TO THE READER.

Reader,

Having seriously perus'd this Work in its Original, I thought I might be serviceable to the publick by giving in English a Piece of so much Learning, and from whence we may draw convincing Arguments for the contradicting all the adaequales Opinions of our Age. There are a sort of half-learned men, who, searching out of the Bible those things only which at the first sight seem to destroy the authority of it; and having found any few apparent contradiction, or what they think is erroneous, will be sure to exercise their wit in publishing to the world what, in their judgment, makes any thing against the authority of those holy Books which have, through all Ages, been look'd upon, by the learned and judicious, as composed by Prophets or men inspir'd by God: without considering that, to the most understanding persons, they only shew their ignorance, in that they understand not how to give solutions to the difficulties of the Scriptures, which belongs only to the learned, or else their wilful obstinacy, in resolving to oppose whatever shall be authoriz'd either by Divine or Humane Authority. We have a fresh example of what I have been saying in the person of him, who, not many years ago.

A
To the Reader.

Years ago, occasion'd the publishing of that excellent Piece, intituled, A Letter to a Drift, wherein the Author has only answer'd the Objections propos'd to him; but if the person that was so desirous to have his Scruples an-
swer'd, or any one else have any more of such like Objec-
tions, they may here either find them particularly differ'd,
or else be instru'd in the way how to resolve them them-
selves. I could with this Criticism had been made by some
of our own Communions, who might have alter'd no-
thing of the Substance of it, but have left our Enemies some
small reflexions upon the Protestants; Father Simon how-
ever is less inveterate and makes fewer of his reflexions
than could be expected from a Roman Catholick Doctor;
which thing is yet more pardonable in him that he spares
not even them of his own Church. If notwithstanding
what I have already said, there shall be any who, at the
first sight, shall be scandaliz'd with this Author's free way
of handling the Holy Scriptures, I give this caution to all
such persons, either to let it alone and not concern them-
selves with it, or else to read it clear through, by which
time I doubt not but they will be satisfy'd of their too
nice Scruples. As for the faults of the Lyrics I cannot an-
swer for them not having had leisure enough for the cor-
recting of them, wherefore I shall onely here advise that
the most considerable errata's are printed at the beginning
of the Book, whither, Reader, if at any time you chance to
doubt of the sense, be pleas'd to turn your eye.

Farewell.

THE
THE
Author's Preface
Translated out of
F R E N C H.

Seeing I have at large explained in the first Chapter of
this History the design of my whole Work, I shall only
here shew what benefit we may thence draw.

First, It is impossible to understand throughly the Holy
Scriptures unless we first know the different Stiles of the Text
of these Books according to the different times and places,
and be instructed of all the several changes that have hap-pen-
ed to it. This we may understand by the first Book of this
Critical History, where I have taken notice of the several
revolutions of the Hebrew Text of the Bible from Moses to
our time; and if I might be suffer'd to speak something here
beforehand of the New Testament, I could shew some faults
in the Translations thereof into our Tongue, which were not
long since made by two learned Divines. This could be occa-
ioned

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found only by the little reflection they made upon the History of the Text they translated. They considered not for example that only by leaving out, in the third Chapter of S. Luke, the Particle Or, which in English signifies Now, they favour'd the opinions of the ancient Marcionite Heretics, who affirmed that the two first Chapters of S. Luke had been added to his Gospel, and that they made it to begin with these words, In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, by leaving out the two foregoing Chapters concerning the Birth and Infancy of our Saviour: but the Church, who has always read according to the Original and the ancient Latin Translation, Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, has always authoriz'd the two first Chapters of S. Luke by reason of the Particle Or, Now, which the Grammarians call an adverbial, which plainly denotes a connection with something that went before.

No one could imagine this Particle to be of so great consequence in this place without being instrued in the History of the New Testament. But I am obliged to contain myself within the Books of the Old Testament.

