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A

LETTER

TO

ADAM SMITH, LL.D.

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LETTER.

TO

ADAM SMITH, LL.D.

ON THE

LIFE, DEATH, AND PHILOSOPHY

OF HIS FRIEND

DAVID HUME, Esq.

BY ONE OF THE PEOPLE CALLED CHRISTIANS.

Ibant olscuri, solá sub nocte, per umbram, Perque domos Ditis vacuas, et inania regna.

VIRG.

A NEW EDITION,

PUBLISHED BY DESIRE OF THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE!

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1799.

N. B. The Author of this Tract was

GEORGE HORNE, D.D.

Late Lord Bishop of Norwich.

Srlf Ur:

B 149.7 H78.8

ADVERTISEMENT. 1799

T is of no consequence, gentle Reader, to you, any more than it is to Dr. SMITH, that you should know the name of the person, who now addresseth you. Your mind cannot be biaffed, either way, by that, of which you remain ignorant. The remarks in the following pages are not therefore true, or falfe, because I made them; but I made them, because I thought them to be true. Read, confider, and determine for yourself. If you find no satisfaction, throw the book into the fire; regret (but with moderation, as becometh a philosopher) the loss of your sixpence*;

Λ 3

and

^{*} The price of the first edition.

and take care not to lose another, in the same manner. If, on the contrary, you should find satisfaction (and, it is humbly hoped, you will find a great deal) neglect not to communicate to others, what has thus been communicated to you. Speak handfomely of me, wherever you go, and introduce me to your kinsfolk and acquaintance. The enemies of Religion are awake; let not her friends sleep.

I intended a much longer work; but, like the learned editor of Mr. Hume's Life, am necessitated to "gratify," with all possible expedition, "the impatience "of the public curiosity;" so eager is it to hear, what they, who believe in God, can possibly have to say for themselves. And if this will do the business, why

should you be troubled with more? I am far from agreeing with Mr. VOLTAIRE, in all his observations. But there is one, in which it is impossible to disagree with him. "I have faid, and I abide by it," cries the little hero, "that the fault of " most books is, their being too large." On reviewing what I have written, I really cannot fee there is occasion to add another fentence.

Had I not chosen, for reasons best known to myfelf, thus to make my appearance incog. I would certainly have fate for my picture, and have tried to cast a look at my title page, as lively and good humoured, as that of Mr. Hume himfelf. My bookfeller, indeed, told me, it would have been a much more creditable

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able way of doing the thing; "and then, "you know, Sir," faid he, "we could have charged the other fixpence."

A LET-

LETTER, &c.

SIR,

balming a philosopher; his body, I believe I must say; for concerning the other part of him, neither you nor he seem to have entertained an idea, sleeping or waking. Else, it surely might have claimed a little of your care and attention; and one would think, the belief of the soul's existence and immortality could do no harm, if it did no good, in at Theory of Moral Sentiments. But every gentleman understands his own business best:

Will: you do an unknown correspondent the honour, Sir, to accept a few plain remarks, in a free and easy way, upon the curious letter to Mr. Strahan, in which this.

A 5

ever memorable operation of *embalming* is performed? Our Philosopher's account of *bis own life* will likewise be considered, as we go along.

Trust me, good Doctor, I am no bigot, enthusiast, or enemy to human learning-Et ego in Arcadiâ-I have made many a hearty meal, in private, upon Cicero and Virgil, as well as Mr. Hume*. Few persons (though, perhaps, as Mr. Hume fays, upon a like occasion, "I ought not to judge on that sub-" ject") have a quicker relish for the productions of genius, and the beauties of composition. It is therefore as little in my intention, as it is in my power, to prejudice the literary character of your friend. From fome of his writings I have received great pleafure, and have ever esteemed his History of England to have been a noble effort of matter and motion. But when a man takes it into his head to do mischief, you must be fensible, Sir, the Public has always reason to lament his being a clever fellow.

^{*} LIFE, p. 5.

