

Memoir of Sir Benjamin Fonseca Outram, CB., M.D., F.R.S., F.G.S., Inspector of naval hospitals and of fleets.

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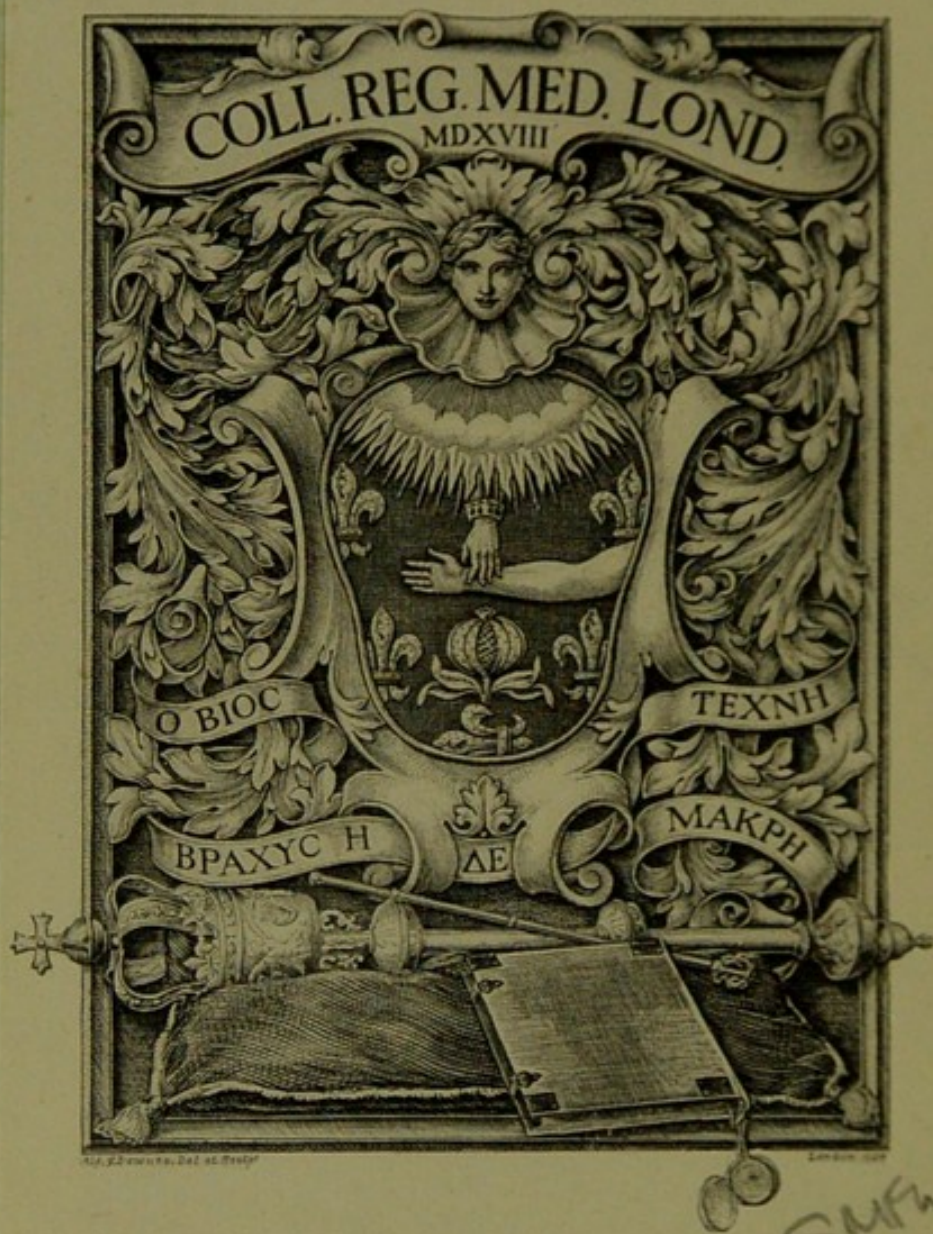