Secondly, It is to be observed that I, considering only their benefit who desire thoroughly to understand the Holy Scriptures, have inserted many useful principles for the resolving of the greatest difficulties of the Bible, and at the same time answering of the Objections which are usually brought against the Authority of the Holy Scriptures. For example, having established in the Hebrew Commonwealth the Prophets or publick Writers, who took care of collecting faithfully the acts of what part of most importance in the State, we need not too curiously enquire, as usually men do, who were the Authors of each particular Book of the Bible, because it is certain that they were all wise by Prophets, which the Hebrew Commonwealth never wanted as long as it lasted.

Besides, as these same Prophets, which may be called publick Writers, for the distinguishing of them from other pri
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Writers, had the liberty of collecting out of the ancient
Acts which were kept in the Register of the Republick, and
of giving a new form to these same Acts by adding or dimi-
nishing what they thought fit; we may hereby give a very
good reason for the additions and alterations in the Holy
Scriptures without sacrificing their Authority, since the Au-
thors of these additions or alterations were real Prophets di-
rected by the Spirit of God. Wherefore their alterations in
the ancient Acts are of as great Authority as the rest of the
Text of the Bible.

We may by this same principle easily answer all the false
and pernicious consequences drawn by Spinola from these al-
terations or additions for the running down the Authority of
the Holy Scripture; as if these corruptions had been partly
of humane Authority, whereas he ought to have considered
that the Authors of these alterations having had the Power
of writing Holy Scriptures had also the Power of correcting
them. Wherefore I have made no scruple to give some
examples of these alterations, and to conclude that all we find
in the Holy Scriptures was not writ by contemporary Au-
thors.

S. Jerom, Theodoret, and several other Fathers who were
of this opinion, thought not that they thereby weakened the
Authority of the Holy Scriptures, supposing at the same
time that the Authors of these corruptions were inspired
by God.

By this principle we may also easily answer several objec-
tions which are usually made, to shew that Moses is not the
only Author of the Books which we have under his name;
for they prove only that something has been added in series
of time, which destroys not the Authority of the ancient Acts
which were writ in Moses’s time.

Herein Spinola has shewn his ignorance, or rather-malice
in tending down the Authority of the Pentateuch, by reason
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of some alterations or additions therein, without considering the quality of the Authors of these alterations.

We ought however to take heed of multiplying these additions or corrections, as Spinola and some others have very injudiciously done: but on the contrary we ought not absolutely to deny them, or too subtly or nonsensically explain them, for these additions are of the same Authority as the rest of the Scripture; or else we must confess the whole not to be equally Divine and Canonical, as a Divine of Paris seems too boldly to have asserted.

This Divine has affirmed that the Writers of the Holy Scriptures were inspired by God only in things relating to matters of Faith, or which had some necessary connection or relation thereto; as for the other things in these Books, we ought not therein to acknowledge a more particular inspiration of God than in other Works which have been writ by godly persons. But besides that this principle is dangerous it is directly opposite to the Doctrine of the New Testament, which acknowledges every thing throughout the whole Scripture for prophetical, and to have been inspired. Wherefore I thought I ought to lay down some principles whereby we might deserve every thing in the Holy Scriptures to Prophets or persons inspired by God, even to the alterations themselves, those only excepted which had happened through length of time or negligence of Transcribers.

We may by this same principle of publick Writers or Prophets, which collected the Acts of what pass'd of most importance in the Hebrew Commonwealth, give reasons for several expressions in the Books of Moses, which seem to suppose him not to be the Author of them.

The publick Writers which were in his time and wrote out these ancient Acts, have spake of Moses in the third person and have used several other such like expressions which could not be Moses's: But they for all that have never the less.
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Authority; because they can be ascribed only to persons which Moses had commanded to put into writing the most important affairs of his time.

We ought to apply this same principle to Joshua, Judges, and other Books which Spinoza has endeavoured to least in the Authority of pretending that some things have been added. He does not, like Eza in injury in affirming that this Rabbi did not take Moses to be the Author of the Pentateuch, where as what he has from him only proves that there have been some additions inserted into the ancient Alls, which we cannot deny to be Moses's, at least but that they were not in his time and by his order.