I hope it will not be deemed vanity in me likewise to say, that I have in my composition a large proportion of that, which our inimitable Shakespeare styles, the milk of human kindness. I never knew what envy or hatred was; and am ready, at all times, to praife, wherever I can do it, in honour and confci-DAVID, I doubt not, was, as you affirm, a focial agreeable perfon, of a convivial turn, told a good ftory, and played well at "his favourite game of whift *." I know not that JOHN THE PAINTER did the fame. But there is no abfurdity in the supposition. If he did not, he might have done it-Doctor, be not offended—I mean no harm. I would only infer thus much, that I could not, on that account, bring myself absolutely to approve his odd fancy of firing all the dockyards in the kingdom.

Concerning the philosophical opinions of Mr. Hume you observe †, that " men will, no " doubt, judge variously." They are certainly at liberty so to do, because the author

LIFE, &c. p. 43. † LIFE, &c. p. 59.

himself did the same. Sometimes, to be fure, he esteemed them ingenious, deep, fubtile, elegant, and calculated to diffuse his literary fame to the ends of the world. But, at other times, he judged very differently; very much fo, indeed. "I dine;" fays he, " I play a game at back-gammon, I converse, " and am merry with my friends; and when, " after three or four hours amusement, I " would return to these speculations, they " appear so cold, so strained, and so ridiculous, " that I cannot find in my heart to enter into-"them any farther *." Now, Sir, if you will only give me leave to judge, before dinner, of Mr. Hume's philosophy, as he judged of it after dinner, we shall have no farther dispute upon that subject. I could indeed wish, if it were possible, to have a scheme of thought, which would bear contemplating, at any time of the day; because, otherwise, a person must be at the expence of maintaining

a brace

^{*} Treatife of Human Nature. I. 467. In the Postfcript to this Letter, a view will be exhibited of the Humian system, taken exactly as it appeared to it's author at fix o'clock in the evening.

a brace of these metaphysical Hobby-Horses, one to mount in the morning, and the other in the afternoon.

After all, Sir, friend as I am to freedom of opinion (and no one living can be more fo) I am rather forry, methinks, that men should judge so variously of Mr. Humf's philosophical speculations. For since the design of them is to banish out of the world every idea of truth and comfort, falvation and immortality, a future state, and the providence, and. even existence of God, it seems a pity, that we cannot be all of a mind about them, though. we might have formerly liked to hear the author. crack a joke, over a bottle, in his life time. And I could have been well pleased to have been informed by you, Sir, that, before his death, he had ceased to number among his happy effusions tracts of this kind and tendency.

For—(let me come a little closer to you, Doctor, if you please, upon this subject—Don't be under any apprehensions—my namedoes not begin with a B—) Are you sure, and can you make us sure, that there really exist

no fuch things as a God, and a future state of rewards and punishments? If so, all is well. Let us then, in our last hours, read Lucian, and play at whist, and droll upon Charon and his boat *; let us die as foolish and infensible, as much like our brother philosophers, the calves of the field, and the affes of the defart, as we can, for the life of us. But -if fuch things BE-as they most certainly ARE-Is it right in you, Sir, to hold up to our view, as "perfectly wife and virtuous +," the character and conduct of one who feems to have been possessed with an incurable antipathy to all that is called RELIGION; and who strained every nerve to explode, suppress, and extirpate the spirit of it among men, that it's very name, if he could effect it, might no more be had in remembrance? Are we, do you imagine, to be reconciled to a character of this fort, and fall in love with it, because it's owner was good company, and knew how to manage his cards? Low as the age is fallen, I will venture to hope, it has grace enough yet left, to refent fuch usage as this.

^{*} Life, &c. p. 47, et seq. + Life, &c) p. 62:
You

You endeavour to entertain us with some pleasant conceits that were supposed by Mr. Hume to pass between himself and old Charon. The philosopher tells the old gentleman, that, "he had been endeavouring to open the eyes of the Public;" that he was correcting his works for a new edition," from which great things were to be expected; in short, "if he could but live a few years longer (and that was the only reason why he would wish to do so) he might have the fatisfaction of seeing the downsal of some of the prevailing systems of superstition *."

We all know, Sir, what the word SUPER-STITION denotes, in Mr. Hume's vocabulary, and against what Religion his shafts are levelled, under that name. But, Doctor Smith, do you believe, or would you have us to believe, that it is Charon, who calls us out of the world, at the appointed time? Doth not he call us out of it, who sent us into it? Let me, then, present you with a paraphrase of the Wish, as addressed to him, to whom it

^{*} Life, &c. p. 50.

should, and to whom alone, with any fense and propriety it can be addressed.—Thus it runs—

"LORD, I have only one reason why I would wish to live. Suffer me so to do, I most humbly beseech thee, yet a little while, till mine eyes shall behold the success of my undertaking to overthrow, by my metaphysics, the faith which thy Son descended from heaven to plant, and to root out the knowledge and the love of thee from the earth."

