

A few practical observations on the art of cupping / by Joseph Staples.

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A FEW
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
ART OF CUPPING.

By JOSEPH STAPLES,
CUPPER,
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HOSPITALS.

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1835.

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PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

ART OF CUPPING.

BY JOSEPH STAPLES,

CHIRURGEON

OF THE HOSPITAL FOR THE SICK AND FEVER, LONDON.

AND OF THE HOSPITAL FOR THE SICK AND FEVER, LONDON.

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TO

DR. W. F. CHAMBERS,		DR. R. MACLEOD,
DR. E. J. SEYMOUR,		AND
DR. J. A. WILSON,		DR. J. HOPE,

PHYSICIANS;

TO

R. KEATE, ESQ.		SIR B. C. BRODIE, BART.
C. HAWKINS, ESQ.		G. G. BABINGTON, ESQ.
R. B. WALKER, ESQ.		E. CUTLER, ESQ.

SURGEONS

OF

St. George's Hospital,

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By their faithful and obliged servant,

J. STAPLES.

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TO

DR. W. P. CHAMBERS	DR. J. A. WILSON
DR. W. J. SETON	
DR. S. HOPE	

PHYSICIANS

TO

SIR R. C. INGHAM, BART.	R. KEATE, ESQ.
G. G. LAMINGTON, ESQ.	G. HAWKINS, ESQ.
A. CUTLER, ESQ.	R. S. WARRER, ESQ.

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C. ASTON KEY, ESQ.
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PREFACE.

THE author was induced to throw together the following observations by having witnessed gentlemen of excellent education, and competent to perform the most important operations, making the strangest mistakes when they attempted to abstract blood by the Cupping-glass.

Of all the modes of abstracting

blood, Cupping is the least dangerous, and attended with the least responsibility to the operator. Not to speak of the serious consequences occasionally attendant on arteriotomy and venesection, instances are by no means infrequent of troublesome hæmorrhage from the simple bite of the leech, which, resisting all other remedies, can only be stayed by sewing together the lips of the wound; and yet there is no form of bloodletting attended with so much disappointment to the operator, and distress

to the patient, as Cupping, simply because gentlemen will not condescend to be instructed in an art which requires as much manual dexterity as far more important operations.

Remembering the adage — *Ne sutor, &c.* and deeming the Cupper as one who is to make no new law for the exercise of his art, but faithfully to carry into effect the directions of the Physician and Surgeon, the author has everywhere avoided stepping out of his

proper sphere ; and, notwithstanding that the work will be much condensed, by the omission of matter, which, in his opinion, has been improperly admitted into works of the like nature, he trusts it will not be the less acceptable ; for that leaving in more learned hands the *when* and the *wherefore*, he points out solely the practical means of carrying their decisions into effect, with credit to the operator and comfort to the patient.

Should the following pages conduce in the smallest degree to that end, it was what the author proposed to himself, and his intention will have been fully answered.

OF THE APPARATUS.

The apparatus of the Cupid is simple, and consists of the Sacrificial Glasses, Torch, Spirit, Sponge, Lent, Stripping, and Heller's Dress, may best be contained in a case of small dimensions, or, what is still better, they may be suspended into the various pockets of the operator.

The following pages con-
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 end, it was what the author pro-
 posed to himself, and his intention
 will have been fully answered.

As to the manner in which he
 has done it, he has not been
 particular in following the
 rules of the art, but has
 endeavoured to do what he
 thought proper, and to
 express his ideas in the
 plainest and most concise
 manner possible.

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
ART OF CUPPING.

OF 'THE APPARATUS.

THE apparatus of the Cupper is simple, and consists of the Scarificator, Glasses, Torch, Spirit, Sponge, Lint, Strapping, and Roller : these may be all contained in a case of small dimensions, or, what is still better, they may be dispersed into the various pockets of the operator.

I would add as a suggestion an addition to this list of an apparatus for procuring instantaneous light, the patient being generally startled by an application for a lighted candle.

OF THE SCARIFICATOR.