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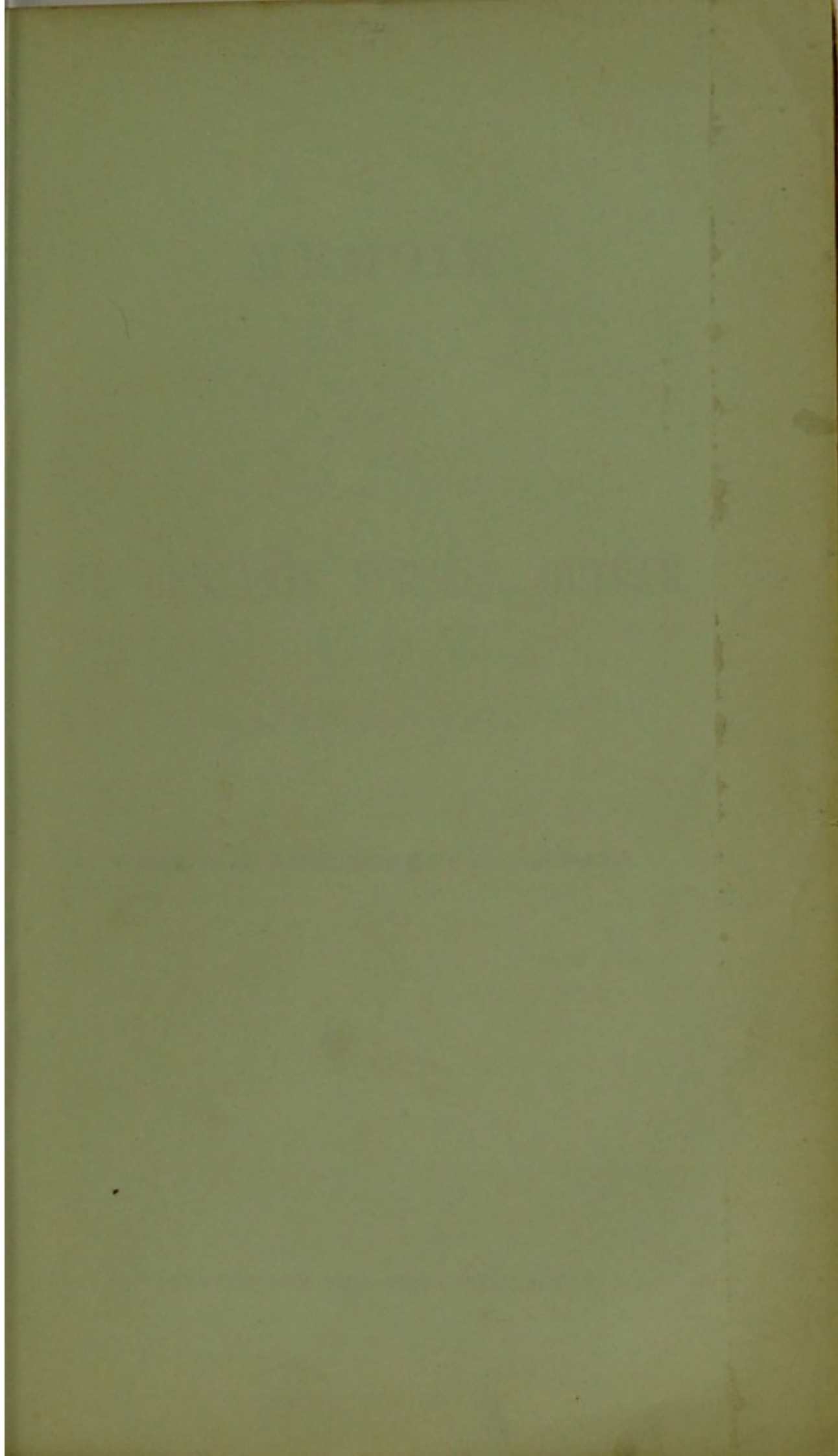
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THE HISTORY