The same Spinoza shews his ignorance yet more in the same place, where he concludes that the Book of Moses was finished much less than the present one, because it was not written within the compass of an Altar of twelve Stone: but he is clearly mistaken in thinking that the places of Deuteronomy and Joshua which he deduces speak of the whole Law of Moses, whereas there are only three Ordinances of Moses spoke of which he commanded should be observed, and that they might the better observe them he commanded them to be written upon twelve Stone, or Pillars. This is so true, that Spinoza could not be mistaken in the series of his discourse this explanation, although he endeavours to pervert it in as much as he can. This passage and several others such like are explained in the first Book of this History Chap. 6. where I have largely shewn what the word Law signifies in the Book of Moses.

Thirdly, This principle which I have laid down, concerning the way how the Holy Scriptures which we have at present have been collected, we having only an abridgment of the Alls which were preferred entire in the Registry of the Republick. This principle I say is of great use for the resolving of many difficult questions concerning Chronology,
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and the Genealogies. For if it is certain that these Books are only abridgments of larger Alls, and that they gave to the people only what they thought was necessary for their instruction, we cannot affirm that all the Genealogies in this abridgment are successive to one another. Wherefore we may by this means reconcile several manifest contradictions in these Genealogies when they are set down in several places. We cannot also frame any exact Chronology upon the authority of these Books, because that things are not always set down according to the times they happened in. Because they often exactly join several Alls together in short, referring us to those same Alls which were kept more at large in the Registories which might in those times have been consulted.

For the better establishing this principle we may besides join the observation which we have in this History made concerning the way of writing of Books heretofore upon little leaves, which were usually only read one upon another, without being sewn together upon a little Roller. It has happened that as the order of these ancient Leaves or Scrolls has not been carefully enough kept, the order of things has been sometimes changed. Wherefore we ought not to blame the Author of the Holy Scripture for the disorder in some places of the Holy Scripture: but we ought to complain of a misfortune which has happened to all ancient Books. This is partly the cause why the Hebrew Samaritan Text agrees not wholly with the Jewish Pentateuch, although these two Pentateuchs are Copies from one and the same Copy. We had also such like transpositions in the ancientest Greek Copies of the Septuagint Translation, which St. Jerome and before him Origen scrupled not to correct.

I had rather have recourse to this principle than to most of the answers which are usually brought for the excusing of these sort of transpositions in the Scripture Text. It is for example said in Gen. 12. that Abram fell in love with Sarah,
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Sarah, and yet the Historian had a little before said, that Sarah and Abraham were well stricken in years. We ought methinks much rather to lay this fault concerning the method of things upon the disposition of the ancient Rolls, which in this and many other places has been changed, than to fly to a miracle and to suppose, as some Authors do, that God by a particular providence had restored to Sarah the beauty of her youth.

We may also say that in abridging of the Scripture to give it to the People, they have not always observed the order of stones, but have chiefly endeavoured to give those Histories which they thought were most proper for the instructing of the People.

We may join with this principle another not much different from this, by which we may give reasons for many repetitions of the same things. It is probable that they who joined together the ancient Records for the making of the Body of canonical Scriptures which we at present have, troubled not themselves to leave out several Synonymous terms which were in their Copies, and perhaps were added for a farther illustration: these repetitions not seeming to them to be altogether superfluous, because they saw'd for explanation, they thought not it to leave them wholly out. We ought methinks rather to have recourse to this principle than to make Moses or the Scribes of his time to be the Authors of many repetitions which are in his Books, as well as of a great many transpositions. And this is the chief reason why I choose rather herein to follow the opinion of S. Jerom and several other Fathers, who have been of opinion that Moses was not the Author of the whole Pentateuch as we at present have it.

