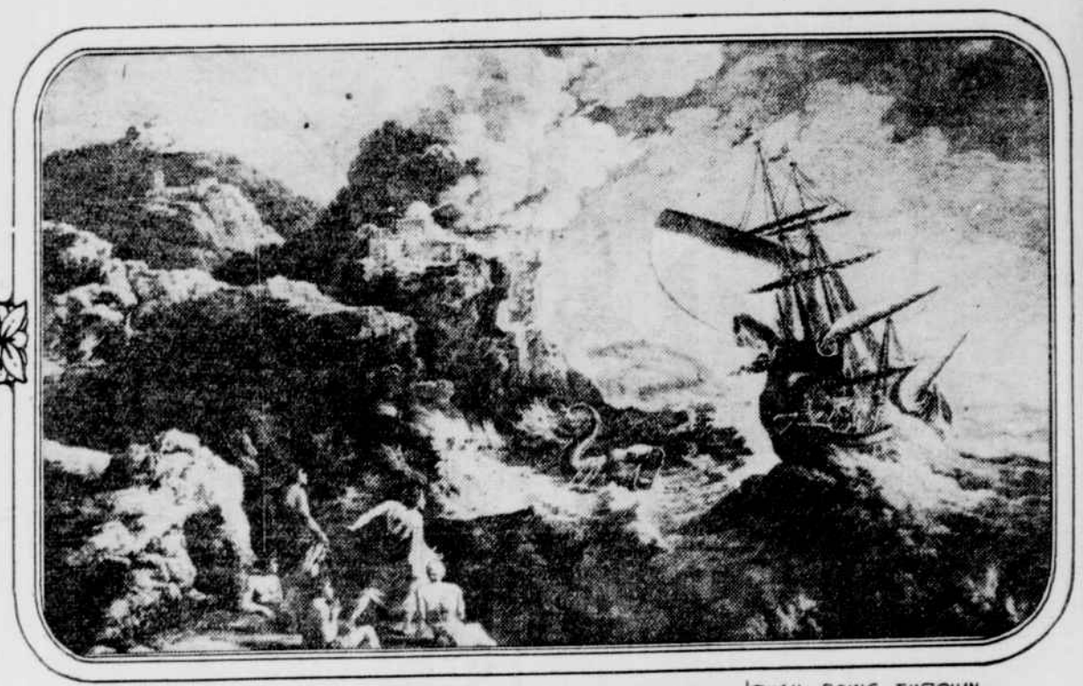
"THE BIBLE CHAMPION" DONS ARMOR TO GIRD AGAINST SKEPTICS

DANIEL in the LIONS' DEN



JONAH BEING THROWN to the WHALE from an old Print

PHARAOH and his HOST DROWNED in the RED SEA

The THREE MEN in the BURNING FIERY FURNACE

A New Campaign Has Been Planned by the Defending Force in the Battle Waged Through the Centuries Between Science and Religion Over the Authenticity of Certain Miraculous Occurences Narrated in the Bible—A Broadside Will Be Issued Once a Month.

SCIENCE and religion have long clashed and disagreed generally on subjects which religionists on the one hand assert to be truths, because they are so set down in the Bible, and which scientists, on the other, declare it is against reason to assume ever actually took place. This is well known. That there is little probability of these believers and dissenters ever agreeing on these points seems fairly certain. Meanwhile, it cannot well be denied that there is an increase of skepticism throughout the world and that it affects religion as well as other subjects. To offset this growth of disbelief in things spiritual, the Church is making a strong and united fight in all parts of the world, and nowhere to a greater extent than in the United States.

In New York City, where irreligion is much in evidence, various religious bodies have long been joined in a fight to combat this condition. What they declare to be gross sins in private life, the appalling corruption in public life, the indecency and licentiousness of many popular amusements, the profanation of the Sabbath, the indifference and contempt of the majority for religion, the decreasing attendance of church members upon church worship—all of these evils, it is maintained, are the direct results of the greatest evil of them all, the disbelief, disregard and the denial of the Holy Scriptures as being the word of God.

DEFENCE OF MIRACLES.

