

**Occasional essays on the yellow fever, containing a number of remarkable relative facts, as well as some encouraging ideas, that those cities of America, which for more than ninety successive years, had been generally preserved from the dreadful evil, may by the divine blessing on wise and prudent measures, experience in future, a similar preservation from the dire calamities of a mortal pestilence. Addressed to those who have not forgotten what has happened, within a few years, among their friends and fellow citizens / By a Philadelphian.**

### **Contributors**

Philadelphian.

### **Publication/Creation**

Philadelphia : Printed by John Ormrod, no. 41, Chestnut-street, 1800.

### **Persistent URL**

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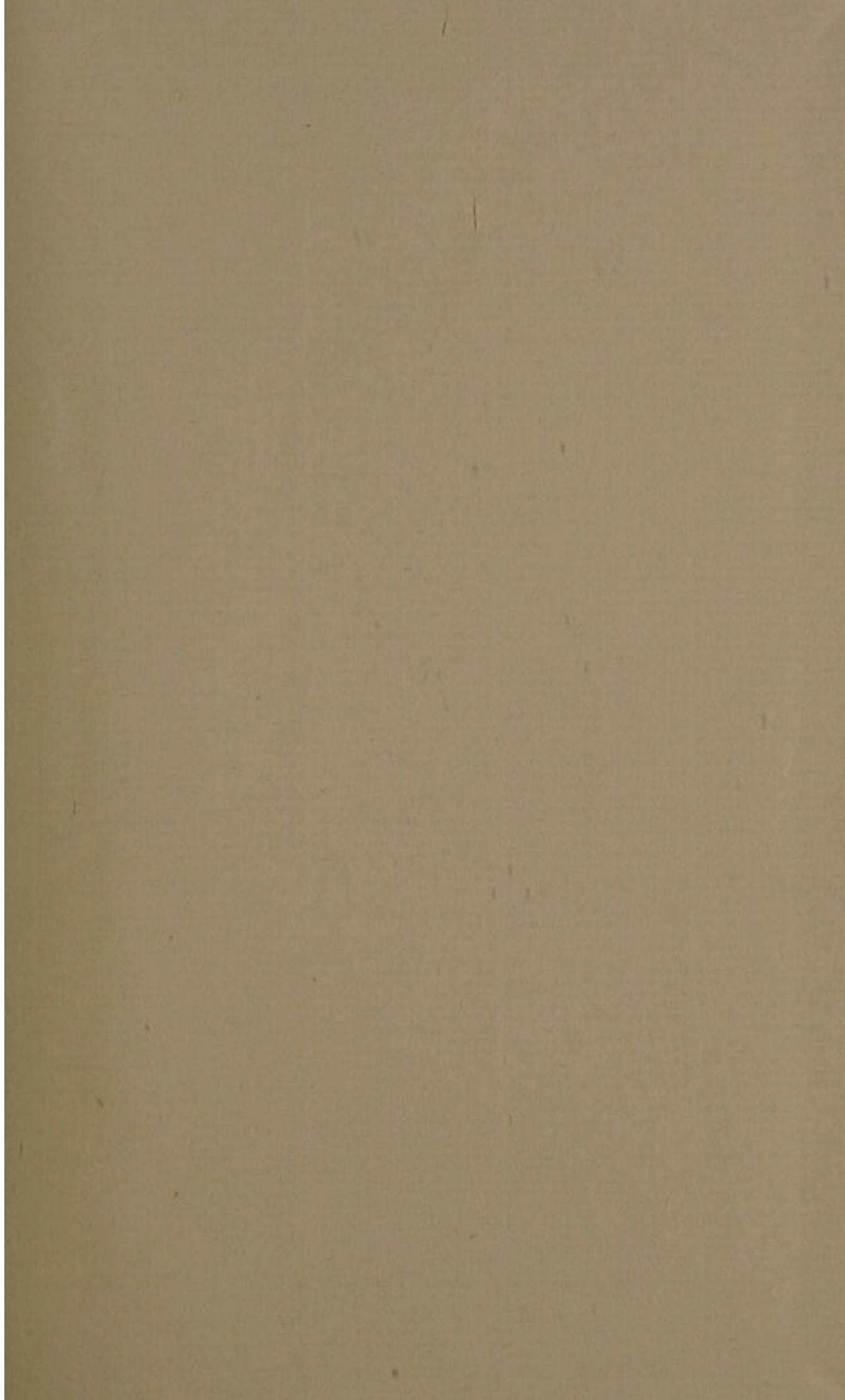
