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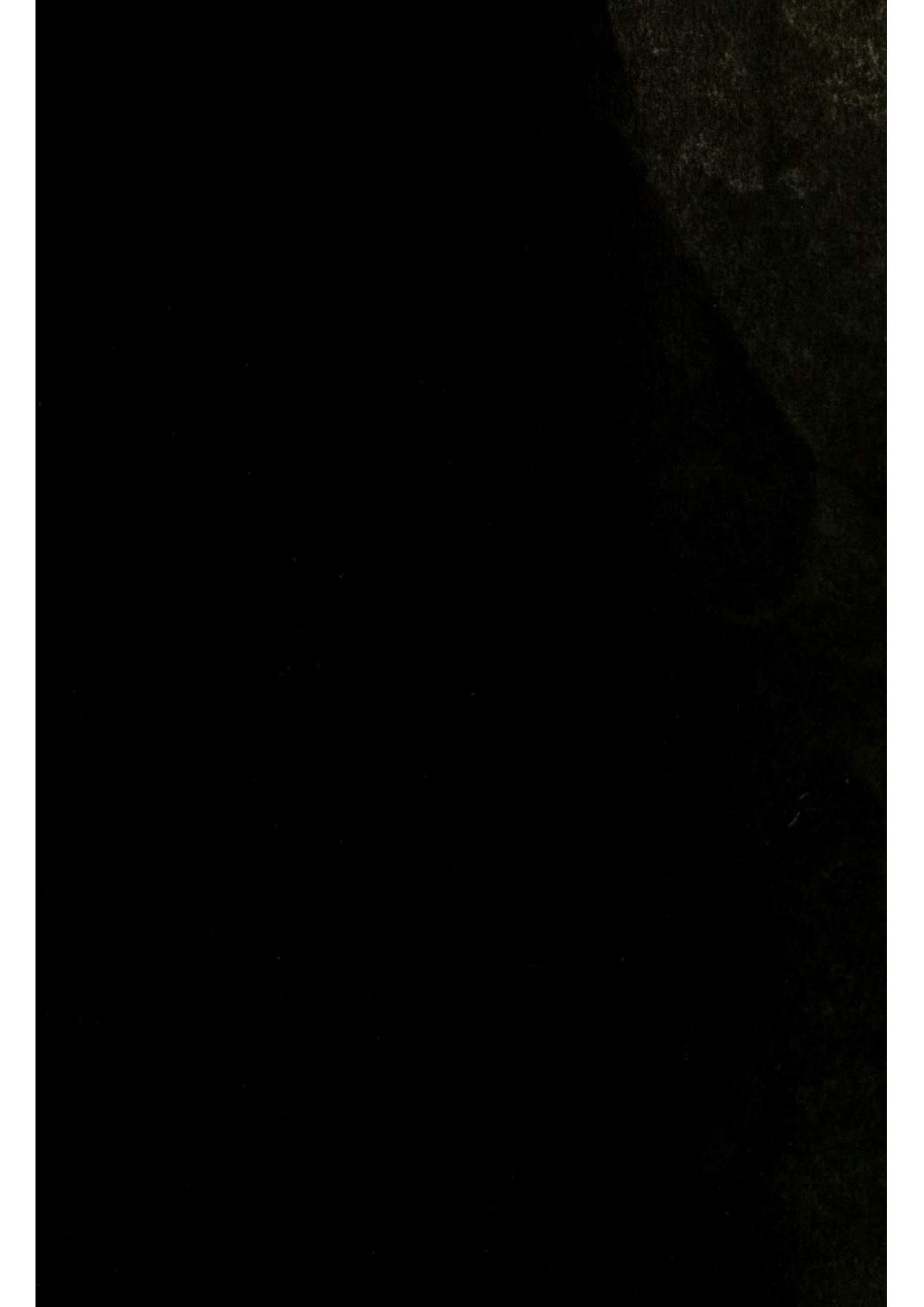