Under the title of "The Bible League of North America," formerly known as "The American Bible League," Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and ministers of the Reformed Church are banded to overcome these evil conditions. One method of accomplishing this as far as may be possible is by the publication of a monthly periodical named "The Bible Champion," which has just appeared. One of its chief objects is the defence of events which are recorded in the Bible as miracles, it being declared that Christianity depended upon historical evidence, such as is presented in the Bible. Each month one of these miracles is to be discussed at length, arguments and such evidence as may be possible are to be presented in support of what is asserted to have been actual occurrences. The September number of "The Bible Champion" treats of the story of Jonah and the whale, of his having been swallowed by a "great fish," in whose stomach he lived for three days, being finally ejected from this prison upon dry land.

Scientists in general, and biologists in particular, totally reject the authenticity of the narrative of Jonah, declaring that it is physically impossible that what is alleged to have taken place could have happened, and submitting their reasons for this attitude, while also denying that it was accomplished through spiritual power.

THE SKEPTIC'S VIEWPOINT.

Equally, they question the truth of the story of the Deluge, declaring that through science it has been shown that no unusual deluge ever took place as recorded in the Bible; that the whole motive or generative incident of the story is to be sought in the occasional and desolating floods of the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers, and hence that the tale of the Deluge is pure fiction. The size of Noah's Ark, as recorded in the Bible, they say, would have been monstrous, considering the probable state of the craft of shipbuilding only 1,600 years after the origin of man.

These skeptics likewise deny that it was in the power of Joshua or any other individual to have caused the sun to stand still; that the first woman was made out of the rib of man, that Moses could successfully have brought about the passage of the Israelites over dry land through the Red Sea, as water could not have stood fathoms deep on the side of a declivity without anything to hold it up; that Lot's wife or any other woman ever turned into a pillar of salt because she dared to look back after having been commanded not to do so; that devils entered the bodies of swine; that there is reality in the claimed reception and rejection, safe and sound, on the shores of the Levant of a man after three days' journey in the stomach of a gigantic marine animal; that water was turned into wine; that a man could smite a rock and make water flow therefrom; that the blowing of trumpets could cause the heavy walls of a city to fall down; that no man, no matter how good and holy, could still a tempest at sea simply by word of mouth; that a defenceless man could be thrown into a den of hungry lions and be expected to have escaped attack and injury; that any man could have turned a living serpent into a brazen one; that a serpent in the garden of Eden spoke; that this world could have been created in six days, or that other equally incredible occurrences took place.

At the present time it is difficult to persuade serious scientific inquirers to occupy themselves with any such stories. They look at you with a smile and a shrug of the shoulders and say they have more important matters to attend to, or else briefly assert that the growth of scientific investigation has revolutionized the whole world and has banished much of the mythology which embarrassed early Christians.

In its defence of the narrative of Jonah and the whale "The Bible Champion" says, in part:

"The thought of the present time is somewhat skeptical, also somewhat superficial. Except in case of extreme radicals, the modern skeptic does not scoff at the Christian religion as a system. He speaks approvingly of its humane efforts to benefit the human race, and may even enter into its communion; still he does not hesitate to express with great freedom his doubt as to its supernatural claims. All miracles are therefore discredited.

"The story of Jonah and the whale is not only discredited, but is regarded by some critics as quite suitable for the amusement of children, and is labelled 'The Pickwick' and 'The Biglow Papers' of the Bible. One might well think, from the frequency and violence of the attacks upon the historical integrity of this story and from the sport made of it, that it is the most vulnerable narrative in the Bible.

"Ever since the dawn of the Christian era the Jonah story has received at the hands of unbelievers a large deal of attention. It provoked the mockery of Celsus in the second century, of Zosimus in the fifth, of Thomas Paine in the eighteenth, while in the last and present centuries and in our own country, among both clergymen and laymen, the story is pretty generally regarded as unhistorical.

VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS.