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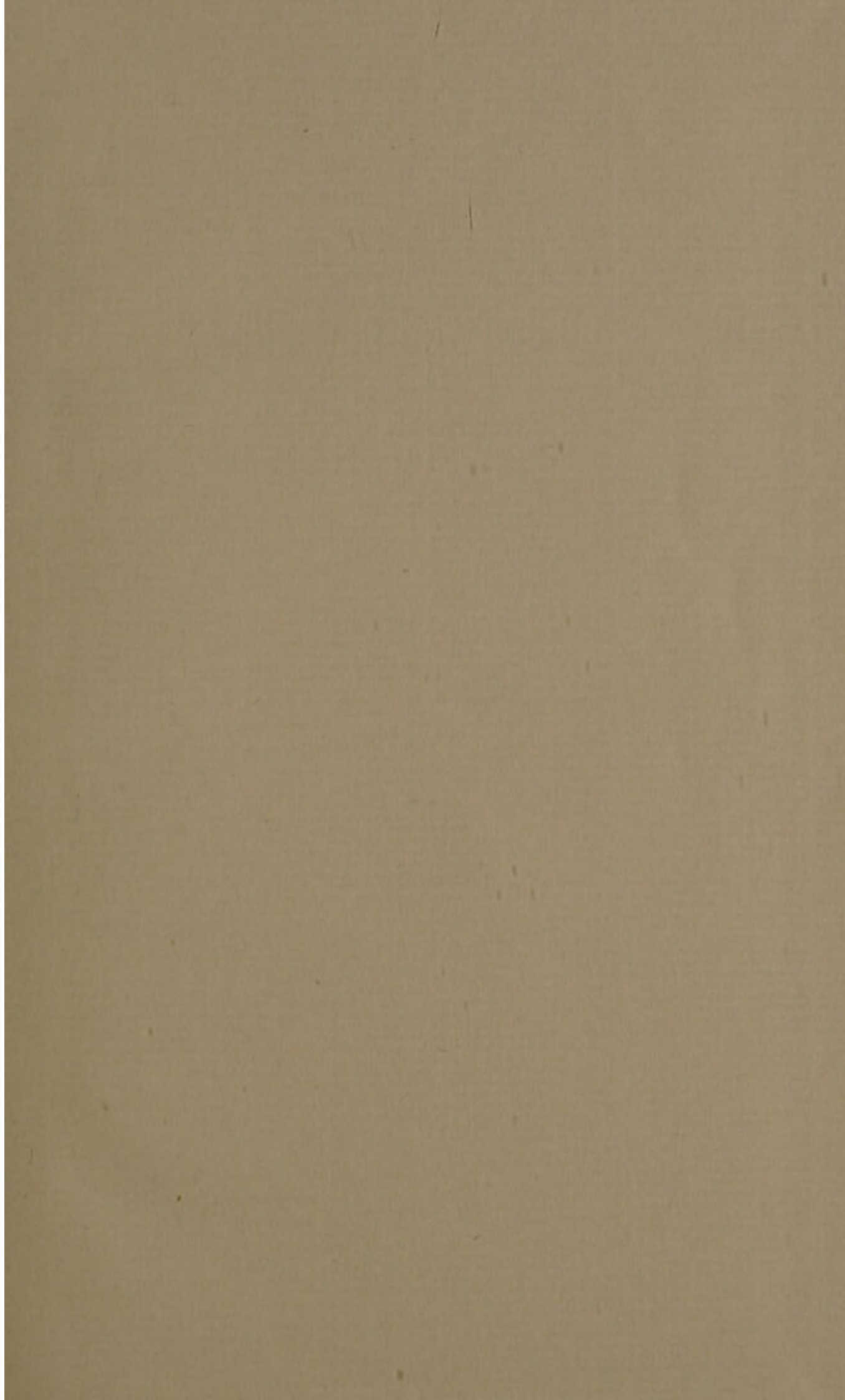
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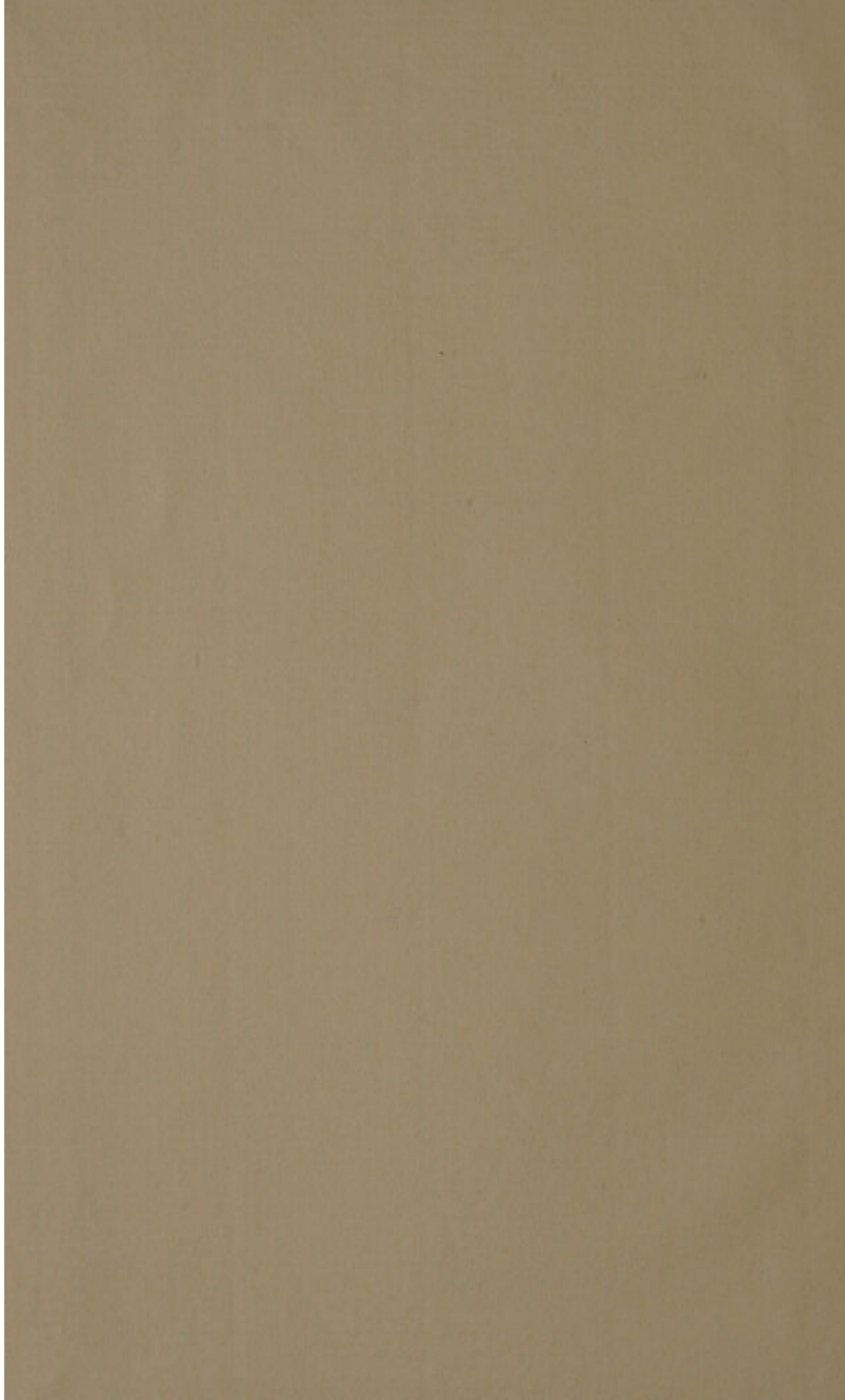
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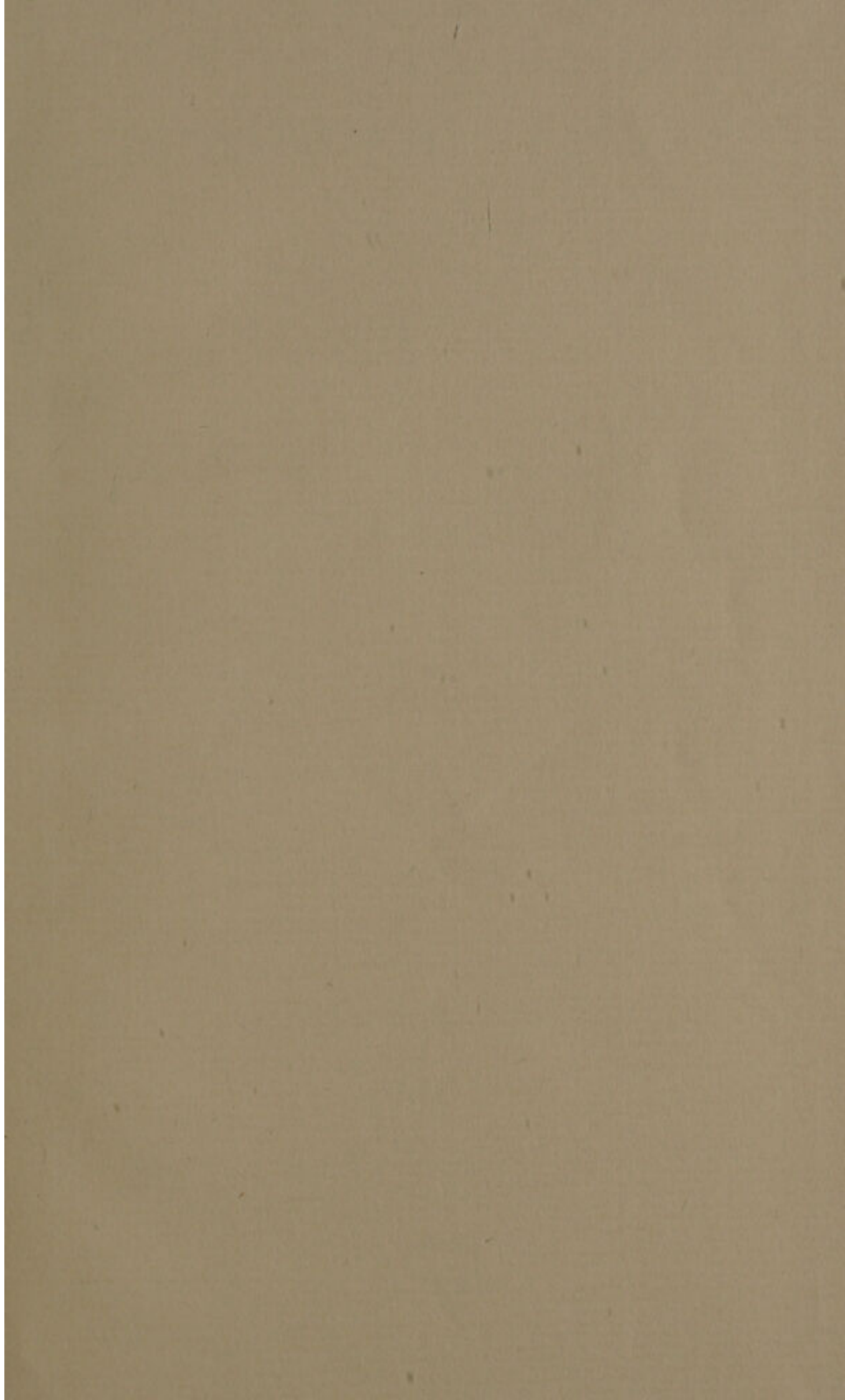
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PHILADELPHIA, December, 1799.