OF THE

MEMOIR

OF

SIR BENJAMIN FONSECA OUTRAM,

CB., M.D., F.R.S., F.G.S.,

INSPECTOR OF NAVAL HOSPITALS AND OF FLEETS.

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MEMOIR
OF
SIR BENJAMIN FONSECA OUTRAM,
C.B., M.D., F.R.S., F.G.S.,
INSPECTOR OF NAVAL HOSPITALS AND OF FLEETS.

THIS Gentleman is believed to have been born at Kilham, near Bridlington in Yorkshire about 1774, although baptised as it appears, at Gravesend in Kent. His Father was known as Captain OUTRAM; and from his Uncle, also called Captain OUTRAM, was derived a moderate estate, situated at the former place. Early destined for the Medical profession, his noviciate commenced at Gravesend. Thence he removed to London; and at Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospitals spent some time. For his instructor at Gravesend, Mr. COLEMAN, he laid claim to some then recent improvement in the treatment of persons apparently drowned.

Induced by that love of adventure and change of scene common to youth, he became desirous of entering into the Medical Service of the Royal Navy. From this he was for a time deterred by the depressed state of the department. That of

the Army was in nearly a similar condition. Both complained heavily and justly of the neglect shown toward the members of a learned and eminently useful profession, which as it could not be dispensed with, seemed strangely injudicious in the authorities not to encourage. The defects of the Army were soon materially remedied. Those of the Navy being less before the public eye, were not so. Its members continued many years longer without the advantages of their brethren in the land service, and the results were that numbers of men of education and talent declined to render their services at sea, while others more adventurous at first, quitted it after a little experience, in disgust. Nor are the causes of complaint yet wholly removed.

Eventually overcoming this distaste in part, Mr. OUTRAM resolved to try it for a time. He therefore in 1794, became Assistant Surgeon (or as then termed, in both Services, Surgeon's Mate) in the *Iris* frigate with Captain, afterwards Sir WILLIAM, HARGOOD, and the celebrated Dr. GEORGE KELLIE, the distinguished Physician of Leith, as Surgeon. Here he continued nearly two years. His scenes of service in this ship were sufficiently varied; and the passion for change pretty well gratified in this first start, by cruising in the North Sea, Baltic, English Channel, Coast of Africa, Teneriffe, and Quebec. In 1796 he was promoted to the rank of Surgeon of the *Harpy* brig of war. Her sphere of service was chiefly on the coast of Holland and in the Channel.

From her he was removed in the following year (1797) to *La Nymphe* frigate, of 36 guns, Captain COOKE, in which some sharp service was experienced. One of the chief occasions was in company with the *St. Fiorenzo*, Sir H. B. NEALE, when they attacked and captured off Brest, in fine style and in sight of

the French Fleet, two frigates of that nation, *La Resistance* and *Constance*. For this action he received the War Medal and a Clasp. Soon afterwards the Mutiny supervened. Nothing could be more unhappy than this mode of asking for a redress of grievances by so important an arm of the country; but as it is rarely that large bodies of men organized for the public service resort to violence without cause, it is to be lamented that more consideration was not given in due time to their complaints, which were in great measure just. All the Officers of *La Nymphe* were sent ashore at Spithead, by the crew, excepting the Surgeon. His services were necessary to the wounded. There was likewise fever on board, communicated to the ship's company by French prisoners from the late action.

This threatening assault upon the prosperity and even existence of our kingdom overcome, Mr. OUTRAM was removed to another frigate, the *Boadicea*, Captain, afterwards the distinguished Sir RICHARD, KEATS. In her, during the years 1798, 1799, 1800, all that a frigate could do was done. Work—severe and uninterrupted work—with scarcely an interval, was his portion. Cruising was then no holiday employment. There was little or no dallying in harbour. No festive scenes, no hospitable tables could be enjoyed by the in-shore squadron off Brest. For the flowers bloomed, the fields looked green, and Nature shone forth in all her native loveliness in vain, for men never permitted for months—the seamen for years—to tread the carpet of mother earth, or enjoy the society of their friends. Recreation was out of the question. The ship and the “Black Rocks” were nearly inseparable. Eighteen and twenty weeks at a time without returning to port were thus occupied by Frigates—a sort of light cavalry in the Navy—while Line-of-battle Ships were often kept on such duty as long as they could well

keep the sea. Their business was constant blockade—vigilance night and day—keeping the enemy in sight and themselves clear of dangers—examining strange sail—now in pursuit of coasters and privateers—now clearing for action on the enemy showing symptoms of getting under weigh. One Western cruise only—then an object of desire with Captains of Frigates, from the prize money it was likely to afford—was given to the *Boadicea*, by Lord ST. VINCENT. A few small captures only were the fruits. The services of Captain KEATS had been deemed too valuable to the country to be permitted to be profitable to himself—a common result to active officers.

