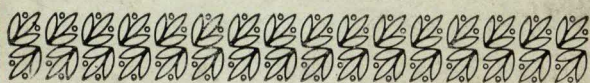


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administration*
by George Jefferson



Examination
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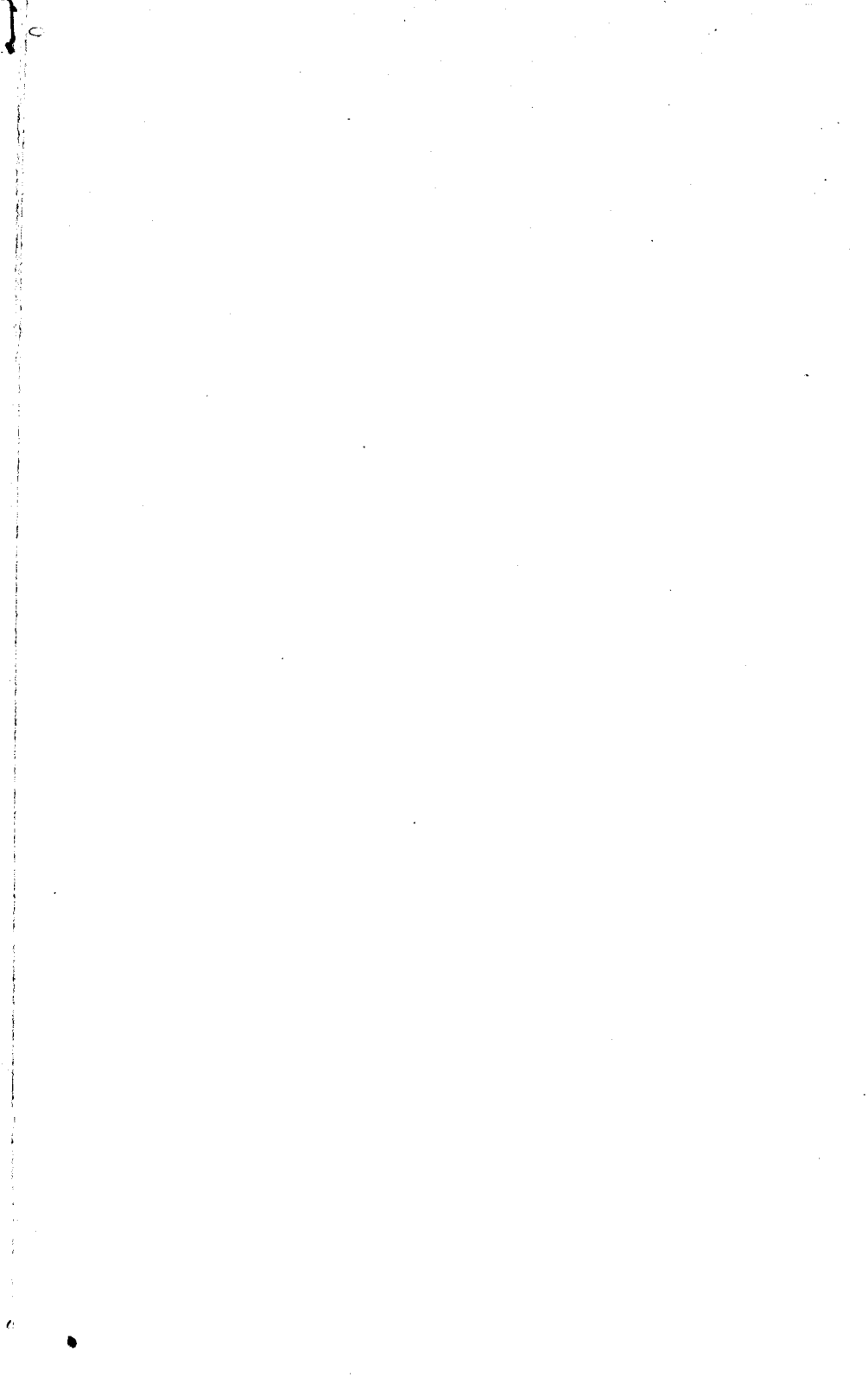
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CHAPTER ONE : PURPOSE

A PRECISE definition of public library purpose is being sought in much the same spirit as the ancient search for the philosopher's stone, and it is proving to be as elusive, as inconclusive, and perhaps as meaningless. Attempts to arrive at some absolute statement of purpose are bedevilled by the variety of contradictory opinion, supported by a bewildering amount of professional literature.