Although a description of this instrument might seem rather to be in the province of the maker, yet, as no workman can be considered competent who is not perfectly acquainted with his tools, so it is necessary that the Cupper should have a knowledge of the principle and construction of his chief instrument, and especially in country

places, where he cannot always obtain the aid of the mechanic.

The Scarificator consists of a brass box, *A*, with a cap, connected by means of a screw, which also serves, by being turned in obvious directions, to regulate the depth of the incisions of the lancets: on the edge of the box is placed a moveable bar for securing the spindles on which the lancets are placed.

B, The spindles, with the lancets divided by collets, by the removal of which any number of lancets may be brought into use, from one to twelve, or more. Great care is required that when these

are separated they are returned in their exact previous positions, or the lancets will not pass through the slits in the cap of the box.

C, A section of a circle (with recess for spring), and bolt to secure it to the side of the box, that its cogs may play into those of the lancet spindles.

D, The trigger, with its circle and recess for spring, as *C*, and bolt to secure it to the side of the box.

E, The springs, with the screws for securing them to the bottom of the box. Some scarificators have

but one spring, the instrument here described has two: should the spring break (which very seldom happens), in a one-springed instrument, the operation is most vexatiously at an end; but in a double-springed scarificator, should one of them break, open the moveable bar described, *A*, take out the spindle connected with the broken spring, and you can finish the operation as if no such accident had happened.

F, The regulating screw.

G, The catch to hold the trigger, with its screw to fasten it to the bottom of the box.

H, The bolt to disengage the catch from the trigger, and screw to attach it to the catch.

I, The spring to act on the catch, with screw to fix it on one of the small sides of the box.

J, The glass leech.

One end of the springs, *E*, being screwed to the bottom of the box, the other falls into the recesses of *C* and *D*, which work into each other by means of teeth, and also into wheels on the spindles. The trigger being pulled causes the lancets to describe a quarter of a circle, or to come to a

right angle with their former position, when they are secured by the catch, *G*. The lancets thus brought to view are regulated to the depth required. The trigger being again pulled carries the lancets out of sight: the instrument is now set and ready for use. The thumb being pressed on the button disengages the catch, and the lancets revolve with such velocity that no eye is quick enough to observe their transit; and from this circumstance the Cupper gathers comfort for his patient, for in the simple operation of bleeding there are two motions, the incision and the removal of the lancet; but in scarifying, there is but one motion, and that instantaneous.

Scarificators are divided into large and small, temple and perinæum,—a multiplication of instruments attended with no practical advantage, a single scarificator duly managed and regulated answering every purpose.

Scarificators have from four to sixteen lancets. I prefer, a preference grounded in experience, one which has six lancets as superior to every other; and I aver, that more blood can be obtained by six lancets than by sixteen: indeed, it is not surprising that such should be the result, when we consider how small the area of a cupping-glass is, and the inutility of dividing the same blood-vessel in more

than one place ; however, this is a matter in the choice of every operator, I insist merely on the success of my own practice with the above-mentioned number of lancets.

The success of the Cupper very much depending on the keenness of his lancets, great care must be taken that they be kept sharp and bright, and to have them re-set as often as their edges are in the least degree blunted.

After each operation the lancets should be sprung through a piece of suet, and this repeated until every vestige of blood is removed from the steel ; two purposes are answered by

this simple plan — the lancets are cleaned, and preserved from rust.



OF THE CUPPING-GLASS.

Cupping-glasses are of various sizes and shapes, neither very important; to be preferred chiefly with reference to the part from whence the blood is to be obtained and the quantity required. But it is very essential that the glasses should be of equal thickness throughout, the rims well turned up, neither too thick nor too thin, and perfectly smooth. I prefer those called bell-shaped, and

having accurately ascertained the quantity of blood they will hold, I mark their respective capacities on the bottom, so that by a little experience mere inspection will shew how much blood is collected. No other mode of graduating the glass is to be depended on, as the various positions of the patient, and other circumstances hereafter to be adverted to, will rarely, if ever, allow the glasses to be perfectly level.