Here are no rhetorical figures, no hyper-bole's, or exaggerations. The matter is even fo. I appeal, in the face of the world, Sir, to yourfelf, and to every man, who can read and understand the writings of Mr. Hume, whether this be not, in plain, honest English, the drift of his *philosophy* as it is called; for the propagation of which alone he wished to live; and concerning which you are pleased to fay coolly, and will judge variously, every one approving or condemning these opinions, according as they happen to co-

ec. incide.

"incide or difagree with his own *." Our thoughts are very naturally carried back, upon this occasion, to the author of the first philofophy, who likewise engaged to open the eyes of the Public—He did so; but the only discovery they found themselves able to make, was,—that they were NAKED.

You talk much, Sir, of our philosopher's gentleness of manners, good nature, compassion, generofity, charity. Alas, Sir, whither were they all fled, when he fo often fate down calmly and deliberately to obliterate from the hearts of the human species every trace of the knowledge of God and his dispensations; all faith in his kind providence, and fatherly protection; all hope of enjoying his grace and favour, here, or hereafter; all love of him, and of their brethren for his fake; all the patience under tribulation, all the comforts, in time of forrow, derived from thefe fruitful and perennial fources? Did a good man think himself able, by the force of metaphysic incantation, in a moment, to blot the fun out of heaven, and dry up every

^{*} Life, &c. p. 59.

fountain upon earth, would he attempt to do it?—Tully had but a faint glimpse of the country to which we are all travelling; yet, so pleasing was any the most imperfect and shadowy prospect into suturity, that Tully declared, no man should ravish it from him*. And surely, Tully was a philosopher, as well as Hume. O had he seen the light which shone upon Hume, he would not have closed his eyes against it; had the same cup been offered to him, he would not have dashed it untasted from him!

"Perhaps our modern sceptics are igno"rant, that without the belief of a God, and
the hope of immortality, the miseries of
human life would often be insupportable.

But can I suppose them in a state of total
and invincible studiety, utter strangers to
the human heart, and to human affairs?

Sure, they would not thank me for such
a supposition. Yet this I must suppose,

^{*} Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro; nec mihi hunc errorem, quo delestor, dum vivo, extorqueri volo. De Senectute, ad Fin.

" or I must believe them to be the most " cruel, the most perfidious, and the most " profligate of men. Careffed by those who " call themselves the great, ingrossed by the " formalities of life, intoxicated with vanity, " pampered with adulation, diffipated in the " tumult of business, or amidst the vicissi-"tudes of folly, they perhaps have little " need and little relish for the consolations of religion. But let them know, that in the " folitary scenes of life, there is many an "honest and tender heart pining with incu-" rable anguish, pierced with the sharpest " fling of disappointment, bereft of friends, " chilled with poverty, racked with disease, " fcourged by the oppressor; whom nothing but trust in Providence, and the hope of " a future retribution could preserve from the agonies of despair. And do they, with facrilegious hands, attempt to violate " this last refuge of the miserable, and to " rob them of the only comfort that had fur-" vived the ravages of misfortune, malice, " and tyranny? Did it ever happen, that " the influence of their execrable tenets dif-" turbed

" turbed the tranquillity of virtuous retirement, deepened the gloom of human dif-" tress, or aggravated the horrors of the " grave? Is it possible, that this may have " happened in many instances? Is it pro-" bable, that this hath happened in one " fingle instance?-Ye traitors to human " kind, ye murderers of the human foul, " how can you answer for it to your own " hearts! Surely, every spark of your ge-" nerosity is extinguished for ever, if this " confideration do not awaken in you the " keenest remorse, and make you wish in " bitterness of foul-But I remonstrate in " vain. All this must have often occurred " to you, and been as often rejected, as ut-" terly frivolous. Could I enforce the pre-" fent topic by an appeal to your vanity, I " might possibly make some impression. But " to plead with you on the principles of BE-" NEVOLENCE, or GENEROSITY, is to address " you in a language ye do not, or will not " understand; and as to the shame of being " convicted of abfurdity, ignorance, or want " of candour, ye have long ago proved your-" felves