"It is variously said to be 'an allegory,' 'a legend,' 'a satirical poem,' 'a parable in ethics' or 'a fiction in prophetic dress'—anything, in fact, except veritable history. Not a few entertain the opinion that it is altogether too late to discuss any of these miraculous stories of the Bible. It is insisted upon that they shall be dismissed from our thoughts and from our talk, since they can no longer be believed by intelligent and educated persons. We would better spend our time, it is said, in discussing the practical phases of the Gospel or the social and economic questions of the day. Let the dead past bury its dead out of our sight and hearing while we pass on into the 'brightness and serenity of the approaching centuries.'

"Not so very long since the story of Jonah was handled in such a way by an eminent clergyman, who is also a literary critic, the Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott, as to excite 'great merriment and outbursts of laughter' in the congregation, though such results, the doctor afterward said, were not intended. But if the story, as he assured his hearers, 'is wholly fiction,' why should not just such facetious and laughful results have been intended? Imposture should be ruthlessly exposed and shafts of ridicule are among the best agencies in exposing it. If the story of Jonah is not true, if it is 'wholly fiction,' if the amusement that arises from 'the simple statement of the story shows,' as the critic said, 'the incongruity which lies in the very nature of the narrative,' then as a literary critic one has no occasion to offer an apology for raising a laugh. Indeed, apology is quite out of place and laughter is quite in place. If the story is 'wholly fiction' and if the Church teaches that it is really historic, then any one would be justified in making it a laughing stock in order to overthrow the error and thus bring the Church to its sen:

PURSUING SCIENTIFIC METHODS.

"If, however, on the other hand, this narrative is regarded by many intelligent and scholarly persons as veritable history, then the case is different and the story is such as may demand reinvestigation.

"While making a study of the Jonah record, this fact should be kept in mind, that the day of pure theological dogmatism is past, and that if one would be of service either to the honest inquirer or to the honest skeptic, there must be a resort t Bible study, not so much to what is known as ecclesiastical authority as to what is termed the scientific method, which is employed by the modern scientist in his study and teaching of natural phenomena; also by the skilful lawyer when preparing his case and presenting it to the jury, and by the physician when making a diagnosis of the disease he is treating or when deciding on the remedies to be employed.

"Against such methods, even when testing things most sacred, no objection should be raised, and when so-called literary or higher criticism thus does its work it should not be assailed. That is, when higher criticism, in the examination of historical subjects or those purporting to be historical searches diligently for all the facts bearing on these subjects, then its method is wise and scientific, though if the critic himself is wise he will say, 'These conclusions I have reached are not necessarily final; they are merely tentative.' Facts may be discovered to-morrow that will demand radically different or, at least, modified conclusions.

CREDIBILITY OF STATEMENTS.

"Now, as this scientific method seems applicable to all discussions on all sorts of subjects—professional, literary, historical, philosophical and scientific—why may it not apply to the story of Jonah and the whale? That story asks no special favor.

"Adopting this method, it is legitimate first of all to bring before the mind some important facts, or what are said to be facts, and then ascertain what parts of the narrative are credible and what, if any, are to be ruled against."

"The Bible Champion" then recites certain facts in Jonah's history, his parentage, his birth, which was about eight hundred years before that of Christ; the fact that Jonah was a prophet; that after prophesying concerning Israel he was sent to Nineveh, the metropolis of the Assyrian Empire, to preach repentance to that great and wicked city; that instead of obeying this command he took passage at Joppa for Tarshish; that Jonah was cast into the sea by the sailors of the ship in the hope of allaying a tempest, and that "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." (Jonah, Chap. x, v. 17.)

"There is nothing incredible in what is said to have followed the throwing of Jonah overboard by the sailors; that a 'great fish' (dahg gathol) was near the ship and seized Jonah the moment he struck the water. Every seafaring man knows that at sea sharks follow ships for days, sometimes for weeks, and if an unfortunate man falls overboard he is quickly seized and devoured.

"Thus far, no one can fail to be impressed with the naturalness and self-consistency of the different parts of this narrative. In other words, if this record is not based upon facts the highest criticism is forced to confess that the story, as it stands, would be unaccountable, if not impossible in an age and among a people where fiction had not been cultivated as an art. The literary remains of that age, as every scholar knows, are historic, not mythical. Even Grecian fiction was a development of from five to eight hundred years later; hence unless the whole Bible is fiction then this story of Jonah stands out conspicuously as an exception in the entire range of ancient Jewish rhetorical composition.

