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School of Nursing



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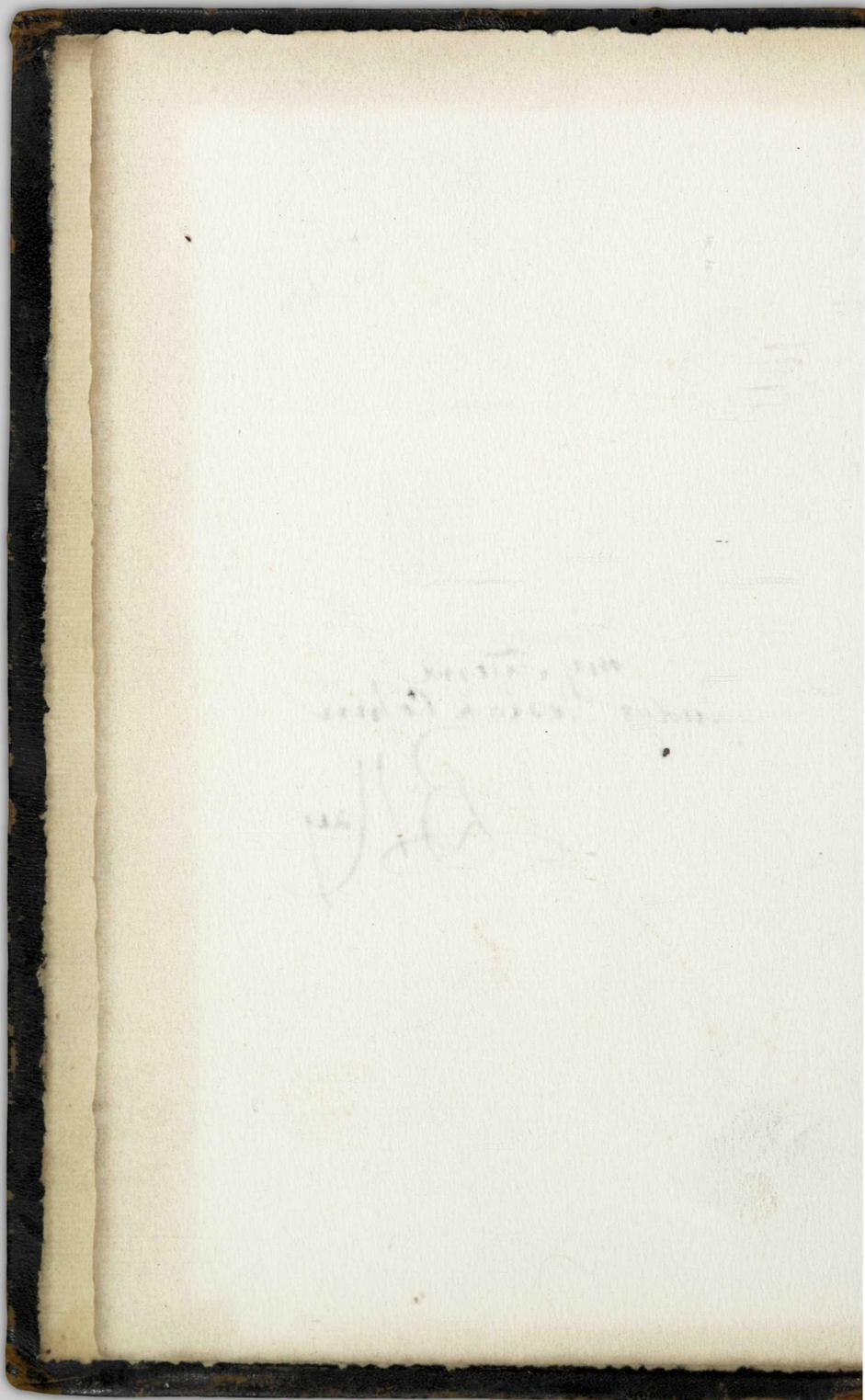
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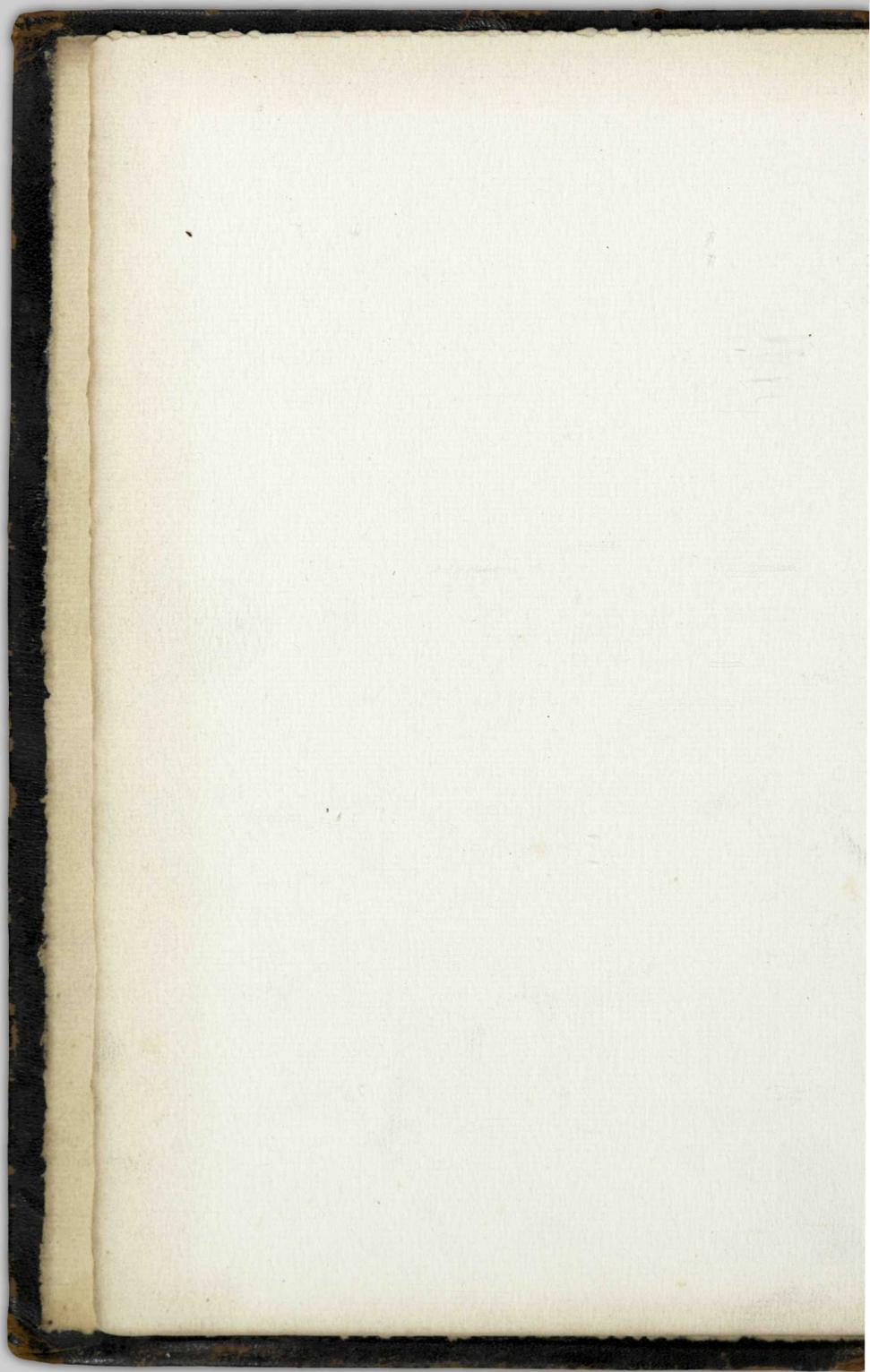
PRESENTED TO

*my friend*  
Judge Josiah Cokin

*B. May*





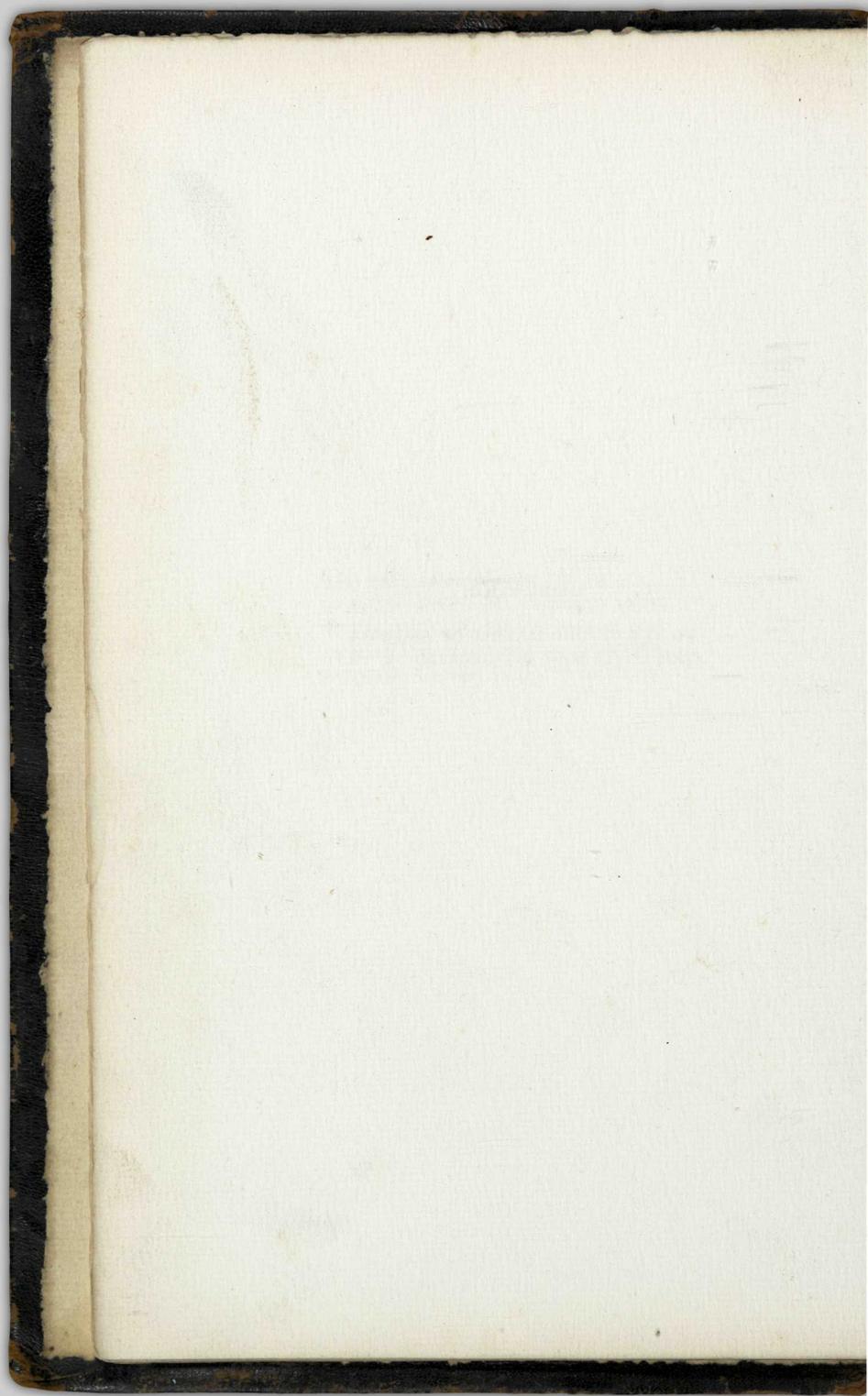


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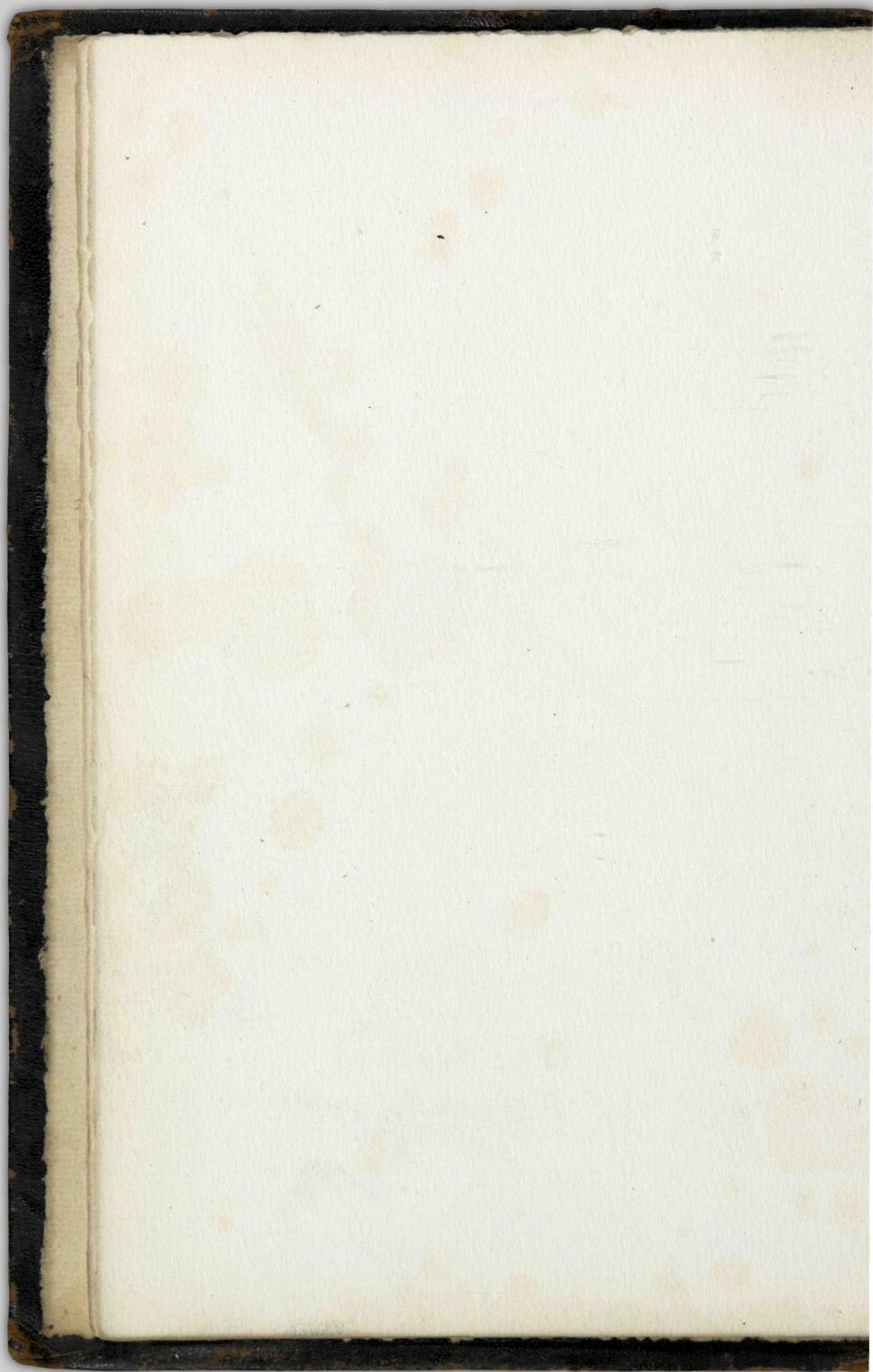
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WHICH THE CHILDREN OF BARNEY AND  
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PARED IN LOVING TRIBUTE TO THEM.

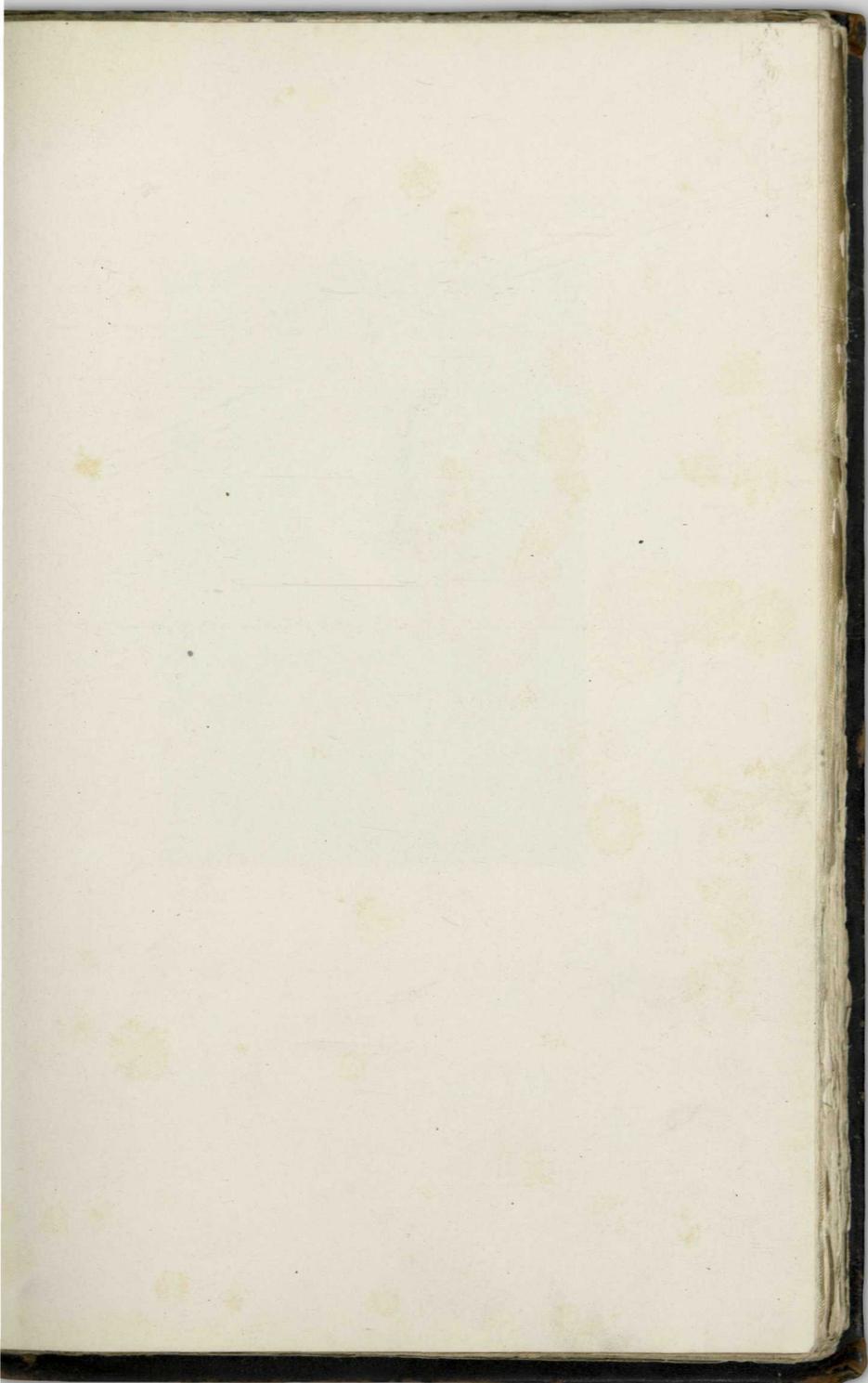
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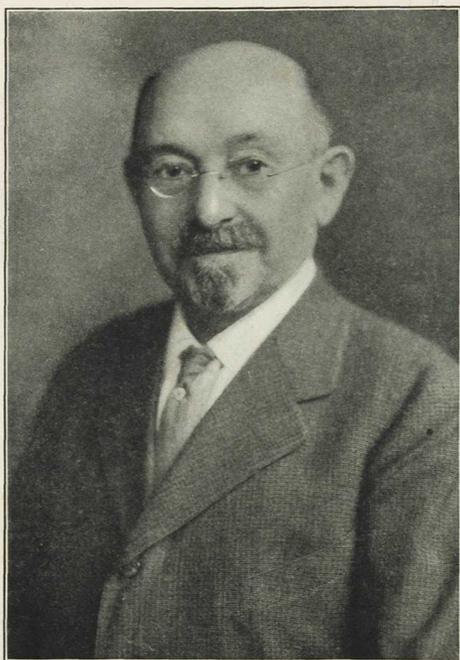
TO THE UNSUNG MAKERS OF AMERICA  
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED ♪ ♪