*AN historical account of a great mortality in the capital of England in the last Century, being truly affecting even to the present time, it is not to be wondered at, that what was certainly known to a resident in a large city in the Year 1793, should attract a more particular attention : ---Some of the circumstances relating to those events, as well as others of different years, have been publickly noticed at various periods ; but as in the course of time it has appeared more and more necessary to investigate the causes of our late calamities a succession of occasional Essays have been offered to a New-Jersey Printer, which as they have met a friendly reception, and the statement of facts with no contradiction, I have believed it right to have them re-published in a pamphlet, in this City ; being on a subject which*



*I conceive, is of very great importance, to the numerous Inhabitants of the principal Cities in my native Country.---As to any pecuniary motives of gain with respect to this publication, they are altogether out of the question on the part of the present writer, who freely offers all the profits, if any, to the Managers of the Pennsylvania Hospital, for the benefit of that noble Institution, having still in respectful remembrance, the honorable example, and charitable disposition of its first Founders, of every rank and denomination.*

*To investigate the truth on an important subject I believe may be of very interesting consequence, and I can truly say I have wished to do it in the following Essays in such a manner, as to give no just occasion of offence to a single member of the whole community.*

#### *A PHILADELPHIAN.*

*Note.....In case the neat profits which may possibly accrue from this publication, should amount to any thing worth attention, the writer expresses a wish, that they may be applied to*

*the purchase of shares of the Schuylkill permanent bridge, provided that work should be carried on in the manner publickly proposed, but as before agreed, those shares to be and remain, with all their produce, for the benefit of the Pennsylvania Hospital, without any reserve whatever.*

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person, or perhaps a beloved friend of the printers, who had made his exit; and among the deaths I soon read the respected name of "SEPTIMUS CLAYPOOLE, one of the Proprietors of the *American Daily Advertiser*." This to me was not like the transient tidings of a newspaper; it fixed upon my mind, and occurred to me that the youth was dear to his relations and friends; and as one of the Editors of a conspicuous paper, he is to be regretted as a public loss. That printer is the last of those, of whom I had any personal knowledge, who have fallen victims to the mortal calamity in the present year. The number of that class in particular, has been very great, and even greater in proportion than the number of physicians of the last year, concerning whom there was published a short memorial, dated in the month of October, 1797, in the city of Philadelphia. These things have been, and they cannot now be recalled; but as I have taken notice of another observation in the letter alluded to, I think there will be no impropriety



in continuing a few remarks. The writer of that letter, after mentioning some things relating to the business of printers, concludes with the following sentiment. "As nothing but flight can save, if the fever appears at another season, I shall consider it as a bounden duty to avoid it." Hard alternative! Grievous indeed will it be, if thousands and tens of thousands of the inhabitants of our great cities should be obliged to fly from them so frequently as has lately happened. For my part, I wish for better things, and hope my countrymen will consider the case as it really is. The people of Philadelphia and Kensington do know, that the disorder there has been imported in the years 1793, 1797, and 1798, having had the most undeniable proofs of this truth, as well as of the melancholy and distressing consequences.

To try to remove the cause then, appears to be the important object, and the proper and reasonable means of such removal I wish to



see promoted, in order that, if it be the will of Providence, the effects may cease ; and for this purpose, I am willing, in a candid and modest manner, to give some of my sentiments, having no objection to hear the sentiments of others, on a subject of so much consequence.

If then it should be thought too much to suspend the trade altogether from the sickly Islands during the summer months, I think at the very least, the vessels from those islands should be unloaded at a proper distance from the city, suppose 40 or 50 miles; and in this case, a proper range of stores should be erected to receive their cargoes; which, after being suitably inspected, might in proper time be transported from thence in other smaller vessels, and in such a manner as probably to prevent all danger; and that for the same reason, the vessels from those Islands should not, on any account, approach the city in the summer months, but should take in their loading, when outward bound, at the distance above alluded to. This



appears to me to be quite practicable, and not very difficult; but some may say, it would be attended with a great expence. Be it so; but what would the expence be, in comparison of raising buildings on the commons for thousands of the inhabitants, and maintaining them with every necessary, under very disagreeable circumstances, and at a distance from their homes.

As to danger from the dire disorder; as to the loss of lives in consequence of it; as to the immense risk of property by the general desertion of the city; these are not included in the account relating to the expence before alluded to; and in fact, such dangers and distresses are at this time too well known to require any further explanation.

If these transient hints should be acceptable, they are freely offered, and I conclude this imperfect essay with making a short remark on another subject.

In another of the papers, dated the 20th instant, I saw a complaisant encomium on the



charity and benevolence of the Philadelphians towards the “ suffering poor ;” a benevolence, as the writer says, “ disinterested, and unchecked by narrow prejudice.” This encomium was under the New-York head; and although that writer has due credit for his intention, yet it is certainly just, to view this matter in a more extensive light, for the liberality of numbers in different states, deserves to be acknowledged in a proper manner; and if I am rightly informed, the thanks of the public, on behalf of the distressed, are partly due, even to individuals of different nations, who, as well as others, have contributed voluntarily on the truly mournful occasion.

*New-Jersey, October 23d. 1798.*

## POSTSCRIPT.

The writer of the foregoing, apologises for making a short remark, on one of the subjects



of the Essay, which was written at a time when the lists of mortality were terrible, and although many thousands had deserted the city, no doubt, their sympathetic feelings were then alive on the truly melancholy occasion: At such a time, it might be well supposed, that a comparatively small sacrifice of interest would be as nothing in the scale, and that therefore, it was unworthy of such a cause to limit the sacrifice in too precise a manner. But after a certain period, the contagion had ceased, and the danger was apparently over. After which, to talk of storing cargoes at a considerable distance from the city, might appear to some, a frightful requisition, and the suggestion of such an idea, unreasonable and improper.

Now, if such an objection should arise, I wish to obviate it by the following explanation. I believe, that almost every article contained in pipes, hogsheads, barrels, or boxes, would require but a short delay, with respect to transportation in shallops, or river vessels, to the

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occasion, to thank providence, in future time, for  
our preservation from the Yellow Fever, and  
all its dreadful concomitants.