"There are two or three other matters that the destructive critic is continually harping upon that may be considered at this point. One of these, rather coarsely put, is that God is not a Being who would 'go into the business of creating whales to swallow men.' Since the ways of God for the larger part are quite incomprehensible, very much so to all except those who fear and love Him, is not the destructive critic assuming too much when saying what God will or will not condescend to do? But at this point the highest criticism will enable one to reach very interesting conclusions.

DESTINY OR PROVIDENCE?

"In the first place, the Hebrew words, translated in the common version of the Bible, 'prepared a great fish,' do not mean that God created a fish for the specific purpose of swallowing Jonah, but rather that God allotted or appointed a great fish for that purpose, or, in Christian speech, the meaning is that by the providence of God, a great fish, already created, was brought to the side of the ship or happened to be there at the moment Jonah was thrown overboard, and under the circumstances did what was perfectly natural for such a fish to do, swallowed Jonah. It would be wellnigh unaccountable if under the circumstances a hungry fish had not done this. That this whole transaction could have been providential, involving what are 'mediate miracles,' is no more singular that that God notes the fall of a sparrow and numbers the hairs of the head.

"The unbelieving critic has also asserted that the story of Jonah is incredible because the throat of a whale is not big enough to swallow a man, but the highest criticism, in its zoological studies, put an end, some time since, to this objection that for centuries has been kept on parade.

"The words 'dahg gathol,' translated into both the Septuagint and the New Testament by the Greek word 'katos' and into the Latin of the Vulgate by the words 'piscem grandem,' mean simply a great fish or sea monster. The word 'whale,' therefore, is the translator's word, while the words 'dahg gathol' and 'katos' are those used by the Bible writers.

"So far, therefore, as the Hebrew and Greek words are concerned, the highest criticism makes it perfectly clear that the fish that swallowed Jonah may have been a whale, a sea serpent, a sea lion or any other large monster of the deep, and even if the skeptic insists that in this discussion the word 'whale' should be used, still no one need suffer embarrassment, for while it is true that the so-called right whale has a throat of small size, the sperm whale has a throat sufficiently large to swallow a man without the least difficulty. There is not a shipmaster or sailor who has been on a whaling voyage who will question the following statement made by one of the crew of a New Bedford, Mass., whaling ship, that he, though a man of large build, weighing 170 pounds, frequently has passed through the mouth and throat of a dead sperm whale. He says he did this after the head of the whale had been cut from the body, and when the jaws and smallest part of the throat had been taken on deck. Then, he adds, 'although a sperm whale is large, the bowhead whale is much larger, with a throat not only capable of swallowing a well built man, but, in my judgment, a good sized cow or horse.'

"'The Bible Student' some time ago printed an editorial in which it was declared: 'A large whale may weigh as much as eight hundred men, and it requires as much fresh air as eight hundred men respire, and the equivalent of the respirations of eight hundred men for twenty minutes—that is, for four hundred respirations of the men—are drawn in at one breath through the whale's capacious mouth into its large air chamber. Its mouth can give place for ten men standing upright, and as it skims along the sea it scoops in its food of jelly fishes and crustaceans and other animalcules, which quickly enter its body; but a large object—Jonah's body, for instance—would pass into the air chamber. Here Jonah might have remained awake, able to meditate on the situation and to pray to God and to sleep overnight. Although not very convenient for Jonah, the whale itself would have felt discomfort and be likely to have sought relief by coughing up the prophet on dry land.'

MEDITERRANEAN SEA DOGS.

"Another adverse criticism on the Jonah narrative is that no large sea monsters frequent the waters of the Mediterranean, but no less an authority than Cuvier calls attention to the 'Rorqual Mediterraniensis,' a large species of whale indigenous to that sea, while the French naturalist, Pacepede, asserts that the Mediterranean sea dog, a species of shark, can swallow animals much larger than a man without mutilating them.

"In view of the statements of these and other naturalists of admitted standing, the highest criticism may therefore reply to the destructive critics that the time is forever past for any one to say that whales or sea monsters do not have throats large enough to swallow men."