In 1800 Mr. OUTRAM removed with his Captain, into the *Superb* of 74 guns. Here, in company with the *Venerable* of similar force and *Cambrian* frigate, a fleet of Merchantmen was seen safely to its destination; followed by a cruise, in which a Spanish Corvette was captured, and several English Merchantmen that had fallen into the hands of the enemy, re-taken. The Mediterranean, Gibraltar, and Cadiz, now became the chief scene of their operations. Here Captain KEATS established his fame by one of the most brilliant, skilful, and successful attacks upon an overwhelmingly superior force, that occurred during the war. The details are too well known in Naval history to require more than a few lines of notice here. After Sir JAMES SAUMAREZ'S action off Algeiras, our Fleet severely crippled by a contest with ships and batteries, could only pursue with diminished and damaged force the combined French and Spanish Fleets, then retiring to Cadiz. The *Superb*, however, had joined him after the battle. She was unhurt, sailed well, was ably commanded, took the lead in chase through the Straits of Gibraltar, and coming up with two Spanish three deckers (*Real Carlos* and *Hermenegildo*), about eleven o'clock at night, commenced the

action. One of her opponents—for both were engaged—soon took fire. The *Superb* so skilfully withdrew from the reach of their guns, that in the confusion of night operations, the burning ship, mistaking her consort for the English man-of-war, bore down upon her, engaged her, and it is even said ran her purposely on board, until she also took fire. This has been supposed one of the most terrible scenes ever witnessed in a Naval action. Two first-rates were masses of flame in a stormy night—not a hope of escape—firing upon each other with all the desperate energy or enmity of despair—while the shadows of men were distinguished flitting about in the flames, like tenants of the infernal regions, until about midnight, when both blew up, consigning nearly 2400 souls to eternity! The *Superb* had humanely ceased to fire on these melancholy objects, but made sail ahead,—assailed the next enemy, in succession, the *San Antonio*, a Spanish 74, under French colours, and finished a most eventful night by her capture. The Surgeon of the victor ship was not without other than professional merit on this occasion. During the engagement a cartridge exploded, followed by that of two or three others, near the magazine door. Mr. OUTRAM happened to be near the spot, instantly ordered the door to be closed, took such other steps as were deemed necessary at the moment, and prevented at least the probability of further mischief. The late Rear Admiral SAMUEL JACKSON, then first Lieutenant of the *Superb*, bore testimony to his presence of mind in this emergency. The action added another clasp to his medal.

The peace threw him, with many others, into private life. On the recurrence of hostilities, in 1803, a summons to service made him Surgeon of the *Matilda*, Hospital Ship, at Woolwich. But this line of employment being more inactive than he

wished, application was made for a sea-going vessel, and an appointment came for the *Euryalus* frigate, Honourable Captain, afterwards Sir HENRY, BLACKWOOD. Her scenes of service were the coast of Ireland, English Channel, and at Boulogne, against the Flotilla. In the following year he became Surgeon of the *Royal Charlotte* Yacht, Captain TOWRY, in attendance upon his Majesty GEORGE III., at Weymouth, where he likewise continued during the succeeding year. In 1809 he received a similar appointment to the *Royal Sovereign* Yacht, Sir H. B. NEALE, to remain in waiting on the Princess AMELIA and Royal Family. He attended in 1814, LOUIS XVIII. and Suite, from Dover to Calais, and at the latter place had the honour of receiving acknowledgments from his Majesty for attentions to the Duchess D'ANGOULEME. Similar duties were performed in the following year to the Imperial and Royal personages voyaging to and from Dover and Boulogne. Amid the changes introduced into the service in 1841, the Medical Department, which, in advantages had been permitted to lag so long in the rear of the same body in the Army, received a portion—and only a portion—of its claims; and Dr. OUTRAM became an Inspector of Hospitals on the retired list. In 1850 he was Knighted, and became Companion of the Bath.

During intervals of service he had turned his attention to private practice, anticipating that at some, perhaps inconvenient, moment, the advent of peace might throw him “high and dry” upon the shore. In 1809 he graduated at Edinburgh; in the following year became a member of the College of Physicians in London, started in Hanover Square, and was soon nominated Physician to a Dispensary in Welbeck Street. In this new sphere he eventually obtained a very respectable, if not extensive practice; and it is creditable to the service that in

many of the first towns in the Kingdom, Naval Medical Officers have been found among the most successful practitioners. In 1811 he married the Widow of Captain CORNE, of the Royal Navy; and added to his fortune as well as his happiness.