*IN the New-Jersey Gazette, of September 23d. 1799, there were re-published, a number of Observations on a pamphlet, which appeared in the Summer of the present year, on the subject of the origin of the Yellow Fever. The Writer of those "Observations" professedly differs from the author of the pamphlet on that subject; but at the same time, shews a proper respect for "his benevolent intentions," as well as his acknowledged abilities; in regard to which, the present writer, hopes a similar disposition will be also manifested from another quarter, by a short expression in the latter part of the following request.*

FOR THE FEDERALIST,

OR

NEW-JERSEY GAZETTE.

ONE of the Refugees from the distresses of the city of Philadelphia, in the year 1798, conveyed a few thoughts on the origin of the



calamities of that period, to the printer of the *Federalist*, which were readily accepted and published in his paper, dated the 29th, of October last year; and as the same writer has again experienced a friendly asylum on the Eastern side of the beloved Delaware, he believes it right to request, as an additional favor, that the enclosed piece, (which he never saw, until it was printed in the *Philadelphia Gazette* of the 19th ultimo,) may be inserted in the Trenton paper, being a performance so modestly worded, and so well adapted to the sentiments of a great number of his respectable fellow-citizens, that he doubts not, a much more extensive publicity, than has yet happened, will be very acceptable to them, as well as to the present writer; who admires the Essay, not only on account of the respect it shews to an eminent Physician, but also for its valuable contents and intrinsic merits.

*New-Jersey*, September 12th, 1799.

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Prudence therefore certainly dictates, that we should diligently use every means that may have a tendency to purify the atmosphere of the city. For however great may be our precautions, &c. [Be it so yet the following is a good copy of the sentiments of the present writer.]

FOR THE FEDERALIST,

O R

*NEW-JERSEY GAZETTE.*

IF the unaccountable and discouraging ideas of a small part of my fellow citizens, were any thing like realities, with respect to local causes of the late calamities, how miserably depreciated in my view, would be my native city : It would appear to me like a place unfit to be inhabited, and where its native sons could not expect a settled residence. But as I have said before, I hope for better things ; I hope my countrymen will at length consider the case as it really is, and know that proofs almost innumerable might be adduced, to shew



that the mortal fever, which has often been the means of desolating our greatest cities, has been imported.

This is a sentiment expressed in the language of encouragement by the writer, who calls himself, "*A citizen*." That writer, in a sensible performance published in the *Philadelphia Gazette*, of the 19th ult. and re-published in the *Trenton Federalist*, No. 64. has this opinion, "That if the sources of importation were properly guarded, our happiness would neither be disturbed, nor our prosperity blighted by so awful and dreadful a pestilence as yellow fever." That such a calamity has been permitted to afflict the once happy Philadelphia, at divers periods, is now notorious even in distant countries; and the distresses thereby occasioned, have caused the feeling sympathy of many of their inhabitants; some of whom (it appears, by British publications) have shewn themselves desirous to investigate the cause; as well as to consider the probable



means of prevention, by a comparison with what has happened in *other lands*.

I desire not at this time to enlarge on their recent observations on the subject, nor to say much on those innumerable proofs of importation, many of which I should think, must now be so manifest to every reflecting mind, that to enter on particulars of that sort, would be like attempting to inform others of what they already knew. I shall just mention that several instances of persons who have been taken from different vessels, at several wharves, to the hospital, and dying there, are among the numerous striking evidences of importation.

When I consider those indubitable facts, relative to the capital of England in the last century, I think them worthy of attention at this distant period. It appears that in the year 1665, there was a dreadful pestilence in the city of London, that in the year 1666, the fatal disorder extended to a small town in Derbyshire, that the origin of their calamities was in



controvertable in both places ; and that from those periods to the present time, nothing of the sort has happened in either of those situations : I say, when I consider those cases, I am strongly induced to hope, that under the favour of a superintending providence, and such reasonable exertions as may be made by my fellow citizens, such calamities may be, likewise, averted in future from my native city ; and that Philadelphia may again reassume its former character, as a place of health and safety, not only for those who may remain there, but for tens of thousands of the scattered refugees, who to avoid the dangerous sickness, have thought it best to desert their proper dwellings, and leave them without inhabitants.

These wishes, I believe, are not incompatible with a friendly disposition, towards the trading part of my fellow citizens ; whose interests, I would desire should be properly considered ; their disadvantages compensated, for



some inconveniences; and that the honor of endeavouring to save the city, in future time from a dire calamity, might be their best reward.

To avoid prolixity, I shall just refer to a remembrance of what happened in the year 1798, respecting Baltimore, Wilmington, &c. and conclude this essay with some of the circumstances relating to the town in Derbyshire, before alluded to, of which the following is an exact copy of what was written in Philadelphia, some time since, on that memorable occasion, viz :

“ In the European magazine for July 1793, there is a remarkable account of a pestilence in a town called Eyam, in Derbyshire; some of the particulars relating to it, are as follow: In the year 1666, one year after the plague in London, “ this fatal disease visited seventy-six families, out of which two hundred and fifty-six persons died.” The disease broke out in the spring of 1666, and ceased at the begin-



ning of October in the same year. It was supposed to have been brought from the metropolis in some woollen cloths that were purchased in that city soon after the plague of 1665, and which had not been sufficiently ventilated and fumigated. By the persuasion and authority of the excellent rector, William Mompeson, the inhabitants were prevailed upon to remain within a certain district; and to the lasting honor of the earl of Devonshire, then resident at Chatsworth, six or seven miles from Eyam, it appears that he caused provisions and the necessaries of life, to be placed on the hills at regular times, and appointed places, to which the inhabitants resorted and carried them away. M. Seward, the last rector, the father of the elegant poetess of his name, preached a centenary sermon upon the plague in 1766, in the parish church of Eyam, composed with such power of description, and such a pathetic appeal to the feelings of his auditors, (many of whom had



lost some of their ancestors by that dreadful visitation) that he was continually interrupted by the exclamations and tears of his audience."