We ought not for all this always to have recourse to these principles, where we find repetitions or transpositions in the Scripture. "I have on the contrary shewn that the Hebrews were
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were not very polite Writers, that they usually transplant'd, or repeated the same thing, and that sometimes they only begin one matter, and then on a sudden go to another, and afterwards realign their former discourse. We may easily understand this style in the Books of the New Testament, especially in the Epistles of S. Paul. But as it would be hard to justify all the transpositions and repetitions in the Books of Moses by their ways of expressing themselves, I have had recourse to other rules, leaving however everyone the liberty of believing as he pleases. Because these questions are such as we may be ignorant of, and may speak freely of without any prejudice to Religion. In quibus, sait S. Augustin, falsa fide qua Christiani fumus, aut ignorantur quid verum sit, & sententia definitiva suspenderat, aut alter quam eft humana & infirma fulpiciione conficciatur.

Fourthly, The great alterations which have happened, as we have shewn in the first Book of this Work, to the Copies of the Bible since the first Originals have been lost, utterly destroy the Protestant and Socinian Principle, who consult only these same Copies of the Bible as we at present have them. If the truth of Religion remained not in the Church, it would be unsafe to search for it at present in Books which have been subject to so many alterations, and have in many things depended upon the pleasure of Transcribers; It is certain that the Jews, who have writ out these Books, have took the liberty of adding and leaving out certain letters according as they thought fit, and yet the sense of the Text often depends upon these letters; wherefore we may add the uncertainty of the Hebrew Grammar, which could never be perfectly restored since its being lost. This has been explained at large at the end of the first Book, where we have given an account of the rise and progress of the Hebrew Grammar.

Besides,
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Besides, the Criticism we have made of the chief Transla-
tions of the Bible is an evident proof that it is almost im-
possible to translate the Holy Scripture, especially if we join
thereunto the project of a new Translation set down at the
beginning of the third Book. Those Protestants without
doubt are either ignorant or prejudiced who affirm that the
Scripture is plain of itself. As they have laid aside the
Tradition of the Church, and will acknowledge no other
principle of Religion but the Scripture itself, they were
obliged to suppose it plain and sufficient for the establishing
the truth of Faith without any Tradition.

But if we but consider the conclusions which the Protes-
tants and Socinians draw from the same principle, we shall
be convinced that their principle is not so plain as they ima-
gine, since these conclusions are so different and the one abso-
lutely denies what the other affirms.

Instead of believing with the Protestants that the shortest
and most certain way of deciding the questions of Faith is to
consult the Holy Scriptures, we shall on the contrary find in
this Work that if we join not Tradition with the Scripture,
we can hardly affirm any thing for certain in Religion. We
cannot be said to quit the word of God by joining therewith
the Tradition of the Church, since he who refers us to the
Holy Scriptures has also referred us to the Church whom he
has invested with this holy pledge.

Before the Law was writ by Moses the ancient Patriarchs
preferred their Religion in its purity by Tradition only.
After the Law was writ the Jews always upon difficulties
consulted the Interpreters of this Law: and although they have
too much creased their Traditions through series of time,
we ought not for all that to find fault with these same Tra-
ditions but the men who have been the depositaries of them.
As for the New Testament, the Gospel was establisht in
many Churches before any thing of it was writ, and since

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that time S. Irenæus, Tertullian and the other first Fathers have not, in their disputes against Heretics, had recourse so much to the word of God contained in the Holy Scriptures, as to this same word which was not written but pre-served in the chief Churches which had been founded by the Apostles.

When these Bishops were assembled in Councils they every one declared the belief of their own Church; so that this belief received in the first Churches serv'd afterwards as a rule for the explaining of the difficult places of the Scripture. Wherefore the Fathers of the Council of Trent wisely ordain'd that no one should interpret the Scripture against the common opinion of the Fathers; and this same Council made the not written Traditions to be of equal authority with the word of God contain'd in the Holy Scriptures, because it suppos'd that those Traditions which were not writ proceeded from our Saviour who communicated them to his Apostles, and from thence they at last came down to us.

We may call these Traditions an abridgment of the Christian Religion, which has been since the beginning of Christianity in the first Churches apart from the Holy Scripture. By this ancient abridgment of the Christian Religion we ought to explain the difficulties of the Scripture, as the Protestants themselves and amongst others Illyricus and Du Plessis are of opinion. Thus they are obliged to acknowledge the true Tradition of the Church, although they affirm the contrary in their disputes against the Catholicks. We can establish no unity in Religion without supposing this ancient uniformity of belief grounded upon the common consent of the first Apostles' Churches, and besides we cannot well confute the schismatical subtleties but by this means.