As he advanced in life, the ties and toils of Medical practice were gradually relinquished. He had no family; his circumstances were independent, indeed affluent; and with something of the spirit that influenced him at first in tracing scenes of novelty in foreign countries, he sought amusement in travelling at home and abroad. Several years were thus spent on the Continent, with but short and occasional visits to England. His medical knowledge, it appears, made him on several occasions a desirable acquaintance. Chance threw him in the way of some of our countrymen suffering from illness, who unable to procure such aid as enjoyed their confidence, found in Dr. OUTRAM a competent and disinterested adviser. Among others of whom we have heard, was the late General Sir JAMES KEMP. Taken ill with very alarming symptoms at a Hotel in Italy, this useful medical countryman was at hand, who adopting a prompt and vigorous method of treatment, happily succeeded in restoring him to health. The patient never forgot the obligation. Their intimacy continued through life; and the General at his death left him a legacy, which the legatee—we chanced to be present on the occasion—declared should be devoted to charitable purposes. His contributions to public appeals of this description were frequent and liberal. Nor were those of a more private nature neglected. Influenced no doubt by his name in the newspapers on such occasions, applications for assistance came from many persons of whom he had no personal knowledge—more than one from officers, and families of officers of name and rank in the service, who possessed more

reputation than wealth—and they seldom applied in vain. His bequests likewise evinced a more than commonly liberal spirit. Nearly all his friends received legacies; and among his domestics a sum in amount quite princely was distributed—no less than £4000 being divided among them!

In 1852, after a union of forty years, he lost his Lady, somewhat suddenly, at Clifton, where we saw them, full of spirits and vigour, only a week or two before. Feeling acutely in advanced life the loss of that attention and kindness which female affection can alone bestow, he married again in 1855, SALLY, daughter of JOSEPH OUTRAM, Esq., and a near relative of Sir JAMES OUTRAM, whose services in India are so highly and justly valued. Unfortunately, when proceeding to Glasgow to attend the British Association for the advancement of science, he was seized with symptoms of cholera, which though eventually subdued, left behind a degree of debility that speedily manifested itself in other forms. A healthy and vigorous old age, the fruits of temperance and medical regimen, had not prepared him for the change. His throat became affected; for which he proceeded to try the air of Brighton. Here, amid fluctuations for the better, he gradually sunk, and expired on the 16th of February 1856, aged 82, whence he was removed to Clifton for interment with his first wife.

He printed no professional work; but on all occasions evinced shrewd observation and clear views in the memoranda of symptoms and treatment of such occasional cases as were communicated to medical friends. His Official Medical Journals, kept while on service afloat from 1796, display care and intelligence, and drew commendation from the higher authorities. So late as the recent war, it appears his interest in former

hostile scenes and details had not declined. For one of the papers drawn forth from him by the occasion, was a full and complete arrangement of the persons and appliances necessary, in his view, to thorough efficiency in the cockpit of a line-of-battle ship during an action. To general literature he made no pretension. A few miscellaneous papers display his usual good sense and graphic powers of description. One of these is an account of the battle in the Straits of Gibraltar.^o In 1815 he materially enlarged by various additions, and edited, an amusing sketch of the French Capital, written chiefly by his friend Dr. BROMET, of one of the Regiments of Guards, and which was published for his benefit.

^o This deeply interesting narrative was originally published in the *Times* as a refutation of some of the statements in M. THIERS' History. It was subsequently introduced into HUGHES' History of England, and is as follows:—

"SIR,—As the modern history of France by the talented M. Thiers is now in every reader's hands, I feel it a sacred duty to the memory of the gallant Lord de Saumarez, and of my brave old shipmates, to give an unqualified contradiction to a misrepresentation which casts a deep shade upon one of the brightest pages of our Naval annals—an achievement which, in the House of Peers, both Earl St. Vincent and Lord Nelson concurred in pronouncing to have surpassed anything they had ever seen or heard of.

"In describing the action in the Straits of the Mediterranean on the eventful night of the 12th of July, 1801, M. Thiers asserts that the Spanish first-rates, *Carlos* and *Hermenegildo*, were destroyed by red-hot shot fired from the *Superb*, and heated by furnaces sent on board for the purpose. Now, Sir, at that glorious period I had the good fortune to be the Surgeon of the said noble ship, and being one of the very few survivors of her officers and crew, I solemnly pledge my word of honour

that there were no means of heating balls in any of our men-of-war; that every spark of fire was put out early in the day; and that the late distinguished Sir Richard Keats, our Captain, a thorough-bred officer and seaman, would have scorned to use any combustible missile, or any other mode of warfare than the fair old English way of fighting, with warm hearts and cold iron.

"I write, Sir, a tale of years long gone by; but as the question is again before the world, some of your numerous readers may be interested by my relating some particulars of the action, as well as the real cause of the tragical catastrophe so disastrous to our enemies.