*The Story of  
Barney May*







*Barney May*  
1917

*Plate I.*

The Story of  
*Barney May, Pioneer*

Told by

GEORGE M. P. BAIRD



THE ALDINE PRESS  
PITTSBURGH  
MCMXVII



Barney May  
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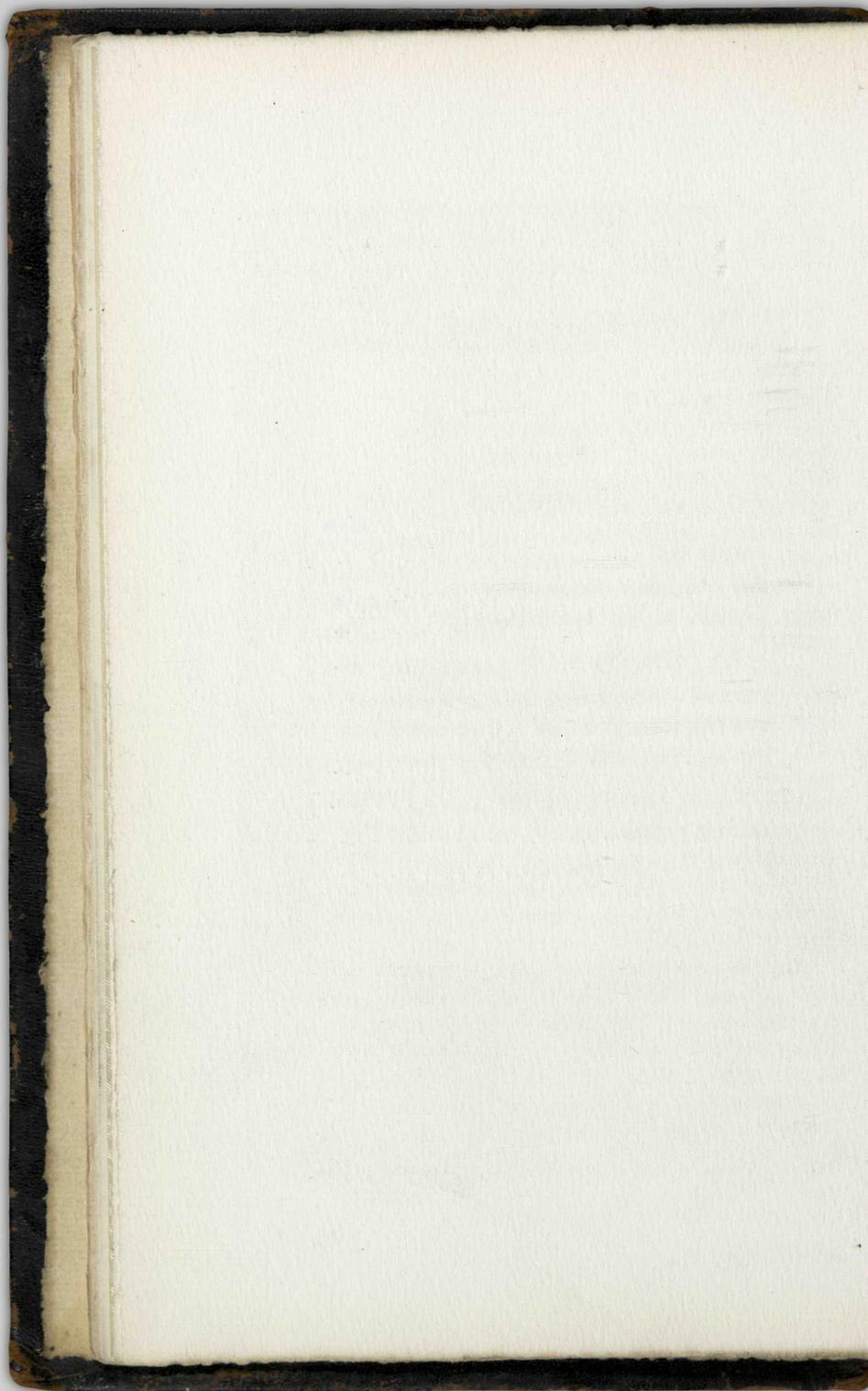
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## INTRODUCTION

THE most fascinating pages of history are those which deal with the movements of tribes and races from their ancestral territories to new lands. The tales of great migrations — folk wanderings, whether born of economic pressure at home or the lure of promised happiness in some unknown, distant country — awake in us the racial memories of that pioneer spirit which led our ancient fathers to make them, and hearten us to essay fresh adventures on the faint trails that lead to new accomplishment in the upward struggle of mankind.

In the older chronicles of the race, we are happy if we can discover so much as a vague picture of the ethnic flux; often little more than a tissue of possibilities, a hopeful assumption, fashioned mosaic-like from vague hints and unproved shadowings gathered from many diverse sources by the patient industry of laborious research. Occasionally we get a glimpse of a leader-hero, some Abad, Herakles, Thor or Romulus, dimly emerging from a cloud of ancient myth, or of some legendary captain, a Moses, a Jimmu Tenno, an Alexander, an Attila, a Kublai Khan; but of the units who formed the rank and file of the moving hordes, of their motives, their actions and their aspirations we know nothing.

This, however, does not yet hold true of modern migrations. Whether because we are

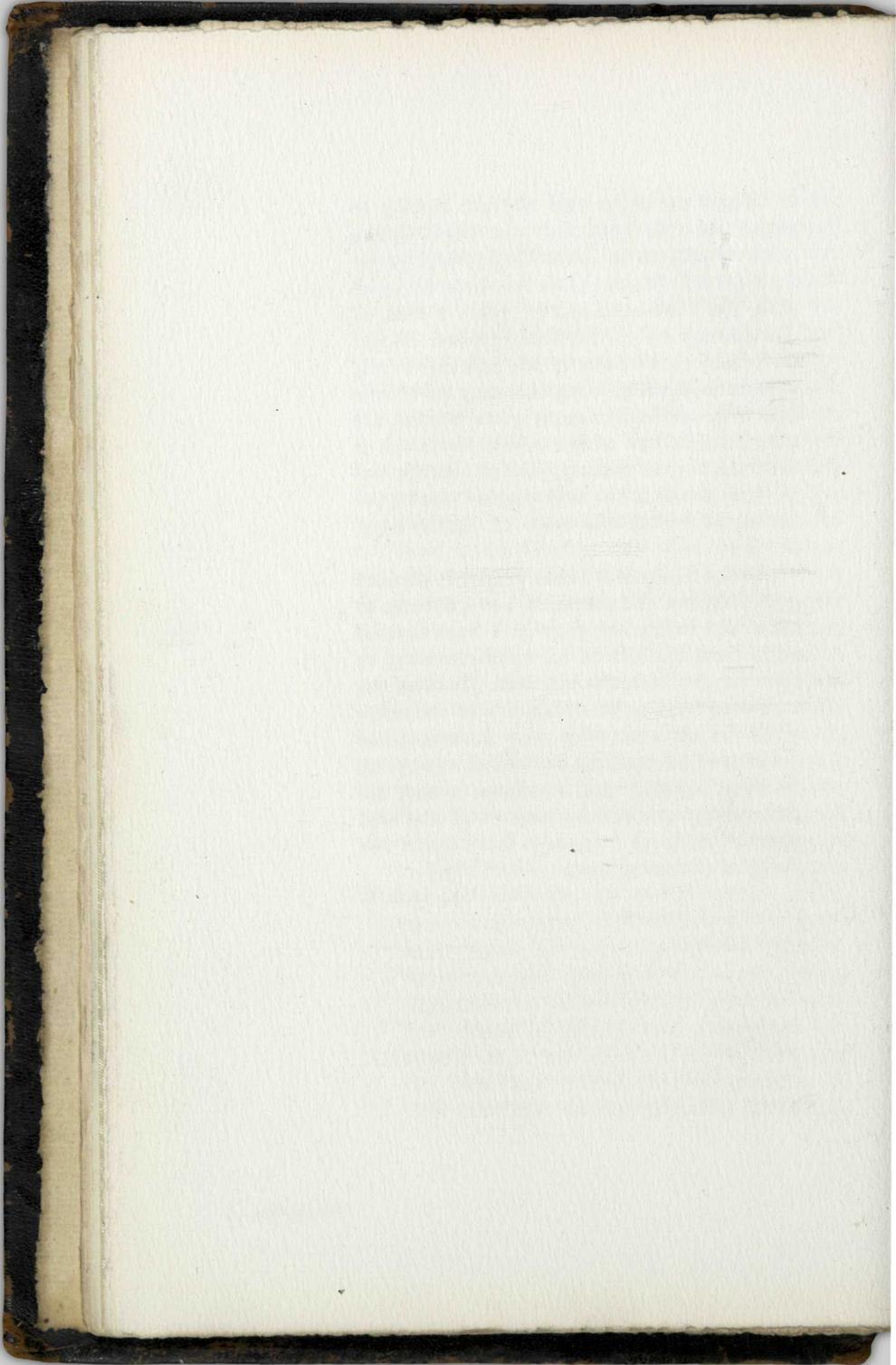
closer to it in time or because geographical limits have been narrowed and the machinery of report and record has been elaborated, the history of the settlement of America is much less the story of groups and much more the narrative of individuals than is that of any other era of race redistribution and colonization known to us. To the student of social history and human conduct, this condition presents obvious opportunities which he cannot ignore with impunity, since they are sure to vanish with the passing of time. As the years go by the individualities of those who have made America will tend to lose their sharp outlines of identity and to merge into broader and less highly differentiated classifications; and unless they are crystalized and fixed in our day, we shall have earned but scant gratitude from the students who are to come after us. If we are to preserve this unique and vital stuff of personality, if we are to render intelligible to future generations those passions and philosophies out of which the Republic grew, we must seize upon and record every bit of available data which promises to be significant. Our efforts must be concerned not only with the careers of the great captains and conquistadores, the builders and entrepreneurs, the inventors and artists and thinkers—, we may depend upon their biographies getting themselves written—, but also with the humbler chronicles of the less conspicuous but equally significant members of the rank and file who have poured the full amphorae of their spirit into the seething vat of democracy.

There are signs that we are coming to appreciate this need and our responsibility with respect to it. Autobiographical works such as: *The Making of an American* by Jacob Riis, *The Promised Land* by Mary Antin, *A Far Journey* by A. M. Rihbany, and Booker T. Washington's *Story of My Life and Work*, together with a growing literature of artistic and of scientific immigrant genre studies, are patent indications of the new attitude. It is with the hope of making a modest contribution to these annals of the later pilgrims that I have attempted to tell the story of Barney May, Pioneer.

In the telling of it I have purposely avoided embellishment and comment, being content to set down baldly the facts as I have learned them from the lips of its chief character or from those who know him well. It is for the reader to trace in this plain tale of the immigrant farmer boy who won success, those qualities of adventurous hardihood, enterprise, frugality, integrity and kindness which are the common spiritual heritage of all the true pioneers, early or late, who have made the America which we love.

G. M. P. B.

University of Pittsburgh  
October 1, 1917



## EBELSBACH

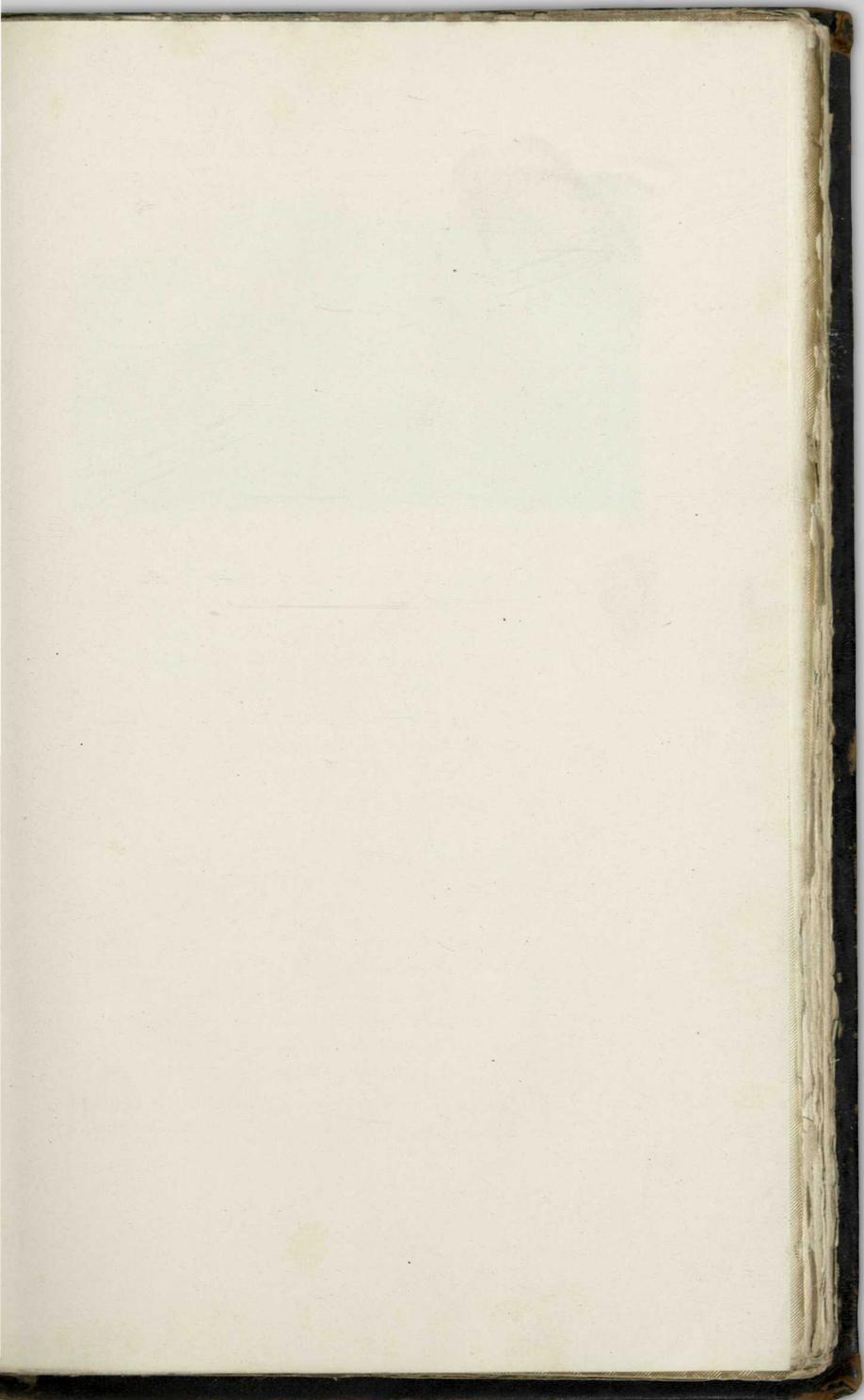
**T**HIS story has its beginning in the quiet, little rural village of Ebelsbach which lies securely walled and enfolded by the fruitful hills and pleasant mountains of Northern Bavaria. The restless, meddling fingers of Time have dealt lightly with Ebelsbach, so that there has been scarcely a change in it during the past three quarters of a century. The brick and stucco houses are a little darker with the colorings of storm and sun, and the lichens are greener upon the stones of the Old Schloss which guards the village from the heights — like a grizzled, broken veteran of the wars, half asleep in the sunshine — a relisque symbol of the region's changeless quietude. True, there are new dwellings here and there along the drowsy streets, and new faces about the hospitable hearths of Ebelsbach; but otherwise it is today just as it was eighty-one years ago when Abraham May and Rosa Silverman were married and came to live in the old homestead on the edge of the Judenhof.

The house, a large, even imposing one for Ebelsbach, had already sheltered two generations of the May family, both Abraham and his father having been born there. Abraham, as the eldest son had inherited the property. The house rose two and one half stories above the nameless street — the town was too small to require labels for its thoroughfares — and its garden stretched for a square to the clear

waters of Ebelsbach River which flashed southward to the Main. Its walls of brick, timber, and roughcast enclosed eight rooms, and under its steep roof on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings the people of the Judenhof met to worship the God of Israel.

Of buildings other than dwellings, the village boasted four: the Town Hall, the German School, the Roman Catholic Church, and a combination of brewery, restaurant and hotel which catered to the citizens and to infrequent travelers. There were quarries near the town and some of the inhabitants engaged in the stone business, but of other industries there were none. The community was an agricultural one and drew its strength from the fields. Its life was simple, its aspirations few, its existence self-sufficient. It knew neither destitution nor affluence. A man was counted well-to-do if he owned a few hundred kronen and a house; the possession of a carriage and horses was a sign of riches.

Ebelsbach contained three hundred souls — more white geese than people, as the local saying had it. About half the population was Roman Catholic, the rest Jewish; but the two peoples dwelt and labored side by side in good will and amity. The villagers were hill-farmers, and the well-tilled holdings outside the town testified to their frugal industry. Dawn saw them trudging out a mile, two miles, three miles to toil on the terraced mountains, where green vineyards and gold-brown rye fields, with here and there a dark clump of honey-fruited Zwetschgen plum trees clung to the slopes.



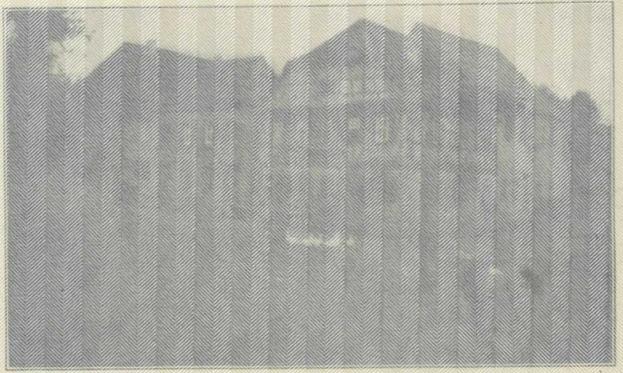


*The Old House*  
*Ebelsbach, Germany*

Twilight found them returning down the long, grey roads to homely fare on white, scrubbed tables, an hour of quiet talk and then well-earned repose.