The Leech-glass resembles a leech when gorged with blood : hence I presume its name. It presents some advantages in experienced hands, as more blood can be obtained by it than by any single glass of another construction,

and by a single application of the scarificator ; two circumstances of some importance as applied to ladies and timid patients.

But the Leech-glass is difficult of exhaustion, and can rarely be used successfully without long practice.

OF THE TORCH.

The Torch (the best instrument for exhausting the cupping-glass,) is a cylindrical tube of metal, having a ring at one end and obliquely truncated at the

other : it is hollow, and filled with cotton, such as is used in ordinary lamps. The cotton should be tightly fitted into the instrument, and the ends well divaricated in the form of a thrum mop.— The uses of the spirit, sponge, lint, roller, and strapping, are so obvious, that it would be a waste of time to advert to their particular uses, which will also appear in the course of the work.

Care is to be taken that no more spirit is to be used than is sufficient for ignition, otherwise a bad burn will be produced by the lighted spirit dropping on the patient, to his torment and the disgrace of the cupper.

OF CUPPING IN GENERAL.

CUPPING is divided into dry cupping, and cupping with the scarificator : the former is seldom ordered in proportion to the latter. The grand object in cupping is to produce the largest quantity of blood in the least space of time. As one example is better than a hundred precepts, I propose to describe a case in which cupping is required on the back of the neck, by much the most frequent, occurring in private practice probably forty-nine times out of fifty.

The patient being placed either in

or out of bed, according to the circumstances of the case, the sponge, dipped in water as hot as can comfortably be borne, should be applied to the part intended to be operated upon ; then glasses adapted to the volume of the patient's neck, three in number, one above and two below, two eight-ounce and a four-ounce, or two six-ounce and a three-ounce, being held at once in the left hand, the torch dipped in spirits of wine, and previously lighted, is introduced under each glass in succession, at *the lower edge*, and quickly withdrawn : the air thus exhausted, the glass adheres with amazing force, and the patient may now be said to be dry cupped.

The application of the cupping-glass produces no pain ; if patients complain, it is merely from the novelty of the sensation. They all concur in describing it as a heavy weight on the part, as truly it is ; for the rim of the glass presses with the whole weight of the atmosphere, equal to the superficies of the area within the glass, which according to the received calculation, must give many pounds on a large cupping-glass.

The left fore-finger pressing above the upper edge of the glass, and the nail insinuated under it, the atmospheric air rushes in, and the glass is thus removed.

The scarificator previously set, held

in the right hand, with the thumb on the button, and that in all cases lowermost, is let off, and the incisions made; the glass is then immediately reapplied, as in the first part of this article, and if dexterously managed, fills rapidly.

This process is repeated with each of the glasses.

To remove the glasses, insert the finger-nail at the upper edge as before stated, holding in the other hand the sponge, just squeezed out of hot water, hard against the lower edge of the glass: turn the glass dexterously bottom downward, and slip the sponge into the place it previously occupied.

Managed in this way, by a little practice you may remove the glasses without spilling a drop of the blood. If the glasses are to be again applied, which they must be until the required quantity of blood be obtained, sponge well the incisions, removing any little coagula that may have been formed. Having finally removed the glasses, sponge clean the parts, close the incisions, place a slip of strapping across them, and the operation is completed.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that in scarifying over bone, care should be taken not to set the lancets too deep; also to avoid large blood-vessels and joints.

OF CUPPING

AS APPLIED TO THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE BODY.

The parts subjected to the operation may be divided into the head and neck, trunk and extremities.

OF THE HEAD AND NECK.

The most important operation is on the temple. Having caused the hair to be closely removed by the razor, a four or six-ounce glass, according to the circumstances, should be applied.

