

Transcription, February 2021:

*Weston-super-Mare Gazette, and General Advertiser*, 16 April 1870: 3b-3c.

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‘The Bedford River Survey.’

Sir,—The particulars connected with the recent experiment to test the shape of the water has, I am pleased to say, assumed those proportions that will enable me very calmly to wait the issue which you are much mistaken in considering as finally settled, by the scandalously precipitate verdict of Mr. Walsh. Truth has no need of such indecent haste. Her statements will bear scrutiny and the most severe and repeated tests. I can spit defiance on all the cowardly impugners of my theory. There is the canal; there are thousands of men capable of testing the truth or falsehood of Mr. Wallace’s pretended curvature. If it is, as it has been, proved to be a lie and a fraud, how will the insolent despisers of the truth of God’s Word grind their teeth with vexation and dismay? Mr. Wallace’s undertakings are all in black and white. It is not likely that a few anonymous theorists will be allowed to decide a question against the testimonies of scores of honest men who are resolved to know the truth. Either the Bible or science is a lie and a fraud. They disagree, and the issue is in the hands of those who know the power and force of truth. There we stand upon a rock through which we can never sink, and behind a rampart which can never be overthrown. Mr. Wallace and my insolent and cowardly correspondents in the *Gazette* have enjoyed a momentary victory, and have been raised to a height of exultation which will only serve to make their fall more crushing and severe. The whole of last week was spent in a series of experiments, the fullest particulars of which will shortly be before the world. Those who dispute their correctness may immortalize themselves by refuting them by practical experiments. I knew perfectly well what I was talking about when I began to discuss the subject in your columns; and I am willing at this moment to stake all I possess on the truth of God’s Word on this very subject. This is no idle boast. Let any of your correspondents take me at my word, and see if I falter or flinch from risking my very existence, if it were possible, on the truth of my unwavering assertion that this earth is a motionless plane, and that the philosophy of Newton is a fraud and an imposition. My former antagonist, Mr. Wallace, has been asked to repeat the experiment, with £1,000 a-side. Why does he demur? Why does he hesitate to jump at my offer? If he is too knowing to risk his gold a second time, why do not your boastful correspondents prove the confidence they profess in the truth of their theory? If they feel under the necessity of continuing their anonymous strictures, at the moment they are glorying in what they consider my defeat, is it not a proof that they feel how shortlived lies and deception are? I am not more confident now of the truth of my cause at the end of a week’s fair and impartial scrutiny than I was five minutes after Mr. Wallace’s experiment had been made. I asserted then, as I assert now, that the water was as flat as any billiard-table in the kingdom; and he will soon learn the truth of my assertion, to his cost and his shame. I said at first as I say now, and as I have said all through this controversy, that God’s Word is not capable of being overthrown by man. Many of your readers have no doubt seen *The Field* of last Saturday. They have read what Mr. Wallace undertook to do, in his own handwriting, and by his own diagrams, copied by Mr. Carpenter. His friends, Messrs. Westlake and Tanner, in perfect ignorance of the agreement made by Mr. Wallace, are arguing it as if he was standing on the crest of the curve, when instead of a rise of five feet, he would have to show a fall of sixteen feet! These Messrs. Westlake and Tanner wisely and craftily refrain from mentioning Mr. Wallace even had the audacity to deny in a previous issue that he had ever undertaken to show a rise. When, most unluckily for him, his own diagrams, which are in my possession, prove that he did mean it. But when the fraud of such an attempt is on the eve of being exposed, he wants to shift his ground to the “top,” and take his view from thence, but still to keep his “five feet!” Is not this a fair

specimen of the rascality for which the scientific world is so notorious? And are not the anonymous sneaks who have replied to my letters in your columns ashamed of their champion? Of course "Parallax," as he calls himself, was silenced and incapable of lecturing as long as this decision was uncontradicted; so he had no alternative but to go down and in the presence of known and responsible parties to test the truth of Mr. Wallace's experiment. He did so, and found it the grossest fraud and imposture that was ever invented. And their thorough deception and meanness in trying to swindle me out of £500, shall be exposed as far as tongue and pen can reach. Water convex, forsooth! What shall we hear of next? If the Bedford canal lies upon a curved surface, what was the use of making it, or any other drainage cutting at all? It was originally made in order to draw the then property of the Duke of Bedford. Just so, if the Somersetshire marshes which you said were about to be drained at the cost of several hundred thousand pounds, were on a curve of eight inches to the mile, multiplied by the square of the distance, I will undertake to drain them for as many shillings as it is now said they will cost pounds. No engineer who was not a downright knave would charge ten or twelve shillings an acre for draining a curved surface. It is because the land is as flat as a billiard-table that they have to cut it into slopes before they can get the water from it.

However, let these ignorant blockheads find out their blunders; but as sure as God's Word is true, I will expose their knavery through the length and breadth of the earth. Before the next twelve months they shall find out who they have to deal with. And I shall see every mother's son of them in the madhouse or the union if they risk their money in disputing my statements.

Yours, &c., John Hampden.

*The Alfred Russel Wallace Page*, Charles H. Smith, 2021.