Referring to the possibility of Jonah having lived and retained consciousness for three days while in the whale's stomach, "The Bible Champion" says:

"All other parts of the story, as we have seen, are credible and are supported by the best possible exegetical and historical evidence. With the exception, therefore, of these apparently incredible incidents, our naturalistic literary critics can point to nothing against which reasonable objection can be urged. What, then, can be said as to these alleged incredible parts of the story? Shall not those who attempt a defence be fittingly held up as a butt for ridicule?

A DIFFICULT STATEMENT.

"Though Jonah might have been an historical character; though he might have been sent to Nineveh; though he might have attempted to escape by going on a sea voyage; though he might have been thrown into the sea and even have been seized by a sea monster and swallowed without suffering mutilation, still, must it not be conceded that in that horrible imprisonment he could have retained his consciousness only a few minutes, certainly not as long as is claimed in the record?

"In this opinion of the rationalistic skeptic let us say that we fully concur, and confess that we know of no agency on earth that could have saved the disobedient prophet from death in the food-stomach of the whale, provided he was there three days and three nights. Must we not, therefore, side with the destructive critic and pronounce against the credibility of the Book that contains the record we have been reviewing?

"Before doing so, however, the highest criticism finds itself confronted with a multitude of difficulties, and it is a wise rule, when meeting anything embarrassing in the Bible or elsewhere, to ask if there are not alternative difficulties equally troublesome. For instance, unless the possibility of divine interposition is admitted, and unless the alleged facts of Bible history, though involving divine interposition, are credible, then the foundations of the Christian religion are gone, and the orthodox faith is no longer worth contending for. Christianity, in its dependence upon facts, differs, in the light of the highest criticism, from all other of the world's religions.

THE MIRACLES.

"That God wrought a miracle in behalf of Jonah is no more incredible than any one of the other scores of miracles recorded in the Bible. If we deny one we may just as well deny all. The story of Jonah is no more incredible than the parting of the waters of the Red Sea; no more incredible than the calling of fire from heaven by Elijah; no more incredible than the preservation of Daniel in the den of lions; no more incredible than the walking of his three companions in the midst of the fiery furnace; no more incredible than the story of Christ's death, burial and resurrection, of which Jonah's experiences have always been regarded as a prophetic type, but upon Christ's resurrection rest in supreme dependence the faith and hope of the whole Christian world."

Professor F. A. Lucas, director of the American Museum of Natural History, at 77th street and Central Park West, who is a scientist of note and an authority on biology, is a skeptic about the miracles which the Bible tells us took place. He said:

"Every scientist believes either that the stories told about in the Bible and which are there classed as miracles did not take place or that they are exaggerations. D'Arcy Thompson, professor of zoology in the University of Dundee, Scotland, and a scientist of international repute, declares that these tales are simply those of Orientals, told with all the imagery and exaggeration of the Oriental. Like the Spaniard who says to a stranger who enters his home, 'My house and all that is in it is yours,' he does not expect you to take him at his word. His expressions are exaggerations of his feelings.

AN IMPOSSIBILITY.

"As to the ability of a whale to have swallowed Jonah, it is true that he might have entered the whale's mouth, because the mouth of a sperm whale, as distinguished from a bowhead or other whale, is large, and his throat correspondingly so, but when a whale closes its mouth in order to swallow, which it must do, those immense jaws would crush the life out of anything upon which they closed. Whales can swallow a fish known as a squid, which is four feet thick, but the squid does not live after that.

"As for Jonah or any other human having lived for three days or even three hours or still less, in the stomach of a whale, that is equally preposterous. Apart from the fact that the gastric juices in the whale's stomach would have made it out of the question for Jonah to have survived, Jonah would have smothered very quickly after having entered the stomach, granting that he had survived the act of having been swallowed.

"The whale has no air chamber such as has been mentioned in connection with this incident and through which means it is suggested Jonah might have lived. What some religious writers have taken for an 'air chamber,' as they term it, is no doubt the blow hole which every whale has, and through which they spout, but this blow hole is designed by nature only to give air to the lungs, not to the stomach or to any other part of its body. How, then, could Jonah have obtained air where there was none?