In this operation the large arteries are to be avoided, the lancets set at a small depth, and if the blood refuses to flow, the lower edge of the glass must be relieved by a counter pressure on the upper. The blood will now be readily obtained, as it was retarded by the pressure of the edge of the glass on the supplying artery. Sometimes the blood will continue to spring from a small artery after the operation is complete: in this case a bit of strapping, and a roller round the head, will stop the bleeding; but if it be obstinate, half a cork enveloped in lint, and retained in its place by strapping and a roller, will always succeed. By a hair getting under the glass, or from some

other cause, the air will get under the glass, and it will very soon fall to the ground. This is a very untoward circumstance, and must be carefully avoided: it may be known by a little froth bubbling at one edge of the glass. It is usual in works of this kind to recommend holding the glass down with the hand, but I find it much the best way to remove, and reapply the glass, or another of a little larger diameter.

OF THE SCALP.

The hair must be removed, as in the former operation; and should the blood be procured with difficulty, relieve the

pressure of the glass as before stated ; and if that should prove insufficient, take away the glass entirely, and proceed to get the required quantity of blood by the sponge and hot water only. In my own practice I have never failed with the cupping-glass, but I have heard, and can easily believe, that it sometimes happens.

BEHIND THE EAR.

An oval glass will be found the fittest for this operation, except in fat persons, when a round one may be advantageously employed. The same observations apply to this practice as to

the former. The glass should be well adjusted to the part, previous to the introduction of the torch, in withdrawing which, draw it downwards suddenly, lest the hair or cap of the patient be set on fire.

OF THE BACK OF THE NECK.

Already described : page 28.

OF THE THROAT.

A round or oval glass should be applied on *each side* of the windpipe : the lancets set about the eighth of an

inch deep. The head of the patient should incline backward, and his arms be folded across the chest.

OF THE TRUNK.

The chief operations here are,
between the Shoulders,
on the Back,
Loins,
Sacrum,
Chest,
Pit of the Stomach,
Abdomen,
Side,
Groin, and Perinæum.

BETWEEN THE SHOULDERS.

This operation differs little from that on the back of the neck. Three glasses are generally used; one over the spine, and one on each side. Here it may be observed, that the number of glasses to be applied depends very much on the circumstances of the particular case. Public patients do not object to a number of glasses, but private patients, and particularly ladies, prefer the glasses being many times applied, to too many scarifications. This is a matter on which the cupper will exercise his discretion.

LOINS AND BACK.

In this operation the position is indifferent as regards the patient, but of some importance to the operator. The patient lying down, three or four glasses may be applied with much facility; but in a sitting posture, scarcely more than two can be well managed, except by a practised hand. The lancets may be deeper set than in the former operations, and the blood generally flows freely. In cupping on the back, you will take care to avoid the spine: I do not place a glass nearer than an inch on either side.

SACRUM.

From two to four glasses ; the lancet set less deep than in the former operations. The cupper would do well to accustom himself early to the use of both hands ; for the situation of beds, and other circumstances, render a one-handed man awkward and embarrassed. An ambidextrous person possesses advantages in all operations,—in none more than cupping.

CHEST.

In the male patient, no particular precautions are necessary. As many

glasses as may be required can be applied, and the blood may be easily procured ; but, in the female patient, care must be taken that no part of the mammæ is drawn under the glasses, and therefore it is better to apply two or three glasses perpendicularly over the sternum, by which all danger is avoided.

Most authors on cupping direct, in operations of the chest, that the scarifications should be made in the course of the rib ; this does not correspond with my experience, and I prefer in all cases making the incisions perpendicular, not to the parts of the patient's body, but to the ceiling of the room ; for if the incisions are made transversely, the blood,

which in cupping has a strong tendency to coagulate, lodges on the sides of the incisions and speedily forms a clot, to the obstruction of the flow of the blood, but the blood trickles fast down perpendicular scarifications : and I think my opponents have scarcely considered, that in scarifying, we divide a number of blood-vessels which are anastomosing in all directions, and consequently, as regards the amount of blood liberated, the direction of the incision is indifferent ; while, for the reason stated, my plan will be found best, of making a perpendicular incision, as experience will prove.

PIT OF THE STOMACH.

From two to four glasses well exhausted: nothing particular to be observed in this operation.

ABDOMEN.

Any number of glasses may here be applied with much readiness, and few precautions to be observed.