To conclude, although the Council of Trent ordain'd that we should not in interpreting of the Scripture deviate from the explanations of the Fathers, it has not for all that prohibited...
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hibited private persons from searching out of other explanations of places not relating to matters of faith. We may on the contrary say that men never endeavoured so much to find out new interpretations of the Scripture Text as since this Council. They thought not that the Fathers had thoroughly sifted the matter. Wherefore I have made bold to give my opinion upon their Commentaries in the third Book. I have observed both their failures and perfections; and lastly I have examined their Works according to the rules of Criticism, because in those places there is no mention made of matters of faith. We however at present find some learned persons who collect only whatever they can find out of the Fathers' Books upon the Scripture, as if the Fathers had better succeeded than the other Interpreters of the Bible.

They who search after truth itself without prejudice value not persons names nor their antiquity, especially in things not relating to faith; and it is certain that most of the Fathers have not had all the necessary helps nor time enough to search into the great difficulties in the Scripture. The Commentaries of the modern Interpreters ought in many places to be preferred before those of the ancient ones, and we ought rather to search for Religion in the Fathers' Interpretations than literal explanations of the Scripture Text. There are few who have applied themselves to this sort of study, and amongst the Latin Fathers there have been none except S. Jerome who were capable of doing it. Wherefore for the carrying on of my design of observing what I thought was necessary for the understanding of the Scripture, it was convenient that I should consult the Jewish Commentaries as well as those of the Catholic Doctors, that every one might be instructed as well in the method which has been observed even to this time in the Synagogue, as in the Church, for the explaining of the Holy Scriptures: I have joined with

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the latter the Protestant and Socinian Authors, to the end one may profit by their new discoveries in this study, as the Fathers heretofore consulted the Greek Translations of the Bible which had been made by the greatest enemies of the Church.

Besides the principles I have already observed which may be found in several places of this History, I can affirm that I have copied from no Author who has writ before me upon any part of this Subject, being persuaded that we have already too many Books of all sorts, and but very few good ones.

For the avoiding this fault, and that I might at the same time be useful to the Publick, I have carefully read over the Works of the chief Authors, who have writ upon the Criticism of the Bible, and after having observed their faults for my particular instruction I thought I might publish them, having no other design but to be useful to others; I dare affirm that I have wanted no necessary helps for the completing of this Work. I have had for a long time within my own power a great many Books which were brought out of the Levant, and are at present in the Library of the Fathers of the Oratory of Paris, and besides having followed so other employment, I have had leisure enough to think upon a Work of this importance. I have also, through the help of my friends, consulted many learned and judicious persons, thereby to know their opinions upon the greatest difficulties.

But after all I found that no one had hitherto thoroughly searched into the Criticism of the Scripture; every one has commonly spoke according to his prejudices. The Jews, for example, who consulted one of their Authors, have had but a very slender knowledge herein, and they havecontented themselves with advising what they understood not. As for the Christians, most of the Fathers have been so much pre-

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judged in favour of the ancient Translations of the Church, that they have wholly neglected the Hebrew Text, besides that they have not had all the necessary helps for the thorough examining of what belongs to the Criticism of the Bible.

As for the Writers of our times, whether Catholics or Protestants, I have found none who were wholly free from prejudice. The two Buxtorfs, who have got much reputation, especially amongst the Protestants, have in most of their Works openly shown they were biased in favour of the Rabbin opinions, without having consulted any other Authors. Father Morin on the contrary was prejudiced against the Rabbins before he had read them, and under pretence of defending the ancient Translations of the Church, he has collected all the proofs he could find to destroy the originals of the Bible.