" felves superior to the sense of it.-But let " not the lovers of truth be discouraged. " Atheism cannot be of long continuance, " nor is there much danger of it's becoming " univerfal. The influence of fome conspi-" cuous characters hath brought it too much " into fashion; which, in a thoughtless and " profligate age, it is no difficult matter to " accomplish. But when men have retrieved "the powers of ferious reflection, they will " find it a frightful phantom; and the mind " will return gladly and eagerly to it's old " endearments. One thing we certainly "know; the fashion of sceptical and meta-" phyfical fyftems paffeth away. Those un-" natural productions, the vile effusion of a " hard and stupid heart, that mistakes it's " own restlessness for the activity of genius, " and it's own captiousness for sagacity of " understanding, may, like other monsters, 's please awhile by their singularity; but the " charm is foon over; and the fucceeding " age will be aftonished to hear, that their " fore-fathers were deluded, or amused, with " fuch fooleries."

You, Sir, have read the preceding paragraph before; but this Letter may come into the hands of many, who have not. It is the alarum bell to the admirers of Mr. Hume; and should be rung in their ears, till succeeded by the last trumpet.

And now, Sir, will you give me leave to ask you a few questions? Why all this hurry and bustle, this eagerness to gratify the pretended " impatience of the Public*," and fatisfy it, that our philosopher lived and died perfectly composed and easy? Was there, then, any fuspicion, in Scotland, that he might not, at times, be quite fo composed and easy as he should have been? Was there any particular BOOK ever written against him, that shook his system to pieces about his ears, and reduced it to a heap of ruins, the success and eclat of which might be supposed to have hurt his mind, and to have affected his health? Was there any AUTHOR, whose name his friends never dared to mention before him, and warned all strangers, that were introduced

^{*} Preface to Life, &c.

to him, against doing it, because he never failed, when by any accident it was done, to fly out into a transport of passion and swearing *? Was it deemed necessary, or expedient, on this account, that he should represent him, to have been perfectly secure of the growth and increase of his philosophic reputation, as if no book had been written, which had impaired it; it having been judged much easier to dissemble the fall of Dagon, than to

"I was a man of mild dispositions, of command of temper, little susceptible of enmity, and of great mo"deration in all my passions. Even my love of literary fame, my ruling passion, never soured my temper,"

Life, p. 32. Yet even by what is said of the Reverends and Right Reverends—Bishop Watburton, Bishop Hurd, the Zealots (that is, the Christians) and of the resolution once taken to "change his name and settle in France," because his writings did not meet with sufficient encouragement—by these circumstances, I say, there seems to have been something of the irritable in his constitution. But these are trifles. My quarry lies not in this way, at present. I say at nobler game. The atrocious wickedness of dissusing atheism through the land, is a subject which concerns every body.

Briton, and, confequently, not acquainted with what passes so far in the opposite quarter. You, Sir, can inform us how these things are; and likewise, when the great work of benevolence and charity, of wisdom and virtue, shall be crowned by the publication of a treatise designed to prove the soul's mortality, and another, to justify and recommend self murder; for which, without doubt, the present and every suture age will bless the name of the gentle and amiable author.

Upon the whole, Doctor, your meaning is good; but I think you will not succeed, this time. You would persuade us, by the example of David Hume, Esq; that atheism is the only cordial for low spirits, and the proper antidote against the sear of death. But, surely, he who can reslect, with complacency, on a friend thus misemploying his talents in his life, and then amusing himself with Lucian, Whist, and Charon, at his death, may smile over Babylon in ruins; esteem the earthquake, which destroyed Lisbon, an agreeable occurrence; and congratulate the hardened

PHARAOH, on his overthrow in the Red fea. Drollery, in fuch circumstances, is neither more nor less than

Moody Madness, laughing wild Amid severest woe.

Would we know the baneful and pestilential influences of false philosophy on the human heart? We need only contemplate them in this most deplorable instance of Mr. Hume.