A logical first approach to this apparently intractable problem is to examine reports that are distinguished as analyses of contemporary public library situations—the *Kenyon report* (paras 95-96, 285), the *McColvin report* (chapter 1), the *Roberts report* (paras 29-35), and the *Standards Working Party report* (chapter 2). A second approach tries to divine a clear conception of the purpose of the public library from statements backed by recognised authorities, such as those given in the appendix of *The chance to read* by L R McColvin (Phoenix House, 1956)—UNESCO's *Public library manifesto* (1948), IFLA's *Public library working paper* (1949).

Reports and statements such as these share common assertions couched in liturgical rhetoric with little meaning but much uplift. Laudatory claims are put forward for the public library as a social institution that can, for example, enrich the personality, foster the full and good life, or act as a centre for the cultural and intellectual life of the community. Such generalisations, however noble the ideals, depend upon value judgments too subjective to be of use as guide lines to the objectives of the public library. Yet clearly defined objectives are a necessity for two very practical reasons.

First, proper management, whether of a library or any other undertaking, requires carefully thought out objectives upon which to construct an effective organisation and carry out an efficient administration. Secondly, the psychological effect of an evident lack of purpose leads to a malaise among public library staffs that

CHAPTER TWO : PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

LIBRARY history is more than an arid academic exercise. Chapter one of *Factors in modern history* (CUP, third edition 1948) 1-12 by A F Pollard succinctly reviews the 'Value of history'. The answer to Raymond Irwin's rhetorical 'Does library history matter?' (*Library review* (128) Winter 1958 510-513) lies in the approach to its study. E A Savage never thought to query the value of something which he thought had its own intrinsic interest, but the theme that library history can be predictive of aims and objectives is expounded by M R Cutcliffe in 'The value of library history' *Library review* 21(4) Winter 1967 193-196. Library history can be seen as a discipline that explains the present and serves as a guide to the future. See also the introduction to *Library history* by J G Ollé (Bingley, 1967).

Like all social institutions, the evolution and the characteristics of the public library are inseparable from the social context within which it developed. Nineteenth century history is still subject to much controversy, but books such as D Thomson *England in the nineteenth century* (Penguin, 1962) give in brief compass a clear overview of the period, and T Kelly in his *History of adult education in Great Britain* (Liverpool University Press, 1962) deals comprehensively with one aspect of social history of which the public library movement was a part. The progress of this movement was marked by the activities of personalities motivated by social conscience and philanthropy, or professional zeal and idealism. The rate and character of its development are determined by interests which are focused and given corporate expression. These may be organisations which included promotion of libraries as part of a wider programme of social work, eg CUKT, or those solely concerned with stimulating library development and professional standards, eg Library Association *vide* LA: Local History Group *Annals of the Library Association 1877-1960* (LA, 1965).

CHAPTER THREE: COMPARATIVE LIBRARIANSHIP

A STUDY of the library systems of other countries should be regarded not as the accumulation of data for its own sake, but as a comparative discipline, whose advantages are detailed in articles such as 'Comparative librarianship' by D J Foskett *Library world* 66(780) June 1965 295-298, and 'Comparative librarianship' by C Dane *Librarian* 43(8) August 1954 141-144. Briefly, an examination of library structures in various social and ideological circumstances can illustrate the cause and effect of public library development; demonstrate common features of development such as the trend towards the larger service unit, regional groupings and state aid; lessen insular attitudes by suggesting that differing methods and practices may have application to domestic circumstances. A 'problem approach' can illuminate difficulties that are international, and elucidate similar complexities and possible solutions. An excellent example of this approach is shown in the issue of *Library trends* 14(1) July 1965 which concentrates upon 'Metropolitan public library problems around the world'. Contributions range from London to Los Angeles, Tokyo to New York. The issue editor, H C Campbell, deals with this theme on a cosmopolitan basis in his 'Effect of metropolitanism on the public library' *Library quarterly* 38(1) January 1968 32-40.