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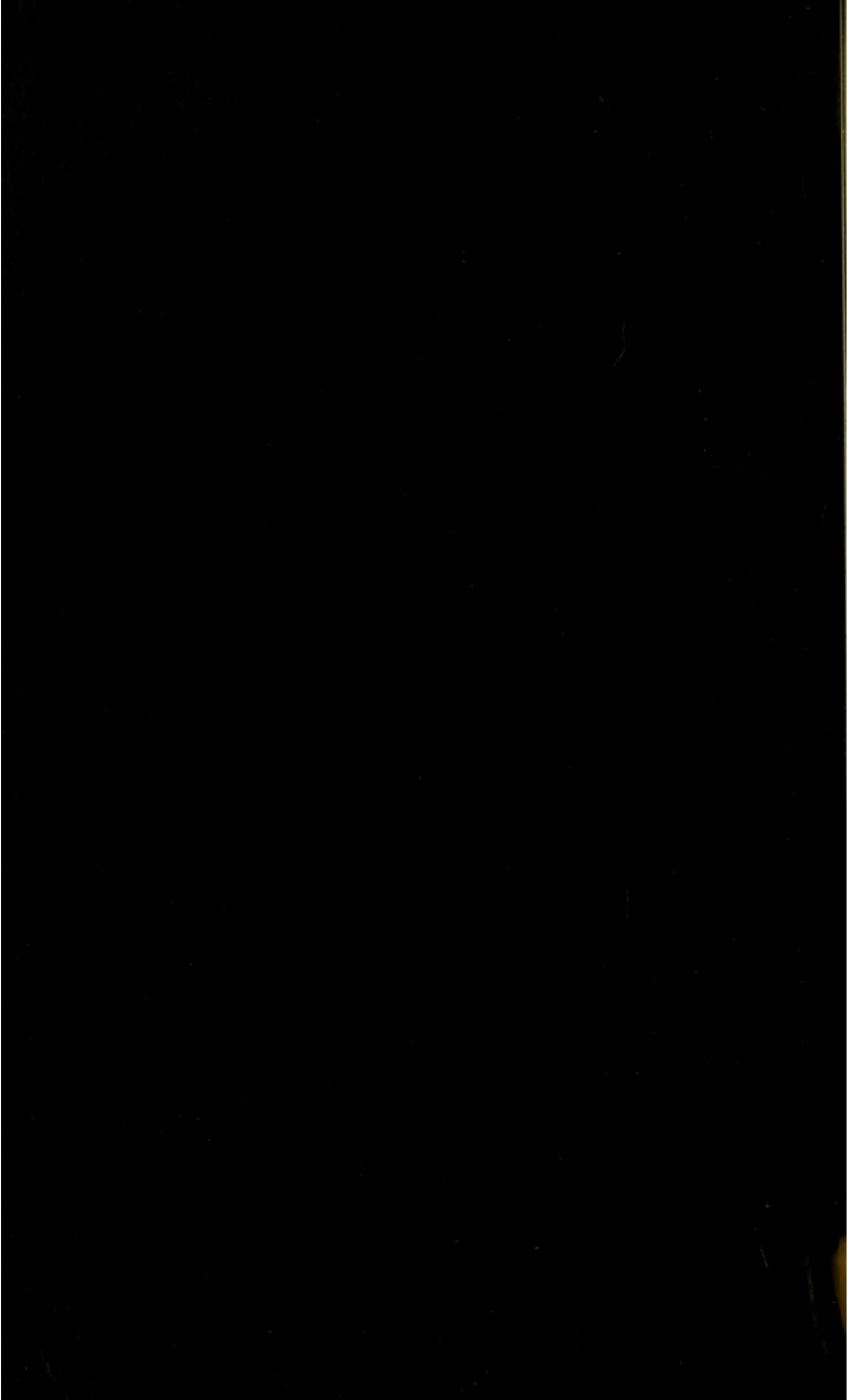