Such a sermon on so melancholy an occasion, the present writer believes to have been consistent with the christian character; a character disposed (as it ought to be) to treat a very serious subject with due solemnity.

The consideration that so dreadful a calamity had not been permitted to visit the nation for one hundred years, must have been a cause of admiration to the pathetic preacher, as well as to his much affected auditors; who, it is probable, were struck with a benevolent sense of gratitude (on this account) to the all wise disposer of events, on behalf of their beloved country.

*New-Jersey, September 30.*



FOR THE FEDERALIST,

O R

*NEW-JERSEY GAZETTE.*

As it may appear by a late publication, that the present writer was born in the city of Philadelphia, he presumes he has a right to know something of that city for a course of years, having actually resided there more than half a century. He again presents his respects to the New-Jersey Printer, and with an acknowledgment of his late civilities, is willing to offer him the following observations.

In the early part of my time, I was informed by history, that soon after the first settlement of Pennsylvania, a terrible disorder, similar to that which has been experienced to be of a contagious nature, and of a mortal tendency, was truly dreadful to the inhabitants of the capital. That calamity happened in the year 1699, when the city was thinly settled; and I believe no man ever suggested an idea,

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rapidity of distress in the neighbourhood of a certain vessel, and such was the danger of communication in that infected part of the city, that it required the spirit of a Howard in any man to visit his nearest friend. The disorder proceeded, and it may be well remembered, that the deaths were from 80 to 100 for many successive days.

In that calamitous time it was my lot to dwell in different parts of the afflicted city, and I cannot but remember many of the mournful scenes of that awful period. Notwithstanding the dreadful mortality above hinted at, the city of Philadelphia was favoured to enjoy again its natural state of health and safety, in the years 1794. 95, and 96, although the imported fever prevailed in a terrible manner in the city of New-York in the year 1795; concerning which the most ample proofs could be produced, as well as that it again prevailed in Philadelphia in the year 1797. Much has been



written on those occasions ; and enough might be also said to prove in the clearest manner, that the disorder was again imported in the present year 1799. On the last occasion I shall avoid particulars at the present time ; but if the printer is willing to give his subscribers a copy of what was written as long since as last December, respecting the year 1798, he is welcome to the following for that purpose, as it may serve for one of the memorials on a very important subject, *videlicet*.

“ When I consider the recent public loss of those respectable physicians Francis Bowes Sayer, and Samuel Cooper, as well as many others of different professions and worthy characters in the grand community, it seems as if words were wanting to express a proper sense of that “ immense mass of distress,” which never fails to accompany a mortal epidemic. These words “ immense mass of distress,” I have taken the liberty to borrow from a for-



mer publication, as they appear to me to convey an extensive idea of the nature of a disease, for the prevention of which, it ought to be the wish of every humane mind that there may be an union with respect to the most important object.

To prevent, if possible, the importation, I believe to be a consideration worthy of the first attention; and in this line, I have now to rejoice in the success of the city of Baltimore in the present year, as it appears by the most credible information to have escaped the general contagion. While several other cities were in a grievous state of affliction, the inhabitants of Baltimore were blessed with the enjoyment of health, and were pursuing their business without material interruption, under the peculiar favour of a well directed caution. I repeat it, that I rejoice in their welfare, and congratulate them on the subject, that the yellow fever, that dire disease, has lately made no progress within their borders.

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material difficulty occurred respecting his burial. Not long after, when the captain was collecting his freight, he mentioned his difficulty to this purpose ; that his vessel was intended for Virginia to take in a load of tobacco ; but observed, that he did not know what was the matter with his people ; they sickened in such a manner that he was afraid they could not proceed on the voyage. It so happened, however, that the attempt was made ; that on the voyage there were three or four deaths, and on their arrival at City-Point, in Virginia, about the number of ten men, who were employed on board, were taken sick and died ; and by public accounts it appears that the mortality spread in a very terrible manner at that unfortunate place, where if it had not been for the arrival of the Nestor with the yellow fever, it is very probable the inhabitants of City-Point might have been as free from that calamity as the inhabitants of Baltimore, or even of the most northern climate.



Other particulars respecting that importation might be easily adduced, but the material facts in that case, as well as those respecting a number of other places, where the disorder has appeared, have been so evident and so notorious, that it may be thought almost needless to mention them: Even the town of Lamberton is another proof of importation, and the more remarkable, as the situation is much higher than many other towns, yet when the disease was lately brought there, it is well known that there was a very considerable mortality among the inhabitants in comparison with the smallness of their numbers.

Such facts, it is believed, deserve to be published on a subject so truly interesting to the people of America.

With respect to Philadelphia and Kensington, so much has been said on the subject alluded to, that it requires a caution to avoid a needless repetition; but it may be truly observed respecting those places, that the great



mortality which prevailed there, has not been secreted from the public knowledge, nor has it been wished by numbers of the most sensible inhabitants to secret the manner of its introduction.

I shall just add, that notwithstanding my opinion is so fully manifested on the origin of our late calamities, yet I am so far from an unfriendly disposition towards well adapted water-works for public utility, that when my countrymen appeared disposed to proceed with an extensive canal, my wishes were united for their success, even from the river Delaware to Norris-Town on the river Schuylkill; and in fact, so much was I interested in that expectation as to have believed, that a part of that canal might have been brought into eminent public usefulness before this time.

