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REPLY TO

MR. HAMPDEN'S CHARGES AGAINST

MR. WALLACE.

MR. JOHN HAMPDEN having written to many of my friends, and threatening to write to all the members of the scientific societies to which I belong, abusing me in the vilest language, I think it advisable to issue a statement of facts (some of the most important of which are not generally known) referring to sources of full and accurate information should any one think the subject worth enquiring into.

1. Mr. Hampden in the beginning of the year 1870 challenged scientific men to prove the convexity of the surface of any inland water, offering to stake £500 on the result. This challenge was published in "Scientific Opinion," Jan. 12th, 1870, and contains the following passage. "He will acknowledge that he has forfeited his deposit if his opponent can exhibit to the satisfaction of any intelligent referee, a convex railway, river, canal or lake." (See also Carpenter's "Water not Convex," p. 4.)

2. Knowing nothing of Mr. Hampden, I, (most

injudiciously, I confess) accepted this challenge, believing that a practical demonstration would be more convincing than the ridicule with which such views are usually met. My first letter to Mr. Hampden was as follows. It was published by him, with several others, in a pamphlet entitled "Is Water Level or Convex after all?"

"9, St. Mark's Crescent, Regent's Park,
London, N.W.,

"J. HAMPDEN, Esq.

January 15th, 1870.

"Sir,—As I presume by your offer in 'Scientific Opinion' of January 12th, that you can afford to pay £500 to have the question of the actual rotundity of the Earth proved to your satisfaction, I hereby offer to stake that sum on the undertaking to show visibly, and to measure in feet and inches, the convexity of a canal or lake. A canal will do if you can find one which is nearly straight for four miles without locks; if not, I propose Bala Lake, in North Wales, as a place admirably suited for the experiment. As an intelligent referee I propose the Editor either of 'Scientific Opinion,' 'The Field,' or 'Land and Water,' or any well known Land Surveyor, or Civil Engineer, or any Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

"I remain, Sir, yours very faithfully,

"ALFRED R. WALLACE, F.R.G.S."

3. Mr. Walsh, Editor of the "Field," was at first to have been sole referee; he being a perfect stranger to us both, not scientific and therefore not prejudiced on my side, accustomed to deciding wagers, and a man of such well-known character and position as to guarantee his honesty and impartiality. £500 were deposited with Mr. Walsh by Mr. Hampden, and

£500 by myself, the £1000 to abide the result of the reference.

4. Subsequently, Mr. Hampden asked to have a second referee specially to represent him. To this I at once agreed, as shown by another letter of mine which has also been published by Mr. Hampden. (“Is Water Level or Convex after all,” p. 15.)

“9, St. Mark’s Crescent, Regent’s Park, N.W.,
“January 25th.

“Dear Sir,—Your wish to have a second referee is quite reasonable, and I accede to it at once, only stipulating that he shall not be a *personal acquaintance of your own*, and shall be a man in some *public position* as *Editor, Author, Engineer, &c.*

“Foggy weather would render the experiments impossible, I should therefore wish that, if they are prevented by weather, the time named by you may be extended a month.

“Yours very faithfully,
“ALFRED R. WALLACE.”

5. Mr. Hampden thereupon appointed Mr. William Carpenter as his referee. This man is a journeyman printer who, in 1863, published a book called “Common Sense on Astronomy,” advocating, with great ingenuity and much show of argument, the flatness of the earth. Mr. Hampden had, only a few months previously, *purchased the copyright and all the stock of this work*, which he considered a masterpiece, but which had been hitherto unsaleable.

These facts are given us by Carpenter himself in his pamphlet—“Water not Convex”—just published, as the following passage at p. 4 will sufficiently show.

“ In 1865 ‘Zetetic Astronomy’ was published, and in 1869 was the means of converting John Hampden, Esq., of Swindon. Before the close of the year, the fates decreed that ‘*Common Sense*’ on *Astronomy* should fall into the hands of this gentleman. The work was no sooner perused than the questions were sent to the author, ‘How many copies have you?’ and ‘What will you take for them?’ These questions were satisfactorily settled in a short time; when there came another: ‘Will you dispose of your copyright? and for how much?’ This matter was also at once arranged, through the liberality of Mr. Hampden, who purchased the copyright, certainly as one having the cause of truth uppermost in his mind. The journeyman printer having now disposed of his work, was particularly requested by Mr. Hampden to take part in another: the experiment which we have mentioned and which we must now consider.”

In a preface to Carpenter’s book separately printed—(Heywood and Co., Strand; price one penny)—is a note by the Editor and Proprietor, Mr. Hampden, in which occur the following extraordinary statements regarding it.

“ All the Scientific Societies of London combined to crush it. They abused his publishers; they threatened to ruin their trade if they dared to sell such a stinging exposure of what had received the approval of the whole scientific world; and so effectually did they bully and bribe the whole book-selling trade, that for nearly five years this extraordinary work was left on the author’s hands, and would probably have remained so, had it not been *providentially* introduced to our notice. We instantly made arrangements for the possession of the copyright, and if we were to lose 95 per cent. of the purchase-money, we shall still feel that to leave such talent and industry unrewarded would be a burden on our

conscience which we were not prepared to endure. But to WILLIAM CARPENTER, of London, will ever belong the proud satisfaction of having been the author of one of the most able displays of genius, perseverance, and intelligent acquaintance with the scientific literature of the day, that Europe or America could boast of."