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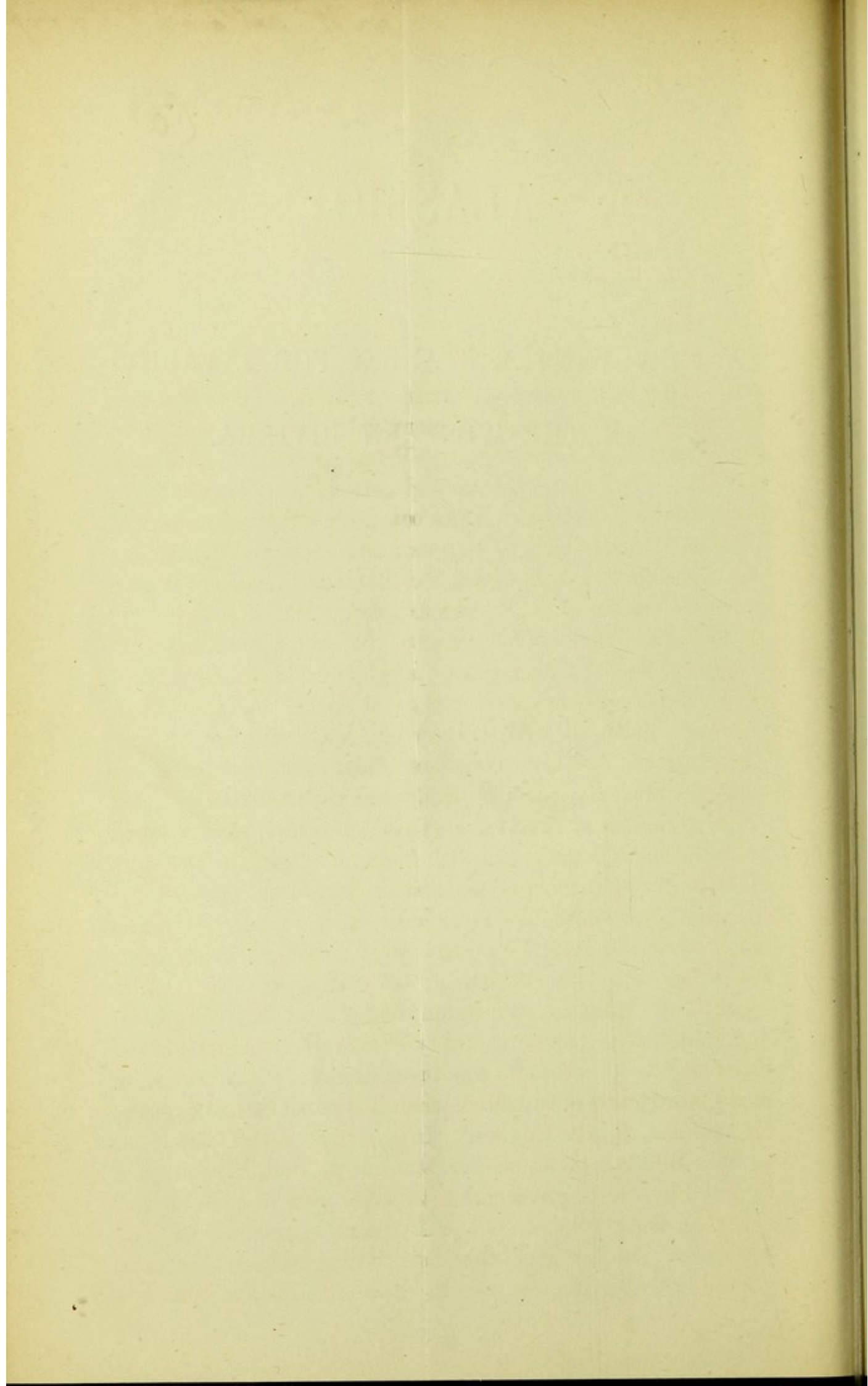
ALASSIO :