A PHILADELPHIAN.

*December 1, 1798.*

NOTE. *It appears that Capt. Rogers left the ship Nestor at Philadelphia, and that she was*



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was whispered that there were several suspicious cases of the yellow fever in that neighbourhood; and soon the evidences became too manifest to be disputed by reasonable men: Among other cases the following was so notorious, as early as the 19th of July, that it was thought worthy of particular observation, viz. : A pump maker (a man of property) whose place of residence was near the still-house wharf, had been to New-York, and on his arrival from thence the 12th of the month, he heard that several of his family were sick; and being justly apprehensive of the nature of the disorder, he very prudently (as I believe) thought it best to lodge at the house of one of his friends, with a determination to take, if possible, what might remain of his family the next morning, to a place of his own, about six miles from the city. Some of the particulars of this case it appears were these: A young girl, daughter of the family was first affected; her mother very ill soon afterwards



with the fever; a young woman, a seamstress in the house, taken sick; a journeyman had also sickened, and died within a few days, and a young man an apprentice, about 19 years of age was (at the time of his master's arrival) extremely ill, and also died on the 13th, of whom it is said, to the credit of his character, that he had kindly attended his mistress in her distress.

Such it appears were the circumstances of that afflicted family; but with respect to those who removed, it seems they all recovered, and it is supposed are still survivors, in remembrance of that melancholy period. As I do not know that I have ever seen the person, who was so honorably attentive to the care of his family, I do not mention his name, though that might be readily inserted, if necessary, as well as some other particulars, the remarkable consequences of a dreadful infectious disease.



Having said thus much about the apparent beginning of the sickness this year, I intend to make but few remarks relating to its progress. It is not to be doubted that from the time above mentioned, the disorder was lurking in several places near the southern boundaries of the city; but the weather being generally cool, it did not spread for some time with much terror to the inhabitants, who were anxiously hoping it might subside; but in the latter part of the last summer month there was a fresh alarm; a number of well known cases then occurred, and thousands of people soon removed from the city.

Wilmington and Kensington have been happily preserved in the present year, in which, perhaps no instances of contagion in either place have occurred, although the mortality in both was very great, in proportion to numbers, in the year 1798.

With regard to New-York, I shall just observe, that on the liberal scale of general

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wharf, at the same time, in unloading their cargoes. On the same day the owner of the ship Connecticut was siezed with the fever, from which he recovered; and about the same time one of the mates, the steward, and two of the hands, were siezed, in the same way and all died." Benjamin Paine, custom-house officer, was likewise attacked on the 25th; he died on the 30th. W. F's clerk, occupied in a store on the next wharf to where the Caroline lay, was taken on the 26th and died a few days afterwards. A. Jenkins, at the head of the wharf was attacked on the 30th or 31st and died; a few days afterwards several of his family were taken sick, and the disorder began to spread through the surrounding neighbourhood."

I conclude this essay with believing, that after such facts as those, which have been fairly exhibited, it might be thought entirely superfluous to add another proof of importation,

especially as in the sultry weather of the year 1794, it is well known to the present writer, that the cities of Philadelphia and New-York, were then esteemed as places of health and safety, not only for their regular inhabitants, but also for passengers in general: and with respect to the city of New-York, it is not remembered that a single case of sickness was heard of for several days, by one of those who at that particular period was an accidental and friendly visitor.