"Her Majesty's ship *Superb* arrived at Gibraltar, from a cruise, in high health and discipline, a few days after the battle of Algesiras, when the *Hannibal* had been obliged to surrender, from having grounded under the enemy's batteries; and when our other disabled ships were towed back to the mole with great labour and difficulty from the wind failing them. Here, also, M. Thiers is in error. The *Pompey* indeed suffered severely, but never struck her colours, as he is pleased to assert. The exertions to refit the crippled vessels were, I believe, never equalled; but they were far from ready for service when, on Sunday afternoon, the 12th of July (six days only after this first action), the combined French and Spanish fleet, plainly in sight of our squadron, was perceived to be preparing to weigh anchor. Then all was bustle and animation; the whole garrison and population of Gibraltar were on the *qui vive*. The Rock was covered with anxious gazers. The force of the enemy more than doubled ours, being two of 112 guns, seven of 74 (not reckoning the *Hannibal*, which they failed to get out), and four frigates. We had only five of 74 guns, and one frigate, for the *Pompey* was obliged to remain in harbour. Nevertheless, our intrepid Admiral determined to attack them in the night, ordering Captain Keats to annoy their rear after dark, and adding that he would follow with the other ships as soon as possible. About sunset, after long manœuvring to weather Cabrita-point, the enemy bore up for Cadiz, and at half-past 8 o'clock the *Superb* made all sail in chase.

"At 11 P.M. I had reported everything ready in my department, and was walking the deck with the Captain, when we came up with a large ship upon our larboard bow, which proved to be the *Carlos*; and another, the *Hermenegildo*, was soon after seen a little ahead of her, both unaware of our stealthy approach, and probably too conscious of superiority to fear attack.

"This was a moment of intense interest; the wind blew strongly from the east (a black Levanter), it was nearly midnight, and dark as Erebus; our lanterns were concealed in match tubs, our other lights shaded, while those of the enemy flashed brightly from their port-holes and

cabin windows. Our decks were clear, our brave tars at their guns, cool and confident of success. The strictest silence prevailed, and not a sound was heard except the ripple of the waves as the gallant vessel made her way through the water.

"When nearly abreast of the *Carlos*, Captain Keats said, 'Now Doctor, below;' and before I could reach my quarters the most astounding broadside was poured into her, and repeated again and again before she returned a shot, being taken so wholly by surprise. At last she began firing on both sides, mistaking her consort for another enemy.

"The effect of our thunder was terrific; away went her fore-topmast, the sail fell over her bow guns, their flash caught the canvas, and the rigging being newly tarred, the fire flew to the mast-head with the rapidity of lightning, when in a moment she was on fire fore and aft.

"All was now horror and dismay on her deck; the *Hermenegildo* was close to her; in utter confusion they fell aboard each other; their yards locked inseparably; and in another moment the second formidable vessel was also in a blaze! Their sad fate was now too evident; the *Superb*, therefore, ceased firing, and passed ahead to avoid the awful conflagration, for already some sparks had come into a port on her lower deck, by which two cartridges exploded, wounding Lieutenant Waller desperately, and several of our sailors more or less severely.

"According to my general orders on the first alarm, I called out for the magazine door to be shut, but when one vivid blue flash after another came down the cockpit hatchway, I thought our fate was sealed also; happily, however, the deck was wet, and the evil extended no further.

"From my pandemonium below I stole on deck for a moment's breath of air, and to catch a glance of the sublime but appalling spectacle; and the deep red glare illuming and spreading over the sea and sky, the impetuous roar of the flames, and the shrieks and agonising gestures of the despairing Spaniards can never be effaced from my memory.

"It seemed wonderful that the adverse squadron, still so superior to ours in strength, did not put about at any risk, and try to rescue the hapless crews of the burning ships; but, as they continued their course, it was obviously our duty to follow them.

"Accordingly, the *Superb* overtook and engaged *St. Antoine*, a French line-of-battle ship of equal force, which, after an honourable defence, surrendered, just as the Admiral, in the *Cæsar*, and Captain Hood, in the *Venerable*, came up. The latter being the fastest sailer, at daylight, near Cadiz, brought to action the gallant Troude in *Le Formidable*, but without any other result than a mutual severe mauling, the brave adversaries parting by consent, with both their ensigns flying.