6. Being then ignorant of these facts, and trusting to the honour of Mr. Hampden, I accepted his referee. Mr. Hampden then proposed the Old Bedford Canal, in Norfolk, as the place in which to try the experiment, and in this I concurred. In "Zetetic Astronomy," by Parallax, (the work which converted Mr. Hampden), at pp. 11—12, an experiment is stated to have been made on this very canal proving it to be absolutely flat for six miles! Neither Hampden nor Carpenter said a word about this previous experiment, on which subject, see an article in "The Field," March 26th, 1870.

7. My experiments occupied a week. Mr. Coulcher (a surgeon, of Downham Market) was appointed referee in place of Mr. Walsh, who could not remain so long away from his editorial duties. The two referees gave diametrically opposite decisions on the same facts. Carpenter would not join in the appointment of an umpire. At Mr. Hampden's own request, Mr. Walsh was appointed umpire, and it was left to him to give a final decision, as the following extract from Carpenter's "Water not Convex," p. 22, sufficiently shows: the italics are my own.

"It is now Friday, the 11th. I receive two letters: one is from Swindon, and the other from the Strand. Mr. WALSH writes as follows:—'My dear Sir, I am now *author-*

ized in writing by Mr. Hampden to settle the matter in dispute between you and Mr. Coulcher, as umpire. Will you therefore forward me to Little Comberton, Pershore, your report together with your diagrams or copies of them? I shall leave there on Wednesday morning after post-time. I propose to come to some decision, either final or otherwise, next Friday at 1 p.m., when you can be present here if you like to support your opinions. . . Yours in haste, J. H. Walsh. Mr. HAMPDEN, in his letter, says:—‘I am sure we shall get it right at last. I enclose you a note received from Mr. Wallace this morning. *I sent him a memorandum empowering Mr. Walsh to consult with both referees or with any others he may choose to add to them.*’ Mr. WALLACE says, in a letter submitted to me by Mr. HAMPDEN:—‘Dear Sir, *In accordance with your letter of yesterday, I enclose a memorandum authorizing Mr. Walsh to act in the manner you suggest, which, if you see nothing requiring alteration, please to sign and send to him,*’ and so on. Thus is it clearly settled that the whole thing—the money and all—is at the disposal of the editor of *The Field*. And it is a responsibility not to be lightly esteemed! May Mr. WALSH prove himself to be ‘the right man in the right place.’”

8. Mr. Walsh decided in my favour, and gave Mr. Hampden notice that he should hand over the £1000 to me. Mr. H. protested that the decision was contrary to the evidence and was unfair; but Mr. Walsh, after hearing all that could be urged by Messrs. Carpenter and Hampden, kept to his decision. (See “*Field*,” March 26th, 1870.) He however asked me for an indemnity against any legal or other expenses Mr. Hampden might put him to on account of his decision. This I gave, thinking it fairly his due, and he then paid me the stakes.

9. Thenceforth Mr. Hampden began abusing Mr. Walsh, but finding he was not likely to produce any effect upon him turned all his wrath upon me. For the last eighteen months he has continued to send, to me and to all my friends whose addresses he can obtain, pamphlets, letters and post-cards, expressed in terms of the most violent abuse, claiming to have won the wager, charging Mr. Walsh and myself with fraud and conspiracy, and stigmatising me as a "liar," "thief," and "swindler."

10. Not content with this, Mr. Hampden has attempted to reach me through the feelings of my wife. For the following letter he was brought before a police magistrate and bound over to keep the peace for three months, suffering a week's imprisonment before he could find the necessary sureties.

"Mrs. Wallace,—Madam, if your infernal thief of a husband is brought home some day on a hurdle, with every bone in his head smashed to pulp, you will know the reason. Do you tell him from me he is a lying infernal thief, and as sure as his name is Wallace he never dies in his bed.

"You must be a miserable wretch to be obliged to live with a convicted felon. Do not think or let him think I have done with him.

"JOHN HAMPDEN."

11. In January last I commenced an action for libel, expressly to give Mr. Hampden an opportunity of justifying, if he could, his language towards me. He entered no plea or defence, but suffered judgment to go by default. A jury gave me £600 damages, but Mr. H. pleads poverty and I have not obtained,

and do not expect to obtain from him, any portion of that sum.

12. Under these circumstances I have issued this reply, every statement in which can be verified by the papers referred to, which are mostly those published by Messrs. Hampden and Carpenter. All who believe Mr. Hampden to be an ignorant but very foul-mouthed libeller, will oblige me by burning unopened and unread any further communications they may receive from him. I am unwilling to resort to a criminal indictment, but should any considerable number of my friends think it due to myself or to them to take this course, I shall not hesitate to do so.

ALFRED R. WALLACE.

November, 1871.

The following pamphlets (above referred to) may be obtained from Mr. Hampden, 3, Oxford Terrace, Chippenham.

“Water not Convex, &c.” 1s. Post free.

“Is Water Level or Convex after all?” 2d.

“Preface to Theoretical Astronomy,” by Common Sense, 1d.

“Common Sense on Astronomy.” Cloth gilt, 5s.

“Zetetic Astronomy,” by Parallax. Simpkin & Marshall, 1864, may be had of Nisbet & Co., Berners Street, price 3s. 6d.

“The Field” Newspaper, from March 26th to April 16th, 1870, contains the Referees’ Reports of the Experiments, and a copious Correspondence on both sides.

J. J. TIVER, Printer, 33, Chancery Lane, London.