There is indeed much more judgment in Ludovicius Capellus's Criticin, but as he endeavoured hardly any thing else but to find out the various readings, he has multiplied them. Wherefore I have in this History laid down some principles for the explaining of several various readings, without blaming the Translators for being mistaken in all these places. Besides Capellus has taken for various readings some downright errors of Translators, which might be easily corrected by good Copies: Lastly, he has not methinks given authority enough to the Malloret, which has fixed the way of reading the Hebrew Text of the Bible. For although the Jews have not been infallible in their Malloret or Criticin, we ought not however to reject or despise it only because it comes from the Jews. As the question is about the custom of reading, we ought to consult them amongst whom this custom has been preferred. But notwithstanding these faults and some others which I mention not here, Capellus his Work ought to be preferred before all others upon this Subject, and although he was a Protestant be was not prejudiced.
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judged in favour of those of his Religion. They of Geneva, Sedan and Leyden opposed the publishing of this Book for ten years together, being persuaded it destroyed the principle of their Religion, and obliged them to have recourse to the Tradition of the Catholics. Father Pensa, a Jesuit, Father Morin of the Oratory and Father Merlianus, a Minim, got the King's Licence for the printing of it. This so alarmed the Court of Rome that it had almost condemned it, it being a thing without precedent that heretical Books wherein matters of Divinity are treated of, should be printed in France with the King's Licence. But Father Morin, who had helped forward the printing of it, and perhaps had not foreseen all the consequences, wrote to Cardinal Francis Barberini, that they at Rome did Capellus a kindness in condemning his Criticisms which had created him the hatred of those of his Sect, and that at the same time they did the Catholics injury, who made use of this Book to show that the Protestants have no certain principle of their Religion having rejected the Tradition of the Church; Capellus however never intended to draw this consequence from his Book.

Lastly, Volatus, who could not allow of the ignorance of some Protestants, whom he calls half Jews, undertook in a Work for that purpose to defend the Septravini Translation, but, under pretence of rejecting the Malevort Copies, he has flown into another extremity concerning the Septuagint, so that we may say there are very few persons who have been able to keep the medium which was necessary for the finding out of the truth. This I have endeavoured to do in this Work, by preferring as much as possibly I could the authority of the original Hebrew and Translations. I have had no prejudice either for the Greek, Latin, Hebrew, or any other Language. But I have carefully examined according to the rules of Criticism the Hebrew Text and all the Translations; and after having
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having observed the various readings, I have shown how we might correct the faults in the present Copies.

If we ought to reject the original Hebrew because of the faults which are therein, we ought also for the same reason to reject all the ancient Translations of the Church which have been made from the Hebrew, because they are also faulty as well as the Hebrew Text, and consequently we ought to admit of no Copy of the Scripture; But these extremes are very dangerous.

Origen and S. Jerom, who found many faults in the ancient Greek Copies of the Septuagint Translation, would not for all that reject it; they endeavoured only to reduce it according to the common rules of Criticism. I have followed the example of these two great men, and as there has been nothing upon this subject as yet in French, no one ought to wonder why I make use sometimes of certain expressions which are not altogether exact French; every art has peculiar terms which are in a manner consecrated to it. Thus we shall often find in this Work the word Critick, and some other such like, which I have been forced to use the better to express myself according to the terms of the art I treated of. Besides persons who are Scholars are already used to these terms in our Tongue. When we speak, for example, of Capellus's Book, printed under the Title of Critica Sacra, and of the English Commentaries call'd Critici Sacri, we say in French La Critique de Capelle, Les Critiques d'Angleterre.

It is also to be observed that for the making my self more useful to the world, I usually set down the Testimonies of the Authors I make use of in abridgment only and according to the sense, there being nothing more tedious than long quotations of passages where sometimes there are only five or six words which are necessary. I designed only in this Work to speak many things in few words, and that my citations
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citations might be of greater credit I have put at the end of the Book a Catalogue of the Authors I have quoted which are not well known.

But I have spoke enough of the design and profit of this Work, I am now only to desire those who will take the pains to read it carefully, to tell me charitably of my faults, to the end that I may profit by their admonitions. It is but reasonable that after having critized upon so many Authors I should submit my self to the censure of others.

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