A NEW WINTER STATION FOR INVALIDS
IN THE WESTERN RIVIERA.

By EDWARD DICKINSON, M.R.C.S.

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ALASSIO a new winter station for invalids in the Western Riviera. I doubt not that many who take up this little pamphlet will at once exclaim—What need of new invalid stations? Are there not enough already? Have we not been troubled enough to make out the conflicting claims of Hyères, Cannes, Nice, Bordighera, Mentone, and San Remo, that there should appear a fresh claimant in Alassio? I congratulate the reader who thus expresses himself. It is very evident that he does not belong to the class of those who are obliged to seek, and anxiously weigh the respective advantages of these various winter retreats, either on account of his own health, or that of any one near and dear to him. The truth is, that all these places differ from each other in many particulars, both physically and in the effect of their various climates on invalids. They have all of them a much milder climate, much more free from misty vapour than any of the places round the south coast of England; they are for the most part bathed in sunbeams—at all events for some hours of almost every day; and when it does rain the downfall is that of a thundershower, the gauge showing that a much larger quantity has fallen than is common in England, and thus with a greater quantity of rain we have much fewer rainy days. It is evident that invalids have in such a climate many more hours of sunshine, when it is possible to take open-air exercise, than in England. Indeed the principal objection to the Mediterranean winter stations is that invalids are tempted by the bright weather to take part in picnics and other pleasure parties, not unfrequently undoing by one afternoon's imprudence the improvement which has been steadily progressing for weeks, and sometimes months. I

am sure that all medical men practising in these parts will confirm my statement; but it is evident that for such acts of imprudence and their consequences the patients themselves must be responsible. It has been a matter of interest to me during the past winter to compare the hours of sunshine which are automatically registered at the Kew Observatory with the bright sunshine of the Riviera. I am not aware that any similar observations of the amount of sunshine at Bournemouth, Hastings, Ventnor, &c., have been published; but it is evident that the Gulf Stream, to which they are so much indebted for their comparatively mild climate, must bring them a great quantity of mist and sea-fog. I freely admit that many persons, suffering from pulmonary disease, derive much benefit by a winter passed in one of the health resorts of England; but having been for many years a resident at different stations round the Mediterranean coast, on account of my own health, I should be extremely sorry to make the exchange. I am also constantly meeting with others who are suffering in the same manner, and I find that many of these who had previously given a trial to whatever places in England had been recommended to them as suitable to their various complaints, give, almost without exception, a decided preference to the sunny south. I do not wish to exaggerate the advantages of our general Riviera climate by pretending, as has been done formerly, especially by foreign physicians, that our winter months are made up of an uninterrupted succession of mild spring days, and when a rainy or cold windy day does occur, pronounce it quite exceptional; for, according to my experience, which has been tolerably extensive, and what I have been able to gather from that of others who have visited other parts of the globe, no such climate is anywhere to be found. But I am wandering from my subject: which is to state the advantages which Alassio enjoys, and my reasons for recommending it. I must premise that my acquaintance with the place is not of long standing, for I visited it for the first time during the last few weeks in company of an artist friend. I was on the search for a new residence, as my lease at Cannes had nearly

run out, and being charmed with the luxuriant vegetation, the splendid condition of the lemon trees in particular, I looked out for a house, and finding one suitable in size for my family, I engaged it. An habitué of the Riviera will readily understand my process of reasoning, for there is no better minimum thermometer than a lemon tree, as a diminution of temperature which would hardly affect even an orange tree would spoil all hopes of a crop of lemons, and if the thermometer falls only a few degrees below the freezing point the lemon tree itself perishes. My attention was also attracted by the caroubiers, or locust bean trees, which the tourist coming eastward from Nice first meets at Beaulieu; thence they abound in the warm rocky slopes about Monaco and Mentone; after passing the latter place they become more scarce, and at Bordighera and San Remo we see here and there a single tree in a garden. At Alassio they are very abundant: in fact I found at Alassio the principal plants which Dr. Bennett has so elegantly described in his work on Mentone, and came to the conclusion that the climate of the two places must be very similar. I should strongly recommend Dr. Bennett's book to any one wishing to have a good idea of the climate of the Riviera in general, as well as of his favorite locale Mentone. Before leaving the town I found at the hotel a pamphlet on the climate of the place, by Dr. Schneer, a resident medical practitioner, and lost no time in making his acquaintance. I was rewarded for my visit, finding him very pleasant and well informed. He formerly suffered severely from pulmonary mischief, and had tried other Riviera health stations ineffectually, but has completely regained his health at Alassio. To his pamphlet I am indebted for the valuable thermometric observations which, by his courtesy, I have been permitted to annex in a subsequent page. I hope to be able to supplement them in future by my own.

