

In memoriam : Frank Baker (1841-1918) / by Fielding H. Garrison.

Contributors

Garrison, Fielding H. 1870-1935.

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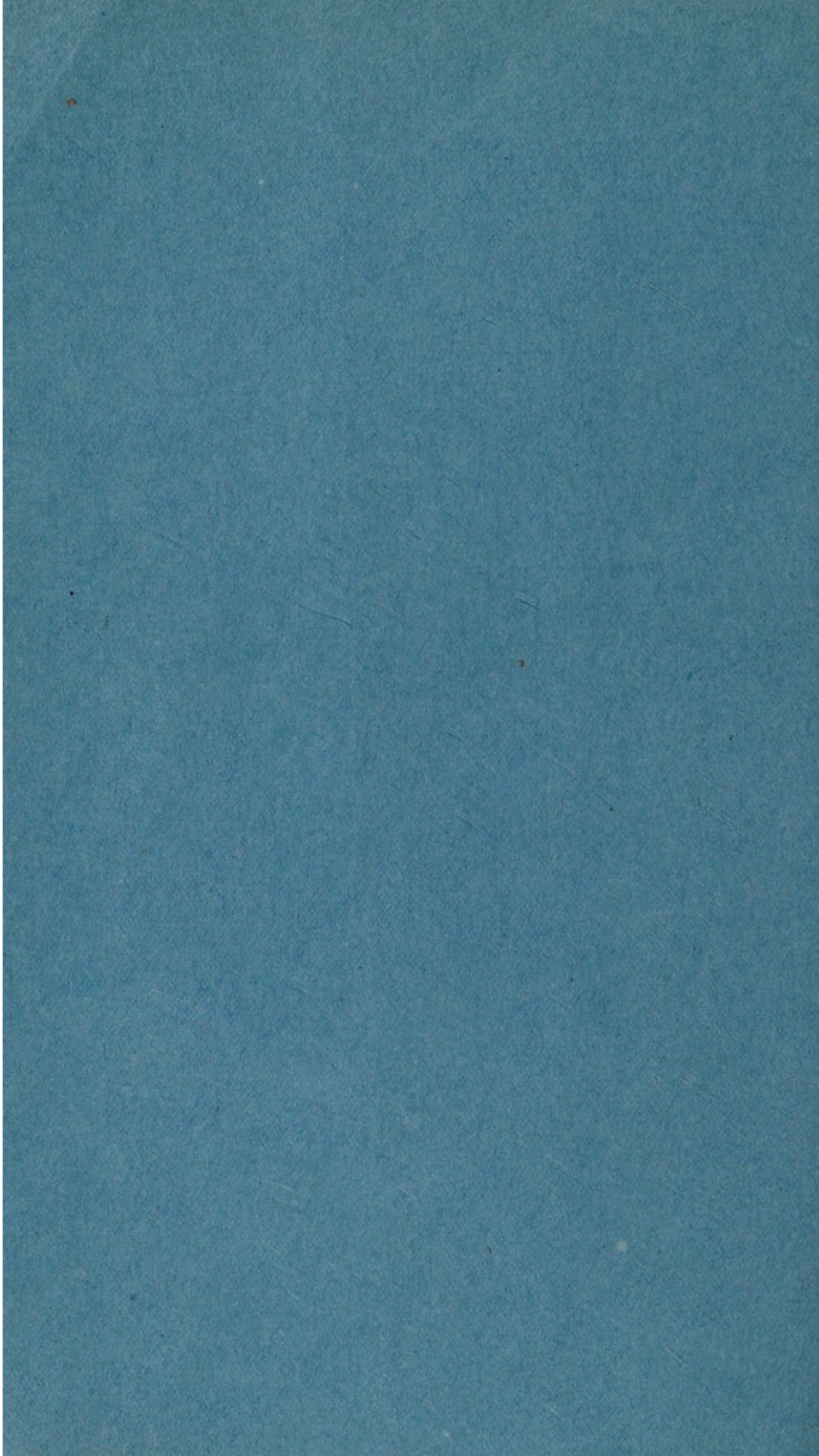
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IN MEMORIAM
DR. FRANK BAKER (1841-1918).

BY
FIELDING H. GARRISON, M. D.,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Reprinted from the
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Lieutenant Colonel, Medical Corps, U. S. Army, Surgeon General's
Office.

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Dr. Frank Baker, professor of anatomy in Georgetown University, Washington, D. C., died at his residence on September 30, 1918. Although well past seventy, Doctor Baker had remained in full possession of all his powers until the year 1916, when his health began to break and he was obliged to sever his official relation with the government. Symptoms of heart trouble began to develop, but his general health was vastly improved by a visit to the Pacific Coast shortly before his death.