The magnitude of a global view of the public library emphasises comparison, rather than a detailed knowledge of systems in each country. Source books in this respect are L R McColvin *Chance to read* (Phoenix House, 1956) and, fittingly, the McColvin festschrift *Libraries for the people: international studies in librarianship* edited by R F Vollans (LA, 1968). In reading widely, bear in mind that terminology undergoes a sea change from country to country; because of Anglo-Saxon affinities and its influence, consider first:

CHAPTER FOUR: LIBRARY LAW

THE librarian, as a responsible administrator, should be familiar with the legal framework within which the library operates. The specialised nature of the law, and the particular complications of administrative law, can only allow, necessarily, an acquaintance rather than an interpretative knowledge. Nevertheless in course of his work the librarian needs a clear understanding of:

- 1 Specific library legislation.
- 2 Local government law and statutes which control the actions of local authorities.
- 3 Law which has particular application to the nature of the work carried out by the library service.

Following these broad groupings:

1 *Specific library legislation* is covered by A R Hewitt *Summary of public library law* (AAL, fourth edition 1965), taking into account the effects of the *Public Library and Museums Act 1964*, on which 'some interpretations of general interest' appeared in the *Library Association record* 67(1) January 1965 19-20, and clarified the position relating to library committees, local byelaws, postal costs, restrictions on charges, joint boards and committees.

2 *Local government law* is too vast a subject for detailed treatment. The most important single piece of legislation affecting the librarian as administrator is the *Local Government Act 1933*. This large scale work of repeal and re-enactment still governs many provisions relating to membership and meetings of local authorities, of committees and joint committees, the procedure regarding making byelaws, staffing, accounts and audit. In addition, numerous other statutes affect local government and, therefore, the public library—*Acquisition of Land (Authorisation Procedure) Act 1946*, *Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960*, *Insurance and Superannuation Acts*, *Rating and Valuation Acts* are a few examples.

3 *Special law* can be further subdivided into: a) Law relevant to library use such as the *Malicious Damages Act 1861*, *Public*

CHAPTER FIVE: GOVERNMENT, FINANCE, ORGANISATION, ADMINISTRATION

THE relationship of these four topics is one of interdependence within the dimensions of local government.

GOVERNMENT

The government of the public library must be seen against the limitations, procedures and customs of the local authority. Local government structure and its internal organisation is in the melting pot, and already many authorities have acted upon the recommendation of the Maud report to reduce the number of committees by combination, and to alter the balance between chief officer and committee. In some cases, inclusion of the public library service in the general amenities committee has associated it with an odd assortment of services such as parks, baths, cemeteries; in others, education or general purposes. The long made plea that a separate committee for library purposes should be established seems to have been against the tide of events. Read the *Annual report 1968 17-18* of the Library Association upon this matter, which concludes with the 'opinion that the only certain way to ensure efficient and economic planning and development is for the chief librarian to be chief officer, with direct access to the committee responsible for the authority's library policy'.

Greater responsibility for management, encouraged by both the Maud and Mallaby committees, is welcome and despite changes it is still important to:

1 Understand the local authority background. E V Corbett *The public library and its control* (AAL, 1962) covers this in part 1, illustrates briefly the operation of the committee system, the inter-committee relationships that affect the procedure and the work of the library committee which is the subject of part 2 of this book.

2 Consider that a sympathetic and informed governing body is the first essential to an efficient administration with adequate financial resources and how the achievement of this is affected by:

a) Status of the library committee in relation to other committees,

CHAPTER SIX : STAFF

THE progress of librarianship depends in the last analysis upon the quality of the people induced to enter and to remain in the library service. Inducements can be categorised as salary, promotion prospects, training, education and welfare facilities, and, perhaps most important, how far librarianship offers opportunity for professional practice with accompanying satisfaction in the work carried out. An unsatisfactory state of affairs in any of these areas leads to a high turnover of entrants—and discontent among those who remain. R J Edwards in 'Professional opportunities in the public libraries of the future' *LA PL conference proceedings* 1968 43-49 analyses 'major problem areas'—the malaise affecting local government, relationships with the central government, specific problems such as an inadequate career structure, distorted hierarchy and the lack of a rational and systematic recruitment policy.

SELECTION OF STAFF

Selection must also consider the obverse—do would be applicants reject librarianship, or, 'Why librarianship?' by K Whittaker *Assistant librarian* 53(3) March 1960 50-51; or 'What governs the vocational decision' by M Y Parr *Library journal* 87(3) February 1 1962 504-507. Image and information are two desirable factors for M Barnes that affect 'Recruitment to public librarianship: vague hopes are not enough' *Library world* 68(802) April 1967 278-280.