I will now give a brief description of the locality; and I think I can readily show why Alassio is so favoured in climate. In approaching it by the railway from the west the train stops at Pigna d'Andora, where we observe considerable ver-

dure and a river of some size. After passing through this station the train enters a long tunnel: emerging from this we find ourselves in a large semicircle of hills, which I estimate by eye at from 1500 to 2000 feet high. The extremities of this semicircle form the two projecting headlands; to the west Capo delle Mele, to the east Capo Santa Croce. They include between them the bay of Porto Salvo, the name indicating safe anchorage for ships. These hills recede from a mile and a half to two miles from the sea and form the watershed of all the land within the limits of the bay. But within their semicircle there are many picturesque elevations clothed with olive trees, and caroubiers which effectually keep off the cold northerly winds. The train stops first at the little station of Laigueglia, and secondly at Alassio, shortly after leaving which place it passes through a second tunnel under the rugged mass going to form the Capo Santa Croce on its way to the next station, Albenga. Here we meet with a large river, which waters the fertile plain and enables the cultivators of Albenga to supply all the neighbouring country with vegetable produce, and also gives fine pasture for cattle. To point out the significance of these facts I borrow the following quotation from Dr. Bennett. "The various towns which skirt the coast are all naturally placed at the mouths of the rivers which form their ports, and the rivers of course empty themselves from valleys which break the mountain line. These valleys being always directed north and south, or thereabouts, the towns are all placed in the coldest situations on the coast at the entrance of breaks in the mountain, down which the cold winds blow. A glance at the vegetation shows this; the orange trees retreat and olives and pines take their place. Here and there, as the road winds along the coast, sheltered nooks and romantic little bays are seen at one's feet, where the orange and the lemon, the cactus and the pepper plant, seem to thrive luxuriantly, finding the same warmth and shelter as at Mentone." I cannot help thinking that Alassio was one of the places to which Dr. Bennett alluded, and hope my readers will allow that I have made out a good *prima facie* case in its favour. It is per-

fectly true that "These towns will have to be raised to a much higher civilization level before they can be adopted as winter residences by invalids. I am persuaded however that in the course of time their day will come." I will now examine Alassio from this point of view. It is very easy of access, being 57 miles west of Genoa, at a seven hours' railway journey from Turin, which again is at the distance of twenty-two hours from Paris. It is thus reached more easily than Mentone, Bordighera, and San Remo. As to accommodation for invalids, there is an hotel at the west end of the town, the Hotel de Rome. I counted in the visitors' book the names of some sixty English visitors during the last season, and many of them had inserted a little note recording the general comfort and good management of the house. I can confirm their favorable impressions by my own experience and that of my friends. There is another, the "Hotel de Londres," of which Dr. Schmeer speaks favorably: but I do not know even its situation, and have therefore no personal experience to offer. But the evidence of rise in "civilization level" mainly rests on the new grand hotel built by the proprietor of the "Hotel des Quatre Nations" at Genoa, a house well known to tourists as extremely comfortable and well managed. The new hotel will contain seventy bedrooms, thirty of them to the south, and many arrangements for the comfort of those who may frequent the house, including baths of all descriptions. That the landlord is a man of liberal views I gather from the fact that he recently travelled to Cannes to put himself into communication with the Bishop of Gibraltar, our diocesan, requesting him to recommend an English clergyman to reside in the house. He also proposes to set apart a large room for an Anglican service. The hotel is to be opened next month, in preparation for the bathing season—for Alassio is much frequented by high class Italian families during July and August, the bay of Porto Salvo being almost the only one in the Riviera which has fine sands, most of the places round the coast having only a rough shingly beach, very uncomfortable to walk on. For English visitors the temperature of