In dropsical patients large blood-vessels cross in all directions, but, as they are very apparent, they are easily avoided, and plenty of space found for the

glasses between their divarications. If the integuments are too tense, or too much relaxed, the necessary means must be used, by bolstering, or otherwise, as will readily present themselves to the mind of the operator.

SIDE.

Round or oval glasses according to the circumstances. Round is the rule, oval the exception ; three or four may be generally successfully applied, not too much exhausted.

GROIN.

The hair to be closely removed, the thigh a little bent ; a single round or oval glass, and the lancet set to about a quarter of an inch.

PERINÆUM.

The hair to be removed, the patient lying on his back, as for the performance of lithotomy ; the scrotum to be kept clear of the glass, which may be a round one over all, or an oval placed on each side of the urethra. Care is of course to be taken not to wound the

urethra. An instrument, called the *perinæum scarificator*, has been invented, but it does not succeed: the best preservative is the precaution of the operator.



OF THE EXTREMITIES.

THE SHOULDER.

Three glasses may be applied; one on the top of the shoulder, one below it anteriorly, and one posteriorly; the lancets may be set deep, and the blood generally flows freely.

THE ELBOW.

In cupping here the arm must be bent to a right angle, or the operation will not be successful. Two glasses may be applied, one above and one below the joint, and the lancets must not be set too deep.

THE WRIST.

One glass on the upper part of the wrist, the hand laid flat on a pillow, the blood flows freely: it is indifferent in what directions the incisions are made: in taking off the glass, the pa-

tient may turn his hand round, which will facilitate and render the operation more successful. If required, the glass may be applied to the under part of the wrist, but not so readily.

BACK OF THE HAND.

Occasionally, in swellings of the hand, the operation is ordered: one glass is readily applied, the incisions to be made transversely, and the hand to be rested edgewise on a table after the scarification.

HIP.

The patient lies on the opposite side, the thigh forming a right angle with the leg and body; there is plenty of space for the glasses, except in very emaciated subjects. Three or four glasses may be applied round the joint as the occasion may require. Be particular in this, and all other operations, to apply the scarificator the *instant* the glass is withdrawn, and again the glass the instant the scarificator is withdrawn; in this, the preclusion of cold and the due application of the torch, depend the credit and success of the cupper.

THE THIGH.

From three to four glasses may be here applied ; they are generally placed in a line between the hip and knee ; there is plenty of space for the glasses, and nothing particular to be observed as distinguishing this operation from others.

THE KNEE.

The patient may either be in a sitting position, or he may be in bed, the leg bent to a right angle ; sitting in a chair is far the best if circum-

stances allow it, as a glass may then be readily applied on each side of the joint. The lancets must not be set too deep, and the blood is easily obtained.

THE CALF.

Cupping is sometimes ordered in phlegmonous swelling of the leg. There is no difficulty in applying two or three glasses, and the lancets may be set deep, which is a general rule in all muscular parts.

THE ANKLE JOINT.

Two round glasses are to be applied, one over the inner, and one over the outer ankle; the lancets superficially set, by a little dexterity there will be no difficulty in obtaining the quantity of blood required.

Cupping may be ordered in some parts of the body not here enumerated; in such cases the operator must exercise his own discretion, in the assurance that if he can manage the operations as here described, there are none

that can be possibly ordered which can give him the smallest embarrassment, adapting, as he must, the means to the end, and considering always the condition, age, sex, development, and constitution of his patient.

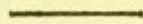
In conclusion. Cheerfulness without impertinence or undue familiarity, the most scrupulous delicacy and cleanliness in the operation, promptitude in attendance, and manual dexterity—these are the requisites of the Cupper; and above all, conscientiousness in the performance of his duty, never sacrificing the fulfilment of the physician's order to the ambition of obtaining a reputation for dispatch, thus bringing

contempt on the remedy, and disappointment to the physician.

The author gives instruction in cupping daily, at his residence, 22, Half-Moon-Street, Piccadilly, and 16, Cross-Street, Hatton-Garden. He undertakes likewise to introduce gentlemen to cases, in which they may themselves perform all the varieties of the operation. Instruments of approved make, and every requisite of the art, supplied to pupils.