A railroad ran near the village and the station was but a quarter mile away; the stage-coach sometimes stopped before the old stone hotel to set down some traveller; or an occasional commercial drummer came from beyond the mountains; but for all that, Ebelsbach was a place apart from the world, isolated and content with the industrious quiet of its own life. News from other towns and other countries filtered in from time to time, but the doings of kings and of peoples were alien to the busy calm of the little town; and, although the infrequent newspaper from outside passed from eager hand to eager hand until it was worn beyond reading, the interest in extrapagane affairs was a detached and impersonal one. The lands beyond the mountains were to the honest farmers of Ebelsbach like the visionary pictures of wonder-countries in an old romance.

Abraham May and his good wife were not long in establishing themselves in the community and, as time went on, wee new people came to live in the big house by the Judenhof.<sup>1</sup> Fannie was the first born. Then came Babette, Simon, Baruch, Jennie, Yetta and Samuel in turn. It is of Baruch or Barney, the fourth child and second son, his career and adventures that this story is told.



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## BOYHOOD

BARUCH MAY was born on the first day of March, eighteen hundred forty-three. His early life was like that of other village lads, an almost uneventful round of play, study and work. He was seven years of age when he entered the German School in the grey stone building with the great bell, and began his education under the stern tutelage of Herr Lehrer Hannes. The discipline was spartan, the curriculum severely practical. The theories of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel and other educational innovators had not yet come to trouble the traditional *Erziehungkeit* of Ebelsbach with revolutionary novelties in method and discipline. The dictum of Solomon: "He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes", was considered to be the last word in pedagogy and, that there might be no suspicion of lacklove on the part of the master, the persuasive birch was conscientiously and frequently applied. Reading and writing were the only studies pursued. It was quite properly assumed that such knowledge of ciphering as was necessary could be acquired at home and in the actual practice of the market, and as for geography and history, they were looked upon as intellectual luxuries, if indeed they were considered at all. To the Ebelsbach farmer, learning was a pragmatic business and not to be indulged beyond the narrow limits of a working mini-

mum. Families were large and life a struggle: schooling cost money and school children, producing nothing, were domestic liabilities. Obviously the best education was that which would most quickly transform the liabilities to assets and make the children capable of adding to the family income the wages of their toil. That was what Ebelsbach believed and practiced. The school was conducted five days each week during the seasons when its activities did not conflict with the more important work of the farms. There were two sessions daily, from eight to twelve in the morning and from two to four in the afternoon, but in the case of Jewish children the weary hours were lengthened by two, for no sooner were they released from the German School, than they were compelled to enter the Cheder or Hebrew School.

The Cheder was conducted by Rabbi Fried in a close, little room of his house.<sup>2</sup> A busy man was the good rabbi for, in addition to his duties as pastor and teacher, he performed numerous other tasks, those of a Shochat for example, since the Jewish community was too small to warrant a division of the labors incident to its religious customs and ritual. Perhaps his own industry made him exacting, perhaps his teacher's conscience was livelier than that of the master in the German School; at all events he was wont to resort to the birch even more frequently than was that formidable pedagogue and to further the cause of sound learning with corporal manifestations of its power, so that every letter from Aleph to Tav

had its own association of switchings in the minds of his pupils. A hard school doubtless, but an efficient one for to this day Barney May is able to read and write that ancient tongue of his fathers which he learned so long ago in the little Hebrew School of Rabbi Fried.

The children of Ebelsbach had little time for play and none of those aids to recreation which we have come to look upon as the necessities of youth. A handful of walnuts or a few beans served in lieu of marbles; a half dozen out-door games sufficed. Even after school was over there was scant leisure for sport. The place of children in that social economy was a quasi-servile one. The wish of the parents was law; the demands of the family were paramount; it was the business of the individual to obey.

Barney — the given name, Baruch was seldom used — assumed his share of the family burden at an early age. His first regular task was to carry the noon day luncheon of bread, cheese and beer to the men in the fields, a task none too easy for the sturdy legs of an eleven year old boy, for the farm lay several miles from the village and the road wound over the steep hills. A year later he himself became a laborer in the fields, trudging out each morning, working through the day, and returning to town in the evening.

One event of those early years is still very vivid in his memory. His father was a cattle dealer as well as farmer and on an occasion had purchased a number of cows from a man who lived at some distance from Ebelsbach.

A press of other work prevented him from driving home his purchase and Barney volunteered to do it for him. The way was long, the cattle were perverse, and the business proved to be such an arduous one that it was long after dark before the young herdsman approached the village. His road lay along a hill crest and on the slope across the valley he could dimly discern the little, weed-grown, Jewish cemetery, a spectral acre invested with many a weird legend of the countryside. For a little lad, bred to the fearsome knowledge of rural superstition, it was a terrible experience. He tried to forget the tales of ghost and goblin; to keep his eyes from the baleful view; but the more he strove to drive the dismal fancies from his mind, the more surely they fixed themselves upon it: the sight fascinated him and held his gaze as a serpent holds a bird. One story in particular took possession of him. It was the legend of a great dog of flame, a lion-like, ferocious beast which haunted the burial ground and had been seen by divers belated travellers of an evening, ramping in fiery rage among the neglected graves and dragging his flaring chains across the dusk. The boy was in an ecstasy of terror. He could not hurry on because the cows were leisurely and opinionated; he could not turn back; the minutes were like hours. A cold perspiration bathed his body and he felt the hairs stiffen upon his head. Every moment he expected to see the brute of fire leap from his den amid the tombs and charge across the valley. But either the specter dog had met

with some restraining conjuration or the village gossips had been misinformed, for nothing of a supernatural nature occurred and Barney reached home safely though still shaken by his adventure of the roads.

There was little to vary the round of toil and simple pleasures which were life in Ebelsbach. The arrival of the train was a day's high point of interest; a paper or periodical furnished material for a week's conversation. Once in a twelvemonth, perhaps a wandering troupe of players or acrobats would park their painted wagons on the green and perform to the great joy and edification of the young people, but such events were rare, days of wonder to be long dreamed of in anticipation and afterward remembered with delight.

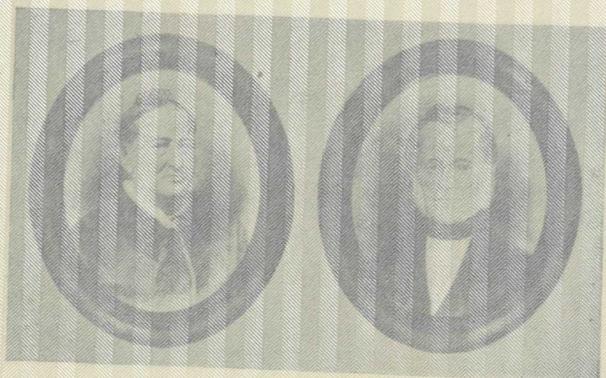
Now Ebelsbach, for all its remoteness and contented isolation, could not live entirely to itself. The great world outside knocked timidly but persistently at its mountain gates and found willing allies within. The spirit of aspiration and adventure betrayed the stronghold of rural quietude and a cavalcade of golden rumors entered to seize the imaginations of the people and to fill their minds with visions of riches and preferment in lands beyond the seas. America, that strange country of opportunity and fabulous wealth was calling to the restless, the ambitious and the oppressed of all the world to share in her bounty and romance. The call was heard in Ebelsbach and went not unanswered. Among those who set their faces westward were Fannie and Simon May, the elder sister and brother of

Barney. This momentous event in the family history occurred in 1854 when Barney was about twelve years of age. The adventurers settled in Montreal, Canada, where they prospered and where Fannie found a husband. Little did Barney think, that day when he said goodbye to his brother and sister at the railway station that, in three years, he too would be on the way to seek his fortune in the New World.

## TO THE NEW WORLD

THAT spirit of discontent which is progress, continued to win converts in Ebelsbach. The prospects offered by life in the little Bavarian village could not compare with the promise of the great new country overseas. The striving, adventurous soul of youth looked longingly westward to that later Canaan and would not be denied. This spirit was fed and fostered in the household of Abraham May by the letters which came from the son and daughter in Canada. They were prospering, they wrote, and finding hospitality and profit in their new home. America was a land of opportunity and there were places for all who willed to take them. They suggested that other members of the family follow them to share in her bounties. The idea gradually took root in the mind of the family and eventually—sans any definite act of decision—it became an accepted conclusion that Barney and Babette should follow Simon and Fannie across the sea. And so it came about that when Barney had passed his fourteenth birthday, preparations for the great adventure were begun.

In these days of rapid travel and swift communication, when distance has been annihilated by the magic of great ships and the very paths of space are mastered to our messages, it is difficult for us to imagine the emotions of love and sorrow in the hearts of those who



*Barney's Father  
and Mother*

*Plate III*

## TO THE NEW WORLD

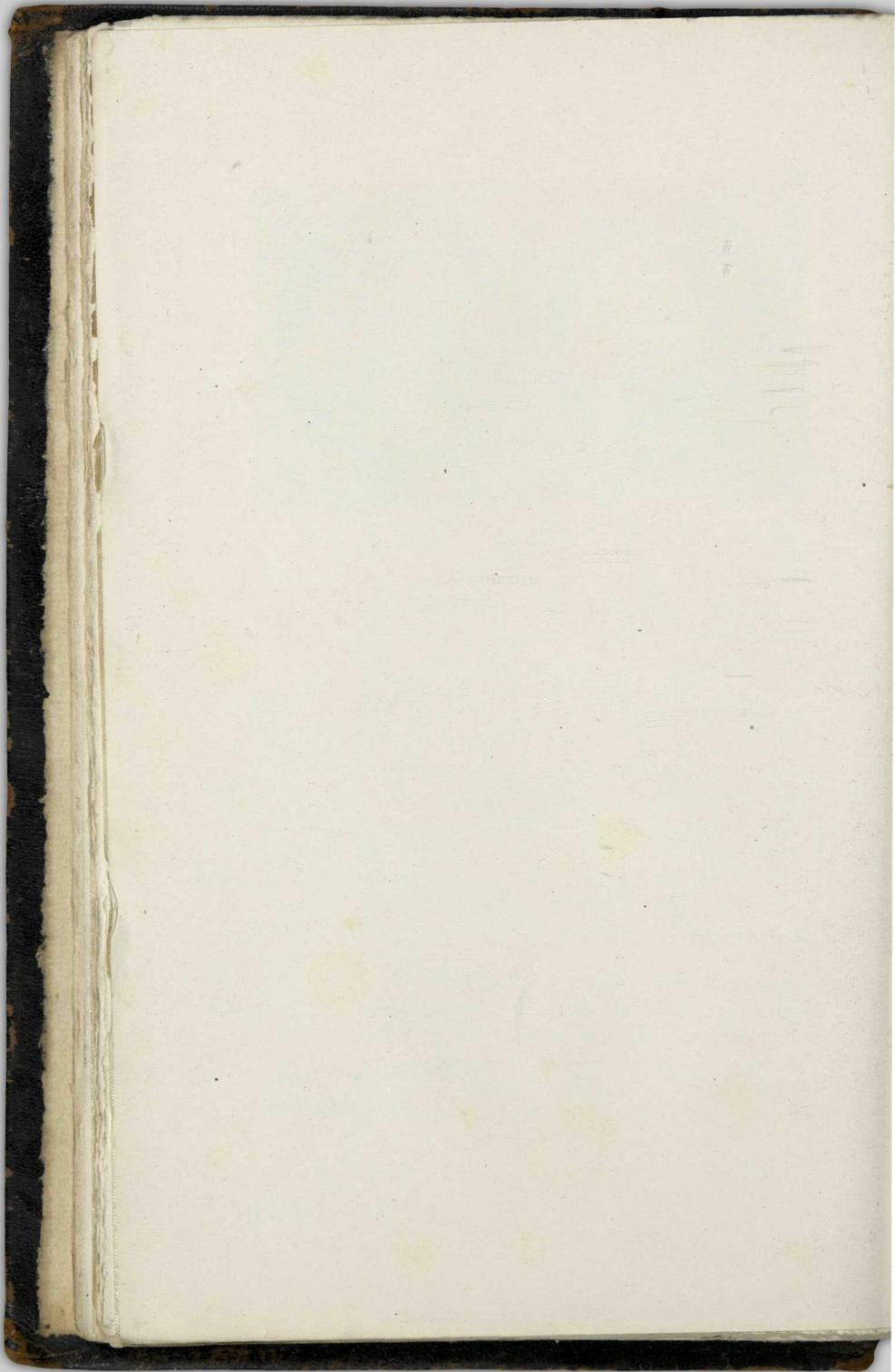
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were about to be separated by the leagues of half a world. To the mother and father in the house by the Judenhof, it was almost as if their children were about to pass to the country of the dead. Every cord knotted about the luggage of the pilgrims was darkly compensated in the snapping of a tender tie of home. The parents knew something of that pang of soul which came to the Athenians, in the ancient legend, as they watched the black sails bear Creteward the sons and daughters that should never more return. America was far away, Oh so far away! and they knew so little of it. Two of their blood had answered her call, and now two more were about to take the western road. It was hard to give them up, hard to think that they might never see them again; but it was better so, for youth deserves its chance in the world, and youth will be served. They were sad, those parents, but they held their peace and tried to smile.<sup>3</sup>

To the pilgrims it was a time of excitement and anticipation. Their interest in the adventure and the busy preparation for it saved them much of the fear and sadness which the others felt. There were many things to do. The thousand and one items of ordinary existence which one scarcely notes in normal times became suddenly important and demanded attention. Clothing must be got ready and all ones little treasures packed. Food, cooking utensils, and bedding must be provided, for aboard the ships of those days each one was his own caterer and steward. There was

passage to be arranged for, railroad tickets to be purchased, letters to be written to America. Then too, they must say goodbye to old friends and school-fellows. But at last the great day came; the farewells were spoken; the train stopped at the little Ebelsbach station and hurried on again bearing our wanderers upon the first stage of their journey toward the Promised Land.

Their father accompanied them as far as Hamburg, where after spending a few days, they embarked and set sail for America. The modern steamship crosses the Atlantic in six or seven days; in 1858 it required more than three times that period. Although there were no great storms and the voyage was an uneventful one, twenty-one days had passed before the weary pilgrims in the steerage beheld the harbor of New York.

Passing quarantine, they landed at Castle Garden one afternoon in February, 1858. Here they were accosted by a man who fired a volley of questions at Barney, but since neither he nor his sister understood a single word of English, their inquisitor had nothing but his curiosity for his pains. He persisted, however, repeated his questions, and again failed to make his meaning clear. Finally he gave up in disgust and signed to them to move on. This was their welcome to America. They discovered long afterward that the importunate gentleman was a United States Customs inspector.

To the young immigrants from the sleepy, little, country village of Ebelsbach, the busy

city was a place of marvels and its buildings palaces. Barney May has visited all the great capitals of the world since then, but even today, as he tells over his first coming to New York, something of that original wonder creeps into his voice. It was pleasant to be on land again after the cramped weeks of ocean travel, but with three days' rest, the pilgrims were ready to continue their journey. Taking passage on a slow coasting steamer, they set sail for Montreal where they were welcomed by their sister Fannie and her good husband, Isidore Samson. In the house of the Samsons on Notre Dame street the wanderers found their first home in the new world.

Samson kept a little jewelry shop and from his stock he made up a case of trinkets which Barney peddled about the city but, although folk were kind to the eager lad who spoke to them in a strange tongue, he did not find a ready market for his wares and it was decided that he should try fortune in upper Canada.

Meanwhile in far off Ebelsbach, the little mother longed and waited for a letter from her venturesome children, and months after their departure it came with news of their safe arrival and of her beloved Baruch's first business essay. Each month thereafter brought a yellow envelope from overseas and in it a sum of money as proof of the young merchant's business success. "Just think of it", she would say to the kindly neighbors who had come to learn of Baruch's doings—for he was a favorite in the village as well as in the home—"Just think of it! He has sent us fünf Gulden!"

Then her face would light up with a smile of pride and happiness. It was well that she did not know the self denial which had made possible the gifts or the dinners which Barney had foregone in order that he might send them.<sup>4</sup>

## WITH PEDLER PACK

**B**ARNEY'S first objective was the little town of Cornwall. Here, and in the country round about, he found ready purchasers and, having canvassed the region, continued his journey westward. His sister and brother-in-law had taught him a few English sentences such as: "Is dinner ready," and "I would like to go to bed," but the names of even the commonest articles of daily life were still mysteries to him. His first meal in Cornwall was an embarrassing, almost a disastrous one because of this. Unable to reach a dish of pickles which he desired and lacking the words to express his wish, he attempted to secure them himself and in so doing inadvertently scattered the contents of another dish over the table. Nor was his apologetic confusion relieved by the attitude of the gentlemen who sat next to him. "You damned Dutchman," said that superior worthy, and eyed him with disdain.

The next place visited was Brockville. From thence, after a few days, he took the narrow-gauge railroad to Perth where he was destined to make his first friends in America. On his arrival he asked a commercial traveller to point out a hotel and was directed to the Allen House. When he entered that hostelry, he met Johnnie Allen, a lad of about his own age and the son of the proprietor. The halting speech and alien appearance of the diffident stranger appealed either to Johnnie's curiosity or kindness, perhaps to both, and he proceeded

at once to make him feel at home. Johnnie was a born teacher and with boyish promptness he had already begun Barney's English education within the first hour of their acquaintance. He had probably never heard of the "direct method" in linguistic pedagogy, but he had the proper technique. Guiding Barney about the house, he pointed out various objects and named them, demanding the German equivalent in return. A real friendship sprang up between the two lads and during their first five days together they achieved marked advances in their mutual study of languages. Barney made a favorable impression upon the other members of the Allen household also and when he asked for his bill at the end of the week, the father refused to accept any remuneration on the ground that the account had been balanced by the German which Johnnie had acquired.

The kindly hospitality of the Allens was deeply appreciated by the lonely pedler lad from Ebelsbach and for a year he made their home the base of his mercantile operations, making excursions of from one to two days duration into the surrounding districts. There were no railroads or other means of conveyance and these trips had to be made on foot, often over wellnigh impassible country roads, but Barney's early training stood him in good stead and the financial success of his ventures together with the pleasant life in Perth more than compensated for the hardship and weariness of the work.