the sea is sufficiently high to allow them to bathe regularly. I have known instances in which this has been done at Cannes. Of course I do not here allude to invalids. There are also a few villas for the accommodation of visitors. The English population at present consists of three families. Mr. Gibb has purchased a charming Italian villa, with an exquisite garden and a large tract of land, which he has laid out very judiciously but evidently at great cost. General McMurdo also has a house beautifully situated, and the garden is said to be very choice. My own family will be the third. But I am quite sure that English visitors will soon appreciate the advantages of Alassio as a winter resort, and houses suitable to their requirements will soon spring up. I do not know any shop at which the thousand and one wants of English ladies and housekeepers can be satisfied, but Genoa is within a three hours' journey, and there is regular steam communication between Genoa and Liverpool, so that there can be no real difficulty in procuring English comforts and luxuries; and if there be a certain amount of roughness at present, it is no slight compensation that the unsophisticated shopkeepers will furnish articles of first necessity at a much lower rate than in the places already mentioned, which are more frequented by our countrymen. Dr. Schner's thermometric observations extend over a period of three years. They are taken at the hours, 8 A.M. 2 P.M. 10 P.M. The mean temperature of the winter months is as follows.

	October.	November.	December.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	Mean of the five colder months.
Mean Temperature } .	62.5°	53.3°	51.4°	48.5°	50°	56.3°	57.3°	62.5°	51.9°
Diff. between 8 A.M. & 2 P.M. } .	.	4.3°	4.5°	4.3°	4.4°	4.2°	.	.	4.3°
									Mean difference between 8 A.M. & 2 P.M.

These numbers agree very nearly with those calculated by taking the mean between the daily maxima and minima throughout the entire months as given in Dr. Bennett's book.

Dr. Schmeer also gives the following table of comparison of the mean temperature during the six colder months at Alassio, San Remo, Mentone, Nice, and Cannes.

		November.	December.	January.	February.	March.	April.
Alassio	(1)	53.3°	51.4°	48.5°	50°	56.2°	57.3°
San Remo	(2)	54.3°	50.8°	48.1°	52.6°	52.2°	56.9°
Mentone	(3)	54°	49.1°	48.7°	49.1°	52.9°	56.2°
Nice	(4)	54.7°	48.6°	46.6°	49.1°	52.2°	58.1°
Cannes	(5)	56.3°	49.8°	47.5°	49.6°	56.1°	63.1°

- (1) Dr. Schmeer's at the following hours, 8 A.M. 2 P.M. 10 P.M.
 (2) Dr. Daubeny's „ „ 9 P.M. NOON. 3 P.M. 9 P.M.
 (3) Dr. de Brea's (quoted by Dr. de Valcourt) 6 A.M. 2 P.M. 10 P.M.
 (4) Dr. Lippert's (hours of observation not stated).
 (5) Mr. Taylor's (quoted by Dr. de Valcourt) 8 A.M. 2 P.M. 8 P.M.

On this table of comparison I must make the following remarks. Supposing that the climates of the respective places were identical, there would be an apparent difference in the mean temperature owing to the variety of hours chosen for observation. Thus San Remo would stand highest, then would follow in order Cannes, Alassio, Mentone. I am by no means certain that the mean temperature of a day is the same as the arithmetical mean between the maximum and minimum of that day. It seems to me that in summer, as there would be more hours in which the temperature approximates the maximum, and in winter exactly the converse, the arithmetic mean would be too low in summer and too high in winter. Moreover all these thermometric observations are old, and formerly thermometers, whose accuracy had been tested by a standard instrument, were rare. I regret

that I am obliged to quote from the old edition of Dr. Bennett's book ; but the scantiness of my thermometric data does not much trouble me, as my opinion of the climate of Alassio was founded, as I have stated, on the luxuriant vegetation. It was from this that I inferred the suitability of the winter climate for invalids. After all, unless thermometers are perfectly accurate and placed with great care so as not to be exposed to the direct or reflected rays of the sun, there will evidently be a source of error. Dr. Schmeer assures me that his thermometer is a very good one, and that it was always carefully placed to the north of a building where no reflected heat could reach it. Some of his observations were made at General McMurdo's house, some at Mr. Gibbs', and the rest at his residence in the town. They ought therefore to indicate the real mean temperature of the place. If any of my readers should wish for more detailed information, I shall be happy to furnish them with it. After the beginning of July a letter addressed to me at Alassio, Riviera di Ponente près de Porto Maurizio, Italy, will be sure to reach me.

