which hath endeavored to subdue us, is of all others, the most improper to defend us.

History sufficiently informs us, that the bravest achievements were always accomplished in the non-age of a nation.

The more men have to lose, the less willing are they to venture.

The intimacy which is contracted in infancy, and the friendship which is formed in misfortune, are of all others the most lasting and unalterable.

It is from our enemies that we often gain excellent maxims, and are frequently surprised into reason by their mistakes.

To conclude, however strange it may appear to some, or however unwilling they may be to think so, matters not, but many strong and striking reasons may be given to show, that nothing can settle our affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined **Declaration for Independence.**

Were a manifesto to be published, and despatched to foreign courts, setting forth the miseries we have endured, and the peaceful methods which we have ineffectually used for redress; declaring at the same time, that not being able any longer to live happily or safely under the cruel disposition of the British court, we had been driven to the necessity of breaking off all connections with her; at the same time, assuring all such courts of our peaceable disposition towards them, and of our desire of entering into trade with them: such a memorial would produce more good effects to this continent, than if a ship were freighted with petitions to Britain.

As to religion, I hold it to be the indispensable duty of government to protect all conscientious professors thereof, and I know of no other business which government has to do therewith.

He who takes nature for his guide, is not easily beaten out of his argument.

A firm bargain and a right reckoning make long friends.

Peace, with trade, is preferable to war without it.

Not a place upon earth might be so happy as America.

We fight not to enslave, but to set a country free, and to make room upon the earth for honest men to live in.

There is a natural firmness in some minds which cannot be unlocked by trifles, but which, when unlocked, discovers a cabinet of fortitude.

Though the flame of liberty may sometimes cease to shine, the coal can never expire.

There are cases which cannot be overdone by language.

Slow and sure is sound work.

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as **Freedom** should not be highly rated.

Universal empire is the prerogative of a writer. The Republic of Letters is more ancient than monarchy; he that rebels against reason is a real rebel, but he that in defense of reason rebels against tyranny has a better title to "Defender of the Faith," than George the Third.

Surely there must be something strangely degenerating in the love of monarchy, that can so completely wear a man down to an ingrate, and make him proud to lick the dust that kings have trod upon.

"*The United States of America,*" will sound as pompously in the world or in history, as "the kingdom of Great Britain."

Honest men are naturally more tender of their civil than their political fame.

It is the madness of folly, to expect mercy from those who have refused to do justice; and even mercy, where conquest is the object, is only a trick of war; the cunning of the fox is as murderous as the violence of the wolf, and we ought to guard equally against both.

Plain language may perhaps sound uncouthly to an ear vitiated by courtly refinements, but words were made for use, and the fault lies in deserving them, or the abuse in applying them unfairly.

A traitor is the foulest fiend on earth.

I am not for declaring war with every man that appears not so warm as myself: difference of constitution, temper, habit of speaking, and many other things, will go a great way in fixing the outward character of a man, yet simple honesty may remain at bottom. Some men have naturally a military turn, and can brave hardships and the risk of life with a cheerful face; others have not; no slavery appears to them so great as the fatigue of arms, and no terror so powerful as that of personal danger.

There is a knot of men among us of such a venomous cast, that they will not admit even one's good wishes to act in their favor.

A bad cause will ever be supported by bad means and bad men.

He that would sell his birthright for a little *salt*, is as worthless as he who sold it for pottage without salt; and he that would part with it for a gay coat, or a plain coat, ought for ever to be a slave in buff. What are salt, sugar and finery, to the inestimable blessings of "Liberty and Safety!" Or what are the inconveniences of a few months to the tributary bondage of ages?

I would rather die in *attempting* to obtain permanent freedom for a handful of people, than survive a conquest which would serve only to extend the empire of despotism. A band of heroes now beckon to me. I can only add that America is the theater where human nature will soon receive its greatest military, civil, and literary honors.

Is it the interest of a man to be a boy all his life?

We have been amused with the tales of ancient wonders; we have read, and wept over the histories of other nations: applauded, censured, or pitied, as their cases affected us. The fortitude and patience of the sufferers -- the justness of their cause -- the weight of their oppressions and oppressors -- the object to be saved or lost -- with all the consequences of a defeat or a conquest -- have, in the hour of sympathy, bewitched our hearts, and chained it to their fate: but where is the power that ever made war upon petitioners? Or where is the war on which a world was staked till now?

What I write is pure nature, and my pen and my soul have ever gone together. My writings I have always given away, reserving only the expense of printing and paper, and sometimes not even that. I never courted either fame or interest, and my manner of life, to those who know it, will justify what I say. My study is to be useful.

It is a much pleasanter task to prevent vice than to punish it.

We ought not so much to ground our hopes on the reasonableness of the thing we ask, as on the reasonableness of the person of whom we ask it: who would expect discretion from a fool, candor from a tyrant, or justice from a villain?

Error in opinion has this peculiar advantage with it, that the foremost point of the contrary ground may at any time be reached by the sudden exertion of a thought; and it frequently happens in sentimental differences, that some striking circumstance, or some forcible reason quickly conceived, will effect in an instant what neither argument nor example could produce in an age.