His progress in the language was rapid and his gift for making friends soon won him a

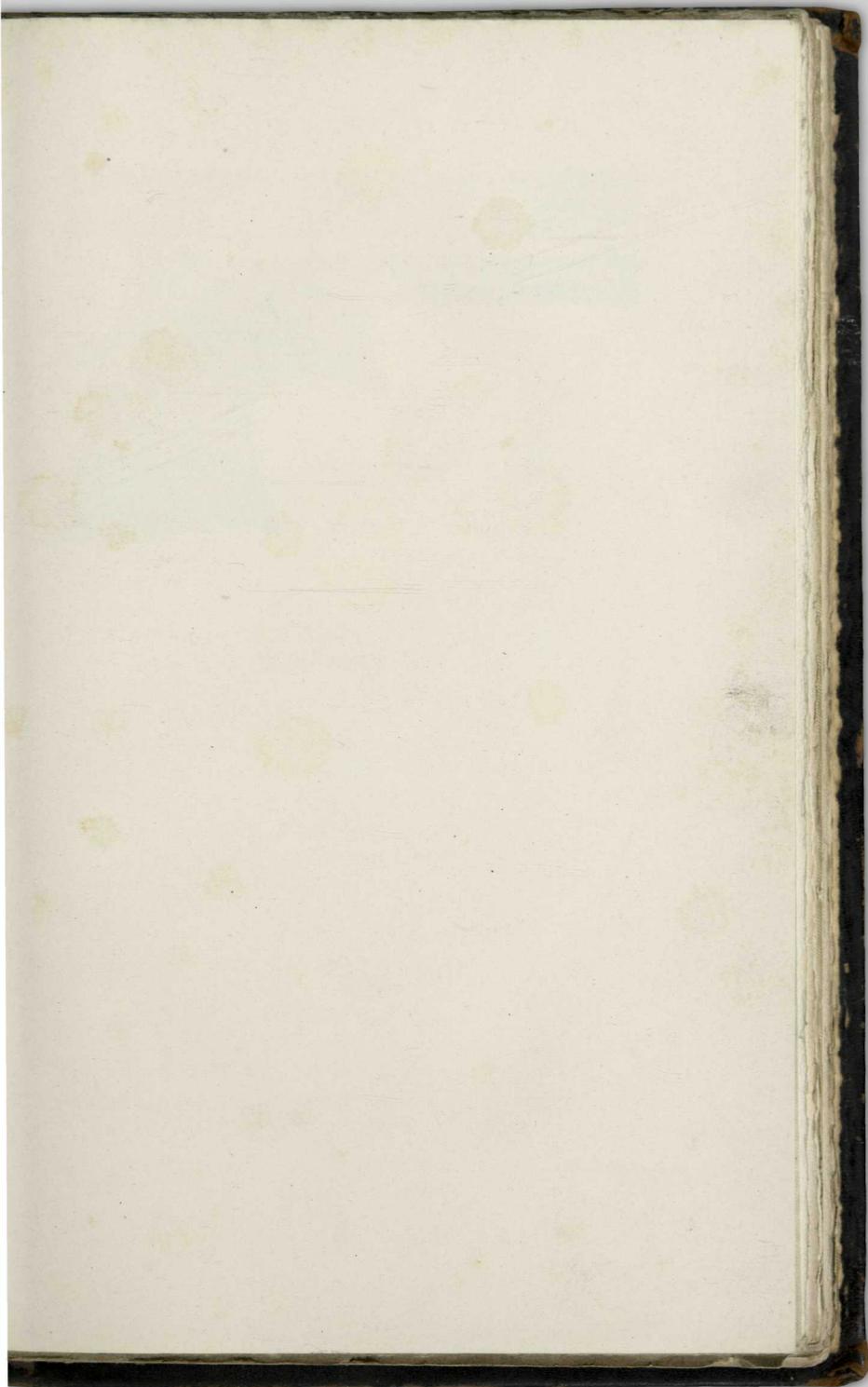
place in the younger set of the town. The boys and girls speedily forgot that he was a foreigner and, thanks to his winning personality and the brotherly championship of Johnnie Allen, he became one with them in the dances and rustic frolics which were their only diversions. Modesty coupled with a keen sense of humor and a sly delight in harmless, practical jokes, had much to do with his popularity in the community.

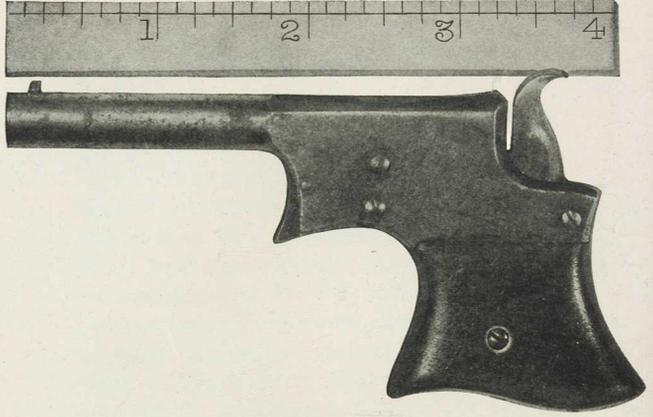
One of Barney's jokes, perpetrated during his stay in Perth, found its mark in the credulity of the senior Allen and, happily enough, brought much comfort to the trustful victim. True to the religious training of his childhood, Barney had persisted in those acts of personal devotion which are the habit of pious Jews in every land. One of these was the ceremony of prayer with phylacteries bound on head and arm, a rite in which Jewish boys and men indulge on every morning of the week except the Sabbath. One Sunday morning while Barney was thus engaged, he was surprised by Johnnie who, on observing the novel proceeding, demanded to know what it meant. Barney solemnly assured him that it was a sovereign cure for rheumatism and quickly changed the subject. But the jest went farther. Mr. Allen was a sufferer from the disease and when he learned of the marvelous remedy through the helpful Johnnie, he became eager to test it and refused to be satisfied until Barney had secured a set of phylacteries from the States and had initiated him into the mystery of binding them. Suggestion and the faith of Allen triumphed. He felt much better after the treatment and greatly

embarrassed the now contrite Barney with his thanks.

On another occasion Barney was the victim of a practical joke, Johnnie Allen being cast in the role of tormentor. One summer's evening while the comrades were out for a stroll with two girls of their acquaintance, Johnnie produced two cigars, handed one to Barney and proceeded to light the other one. Barney had never smoked in his life but, having no desire to appear deficient in that manly accomplishment, particularly in feminine society, he accepted the treacherous Achaian gift as if to the manner born, and kindled it with a flourish. There was a grin on Johnnie's face and the girls were smiling but Barney did not notice them. A few puffs, and the evening had lost its beauty for him; a few more puffs and even the charms of his fair companions were forgotten in a profoundly personal and inner misery. That gold-brown siren of the vaporous tresses, Our Lady Nicotine, had worsted her mortal sisters in rivalry. He walked no more with them that evening.

A year passed pleasantly in Perth. By the end of it, Barney was already proficient in English and had learned his pedler's business well. Word came to him that excellent business opportunities were to be found in the Lower Province, *i. e.* Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Cape Breton and, after advising with his brother-in-law, he determined to go there. Bidding goodby to his friends in Perth, he returned to Montreal to prepare for his second campaign.



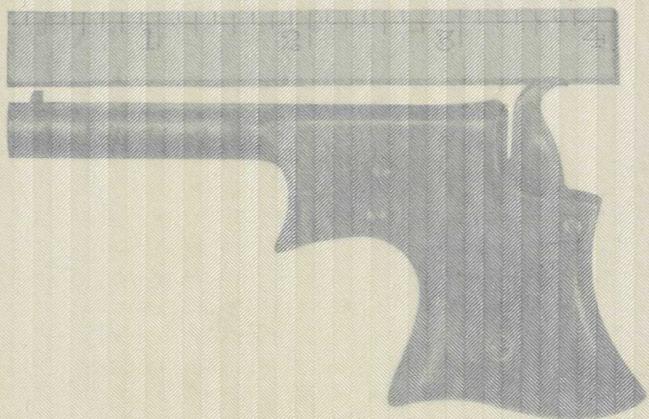


*Pistol carried by Barney  
on his travels*

## THE LOWER PROVINCE.

AT the beginning of the season, Barney decided to make an excursion into New Brunswick, Cape Breton and Newfoundland where there was a promising market for his goods, particularly for the cheaper type of American watch. His brother-in-law accompanied him on the venture. From Montreal they went to Quebec, thence by steamship to Antigonish which they made the base for their journeys to remote settlements of the province.

They had scarcely begun their travels in the wilds when the stern northern winter set in bringing with it hardship and dangers. The ill made roads were choked with snow or rendered treacherous by ice; blinding blizzards and intense cold added to their discomfort. They had many misadventures and some narrow escapes from death. Once in Cape Breton, they were overtaken by a terrible storm. Heaping snow drifts made the road almost impassable. The mail coach in which they were traveling moved very slowly against the biting, mountain gale which blinded horses and driver and, as night came on, the temperature fell rapidly. The driver, none too skillful at best, his faculties numbed by the cold, worried the tired horses with the whip and kept the coach lurching from side to side in his impatience to reach the post station—still more than seven miles away across the mountains. While attempting to get the coach out of a



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gully into which it had slipped, one of the traces broke and the vehicle overturned flinging the driver into the drifts and painfully injuring Samson's head. The driver's fingers were so stiff with the cold that he was unable to mend the harness nor could he bring his dazed mind to discover a way out of their grave predicament. They were miles away from any habitation; night was upon them; they must get on; to remain where they were was to freeze to death. Certainly they must get on, but how? The brothers-in-law held a consultation and decided to try the only possible course. After reviving the driver with whiskey, they placed him on one of the horses, Isidore clambering up behind him. Barney cut the traces and mounted the other horse and they set out on their seven mile ride. It was not until nine o'clock that they reached the welcome refuge of the post station. Their clothing had frozen about them like suits of armor and they were so rigid with cold that they had to be lifted from the backs of the horses and carried to the house. Here they were rubbed with snow, given hot drinks and wrapped in blankets, but it was twelve o'clock before they had sufficiently recovered to narrate their adventures.

On another occasion they were compelled to cross the Strait of Canso, a distance of about six miles. The man whom they had engaged to ferry them across showed little enthusiasm for the trip; the ice was running he said. The two travelers were not sure whether this was a warning or an excuse to get out of work. They knew nothing of the

dangers of that strait, particularly the menace of the waters when the ice goes out in the Spring. "The ice is running," meant no more to them than "the train is running," would have meant; and they insisted upon crossing. They started in the morning and worked their way through the floating cakes of ice until about ten o'clock when the ice began to close in about them. By ten-thirty they were securely locked in the drift and for seven hours they lay there unable to extricate themselves. A cold wind, against which their overcoats were scant protection, sprang up. There was no food on board, no way of making a fire and at any moment the grinding ice might crush the light timbers of their frail open boat. About five o'clock in the afternoon they managed to attract the attention of people on the shore, but the condition of the stretch of ice packed water which intervened between the boat and the land gave them little hope that a rescue would be attempted. The folk on shore did nothing. After a little a strange thing happened. Isidore Samson arose in the boat and began to make a series of extraordinary, rhythmic gestures with his arms. Barney feared that his brother-in-law's mind had been affected by the danger and exposure, but as he looked shoreward he observed three men run down the steep bank and launch a boat. Slowly they fought their way toward the marooned travelers, now pushing the ice away from the bow, now dragging the boat across some rocking pan, but at length they reached the objects of their toil and brought them safely to land. Samson was

taken to the home of one of the rescuers and Barney was made comfortable at the hotel. This arrangement struck him as an odd one at the time and it was not until long afterward that he came to learn the reason for it and to appreciate that spirit of fraternal loyalty which had caused men to risk their lives to save a party of strangers one of whom had thrown them the sign of a brother in distress. In 1867, in Williamson Lodge, No. 169, F. & A. M. of Pennsylvania, Barney May was raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason, and then he understood.

Although the life was hard in the Lower Province, Barney was succeeding in business and would have been content to remain for another two years had not the call of a new adventure come to him. His brother Simon had gone with the first fevered rush to the gold fields of British Columbia and had set up a store in a mining camp of the Caribou Diggings. On receipt of a letter from him, Barney packed his belongings and began his long journey to the Great North West.

## THE CARIBOU

IT was still the day of the prairie schooner and the pack train. The transcontinental railroad had not even been projected and eight years were to elapse before it should become a reality. A traveler from New York to the Pacific coast had to choose between the weary and dangerous overland route across the plains and mountains and the one which lay through Central America. In this case, at least, the old adage was confirmed, for the longest way 'round was the shortest way indeed. It was much quicker and easier to go by way of the Isthmus, and Barney selected that route. He boarded a coasting vessel at New York and sailed to Panama; crossed the Isthmus, and re-embarked on a ship which carried him to the Golden Gate. San Francisco, already a fair sized city and on the crest of its first boom period, had little attraction for Barney who was eager to reach the scene of his new activities as soon as possible. He was compelled to stop there for a few days, however, until passage could be secured, but the first northbound ship carried him to Portland.

Portland, as Barney first saw it, was little more than an overgrown country village. True, it had progressed mightily from the huddle of tents on the water-front which had marked it in the earlier days, but it still displayed much of that raw crudity which belongs to the frontier settlement. Its houses and shops were

rough and unpretentious structures of weathering timber and its streets were filthy sloughs. The unwary pedestrian on its single-plank side-walk was all too likely to find himself suddenly plunged kneedeep in mire or showered with the flying mud from the wheels of passing drays. What a contrast between that early settlement by the river and the majestic city which occupies its site today! After a day's sojourn in Portland, Barney went by steamer to the already flourishing city of Victoria on Vancouver Island. From Victoria, he proceeded inland by river-boat to the town of Yale, situated on the Fraser River about eighty miles from the coast. Here he was met by his brother, Simon. Having purchased supplies and four pack-horses for the transportation of them, they set out for the Caribou on foot.

Although it was mid-April, the winter had not yet loosened its hold in the high altitudes of the north country and progress was difficult and slow. The trail led through the mountain wilderness and parts of it had to be traversed with the aid of snow-shoes. There were storms to endure, steep paths to be negotiated and wild streams to be crossed. At one place on their route they came upon a lake. There were no boats and nothing to be done but to attempt a crossing on the backs of the swimming pack-horses. They mounted and urged the unwilling animals into the icy waters which wet them to the hip and, by the time they reached the other shore, their bodies were so numb that they could scarcely stand. The horses had chosen the course across the lake

and on landing the travellers had difficulty in finding the trail again, but toward nightfall they discovered it, pitched camp, and kindled the fire of which they were sorely in need.

The journey from Yale to the Caribou consumed ninety days and it was July before they arrived at the little mining colony which was to be the scene of their labors and to which they were to give their own name.

To call Mayville a town would have been a cheerful euphemism for it was only a small clearing in the heart of the virgin forest. The May cabin was the one building of a permanent nature in the district, the only structure boasting a lockable door. The miners lived in tents or primitive shacks, the passion for gold leaving them no time to devote to mere house building. While a claim payed or offered promise of payment they worked feverishly and when it failed or dwindled they moved on in a restless search for new diggings. Being wise in their generation, the Mays attempted no actual mining operations themselves, but preferred to develop the claims, to which they held title, on a share basis with practical miners. They were the merchants, the victualers and the bankers of the camp and their cabin was the center of its activities.

Food, clothing and tools were difficult to obtain in that remote region and were very high in price. All the necessities of life had to be transported from beyond the mountains on the backs of Chinook Indians. Rubber boots worth two dollars in the States brought sixteen dollars in the Caribou, penny packets of

matches were one dollar and a meal for which a New Yorker of the period might have squandered twenty-five cents, cost the Canadian miner two and one half dollars. Expenses were high but gold was plentiful. An ordinary wage worker earned twelve dollars per day and many claim-holders averaged several times that amount in the yellow metal. There was no coin or paper currency, the medium of exchange being gold dust which was valued at sixteen dollars the ounce. Little chamois leather bags filled with gold dust in one, two, three, four and five ounce denominations served as legal tender.

The Caribou Diggings were situated in a deep gulch or valley through which ran a little mountain river fed by streams which served the flumes at the mines on the slopes. The settlement was on the valley bed and but a few hours rain sufficed to change the little river into a flooding torrent which drove the inhabitants to seek safety on the mountain sides. The mines were, for the most part surface diggings, the gold being extracted by use of a sluice or by pan or rocker. This method ensured a modest but fairly uniform production of gold, and when a fortunate man struck a pocket, *i. e.*, a rich deposit of pure metal in the form of nuggets, a fair living might be increased to wealth. Few fortunes were made, however, and fewer yet remained long in possession of their owners. The same spirit of adventure, the same restless wanderlust which had made possible the discovery of Eldorado, hastened the dissipation of its re-

wards and many a son of chance was glad to have enough to pay his way out of the country at the end of his stay.

The population of the Caribou was made up of wanderers from the lands of the four winds, with no other bonds between them than their common quest and that comradeship which belongs to men who live in the open. Strong, bronzed, bearded fellows they were, independent, fearless, and peaceable enough except when in liquor. Their life was simple; their pleasure primitive. Gambling and drink were their best loved vices; but withal, they were honest, generous and companionable—ever ready to help a luckless comrade and capable of the most quixotic kindness. In the early days there were no white women in the district. Occasionally a Chinook squaw would come to sell provisions, but until 1863 the Caribou was an Eveless Eden.

The story of the coming of the first white woman casts an interesting side light upon life at the mines. A certain prospector, one Cunningham—a tall, gaunt, devil-may-care adventurer from Kentucky—had developed a very rich claim and had suddenly become wealthy beyond his wildest dreams. Even the poker den—a shanty situated next door to the May cabin—and the camp bar failed to satisfy his desire to spend money, so he sent to his home state for a wife and brought her to the diggings at the expense of a small fortune. He celebrated her arrival by giving a feast to some of his friends. One of the items on the menu was eggs, a whole dozen of them, at five dollars per egg.

Of government in the formal sense there was none at the time of Barney's arrival. Although nominally under the sovereign power of the British Crown, the Caribou was a law unto itself. The individual citizen trusted to the penetrating logic of his well oiled gun and the swiftly executed verdict of public sentiment to protect his property from criminal attack. Killings were not infrequent, but were looked upon for the most part as purely private matters in which it would have been indelicate for other gentlemen to interfere. Theft was almost unknown; thieving was too unhealthy a profession to attract many practitioners. Barney was in the Caribou for three years before a single session of court was held, but in 1863 a British judge arrived and conducted assizes. The trials over which he presided had little more than dignity to commend them. Like the Sultan in one of Edmund Burke's speeches, he governed with a loose rein that he might govern at all; for the code of the north-west mountains was not the code of Temple Bar, and the Caribou was ready to direct justice in what it conceived to be the proper channels by argument of arms, if need be.

There was no Postoffice in all that region and mail was delivered but four times a year, being packed across the mountains by Indian couriers. The "New York Saturday Night" was the only paper ever seen in camp, but even though its news was four months old before it reached them, the miners welcomed it as a voice from the world of civilization. In this way the thrilling stories of the Civil War

came to them and were read out to the assembled men, many of whom had friends and relatives on one side or the other. As a member of the only merchandising firm in the Caribou, Barney May was made its first post-master by popular vote, his duties being to distribute the quarterly mail and to act as custodian of the modest camp letter-pouch until the returning Chinook should carry it to the world across the divide. The postal rate was one dollar per letter.

The May cabin was in a clearing, a little plot of burned-over land, surrounded by the dense forests. Black bears and other wild denizens of the wood visited it from time to time. On one occasion a large she bear appeared and was killed by a shot from Simon's rifle. This was in the early evening. About midnight the male bear came sniffing about the camp and was attacked by the dogs. One dog ventured too near the formidable beast and was hurled many feet through the air by a blow from its paw, whereupon the others became more discreet and permitted bruin to escape. Bears were not much feared and were prized for their pelts and the meat which made a welcome addition to the monotonous diet of bacon, beans and bannocks which formed the miners' constant fare.