"As the *Superb* had suffered damages in the engagement, we necessarily lay-to, not only to repair them, but to take possession of and

man the captured French ship; and while thus employed a large boat came alongside, with 2 officers and 39 only of the ghastly Spanish sailors—wet, nearly naked, panic-struck, and speechless, until refreshed with a cordial, and cheered by a kindly welcome.

“At noon next day we passed by the melancholy wreck of the Spanish ships, blown into fragments by the explosion of the magazines, the only relic of two “wooden worlds,” which the day before floated proudly on the ocean, peopled with 2400 men, all of whom perished, alas! except the comparative few we had the happiness to save.

“In the evening we arrived at Gibraltar with our prize in company, under the command of our first lieutenant, the late Rear Admiral S. Jackson, C.B., (than whom a braver fellow never stept on ship board,) and were welcomed by the garrison with the warmest enthusiasm.

“I fear this tough old yarn may be spun out too long for insertion in your valuable columns even at this comparatively dull season, and have the honour to subscribe myself, with great respect,

“SIR,

“Your very humble servant,

“B. F. OUTRAM, M.D., F.R.S.

“Inspector of Hospitals and Fleets.”

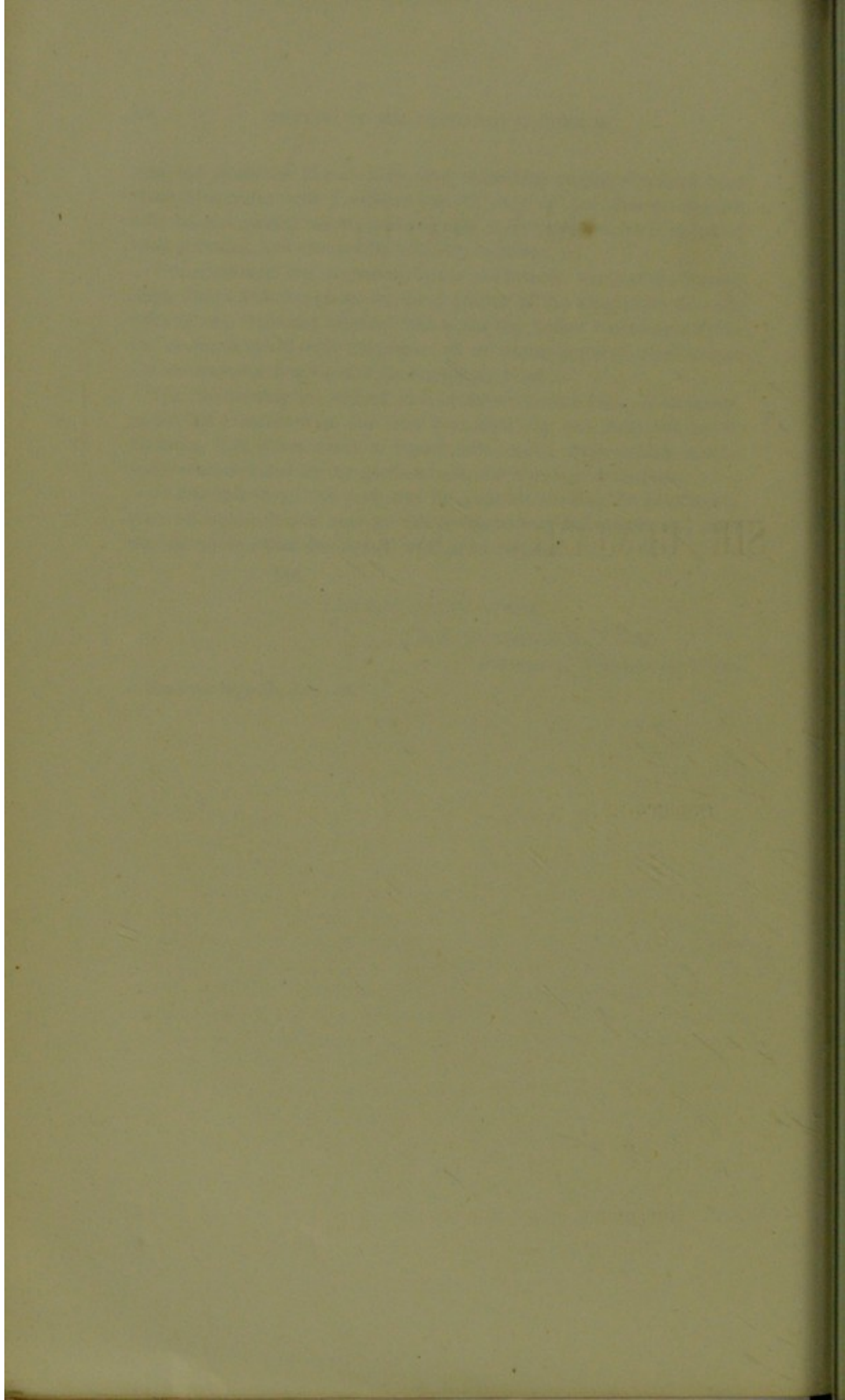
“Hanover Square, Jan. 30.”