The connection between vice and meanness is a fit subject for satire, but when the satire is a fact, it cuts with the irresistible power of a diamond.

We profess liberality of sentiment to all men; with this distinction *only*, that those who do not deserve it would become wise and *seek* to deserve it. We hold the pure doctrines of universal liberty of conscience, and conceive it our duty to endeavor to secure that sacred right to others, as well as to defend it for ourselves.

We persecute no man, neither will we abet in the persecution of any man for religion's sake; our common relation to others being that of fellow-citizens and fellow-subjects of one single community; and in this line of connection we hold out the right hand of fellowship to all men.

Nature, in the arrangement of mankind, has fitted some for every service in life: were all soldiers, all would starve and go naked, and were none soldiers, all would be slaves.

A narrow system of politics, like a narrow system of religion, is calculated only to sour the temper, and be at variance with mankind.

There is a bastard kind of generosity, which being extended to all men, is as fatal to society, on one hand, as the want of true generosity is on the other.

A lax manner of administering justice, falsely termed moderation, has a tendency both to dispirit public virtue, and promote the growth of public evils.

When one villain is suffered to escape, it encourages another to proceed, either from a hope of escaping likewise, or an apprehension that we dare not punish.

It is disgraceful to the pure cause of truth, that men can dally with words of the most sacred import, and play them off as mechanically as if religion consisted only in contrivance.

Suspicion and persecution are weeds of the same dunghill, and flourish together.

A substantial good drawn from a real evil, is of the same benefit to society, as if drawn from a virtue; and where men have not public spirit to render themselves serviceable, it ought to be the study of government to draw the best use possible from their vices. When the governing passion of any man, or set of men, is once known, the method of managing them is easy; for even misers, whom no public virtue can impress, would become generous, could a heavy tax be laid upon covetousness.

It is not the number of dollars that a man has, but how far they will go, that makes him either rich or poor.

He that can conquer, finds his mind too free and pleasant to be brutish; and he that intends to conquer, never makes too much show of his strength.

Mankind are not universally agreed in their determination of right and wrong; but there are certain actions which the consent of all nations and individuals has branded with the unchangeable name of *meanness*. In the list of human vices we find some of such a refined constitution, they cannot be carried into practise without seducing some virtue to their assistance; but *meanness* has neither alliance nor apology. It is generated in the dust and sweepings of other vices, and is of such a hateful figure that all the rest conspire to disown it.

The glow of hope, courage and fortitude, will, in a little time, supply the place of every inferior passion, and kindle the whole heart into heroism.

The nearer any disease approaches to a crisis, the nearer it is to a cure. Danger and deliverance make their advances together, and it is only the last push, in which one or the other takes the lead.

It is dangerous to make men familiar with a crime which they may afterwards practise to much greater advantage against those who first taught them.

A man whose soul is absorbed in the low traffic of vulgar vice, is incapable of moving in any superior region.

A fog is always favorable to a hunted enemy.

When we take a survey of mankind, we cannot help cursing the wretch, who, to the unavoidable misfortunes of nature, shall wilfully add the calamities of war. One would think there were evils enough in the world without studying to increase them, and that life is sufficiently short without shaking the sand that measures it. The histories of Alexander, and Charles of Sweden, are the histories of human devils; a good man cannot think of

their actions without abhorrence, nor of their deaths without rejoicing. To see the bounties of heaven destroyed, the beautiful face of nature laid waste, and the choicest works of creation and art tumbled into ruin, would fetch a curse from the soul of piety itself.

It is pleasant to look back on dangers past, and equally as pleasant to meditate on present ones when the way out begins to appear.

An army in a city can never be a conquering army.

It is not the farcical benedictions of a bishop, nor the cringing hypocrisy of a court of chaplains, nor the formality of an act of Parliament, that can change guilt into innocence, or make the punishment one pang the less.

There is something in meanness which excites a species of resentment that never subsides, and something in cruelty which stirs up the heart to the highest agony of human hatred.

If there is a sin superior to every other, it is that of wilful and offensive war. Most other sins are circumscribed within narrow limits, that is, the power of *one* man cannot give them a very general extension, and many kinds of sins have only a mental existence from which no infection arises; but he who is the author of a war, lets loose the whole contagion of hell, and opens a vein that bleeds a nation to death.

It is the object only of war that makes it honorable. And if there was ever a *just* war since the world began, it is this in which America is now engaged. She invaded no land of yours. She hired no mercenaries to burn your towns, nor Indians to massacre their inhabitants. She wanted nothing from you, and was indebted for nothing to you: and thus circumstanced, her defense is honorable and her prosperity is certain.

The only way to finish a war with the least possible bloodshed, or perhaps without any, is to collect an army, against the power of which the enemy shall have no chance. By not doing this, we prolong the war, and double both the calamities and expenses of it.

Vigor and determination will do anything and everything.

The worst of all policies is that of doing things by halves. Penny-wise and pound-foolish, has been the ruin of thousands.