Shortly after his arrival in the settlement, Barney was put under the skillful tutelage of a Mexican guide named Bablo and soon learned the secret of baking bannocks between two pans heaped round with coals, as well as the preparation of beans and bacon. The good

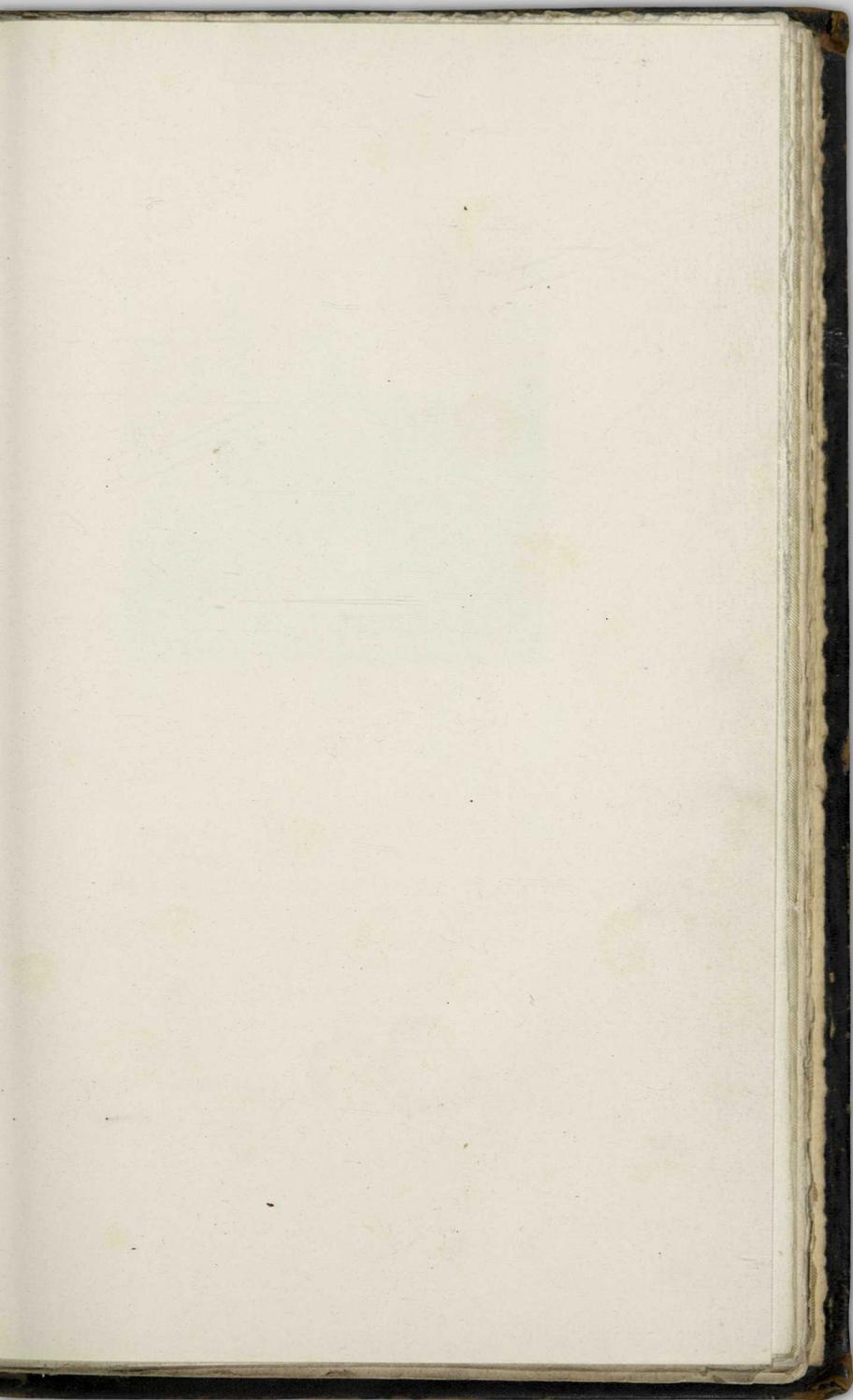
Rabbi Fried would have been horrified could he have seen the hot, earnest face of his former pupil bent above a sputtering skillet of forbidden flesh which he was cooking for his evening meal, but what was one to do? Observe the kosher law and starve! The law of life transcended the code of Moses, in the Canadian wilderness, and let a dish be ever so trefa, it was eaten with relish for lack of a better. Eggs and fresh meat were almost unknown in that part of British Columbia. The only taste of fresh meat other than bears' flesh which Barney had during his stay at the mines was a succulent bit of mule steak, the animal having fallen and injured himself beyond further usefulness as a beast of burden. The Mays and ten or twelve others shared in this fortuitous dispensation and thought it very good indeed.

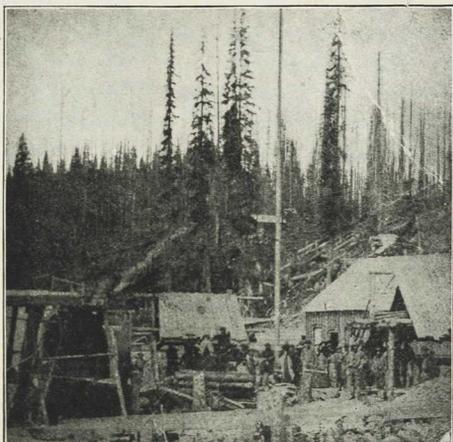
The Chinook Indians, who had been the original inhabitants of the country, were a peaceful tribe and gave the miners little trouble. Simon May had mastered their language and acted as interpreter in their dealings with the Crown. Barney, in his apprentice days as a pioneer, had the white man's natural distrust of the red brother and this, together with his ignorance of the native tongue, led him into one laughable adventure. He had been left alone at the cabin, his brother being engaged in some business on the slope, and was not a little frightened by the arrival of a party of Chinooks who accosted him with the question, "Sakali dae?" Which being translated, means, "Are you the boss?" Barney thought they said, "Are you ready to die?"—and

immediately fired a shot into the air, the signal of danger in camp. In response to his call, men came running from all directions, but when the Chinook question was repeated, they burst into laughter. The red men were not looking for blood but for beans, and after they had been feted by Simon, departed content, though somewhat mystified by the strange action of the young tenderfoot.

Hospitality, that virtue of primitive societies which all too often loses its finest attributes in more sophisticated civilizations, was a matter of course in the Caribou. Men who are the pawns of fortune are ready to share when they are in her favor, knowing not when her capricious smile may turn away and compel them to seek aid of those who still enjoy her rich regard. Though the necessities of life were very costly in the camp, no hungry wanderer or broken prospector turned away empty from the door of the cabin or the mess-fire of the miner. One day a young Jew knocked at the May's door and asked for food. He was without money or friends and had met with no success in his hunt for gold. The son of a New York banker, he had heard the call of Eldorado and had left everything to answer it. Now he was far from home and destitute. They fed him and gave him work so that after a time he was able to make his way to the coast. Barney May little knew that this act of human kindness would be like bread upon the waters to him in darker days to come.

For almost four years the two brothers lived and worked together, but the terrible mountain fever entered camp and Barney was taken down with it. The disease was almost always a fatal one in the mining camps for there were neither physicians nor facilities for proper treatment. The only hope was to get to the coast as soon as possible and Barney began his pilgrimage of suffering across the mountains.





*Caribou Diggings  
in 1863*

## A PILGRIMAGE OF PAIN

THE wilderness trail from the Caribou to Yale was no easy road for a healthy man and to Barney May, alternately burning and shivering with fever and chills and scarcely able to drag one foot after the other, it was a path of torture. Six or seven miles was the longest distance he could cover in one day—often he was too weak to walk and had to be carried—and three terrible weeks had elapsed before he gained the Fraser River and the boat which was to carry him to the coast. Arriving at Vancouver, he took ship for San Francisco. He reached the city on a Friday, early in September, 1867 and found lodging in a private boarding house. Two days later the place was badly shaken by an earthquake which destroyed a number of buildings. Happily, Barney escaped uninjured. He lived in San Francisco until health returned and then embarked on a ship bound for San Juan del Sur on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua. His agreement with the transportation company called for complete passage from the Golden Gate to New York and board while en-route.

In San Juan del Sur, Barney again met the young Jew whom he had befriended in the Caribou. The banker's son had not improved his fortunes since they had parted in Mayville and at once asked for a loan of two dollars and a half. He was made happy with five dollars in gold.



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With other eastbound travellers, Barney crossed Nicaragua to Greytown (San Juan del Norte), the terminus of steamers plying between New York and the Isthmus, and here another dangerous adventure fell to his lot. The ship which was to have taken them to the north, failed to arrive—it had been lost in a storm at sea as they learned later—and since there was no marine cable or other means of communication with the outside world, there was nothing to do but await the coming of a vessel. The transportation company had erected a number of rough sheds for the transient accomodation of its patrons and these were now crowded with men, women and children. Weeks dragged on but no vessel came. The scanty supplies of food which the company had provided had become exhausted and the unfortunates were compelled to forage for such subsistence as the country afforded. The diet consisted of bananas and a meat, euphemistically styled "Spanish chick", which was nothing but the tender flesh of young monkeys. There was no protection against the swarms of mosquitoes which infested that low coast region and the hapless travellers were soon covered with painful sores. Infections followed and fever became epidemic. When the welcome ship arrived a number of the unfortunates had already perished and less than two thirds of the original company reached New York alive.

Weakened by his previous illness and the new exposure, Barney May fell an easy victim to the tropical fever and insect poisoning, and

had it not been for the grateful offices of the young Jew whom he had befriended, it is probable that this story would never have come to be written. The banker's son found him helpless and delirious, tended him as best he could, secured him a berth in the sick-bay of the ship, and cared for him until the vessel reached New York. On their arrival, May 1866, the young man communicated with his father who sent his private carriage to the dock and had Barney carried to the home of his mother who, with his sister Yetta and brother Samuel, had come to America after the death of Abraham May.<sup>5</sup> A doctor was summoned, but gave little hope of Barney's recovery. Through weary weeks of suffering and delirium, the devoted sister nursed the sick boy back to life and health but four months had elapsed before he was able to walk again.<sup>6</sup>

## MARRIAGE

WHEN Barney was well once more, he and his sister Fannie opened a little millinery shop on Broadway near Thirty-fourth Street, with Yetta as milliner. Trade came all too slowly, and after a brief trial, the partners sold their stock and removed to Williamsport Pennsylvania, where they opened a store. Here Barney met William Silverman and, after a time, established with him a millinery and drygoods business on Third Street. Williamsport at that time had a population of about eighteen thousand people and the new firm prospered.

In 1868 Yetta married Jacob Morganstern and went to Pittsburgh to live. The newly married couple occupied a portion of the house of Mr. Morganstern's uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Fleishman whose daughter Pauline became a very close friend of the young bride. Yetta with the true feminine penchant for match-making, lost no opportunity to impress upon her brother Barney the virtues of her friend, and upon his first visit to Pittsburgh, he vindicated her judgment by promptly falling in love with Pauline. A courtship, with the usual painful oscillations between rapture and despair, followed, but at length their troth was plighted and the delighted Yetta was made happy by the success of her loving chicane.

MONTEFIORE HOSPITAL  
School of Nursing

The Fleishman home was a house in Diamond Street on a part of the site now occupied by the Frick Building Annex. The front room on the ground floor was used as a law office by John M. Kennedy, Esq., who later became a judge. In this room Pauline and Barney were married on the seventeenth day of January, 1872, the ceremony being performed by Rabbi L. Mayer.

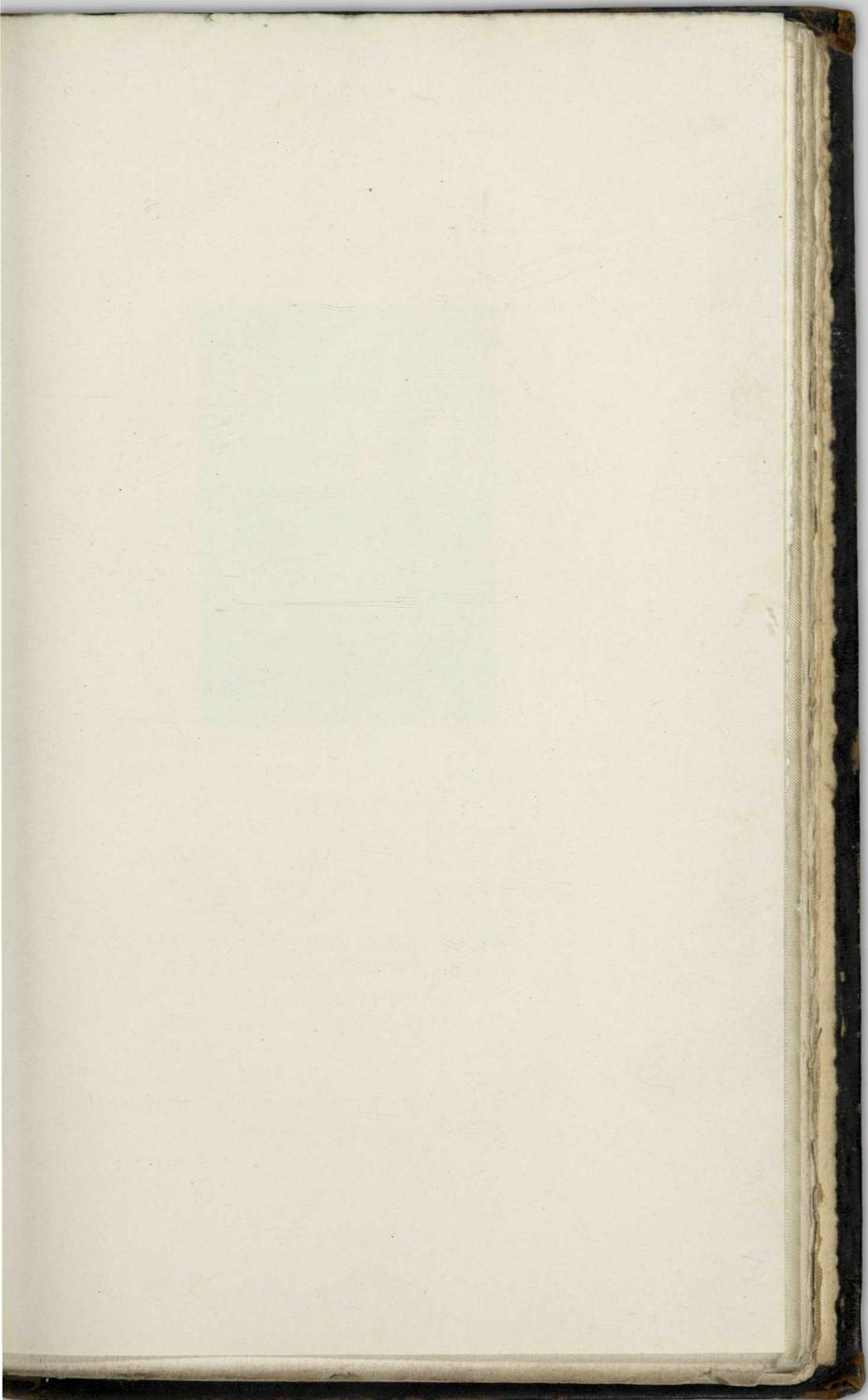
The young couple visited friends in New York and Philadelphia for a brief season and then went to live on West Street in Williamsport. Both Walter and Estelle May were born there.

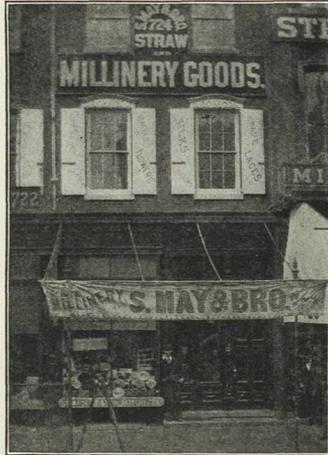
After his brother's departure from the Caribou, Simon May had continued at the mines, but with the reduction of the gold supply in that vicinity and the rush of prospectors to the newly discovered diggings to the northward, it was no longer profitable to continue the business. In 1873 he returned to the East and founded a wholesale millinery and supply concern in Philadelphia.

Marriage had given Barney the ambition to make money more rapidly, but the prospects for business expansion in Williamsport were not bright enough to satisfy him. Accordingly the family moved to 919 North Seventh Street, Philadelphia in 1875 and Barney became his brother's partner in the Arch Street jobbing house, the firm being known as S. May and Brother. It was the year before the Centennial Exposition, the influx of people had already begun, and the city was entering upon an era of trade and prosperity such as it had never

known before. The Mays' business venture was successful from the beginning but its fruits were not won without toil. The brothers did most of the work themselves, buying and selling, packing and shipping, busying themselves early and late with a thousand details of barter and account. In 1880 they purchased a building on Arch Street, which had been the United States Tax Office, to accomodate their growing trade, and here they continued until the Spring of 1884 when the entire block was destroyed by fire and the business wiped out. Although property and stock were protected by insurance, the brothers met a heavy loss by the interruption of trade. Temporary quarters were secured, and the partnership continued until 1887 when it was dissolved.

The Mays' were members of a company which had purchased the rights in a process by which shoes and slippers were to be fabricated from colored fibres. The product had been manufactured successfully already upon a small scale but additional capital was needed to push sales and increase the output. Barney accordingly went to England, late in 1886, where he succeeded in interesting British business men in the project and in selling the manufacturing rights for South America. Beautiful samples of the product were presented to leading actresses of the London stage and Queen Victoria herself was graciously pleased to accept a pair of mauve boudoir slippers. Judicious advertising, the obvious merits of the business, and May's persistence convinced the British capitalists and made them very eager to

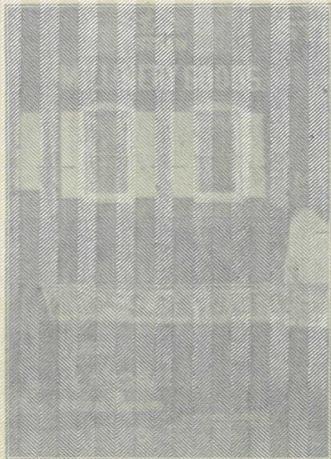




*The Philadelphia Store*

secure the European rights to the patent; but just when success in his venture seemed assured, Barney's short-sighted New York associates ruined it by refusing to do more than license the use of the process abroad and by fixing a prohibitive minimum price on all shoes made under the patents. In February 1887 Barney returned to America disgusted with the stupid greed of his associates. The shoe company struggled on weakly for a time, but eventually collapsed leaving the May brothers poorer by twenty thousand dollars.

During the days of the Philadelphia business, Barney had acted as travelling salesman for the firm and his search for customers had taken him all over Pennsylvania. One of the most profitable and promising territories lay in the west with its center at Pittsburgh. The famous Oil Boom was at its height and money was plentiful. Thousands of poor farmers suddenly found themselves wealthy because of the viscid, yellow treasure which the drill had discovered beneath their lands and a great, new buying power was established. Towns and cities sprang up where there had been but wilderness; everywhere there was speculation, enterprise, and feverish activity. The oil country settlements were like western mining camps, crude, lawless and primitive. Tents and clapboard shanties served for houses and the hurriedly constructed hotels were filled with guests, often before completion. Barney was frequently compelled to stop in hostalries where the doors and windows were of white muslin and where the food was scarce and costly.



