

Transcription, June 2017:

*The Daily Telegraph* (London) No. 5031 (29 July 1871): 3b (Charles E. Shea).

[p. 3b]

‘The Scientific Wager.’

To the Editor of “The Daily Telegraph.”

Sir—May I ask you to add to your very accurate report of this case one point of considerable importance to Mr. Wallace, alluded to by counsel, but omitted from the report in question? It is this: It is shown by the letters of Mr. Hampden that he has always claimed and insisted upon having the whole sum of £ 1,000, his own stake, and that of Mr. Wallace as well, handed over to him, he (defendant) declaring that, the decision of the umpire to the contrary notwithstanding, he had won the wager. I quote from a letter of the defendant: “I claim £ 1,000, with interest and costs, from Alfred R. Wallace and in spite of fifty juries I will make him pay me.”

As stated your report, there was no wish on Mr. Wallace’s part to enter into the wager at all, and he would have withdrawn from it had defendant permitted him. Even after the decision of the umpire, my client, having proved to the defendant the erroneousness of his theory, would gladly have returned the amount deposited by him, and so have ended the matter. The defendant, however, rendered such a course impossible.

It appears that Mr. Hampden is not disposed to surrender the “fat theory” held by him; for in a letter I have received from him since yesterday’s trial he very truly remarks that ten thousand verdicts will not extinguish truth! This will probably be accepted as a truism; but, unfortunately, Mr. Hampden’s ideas of the truth do not accord with those entertained by the world at large. He believes that the world is flat, and this fact he keeps before him in all his arguments most rigorously. He sought the experiment, believing that it would confirm his theory. If it should not do so, so much the worse for the experiment; for even the result of an experiment cannot alter a “fact.” In Mr. Hampden’s brain the idea of the rotundity of our planet is, as he terms it, “a Pretended fact;” and it must be consoling to Mr. Wallace to know that in a letter Mr. Hampden admits that “if he (Wallace) can prove his pretended facts, then I (Hampden) am the greatest libeller and slanderer that was ever summoned to a court of justice.” The jury appeared to be very much of the same opinion as Mr. Hampden.—Your obedient servant,

Charles E. Shea, Attorney for Mr. Wallace, Clarence Chambers, 36, King William-street, E.C., July 28, 1871.

*The Alfred Russel Wallace Page*, Charles H. Smith, 2017.