These sayings, Sir, may appear harsh; but they are salutary. And if departed spirits have any knowledge of what is passing upon earth, that person will be regarded by your friend as rendering him the truest services, who, by energy of expression, and warmth of exhortation, shall most contribute to prevent his writings from producing those effects upon mankind, which he no longer wishes they should produce. Let no man deceive himself, or be deceived by others. It is the voice of eternal TRUTH, which crieth aloud, and saith to you, Sir, and to me, and to all the world—He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son,

shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him *.

By way of contrast to the behaviour, of Mr. Hume, at the close of a life, passed without God in the world, permit me, Sir, to lay before yourself, and the Public, the last sentiments of the truly learned, judicious, and admirable Hooker, who had spent bis days in the service of his Maker and Redeemer.

After this manner, therefore, spake the author of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, immediately before he expired—

"I have lived to fee, that this world is "made up of perturbations; and I have been "long preparing to leave it, and gathering

" comfort for the dreadful hour of making

" my account with God, which I now apprehend to be near. And though I have, by

"his grace, loved him in my youth, and feared

" his grace, loved him in my youth, and leared thim in mine age, and laboured to have a

"confcience void of offence, towards him,

" and towards all men; yet, if thou, Lord,

" shouldest be extreme to mark what I have

" done amis, who can abide it? And there-

^{*} John iii. 36.

"fore, where I have failed, Lord, shew mercy " to me; for I plead not my righteousness, " but the forgiveness of my unrighteousness, "through His merits, who died to purchase " pardon for penitent finners. And fince I " owe thee a death, Lord, let it not be terrible, and then take thine own time; I submit " to it. Let not mine, O Lord, but thy will " be done!-God hath heard my daily peti-"tions; for I am at peace with all men, and " he is at peace with me. From fuch bleffed " affurance I feel that inward joy, which this " world can neither give, nor take from me. "My conscience beareth me this witness; " and this witness makes the thoughts of "death joyful. I could wish to live, to do ce the church more fervice; but cannot hope "it; for my days are past, as a shadow that " returns not."

His worthy Biographer adds—" More he would have spoken, but his spirits sailed him; and, after a short conslict between nature and death, a quiet sigh put a period to his last breath, and so, he seil asseep—"
And now he seems to rest like Lazarus in

" Abraham's bosom. Let me here draw his curtain, till, with the most glorious com-

"pany of the Patriarchs and Apostles, and

"the most noble army of Martyrs and Con-

" feffors, this most learned, most humble, most holy man shall also awake to receive

" an eternal tranquillity, and with it a greater

"degree of glory, than common Christians

" fhall be made partakers of."

Doctor Smith, when the hour of his departure hence shall arrive, will copy the example of the Believer, or the infidel, as it liketh him best. I must freely own, I have no opinion of that reader's bead, or beart, who will not exclaim, as I find myself obliged to do—

Let ME die the death of the Righteous, and let MY last end be like his!

I am, Sir,

Your very fincere
Well-wisher, and
Humble Servant,

One of the People called CHRISTIANS.

POSTSCRIPT.

AS it is possible, Sir, nay probable, that this little tract, because it is a little one, may be perused by many, who have not leifure or inclination to go through large volumes, and yet wish to know what Mr. Hume's philosophical fystem is; I shall here subjoin a short, but comprehensive summary of the doctrines which compose it, drawn up, some few years ago, by a learned gentleman, for his amusement, with proper references to those parts of our philosopher's works, where such doctrines were to be found. And though I never heard, the compiler had the thanks of Mr. HUME for fo doing, yet neither could I ever find, that he or his friends disputed the fidelity and accuracy with which it was done *..

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A SuM

^{*} See Dr. BEATTIE'S Essay on Truth, Part II. Ch. I. Sect. I. and Part III. Ch. II.

A SUMMARY OF MR. HUME'S DOCTRINES, METAPHYSICAL AND MORAL.

OF THE SOUL.

That the foul of man is not the fame this moment, that it was the last; that we know not what it is; that it is not one, but many things; and that it is nothing at all.

That in this foul is the agency of all the causes that operate throughout the sensible creation; and yet that in this soul there is neither power nor agency, nor any idea of either.

That matter and motion may often be regarded as the cause of thought.

OF THE UNIVERSE.

That the external world does not exist, or at least, that it's existence may reasonably be doubted.