*The Philadelphia Store*

*Plate VI.*

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His success in Western Pennsylvania and the opportunities which Pittsburgh seemed to offer for merchandising had led him to consider settling there and after his disappointing trip to England he determined to begin his struggle anew with Pittsburgh as the scene of operation. Accordingly he removed from Philadelphia in 1888 and, in partnership with a local merchant, opened a general store on Market Street, near Fifth Avenue.

## PITTSBURGH

**I**N the Pittsburgh of 1888 the modern department store, with its army of employees, its elaborate system of efficient control, and its multiform stocks, was unknown. The typical mercantile unit of that day was the little store or shop, conducted by an individual merchant or by a co-partnership. Barney's partner had been the proprietor of a dry goods and notion shop for some time, and was encouraged by his success in it to attempt a larger venture. He had built up a good clientele and the prospects for an increasing trade were bright, but sufficient capital to float the enterprise was wanting. Barney was impressed by the opportunities offered and invested all the remaining proceeds of the Philadelphia business in the new venture.

Neither May nor his partner had the knowledge or experience necessary for the profitable conduct of large-scale merchandising. Their years as small shop-keepers ill fitted them to cope with the intricate problems of management incident to the business upon which they had embarked. Ignorance of technique and the acceptance of the ill-considered advice of friends, led them to sink the major portion of their limited funds in plant and fixtures, leaving a dangerously narrow margin of working capital available for the prosecution of business. Even with this handicap and with the debts which they were obliged to contract in order

to secure goods, they might have made shift to weather the storm had it not been for the unscientific and too liberal credit system then prevalent in retail trade in Pittsburgh. This was the factor which was to prove their ultimate undoing.

Although the store was popular and the volume of business large, overhead leakage and bad accounts devoured the profits. Barney worked early and late in a vain attempt to offset these unfavorable conditions by sheer human energy, but strive as he would, the burden of debt continued to increase. As time went on, the partners were forced to borrow money from relatives and friends, thus adding personal embarrassment and worry to their already onerous burdens. In the May household the strictest economy ruled. Barney accepted only a small salary from the business, since both he and his good wife looked upon themselves as trustees rather than owners of a concern in which the savings of their friends and relations were so precariously invested. The struggle was a long and discouraging one; but they persevered, hoping against hope. Five years of labor and anxiety, five years of pinching and planning: then failure!

The autumn of 1893 found the United States in the crisis of a financial panic. High protective tariffs, prodigal banking and widespread inflation of values—fostered by the greed and stupidity of the politico-financial group which had dictated the economic policies of the nation since the Civil War—had reached their culmination during the presidency of

Benjamin Harrison; and now, that the second election of Grover Cleveland threatened to reduce swollen profits, a period of acute depression and lack of confidence ensued. The situation was further aggravated by an unfavorable trade balance, a depletion of the gold reserve and the agitation for a bi-metal monetary standard. Retrenchment, lack of confidence, deflation, the aplastic currency system, a lack of gold and the withdrawal of funds from eastern banks to meet western harvest demands precipitated the panic. Mills and shops were closed; banks and railroad companies failed; production was curtailed; credits were withdrawn; and the price of money soared to well-nigh prohibitive rates.

The business, already tottering under a weight of debt, and unable to realize quickly upon its outstanding accounts or to obtain further credit, was forced to close its doors. The Sheriff took possession of the stock and fixtures on the afternoon of Christmas Eve, 1893. Barney May was a bankrupt: almost half a century of toil and enterprise had ended in failure.

It was typical of the man's courage and faith in himself that although defeated he would not surrender. The spirit of the pioneer, which had led him out of sleepy Ebelsbach and had carried him scathless through the hardships and adventures of Canadian wilderness and tropical swamp, continued to assert itself; and, strengthened by the devoted courage and resourceful optimism of his good wife, he began his struggle anew.

He had lost everything but his integrity and grit, but from his defeat he had learned the secret of victory.

Once, during the days while he was still striving to make the business a success, he had made the acquaintance of a gentleman in the employ of a New York department store. Over a modest dinner in the dollar-a-day hotel—where economy forced Barney to stop while in New York—they fell to discussing business problems and possibilities. The Gothamite was enthusiastic about the opportunities for profit to be found in the sale of patent remedies and told of the success of a proprietary medicine department in the store with which he was connected. Barney was so much impressed by the recital that he determined to try the experiment and, upon his return to Pittsburgh, immediately set about carrying his plan into operation. His partner and many of his friends predicted disaster and tried to dissuade him from the attempt but he had his way and established a small stock of medicines and a soda water fountain in the basement of the store. The venture proved successful and attracted considerable custom.

After the catastrophe of 1893, while he was casting about for a new means of making a living, it occurred to him that a patent medicine store might prove worth trying, but he had no capital with which to start it. Several friends offered to advance him small sums of money and from one of them he accepted a modest loan on condition that he should be permitted to repay it in weekly



Mr. and Mrs. May  
circa 1870

May 1870

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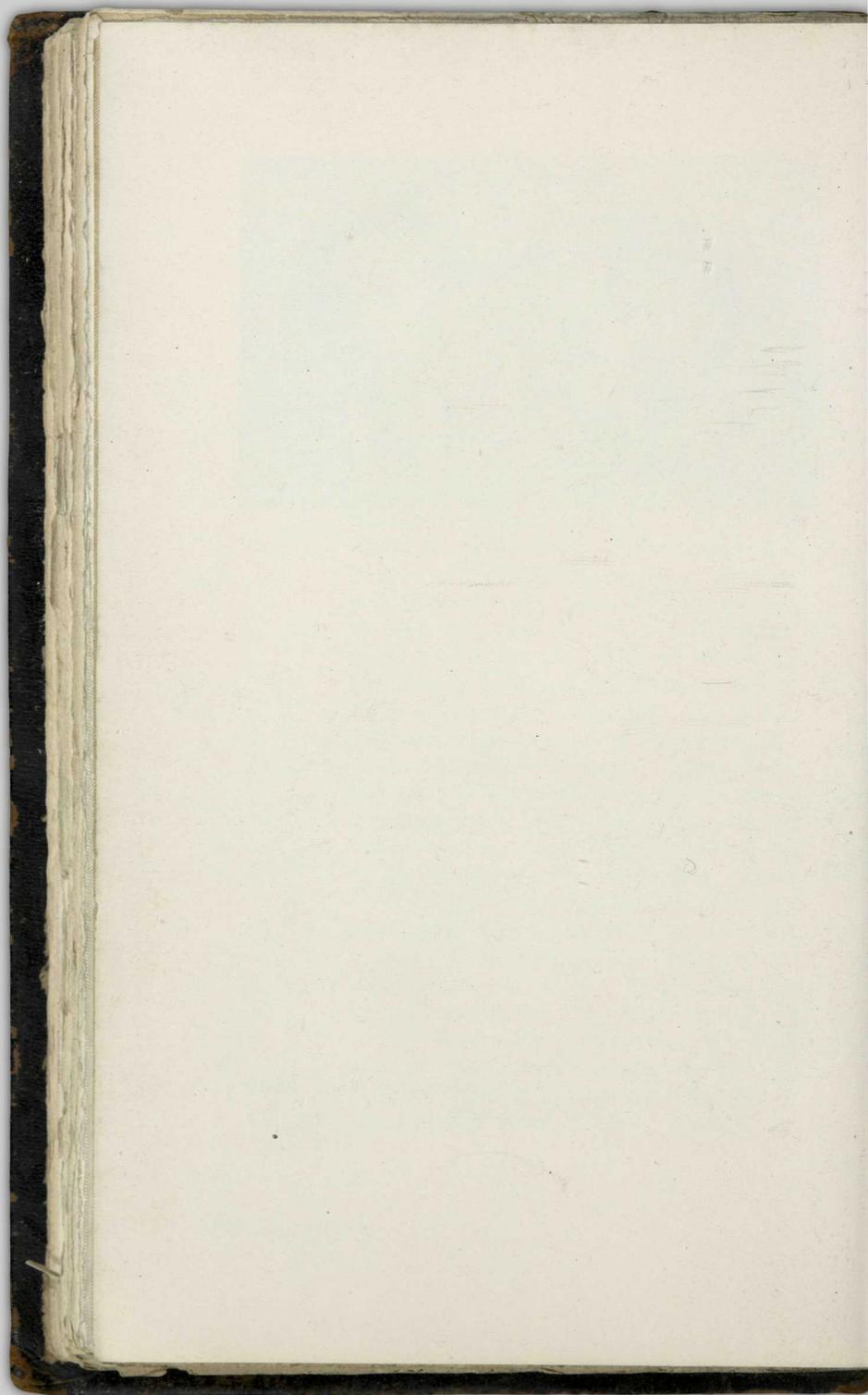
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*Mr. and Mrs. May*  
*circa 1875*

*Plate VII.*



installments after three months' time. This sum purchased the first scant stock for the new business. Mr. John R. Gregg leased to him a store-room and building at 506 Market Street, and the store was opened in April, 1894. The diminutive stock of medicines occupied the left side of the sales-room, the other half of which was sublet to a glove dealer, while the second floor was rented to a millinery firm.

The greatest lesson which Barney had learned from his five years of disaster was this: "Buy nothing for which you cannot pay in cash; sell only to those who do likewise," and in spite of pessimistic prophets who foretold failure, he made it the basic rule of his business and adhered to it faithfully. His other maxims were: "Service," "Satisfaction," and "Publicity."

Barney had discovered the secret of personality in merchandising early in his business career, as witnessed by an incident of the days when he kept a millinery store in Philadelphia. One evening after closing hours, a belated but importunate customer knocked at the door and insisted upon being shown the hats. The accomodating Barney displayed all his wares, but after many trials, the exacting fancy of the lady was still unappeased. The milliners had gone home; a patron must be pleased; so Barney trimmed the hat himself and the delighted customer departed to sing the praises of his establishment.

The idea of service, now an accepted fact in American mercantile policy, was a little-tried novelty in 1894. The old latin dictum, *caveat*

emptor, let the buyer beware, was still held in veneration by the sons of barter, and the modern commercial canon, "No transaction is complete until the purchaser is satisfied," was looked upon by the majority of tradesmen as impractical and quixotic. Barney May introduced the "money back" principle in the proprietary medicine business and added to it every device for the accomodation and satisfaction of customers which experience and observation could suggest. He studied his market and his patrons until he was as familiar with them as he was with his stock.

Barney's choice of business proved a wise one and its progress was favorable from the beginning. Cash purchase and cash sales enabled him to market his goods at a much lower rate than that asked by the druggists of the city, and this together with his advanced selling policies secured a large clientele of satisfied customers whose good will did much to further growth and to create a public sentiment in favor of the May methods, which proved valuable during the contest between Barney and his competitors.

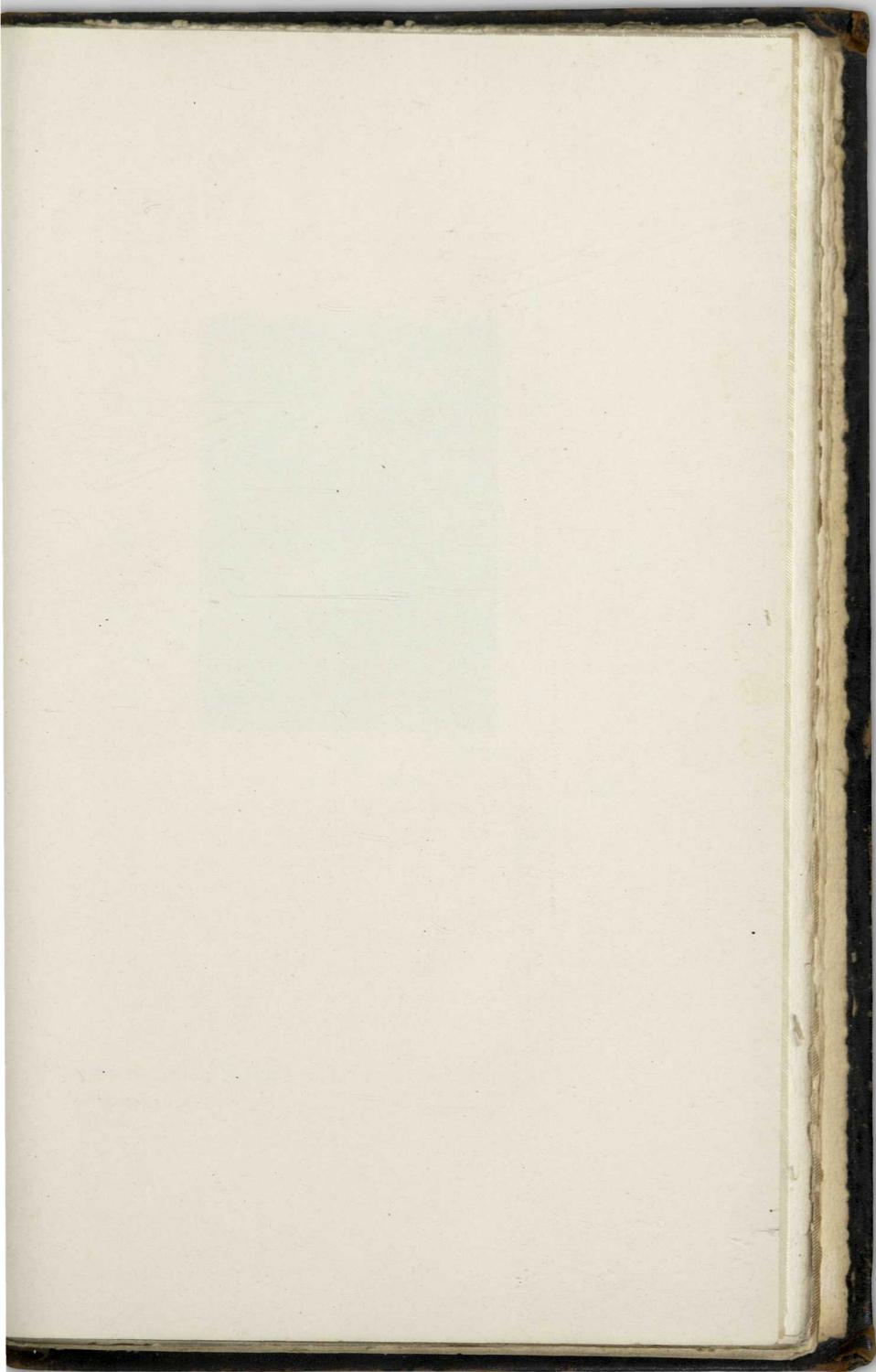
The conservative element in the local retail drug business did not take kindly to the innovations which Barney had introduced into the trade, particularly his practice of radical price-reduction. Individually and through their dealers' association, they instituted vigorous measures to combat the methods which seemed to them to threaten the prosperity of their business. Great pressure was exerted to prevent Barney from carrying out his announced

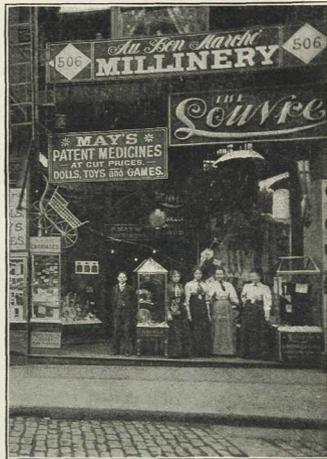
policies. Jobbers and wholesalers were threatened with loss of custom if they sold him goods and several manufacturers, fearing the ill-will of the retail merchants, tried in the courts to enjoin him from selling their products below the minimum price which they had fixed. Opposition only served to stimulate Barney to more determined effort. Where the market was closed to him, goods were secured through the secret coöperation of friendly jobbers and manufacturers or indirectly through intermediary purchasers. The May enterprise continued to prosper and the conservatives, finding that neither embargo nor legal proceedings availed, gradually gave up their hostile attitude so that today there is nothing between the Mays and their fellow dealers except that healthy competition which, we are told, is the life of trade.

The contest was a long and troublesome one but it served to strengthen the business and to develop those modern ideas of economic management, reasonable price and perfect service which Barney May had independently evolved and which are the *sine qua non* of present day merchandising the country over.

One by one, as Barney's sons completed their education and learned the business, he took them into partnership, thus adding new impetus to the enterprise. By this time the little half-shop on Market Street had been long since outgrown and more commodious quarters secured. Branch stores were gradually established for the convenience of the buying public in various districts of the city, and today there are eight of them radiating from the central

mother-store and executive offices in the May Building at Liberty and Fifth Avenues a monument to the courage and industry of the farmer boy from Ebelsbach.



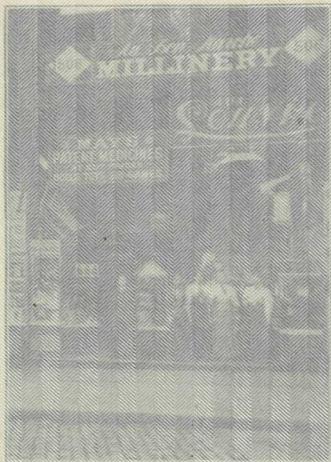


*The First Pittsburgh Store  
Market Street*

## LATER DAYS

THE protracted struggle against adverse circumstance had brought its satisfactions and material rewards, but now that it was over, the long neglected need for rest and relaxation began to assert itself. From early youth, hard work had been Barney's portion and the fourteen years of business activity in Pittsburgh had been filled with particularly onerous labor, worry and vicissitude which had tested the strength and courage of his good wife and himself. Although the energy and will which had made the achievement possible were unabated, the demands upon them were lightened—especially since the sympathetic coöperation of the young partners, his sons, had added new vigor to the enterprise—and Barney found himself the possessor of a leisure long denied. He did not give up active participation in the business—to a man of his habits and temperament that would have been impossible—but from time to time he would lay aside his work for a season of recreation. The spirit of adventure and the love of travel which had carried him across the sea and up and down the land were as strong as ever and in the indulgence of them he found his highest delight.

The first pleasure trip to Europe was made in 1902. Mr. and Mrs. May, accompanied by their son, Herbert, his wife and baby, sailed from New York and landed at Cuxhaven. From thence they went to Hamburg, Berlin,



*The First Pittsburgh Store*  
Market Street

PLATE VIII

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The first pleasure trip to Europe was made in 1902. Mr. and Mrs. May, accompanied by their son, Herbert, his wife and baby, sailed from New York and landed at Cuxhaven. From thence they went to Hamburg, Berlin,

Frankfort and other cities. Leaving Germany, they entered Switzerland, and passed thence into Italy where they visited the lake country and the greater Italian cities, spent some time in Rome, and returned to the coast by way of St. Moritz, Paris and Havre. They saw the wonders which the civilization of the Continent had been creating and storing up through centuries of travail and achievement—the castled vinelands of the Rhine, the mellow charm of the Riviera, the majesty of the Alps and the feverish, pulsing life of mighty towns, but for Barney May the high point of that tour was elsewhere. Not even the Eternal City itself, with the golden glamour of storied centuries about it, meant so much to him as a sleepy little town amid the Bavarian hills, the town from whose peaceful gates he had departed forty-four years before. The farmer boy had come home again; the wanderer had returned to the village of his fathers.