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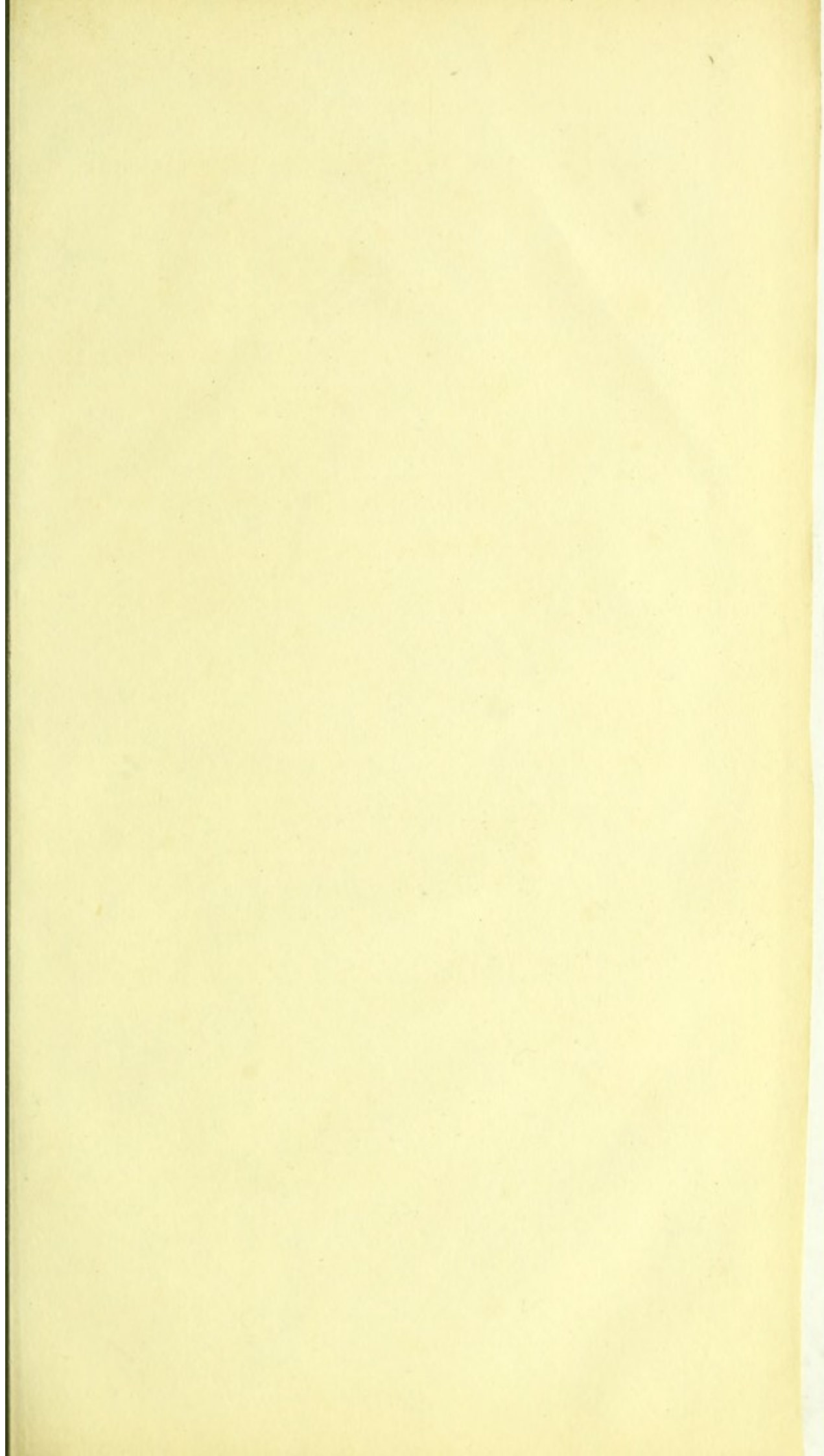
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