Doctor Baker was born at Pulaski, N. Y., on August 22, 1841. His ancestors, who came from Gloucestershire, England, were New Englanders who fought in the Revolutionary War, and his father, Thomas C. Baker, was a well read man. His schooling was private and local. When the Civil War broke out, he at once enlisted in the Thirty-seventh New York Volunteers in 1861, serving until 1863, when he was transferred to Washington, where he later entered the government service and began the study of medicine. On September 13, 1873, he married Miss May E. Cole, of Sedgwick, Me., who survives him with six children. His son, Colonel Frank C. Baker, M. C., U. S. A., is now in France.

Doctor Baker took his M. D. degree at Columbian (now George Washington) University, and later received the degrees of A. M. (1888) and Ph. D. (1890) from Georgetown University. In 1883, he

became professor of anatomy in the Medical School of Georgetown University, occupying this chair continuously for thirty-five years (1883-1918). He became assistant superintendent of the United States Life Saving Service in 1889, and in 1890 was made superintendent of the National Zoological Park, D. C. (1890-1916). Doctor Baker was one of the founders of the Biological, Anthropological, and Medical History societies of Washington, was president of the Association of American Anatomists (1897), the Anthropological Society of Washington (1897-98), the Medical History Club of Washington (1915-16) and secretary of the Washington Academy of Sciences (1890-1911). He was editor of the *American Anthropologist* (1891-98), one of the collaborators of Billings's *National Medical Dictionary* (1890), supplied the definitions of anatomical and medical terms in Funk & Wagnalls's *Dictionary*, and contributed several monographs on regional anatomy to the *Reference Handbook of Medical Sciences*. His first contribution to medical literature comprised two papers on President Garfield's case (1881-82), in which he showed that the wound was caused by the second bullet and correctly diagnosed its course in a well accredited diagram made two days after the event. This was followed by a number of papers on anatomy and anthropology, notably *The Rational Method of Teaching Anatomy* (1884), *What Is Anatomy?* (1887), *Some Unusual Muscular Anomalies* (1887), *Anthropological Notes on the Human Hand* (1888), *Ascent of Man* (1890), *Nomenclature of Nerve Cells* (1896), and *Primitive Man* (1898). His monograph on the *History of Anatomy* published in *Stedman's Handbook* compares favorably with the well known article of Sir William Turner (*Encyclopædia Britannica*), which has remained the ranking contribution in English. As one of the founders of the Medical History Club of Washington, Doctor Baker was a frequent contributor to its meetings. To these meetings, his wide

knowledge and his kindly presence lent a peculiar charm, and even before his presidency (1915-16), he was asked to contribute a paper every year. He attended nearly every meeting and usually made highly original comments in the discussion. Since the death of the late Dr. Robert Fletcher, he was probably the most erudite physician in Washington. Among his contributions to medical history were *The Two Sylviuses* (1900) and *The Relation of Vesalius to Anatomical Illustration* (1915), both read before the Johns Hopkins Medical Society, a paper on the old Paris Medical Faculty (1913), the above mentioned *History of Anatomy* (1913); two papers on Scarpa (1915); and the *History of Body Snatching* (1916), still unpublished. Doctor Baker left a valuable collection of books on anatomy, all having the well known signs of constant use and study. These have been donated by his widow to the Library of the Surgeon General's Office and the Medical Library of McGill University, Montreal.

Doctor Baker was a man of goodly height and presence. His fine head was remarkably like that of some of the great anatomists of the past, notably Quain and Sir Richard Owen. He had a lively sense of humor and his pleasant, affable, quizzical ways endeared him to all. He was a man of character, who maintained his views of things, sometimes in opposition to his fellows, but he was everywhere beloved and had no enemies. As a teacher of anatomy, he early saw that didactic lecturing has little value, and that the proper place for instruction is the dissecting room. His lectures, at Georgetown, therefore, were humanistic, historical, morphological, of ample scope, set off by demonstrations on the cadaver, which he performed himself. Latterly, he inclined more and more to Mall's views of inductive, as opposed to didactic, teaching, while his lectures acquired more of the historic flavor, through a splendid set of lantern slides, selected from the older illustrated

books with rare discrimination. These slides, which he used with skillful effect at the Vesalian quadricentennial meetings in the Army Medical School (Washington) and the Johns Hopkins Hospital, were not even regarded by him as his exclusive property but were freely and generously lent to others. They were remarkably effective in his lectures to art schools, covering Choulant's material and going beyond it. In the classroom, Doctor Baker had few equals. He was always a friend of young men, sometimes even fighting their battles in his impetuous way. As the rector of Georgetown University said at his funeral, each of his pupils carried away with him something of the scholar and gentleman who taught them. In the medical societies and history clubs, the effect of his pleasant old fashioned manner was the same; his comments on papers read were always of quaint, original quality.