The image of the library profession, and that of the local government service, determines what kind of people are likely to turn to it as a career. This image making is discussed by R Surridge 'Status seekers' *LA Conference papers* 1960 32-40, and American viewpoints are given in J E Smith 'Recruitment and public relations' *Library journal* 87(5) March 1 1962 932-934, and, cynically, F A Briggs 'Status symbols and the librarian' *Wilson library bulletin* 36(3) November 1961 231-233. Within

CHAPTER SEVEN: BUILDINGS

THE librarian is not an expert on architecture or building methods, nor on the design of furniture and fittings, nor of the materials now being used or introduced in all of these. He should, however, be familiar with innovations and recent trends in library building and planning. This will give him an acquaintance with new methods and materials, and more important, how problems connected with building and siting have been approached by others. It will also make him more able to talk a common language with his architect and appreciate the latter's viewpoint and problems.

It is advisable, therefore, to read accounts of buildings recently erected with particular attention to choice of site, siting problems that have been overcome, inter-departmental relationships, service area/storage access, design of equipment and fittings and choice of materials. They should be seen as physical expressions of the organisational pattern instituted to meet the varying needs of particular communities and their environment.

Reading can be grouped for comparison as follows:

MUNICIPAL CENTRAL LIBRARY

Eastbourne's central library and that of Hampstead (part of a civic centre) are described in *Library Association record* 66(12) December 1964 502-509. Those for Bradford, Luton and Norwich are portrayed in *Library Association record* 62(11) November 1960 369-374. Norwich, recognised as one of the best civic buildings since the war, is further detailed by P Hepworth in *Librarian* 50(7) September 1961 138-144. A record of a visit to the rebuilt Brown Central Library, Liverpool—'Editorial excursions: Liverpool' *Library Association record* 63(9) September 1961 293-299—is of special interest as a commentary and description of the subject departmental plan. The *LA PL conference proceedings* 1968 29-35 feature two contributions upon 'Planning a new central library'. The first, by H Bilton, deals with Bradford

CHAPTER EIGHT : STOCK

CONSIDER the three headings of selection, classification and cataloguing, access and control.

SELECTION AND ACQUISITION

D Spiller criticises present book selection methods aggressively as 'Stark, staring mad' *Library world* 70(818) August 1968 43-45, putting forward the thesis that the only correct economic method is a study in depth of demand, supply, the stock on the shelves, and their relationships. Minute analysis of this sort, perhaps possible eventually with a computer, is an approach which parallels practices that have led to the success of retail stores groups, where detailed stock and sales records give more scientific forward estimates than intuitive assumptions on what is required and what is being used.

Administration of book selection treads a narrow path between bibliographical control and philosophic discussion of the purpose of the public library. Selection of stock must be made within an agreed framework of policy, and factors which can be counted administrative in this respect are:

1 Committee/librarian relationship. How far does the committee enter into selection decisions and procedures? Are any limitations placed upon the freedom of action of the librarian? Trend and opinion is towards less committee and more librarian initiative. See E A Savage *The librarian and his committee* (Grafton, 1942) chapters 8-9. According to this relationship and the size of the authority:

2 The financial resources available and how much is allocated to book purchase, is the procrustean bed of selection. Control over expenditure throughout the year is discussed by A Ladenson 'Budget control of book purchase and binding expenditures in large public libraries' *Library resources* 4(1) Winter 1960 47-58. A scientific approach to replacement costs is made by L R McColvin *Theory of book selection* (Grafton, 1925) based on

CHAPTER NINE : CO-OPERATION

DISTINGUISHED by a bewildering array of national, regional and local schemes, co-operation endeavours to extend and improve the multi-purpose activities of public libraries by arrangements for inter-loan, acquisition, preservation, exchange and re-distribution of material. Their evolution has accompanied and has been stimulated by post-war library expansion, which queried the predominance of inter-lending in co-operation, its cost and effectiveness in ensuring the availability of material to an upsurge of purposive readership.