A good opinion of ourselves is exceedingly necessary in private life, but absolutely necessary in public life, and of the utmost importance in supporting national character. I have no notion of yielding the palm of the United States to any Grecians or Romans that were ever born. We have equalled the bravest in times of danger, and excelled the wisest in construction of civil governments.

Here are men Of all nations, characters, professions and interests ... surviving, like sparks in the ocean, unquenched and uncooled in the midst of discouragement and disaffection. Here are men losing their all with cheerfulness, and collecting fire and fortitude from the flames of their own estates.

There never was a scheme against which objections might not be raised. But this alone is not a sufficient reason for rejection. The only line to judge truly upon is to draw out and admit all the objections which can fairly be made, and place against them all the contrary qualities, conveniences and advantages, then by striking a balance you come at the true character of any scheme, principle or position.

That in which every man is interested, is every man's duty to support. Any burden which falls equally on all men, and from which every man is to receive an equal benefit, is consistent with the most perfect ideas of liberty.

It is a shame and a sin to suffer a soldier in the field to want a blanket while there is one in the country.

Though age will naturally exempt a person from personal service, it cannot exempt him from his share of the charge, because the men are raised for the defense of property and liberty jointly.

Men in a state of intoxication, ... forget that the rest of the world have eyes, and that the same stupidity which conceals you from yourselves exposes you to their satire and contempt.

As you do, so shall you be done by.

If nothing but distress can recover you to reason, to punish will become an office of charity.

There is something in corruption, which, like a jaundiced eye, transfers the color of itself to the object it looks upon, and sees everything stained and impure.

Man with man cannot arrange in the same opposition. Their quarrels are accidental and equivocally created. They become friends or enemies as the change of temper, or the cast of interest inclines them.

Even wolves may quarrel, still they herd together.

There is something in obstinacy which differs from every other passion; whenever it fails it never recovers, but either breaks like iron, or crumbles sulkily away like a fractured arch. Most other passions have their periods of fatigue and rest; their suffering and their cure; but obstinacy has no resource, and the first wound is mortal.

If peace can be procured with more advantages than even a conquest can be obtained, he must be an idiot indeed that hesitates.

There are stages in the business of serious life in which to amuse is cruel, but to deceive is to destroy.

Misfortune and experience are lost upon mankind, when they produce neither reflection nor reformation. Evils, like poisons, have their uses, and there are diseases which no other remedy can reach.

When information is withheld, ignorance becomes a reasonable excuse.

In a general view, there are few conquests that repay the charge of making them, and mankind are pretty well convinced that it can never be worth their while to go to war for profit's sake.

War never can be the interest of a trading nation, any more than quarrelling can be profitable to a man in business. But to make war with those who trade with us, is like setting a bull-dog upon a customer at the shop-door.

My attachment is to all the world, and not to any particular part, and if what I advance is right, no matter where or who it comes from.

There is such an idea existing in the world, as that of *national honor*, and this, falsely understood, is oftentimes the cause of war.

To oblige and be obliged is fair.

Peace by treaty is only a cessation of violence for a reformation of sentiment. It is a substitute for a principle that is wanting and ever will be wanting till the idea of *national honor* be rightly understood.

It is, I think, exceedingly easy to define what ought to be understood by national honor; for that which is the best character for an individual is the best character for a nation.

Nothing is more common than to agree in the conquest and quarrel for the prize.

Trade flourishes best when it is free.

It is a long lane that has no turning.

That advice should be taken wherever example has failed, or precept be regarded where warning is ridiculed, is like a picture of hope resting on despair.

Where nature and interest reinforce with each other, the compact is too intimate to be dissolved.

No human foresight can discern, no conclusion can be formed, what turn a war might take, if once set on foot by an invasion.

A mind disarmed of its rage feels no pleasure in contemplating a frantic quarrel. Sickness of thought, ... leaves no ability for enjoyment.

The man that does not now feel for the honor of the best and noblest cause that ever a country engaged in, and exert himself accordingly, is no longer worthy of a peaceable residence among a people determined to be free.

Of all the innocent passions which actuate the human mind there is none more universally prevalent than curiosity.

How easy it is to abuse truth and language, when men, by habitual wickedness, have learned to set justice at defiance.

One broken leg is better than two, but still it is not a source of joy.

To be nobly wrong *is more manly than to be meanly right*, is an expression I once used on a former occasion, and it is equally applicable now. We feel something like respect for consistency even in error. We lament the virtue that is debauched into a vice, but the vice that affects a virtue becomes the more detestable: and amongst the various assumptions of character, which hypocrisy has taught, and men have practised, there is none that raises a higher relish of disgust, than to see disappointed inveteracy twisting itself, by the most visible falsehoods, into an appearance of piety which it has no pretensions to.

Every attempt to do a thing for less than it can be done for, is sure to become at last both a loss and a dishonor.

Too great to yield, and too noble to insult; superior to misfortune, and generous in success, let us untaintedly preserve the character which we have gained, and show to future ages an example of unequalled magnanimity. There is something in the cause and consequence of America that has drawn on her the attention of all mankind. The world has seen her brave. Her love of liberty; her ardour in supporting it; the justice of her claims, and the constancy of her fortitude have won her the esteem of Europe, and attached to her interest the first power in that country.