Doctor Baker took the present war very seriously to heart. Familiar as he was with the German masters of his subject, and imbued with the earlier Germanic ideals of the romantic period, the defection of Germany from the vanguard of civilization affected him gravely. In his early manhood, he became intimate with Walt Whitman and John Burroughs—all three in fact having been in the government service together, and remaining lifelong friends. As a friend and familiar of our greatest poet, his views of the infinite variety and impartiality of nature and of the solidarity of human interests were those of all "liberators of the human spirit," of whom Walt Whitman was assuredly one. When the present war broke out, Baker saw, and even stated, that the Prussian idea is that of a narrow, selfish clansmanship, something very different from the multiform, humanistic Germany of the past, and that such arrogant clansmanship, with its monstrous, maladroit ambition to reduce all nature to a dreary monotone and all mankind to a mechanical pattern, in-

variably leads to factional, sectional, racial, and national hatreds, and so is the true breeder and perpetuator of wars—

"The children born of thee are sword and fire,
Red ruin and the breaking up of laws."

Few realize how many have broken their spirits over this war. In 1861, Doctor Baker was one of those who responded to the first call. The service flag of his family now numbers no less than five stars; he would have been an honor to any country, and dying as he did of heart failure, it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that, as with Brunton, Gaskell, Minot, and so many others, he himself was a martyr to the present cause. Those of us who were his pupils and whom he honored with his friendship can only express our deep sympathy with his family and the sense of an irreparable loss.