Chapter twelve 'Co-operation' of the *McColvin report* 101-105 was an early indication of this, and critical of the NCL/RB basis, with views that find repetition in later trends that can be summarised as:

- 1 Re-appraisal and re-organisation of the NCL/RB network;
- 2 Inauguration of regional and local schemes to implement broader concepts of co-operation beyond the limitations of the NCL/RB system, and/or to mitigate its slowness and cost:

- 3 Arising from 1 and 2, the re-orientation and expansion of national and regional co-operation, related developments affecting the structure of the public library system. Taking these groupings consider:

- 1 Significant source material R F Vollans *Library co-operation in Great Britain: report of a survey of the NCL and the regional bureaux* (1952); the observations of R H Hill 'The Vollans report of 1952: its origins and implications' *Library Association record* 56(7) July 1954 241-248, and the surveyor's own 'Focus on library co-operation' *Library Association record* 55(5) May 1953 152-157; following this 'Vollans report, the recommendations on library co-operation' *Library Association record* 56(7) July 1954 248-251.

- 2 Concurrent developments: a) regional activity in co-operative purchase observed by K G Hunt *Subject specialisation and co-operative book purchase in the libraries of Great Britain* (LA Pamphlet no 12, 1956), and commented upon by J F W Bryon

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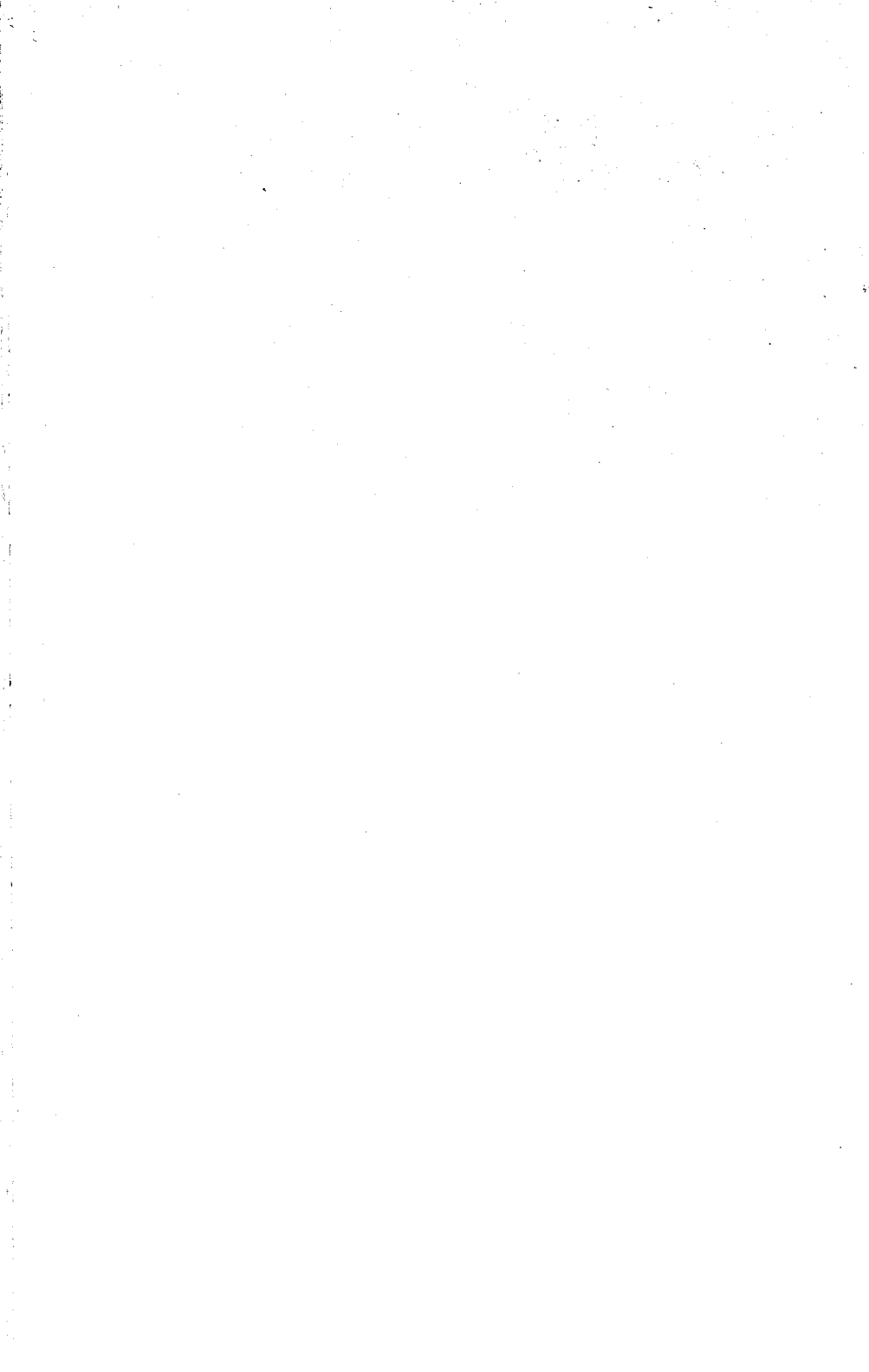
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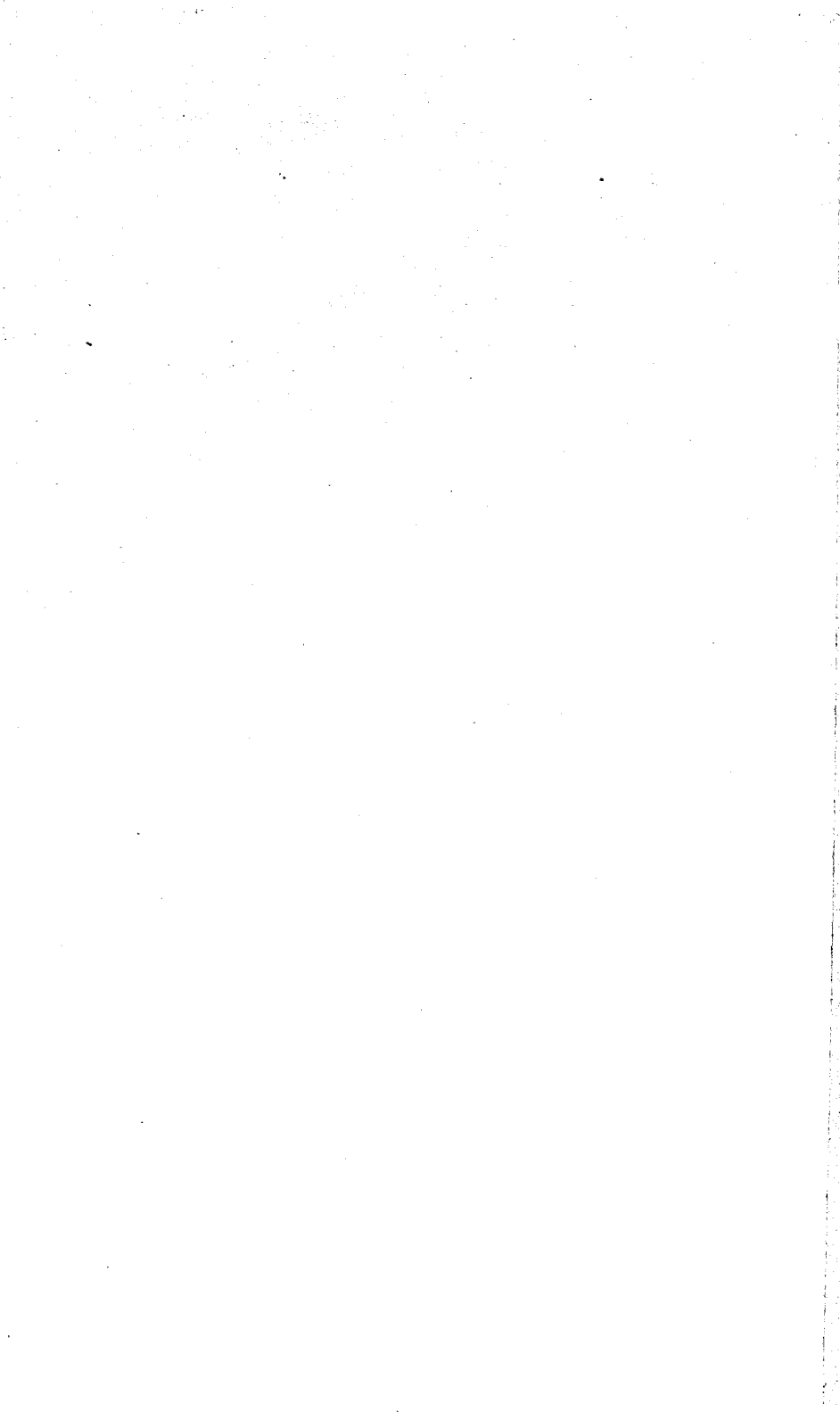
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