That the universe exists in the mind, and that the mind does not exist.

That the universe is nothing but a heap of perceptions, without a substance.

That though a man could bring himself to believe, yea, and have reason to believe, that

every thing in the universe proceeds from some cause; yet it would be unreasonable for him to believe, that the universe itself proceeds from a cause.

OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

That the perfection of human knowledge is to doubt.

That we ought to doubt of every thing, yea, of our doubts themselves, and therefore, the utmost that philosophy can do, is to give us a doubtful solution of doubtful doubts *.

That the human understanding, acting alone, does entirely subvert itself, and prove by argument, that by argument nothing can be proved.

That man, in all his perceptions, actions, and volitions, is a mere passive machine, and has no separate existence of his own, being entirely made up of other things, of the exist-

* The fourth section of Mr. Hume's Essays on the Human Understanding, is called Sceptical doubts concerning the operations of the human understanding; and the fifth section bears this title, Sceptical Solution of those doubts.

ence of which he is by no means certain; and yet, that the nature of all things depends fo much upon man, that two and two could not be equal to four, nor fire produce heat, nor the fun light, without an act of the human understanding.

OF GOD.

That it is unreasonable to believe God to be infinitely wise and good, while there is any evil or disorder in the universe.

That we have no good reason to think the universe proceeds from a cause.

That as the existence of the external world is questionable, we are at a loss to find arguments by which we may prove the existence of the Supreme Being, or any of his attributes.

That when we speak of Power, as an attribute of any being, God himself not excepted, we use words without meaning.

That we can form no idea of power, nor of any being endued with power, much less of one endued with infinite power; and that we

ean

can never have reason to believe, that any object, or quality of any object exists, of which we can form an idea *.

OF THE MORALITY OF HUMAN ACTIONS.

That every human action is necessary, and could not have been different from what it is.

That moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues are nearly of the fame kind—In other words, that to want honesty, and to want understanding, and to want a leg, are equally the objects of moral disapprobation.

That adultery must be practised, if men would obtain all the advantages of life; that, if generally practised, it would in time cease to be scandalous; and that, if practised secretly and frequently, it would by degrees come to be thought no crime at all.

Laftly, as the foul of man, according to Mr. Hume, becomes every moment a diffe-

^{*} The poor prodigal Gentile, in the parable, was hardly reduced to feed upon such Husks as these. How good and how joyful a thing must it be, for one, that has been so reduced, to return to the house of his heavenly Father, where there is bread enough and to spare—to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom be bath sent?

rent being, the consequence must be, that the crimes committed by him at one time, cannot be imputable to him at another *.

I believe, Doctor Smith, the reader is now fully prepared to enter into the spirit of your concluding sentence, which therefore shall be mine.

"I have always confidered Mr. Hume, both in his life-time, and fince his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of A PER"FECTLY WISE AND VIRTUOUS MAN, as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit."

* "My Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals is of "all my writings, historical, philosophical, or literary, incomparably the BEST." LIFE, p. 16.

THE END.

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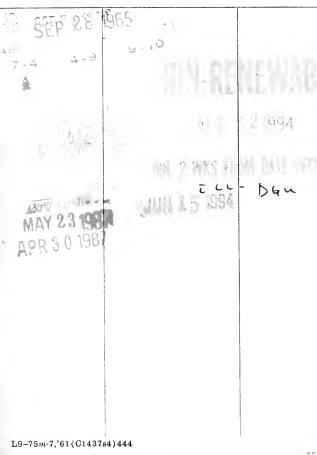
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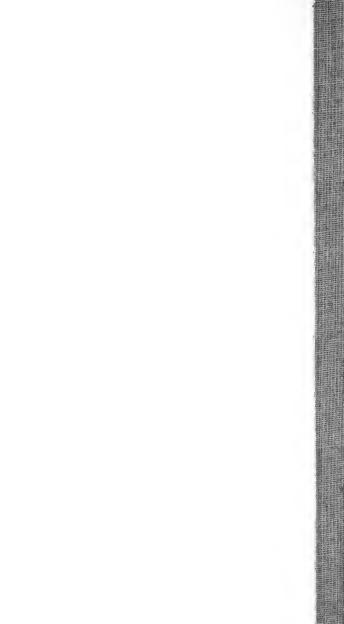
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