AGAINST NATURAL LAW.

"As for the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea without getting wet, it is true there are low tides in that sea, but no water can be made to stand up straight while people walk safely between the suspended walls.

"The tale of the driving of devils into swine cannot be taken seriously. It may refer to some form of insanity having taken possession of them.

"As for the legend about the sun having stood still when a man commanded it to do so, well, that was a pretty big task even for Joshua or any other man to have undertaken. Such a happening does not appeal to rational beings in these days.

"No, as I regard it, the Bible was written by Orientals for Orientals. These stories which cannot be accepted with reason were not intended, as I view it, to be taken literally, but metaphorically. To those who reason logically and sanely in these days of scientific progress and enlightenment their improbability must be at once apparent."

Fortune's smile is that abominable thing to which our friends give all the credit for our hard work.

PLAY OF BIRD LIFE BY NOTED PLAYERS

Continued from first page.

serenity practically at their elbows. Into the window box at the home of Mr. Baynes the chickadees came in flocks. Bluejays came more circumspectly, one at a time, while a single downy woodpecker became an old family friend and made several visits a day. The window box became his established home, and he did not object in the least to the use of the camera upon him, which the glass window box makes possible with the least amount of difficulty.

THE FOOD TREE.

Another successful method of feeding the birds established by Mr. Baynes was the food tree—an innovation that already had met with success in Europe on the estate of Baron Von Berlepsch, and the following description of this was given by the naturalist:

"A young spruce, perhaps twelve feet high, was cut down in the pasture and stuck into the ground opposite a window. Bird food, consisting of fat, ground meal, ants' eggs, seeds, etc., was poured boiling hot over the twigs and branches and, hardening there, made a splendid substitute for many kinds of natural foods and attracted both seed eating and insectivorous birds. Small as it was, there were sometimes as many as seven bluejays on it at once.

"It really seemed as if the birds entered into the spirit of the work being done for their entertainment and protection, for they fairly flocked to the feast prepared for them. Charles A. Tracy, principal of Kimball Union Academy, a careful observer, tells me that he never saw so many birds in Meriden during the winter before, and several of the older residents tell me the same thing. The bird feeders, one and all, felt that their efforts were appreciated and made up their minds to begin the work of bird feeding much earlier next fall. It is wise to do this because it gives the birds a chance to learn where the feeding stations are, and, though their visits may be infrequent until the severe weather sets in, they will know exactly where to come when the first big snow storm covers up their natural supply. And if one cares to keep the birds close to the house through the spring and summer it can be done through feeding alone. We have song sparrows, chipping sparrows, vesper sparrows, purple finches and goldfinches coming to our doorstep daily for the seed we scatter there for them. In the village the downy woodpeckers and sapsuckers still come for the suet left over, and at least one chickadee comes daily to a lump of suet we recently tied to a stump near our house."

THE WOODLAND SANCTUARY.

The actual establishment of a woodland sanctuary was made possible through Helen Woodruff Smith, who supported it financially, and it bears her name in consequence. It is said to be planted with the best list of trees, shrubs and creepers attractive to birds and hardy in that part of New England which has ever been made. In the sanctuary one sees various curious contrivances for bird comfort—food bells and food houses, miniature bathtubs on the top of tree stumps and boxes with paddle wings.

The result of these things was threefold—first, in the number of birds that decided that Meriden was an excellent place to take up residence; second, in the local interest in bird conservation that was aroused by means of this practical object lesson, culminating in the masque, which may later be played in Washington before the Senate and the House of Representatives, and last, through the demonstration of the vast amount of interest in bird conservation lying dormant throughout the country. If the current opinion of New England is any indication of the state of mind of the nation, it will not be long before the bird conservation movement has branched through the whole country, for while lecturing for the Massachusetts Audubon Society the originator of the Meriden sanctuary was impressed by the genuine interest taken in birds in almost every town that was visited. It was evident, he said, that numbers had attended the lectures not only to be entertained, but to learn how they might help the great cause of bird protection. The Meriden sanctuary, for the wild birds of the countryside, followed as an experiment, and next came the recent masque, which was designed to make the effect of this far reaching.