He found Ebelsbach almost unchanged in outward appearance. The Schloss, the School House, the Town Hall, the Hotel, and the terraced farms, laced by ribbons of grey road, were still the same. White geese marched in solemn file across the green, children romped in the sunshine, and a whisp of blue smoke curled lazily from a great chimney of the old house by the Judenhof. The eye was deceived, but the heart knew all too well that beneath the seeming immutability of things great changes had taken place. The folk on the streets and in the doorways were strangers to Barney. There was no familiar face, no well known

voice to greet him. The very house in which he had been born sheltered a family ignorant of his name. A few old ones in the village vaguely remembered his people when names and events were recalled to them, but that was all. The pathos of time had fallen like a grey sea fog between the past and the present.

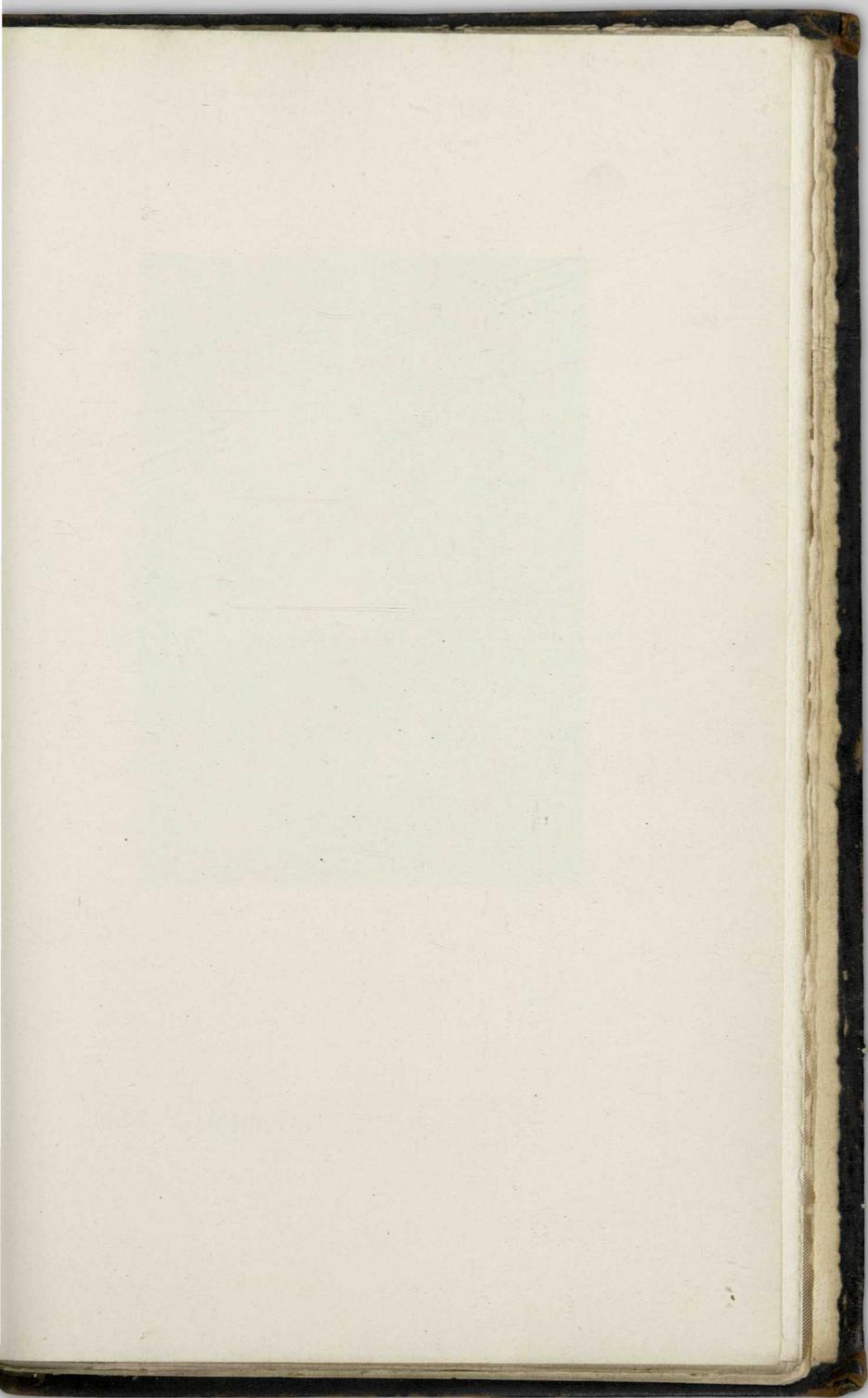
In the period between 1902 and 1913 the Mays made ten journeys abroad, touring the British Isles, the Continent and a part of the Orient. Frequently they were accompanied by one or another of their children. Their travels led them through France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor and Egypt. The outbreak of the Great War put a stop to foreign travel, but its loss was compensated by tours of America, the latest of these being a trip to the Pacific Coast in the early months of the present year (1917).

Barney May has lived for almost three quarters of a century, and yet he is not an old man in the ordinary sense of the term. A rugged physical constitution, strengthened and preserved by habitual exercise, a well ordered, temperate life and a sunny disposition have enabled him to remain young in despite of the years. Even his pastimes are calculated to preserve his vigor of mind and body. He is an ardent golf player and spends many an hour on the links. When the weather is too inclement for sports, he satisfies his need for bodily activity with long walks. At home his pleasures are simple. A quiet game of cards with his wife and comrade, a romp with his grandchildren and their young companions,

the discussion of current events with his sons  
or with some old friends; these are the delights  
of his leisure.

The labor and heat of the day are passed;  
trial and adversity have been defeated by faith  
and courage. The pilgrim rests after the long  
journey in the calm contentment of his home,  
his children and grandchildren about him, his  
dear wife by his side.

*At length the silver of old age serene;  
Two with clasped hands that wait to see the rise  
Of evening's star in the hushed west; a love  
Without farewell; and the untroubled dark.*





*Pauline F. May*

## AN AFTERWORD

ONCE upon a time there was a little grey mouse who had taken for his dwelling a cabin in the Caribou. He was a sly fellow but sociable and was not long in making friends with a lonely young man who had come across the continent to live in the same cabin. Now there is an age-long feud between the race of mice and the race of men, and the little grey people know that they are forever in danger, nevertheless the mouse of our story found not an enemy but a protector in the person of the lonely young man who would not suffer a trap to be set and who permitted him to go about his mousely business unmolested. One day a great rainstorm had filled the creek and the camp was threatend by flood. The young man ran for his tall boots which were under his bunk in the cabin, but when he attempted to draw them out he found them strangely heavy. The little mouse had turned them into barns and had stored them full of rice and raisins against some far-off day of want. Each white grain, each withered grape had cost him a journey from barrel or box and now chance had dispossessed him. A penniless, alcoholic photographer who had strayed into camp and whose empty stomach had no scruples against the mouse's fare, was rejoiced when the young man offered him the hoard, and when the little grey millionaire returned he found himself bankrupt.



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The point of this tale lies in the fact that although rice and raisins were very scarce in the Caribou and although the peculations of the mouse were costly and annoying, the young man remained his friend and protector. Even after this glaring revelation of bad faith, no trap was set in the cabin. The kindly spirit which marked his treatment of the humble creature who was his friend is the outstanding trait of Barney May's character. It shows itself in his gentleness toward little children, in his thoughtful consideration of older folk and in his loyalty to his friends. Born a peasant and forced to fight his way through difficulties and over obstacles, he has nevertheless maintained his sweetness of disposition and has achieved a courtliness of demeanor which marks him as one of the true noblesse—a knight of the order of pioneers.

Although Barney May twice fought his way upward to success, having begun the second struggle for a competence at fifty years of age after the first one had been lost, his achievement was primarily a moral rather than a financial one. Many men have amassed riches and become the weaker for it; it is the rare man who grows with his fortunes. Endowed with a vigorous physique and a quick mind, schooled in the lessons of poverty, hard work and simple living, he was able to make the most of his opportunities and to create openings where none seemed to offer. His native endowments and the habits of his youth destined him for success. It was because of this, because of his own will-power and energy

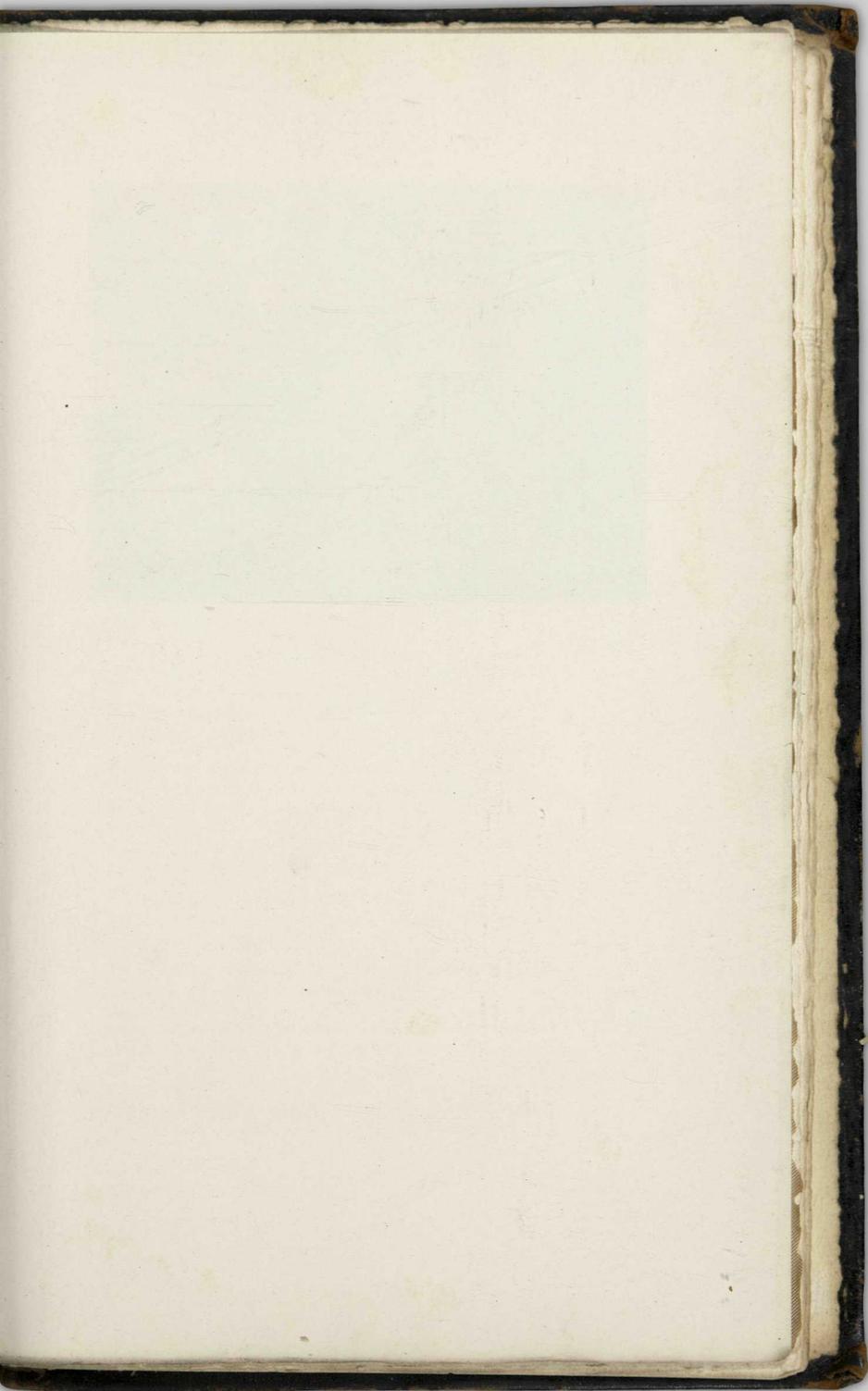
which admitted no defeat, that he could never appreciate men who failed. It seemed to him that achievement was a purely personal thing and lack of it signified a defect, a want of energy on the part of the individual. He could pity the failure and help him generously in his hour of need, but he could not understand him. This attitude proved an asset as well as a limitation, and it had its effect in the training of his partners and his employees. It is a peculiarity of the human animal that it will often strive to fulfill another's hope of it when its own ambition makes no such demand. Success is more frequently a response to an outside expectation than we are willing to admit, and where a normal man or woman works in a continuous atmosphere of effort and enterprise, the chances are that he or she will not only respond to the stimulus but will also become habituated to the incentive gesture itself. Your true pioneer is an individualist, and Barney was a pioneer. That his individualism was tempered by kindness saved it from becoming selfishness, but did not detract from its virility.

Of his ability to estimate the character and worth of men, of his talent for friendship, of his honesty, integrity and probity, of his wit and good humor, his generosity and the happiness of his domestic life—the story itself speaks, and to say more to those who know and love him would be supererogation.

This story is happily unfinished. It began more than seventy-four years ago, and that many years may pass before the last chapter

must be written, is the cordial hope of all who know its hero.

Here beginneth another chapter in the story of Barney May, Pioneer \* \* \* \* \*





*Sons and Daughters*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Nine children were born to Abraham and Rosa May. Of these two, a boy and girl, died in infancy. The others were: Fannie, b. Feb. 26, 1817, Babette b. Mar. 26, 1839, Simon b. Feb. 24, 1841, Baruch (Barney) b. Mar. 1, 1843, Jennie b. Jan. 7, 1845, Yetta b. May 3, 1849 and Samuel b. Mar. 18, 1853. Of these, Babette (Mrs. M. Harris), Barney, Jennie (Mrs. H. J. Messing), Yetta (Mrs. J. Morgenstern), and Samuel survive.

<sup>2</sup>Mr. Walter May visited the old school room in 1961. He describes it as a cramped, little cubicle, furnished with a few low benches of rough wood, and without a single inviting feature.

<sup>3</sup>Yetta (Mrs. Morgenstern) in a letter dated August 20, 1917, says, "Fannie's and Simon's departure I do not remember, but if I live to be a hundred years old, I shall not forget Barney's parting from his mother. In those days going to America was a parting forever, and Oh so hard!

<sup>4</sup>"From the first month on, he (Barney) sent five gulden each month to show his parents what a successful merchant he was, but in later years he told me he denied himself many a dinner just to be able to give his parents that joy.\*\*\* When the postman brought a yellow envelope containing one of his letters, every one in the village would rush to our home to hear what mother had from Baruch and the others. I can see my mother's smiling, happy face yet as she would say, 'and he sent us fünf gulden, just think of it!' Then all would rejoice with mother in a son so good and so successful, for you must know, that Baruch was as much a favorite then as Barney is now."—Letter from Mrs. Morgenstern.

<sup>5</sup>Abraham May died in Ebelsbach in the early part of 1863 and the mother accompanied by Yetta and Samuel came to New York to live.

<sup>6</sup>"Barney was brought home sick unto death with some terrible fever. With all our grief, we were happy to have that good son and brother back with us. We sent at once for a doctor who gave us little encouragement. I was installed as nurse. My mother swore that she would not live if her beloved Baruch was taken from her. I was determined that both should live. He was delicious for many weeks, but our efforts and prayers were at length effective and we got that beloved boy well again."—Letter of Mrs. Morgenstern.



*Sons and Daughters*

Plate X

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Nine children were born to Abraham and Rosa May. Of these two, a boy and girl, died in infancy. The others were: Fannie, b. Feb. 26, 1837, Babette b. Mar. 26, 1839, Simon b. Feb. 24, 1841, Baruch (Barney) b. Mar. 1, 1843, Jennie b. Jan. 7, 1845, Yetta b. May 3, 1849 and Samuel b. Mar. 19, 1853. Of these, Babette (Mrs. M. Harris), Barney, Jennie (Mrs. H. J. Messing), Yetta (Mrs. J. Morganstern), and Samuel survive.