#### A PHILADELPHIAN.

*New-Jersey, Nov. 22, 1799.*

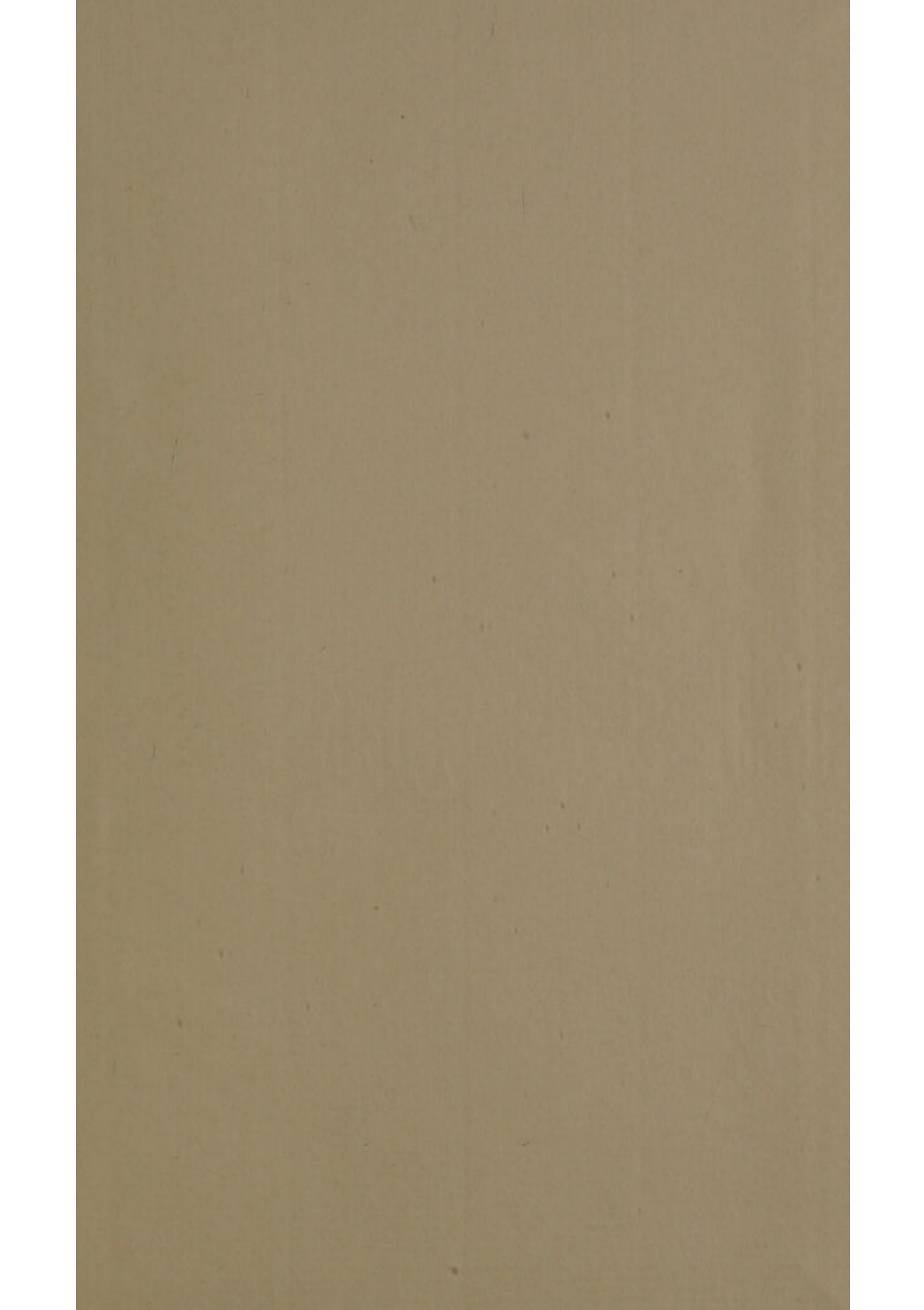


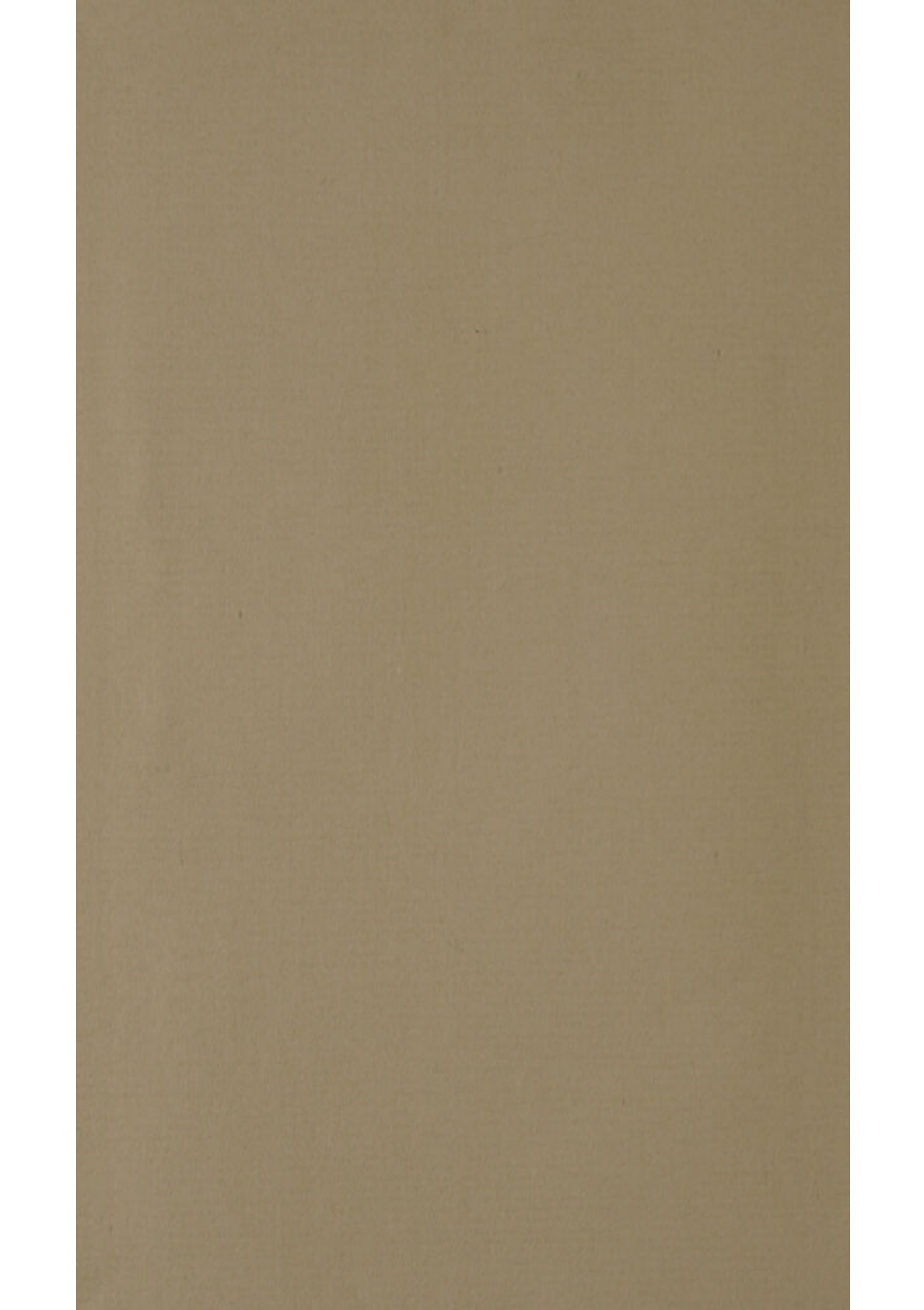


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