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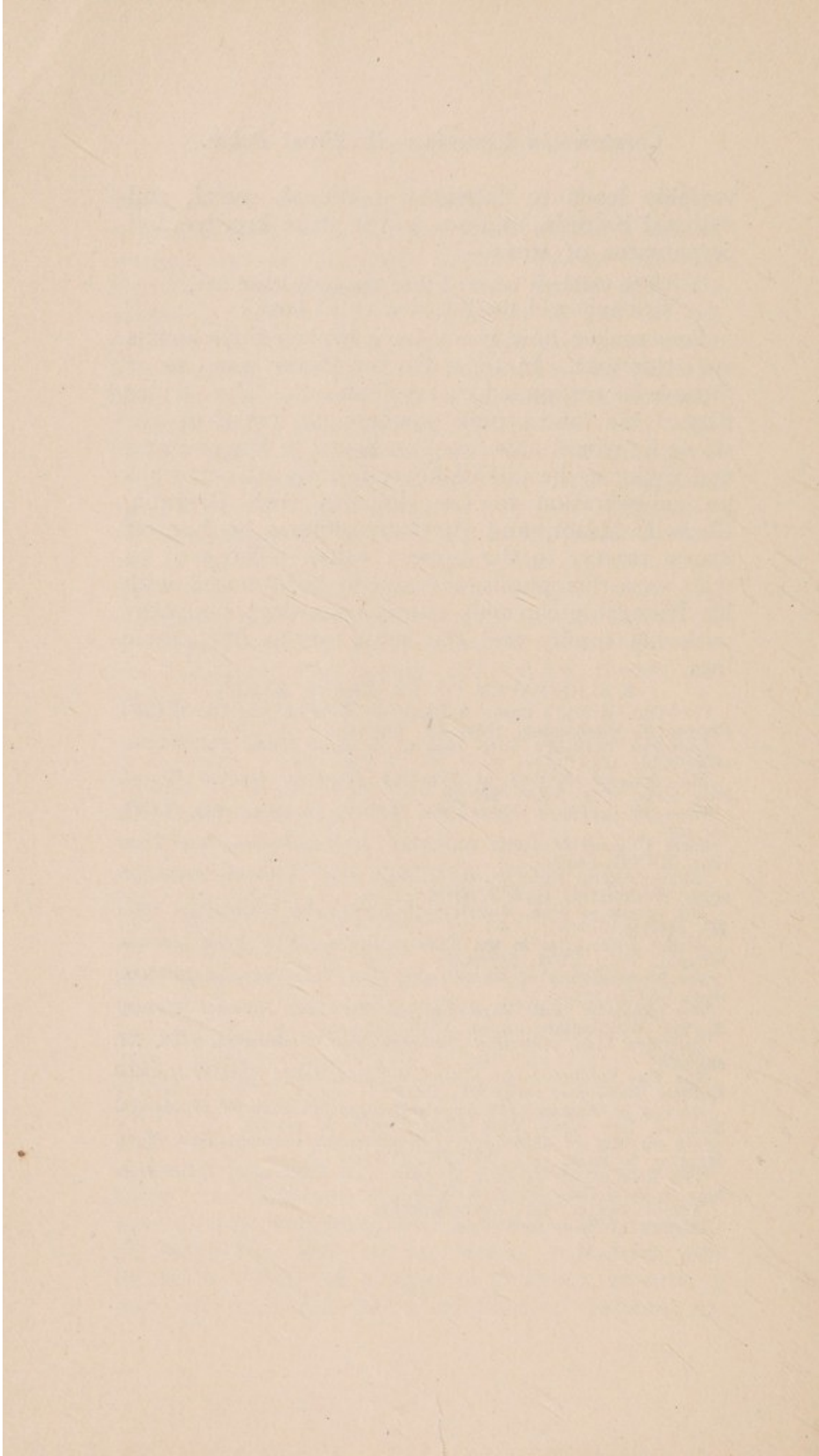
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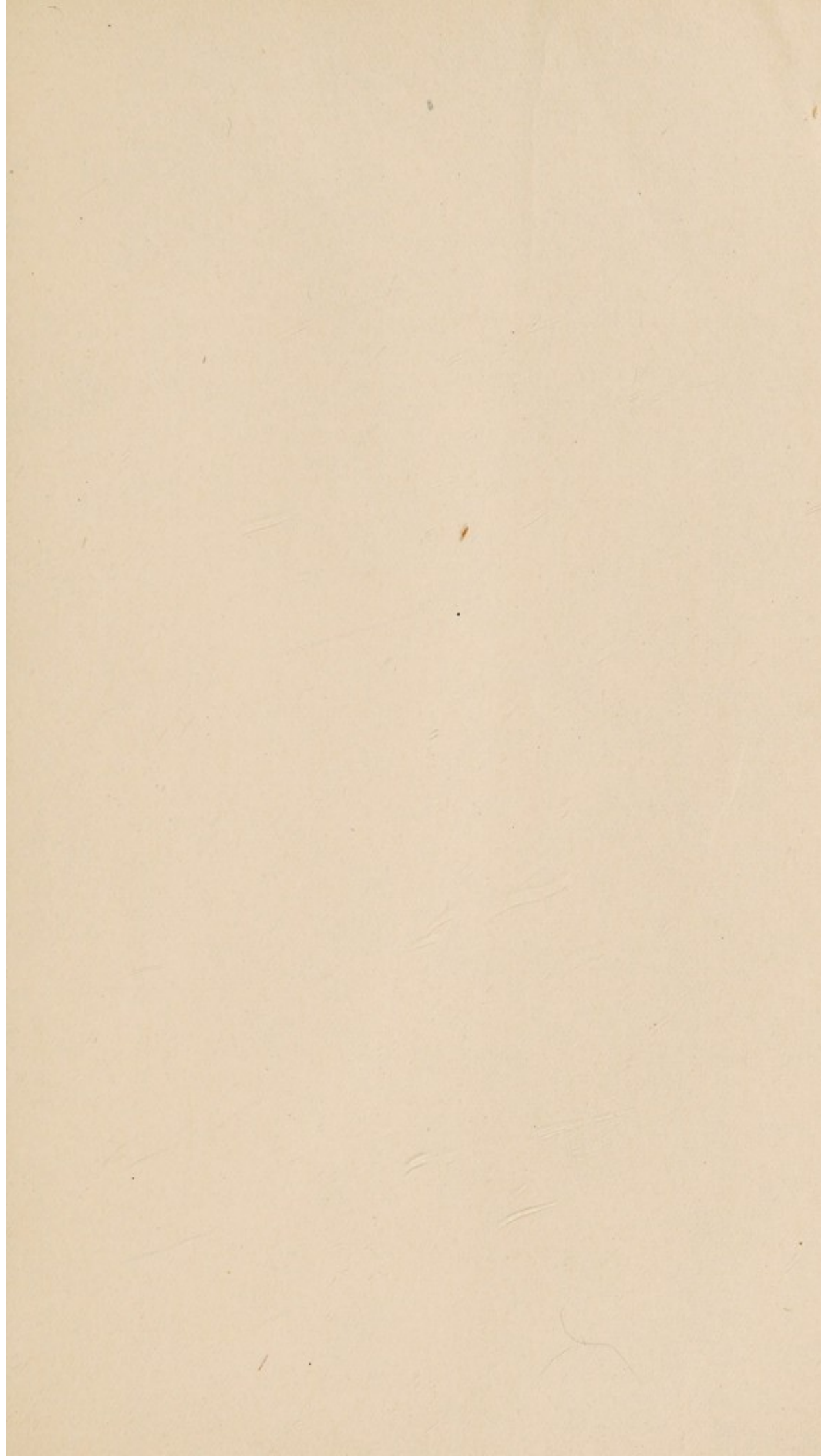
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