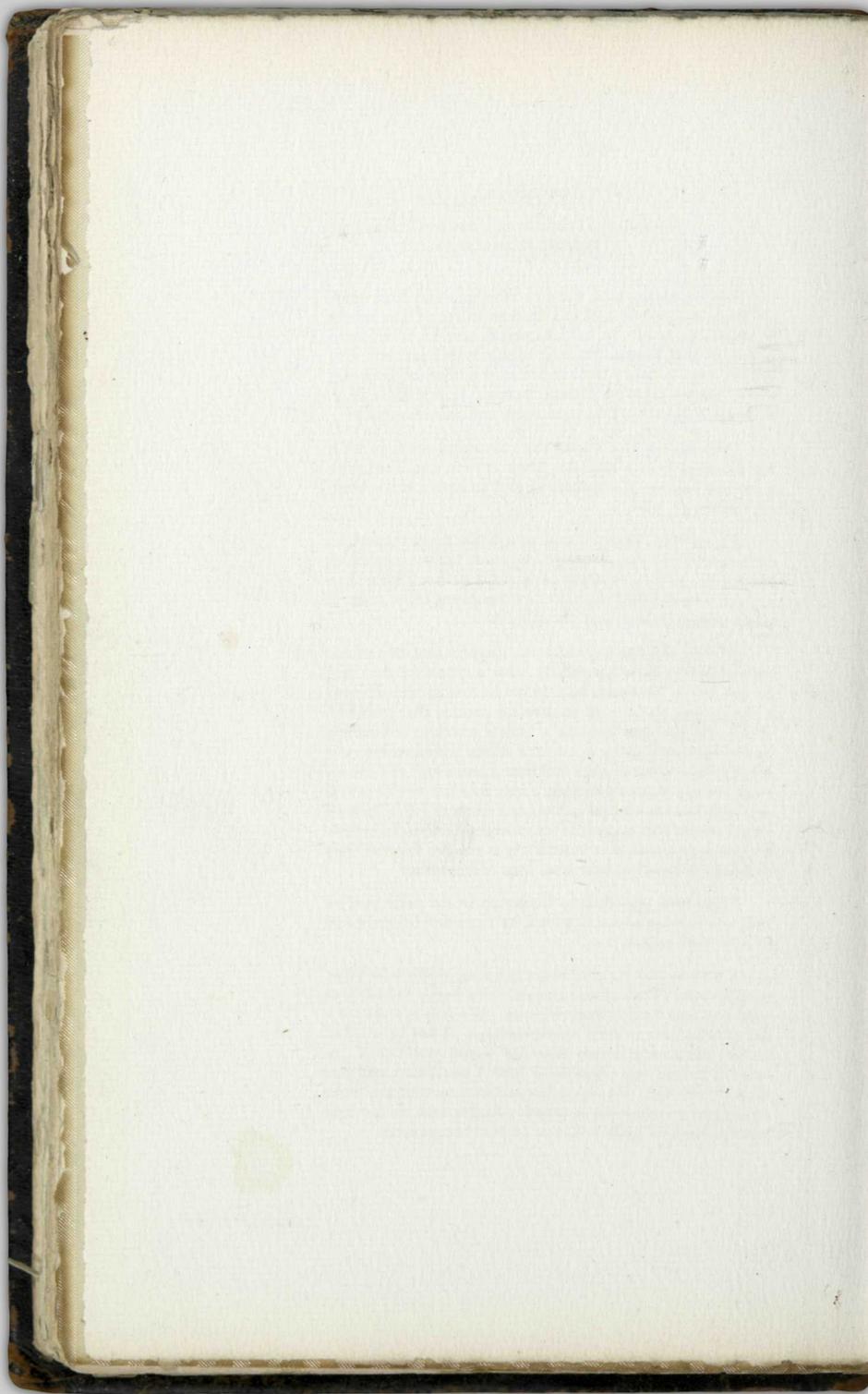
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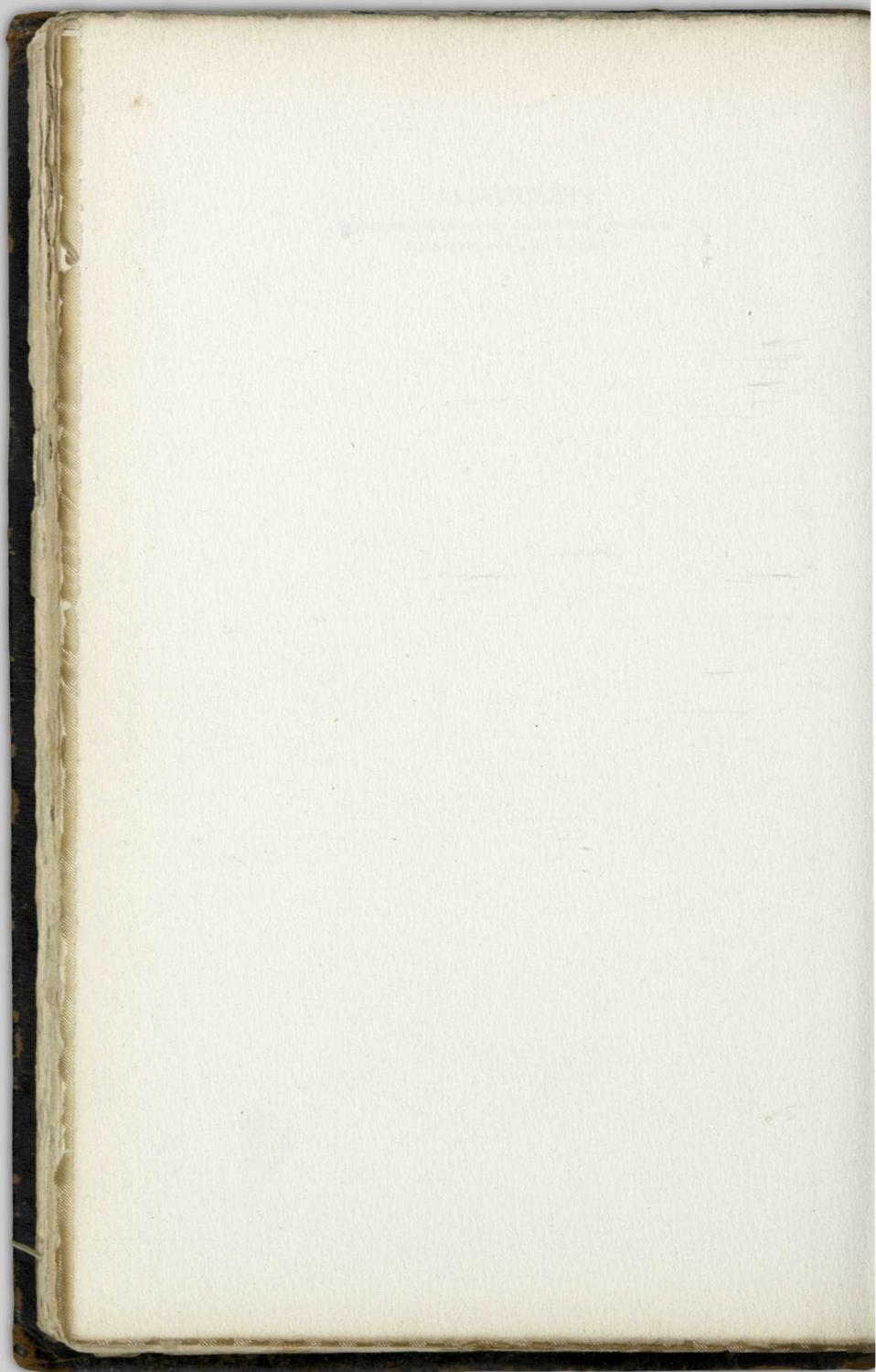
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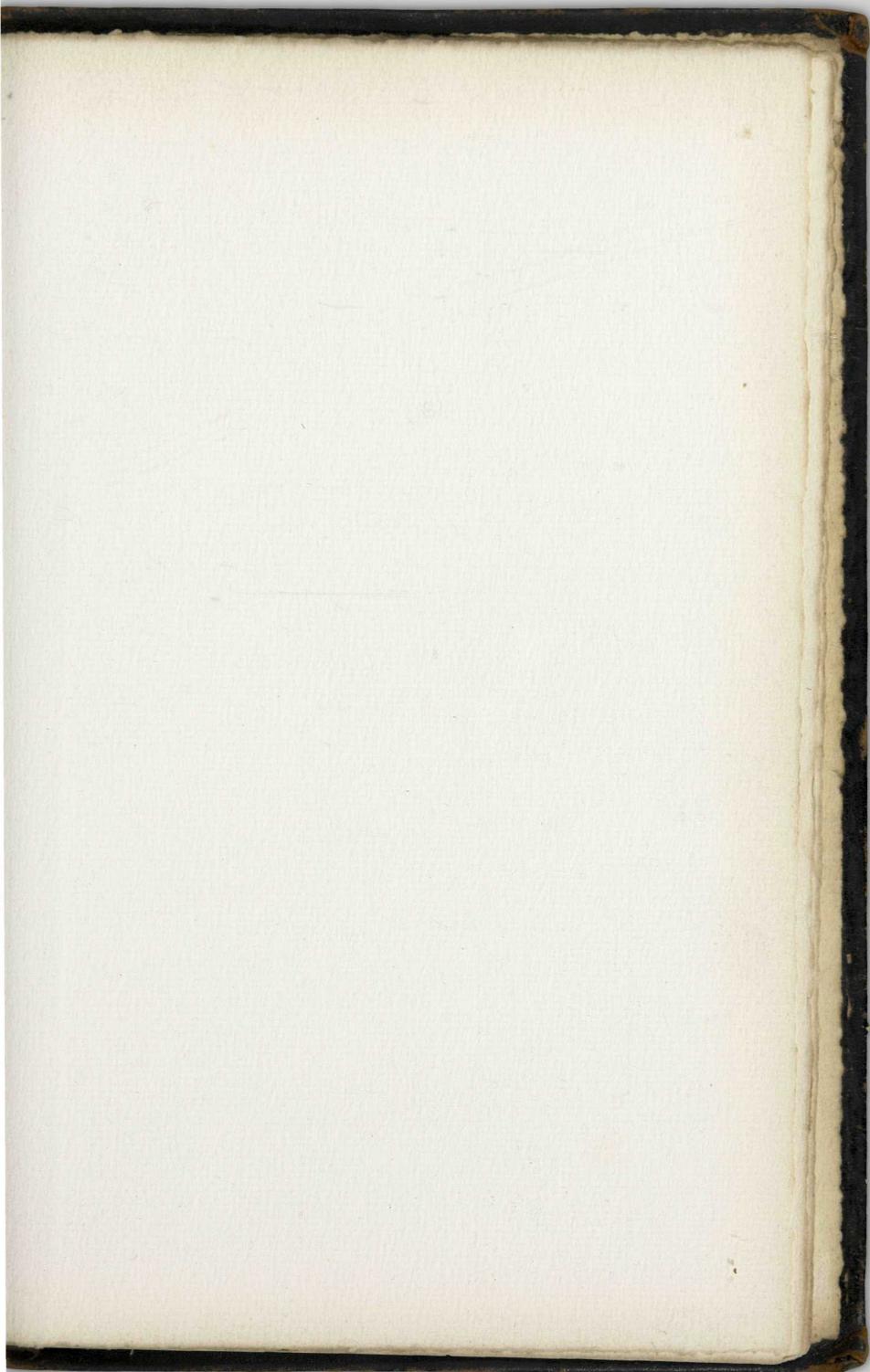
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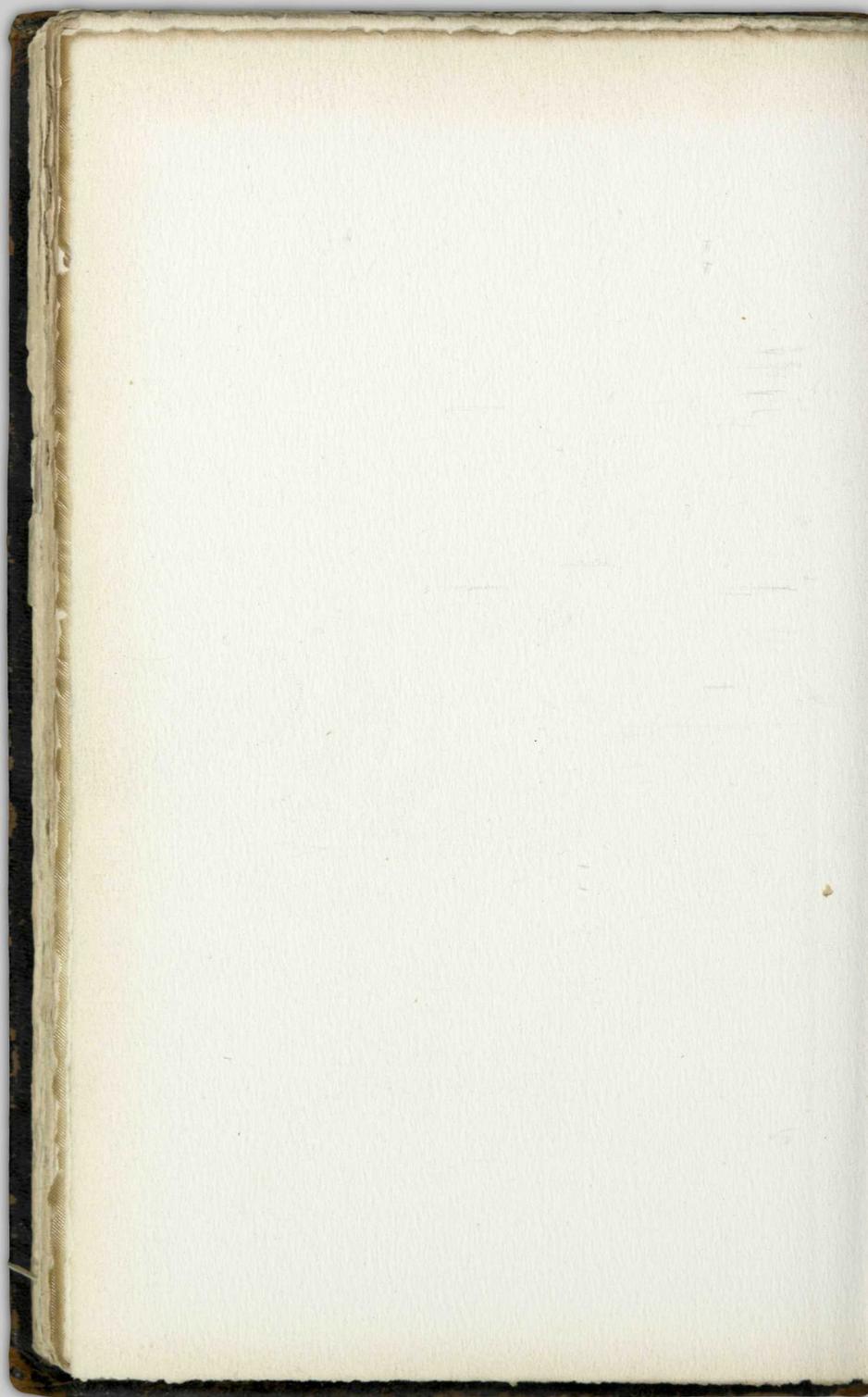


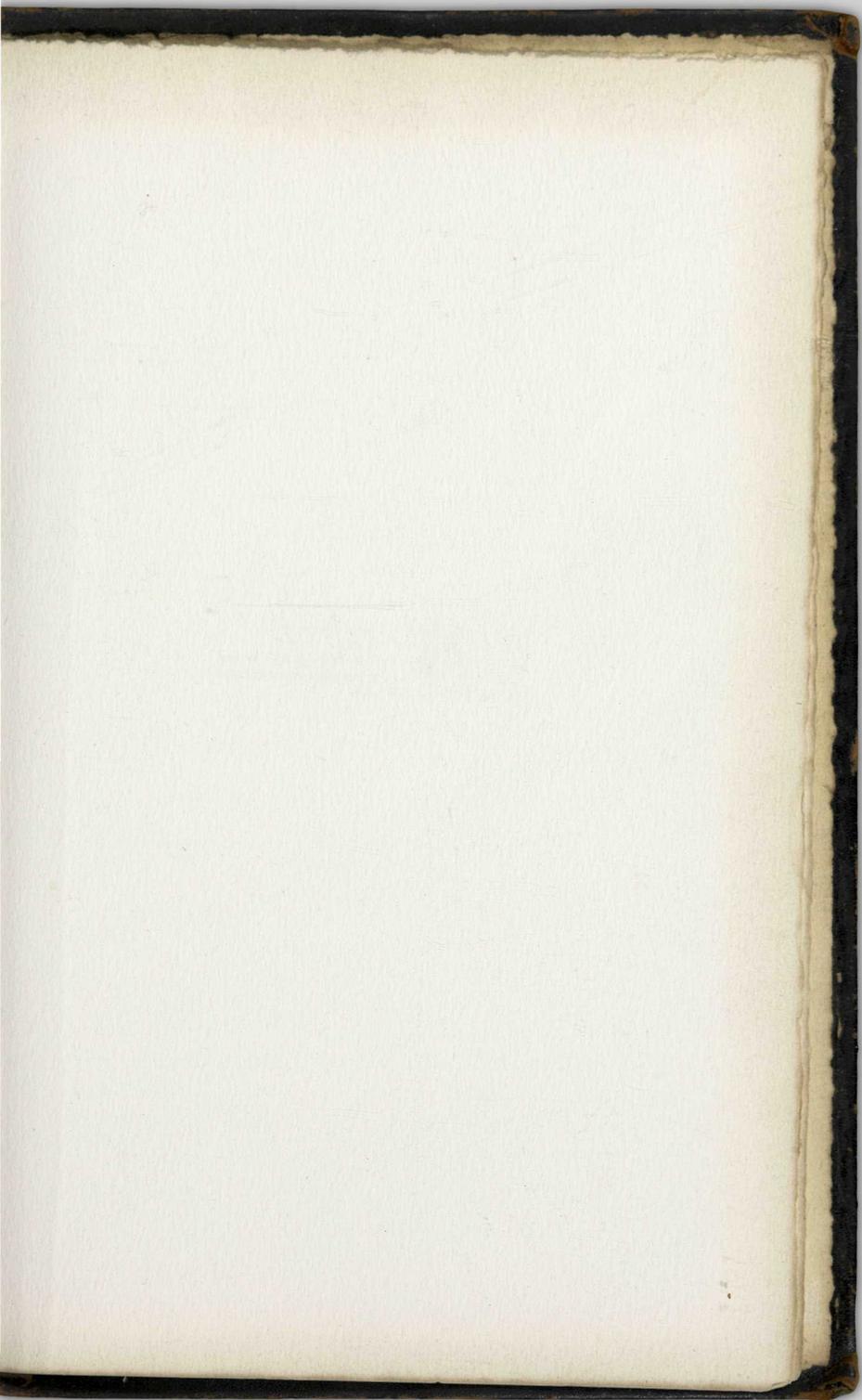
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*The following blank pages are for the preservation of  
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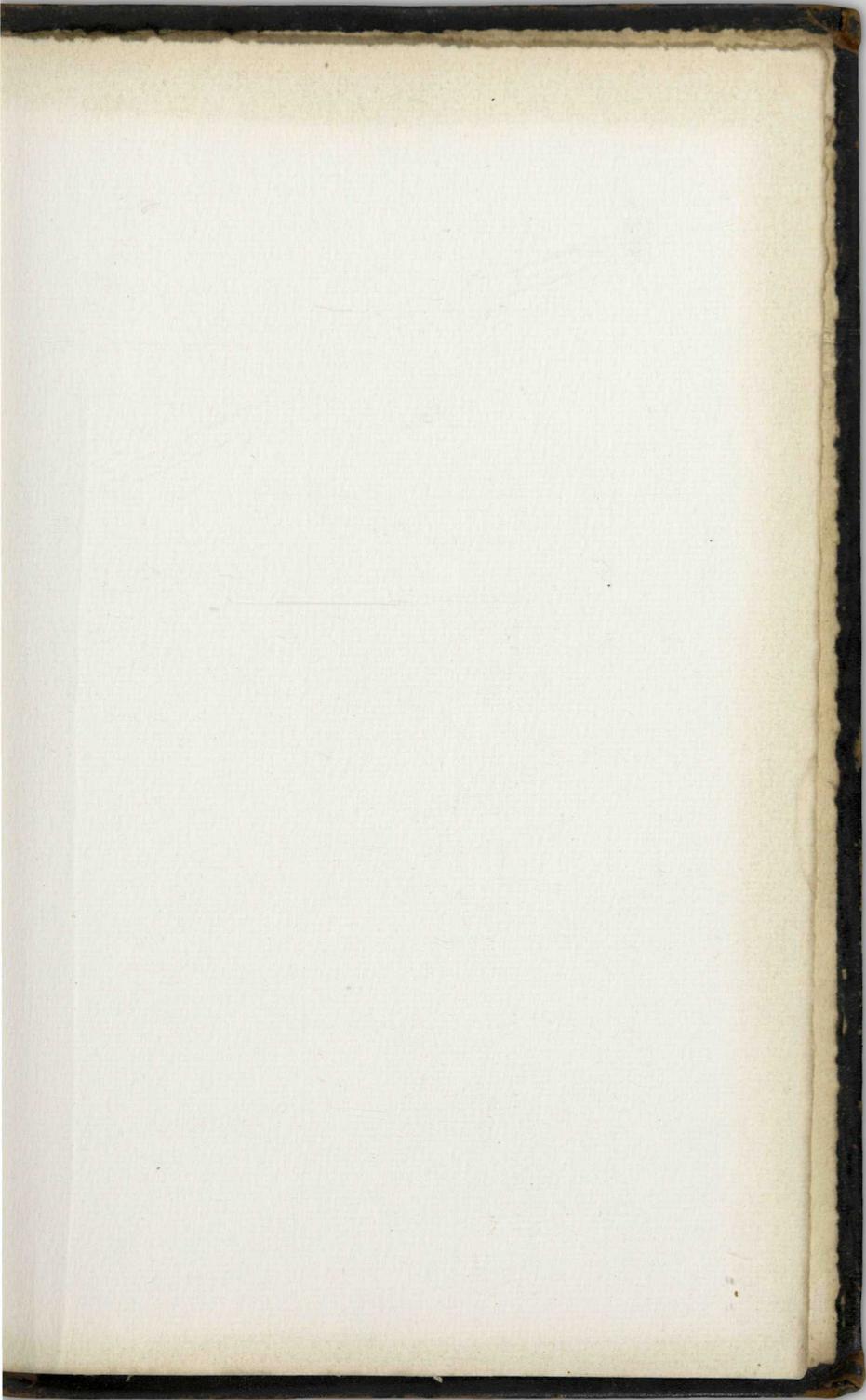








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