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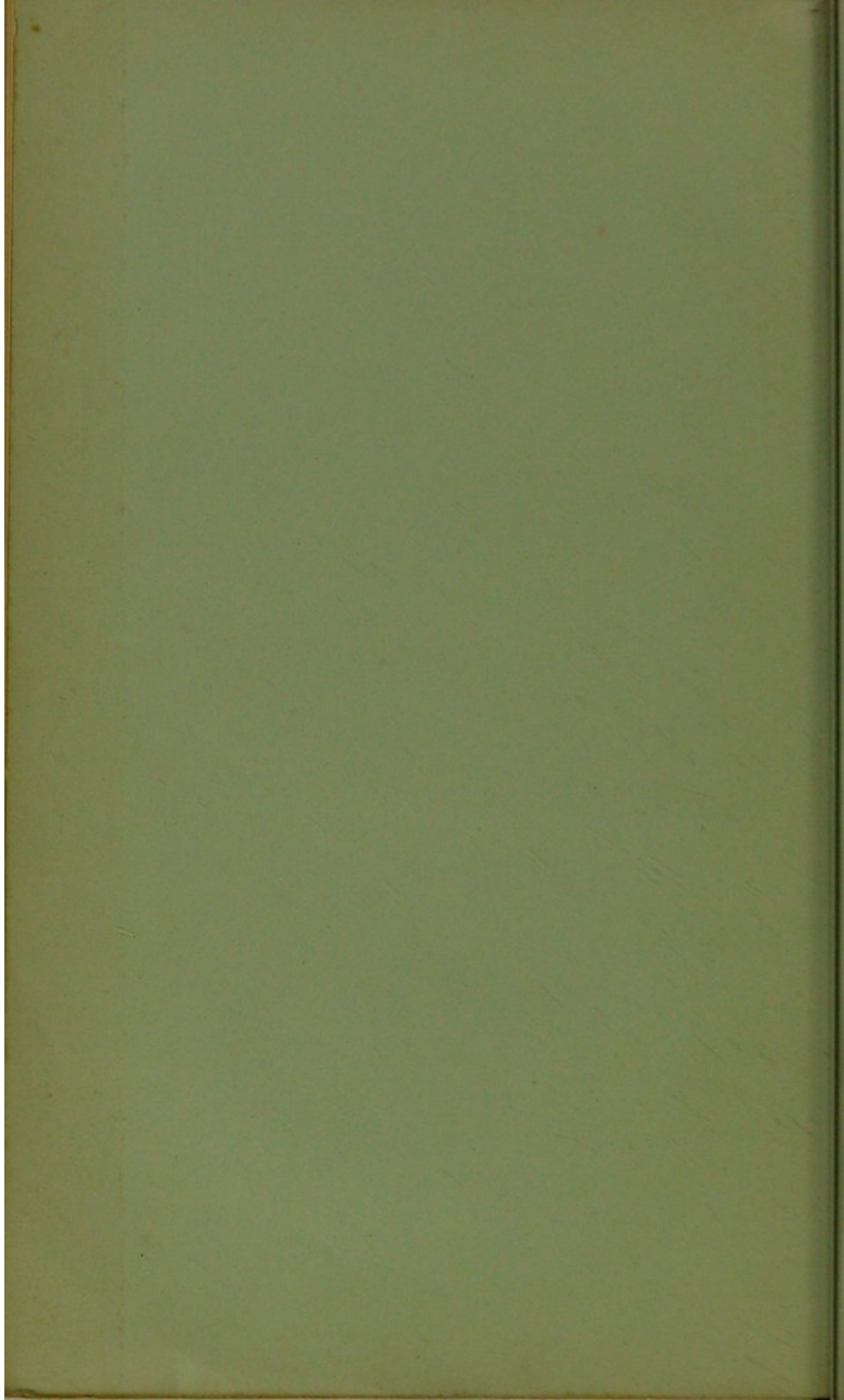
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