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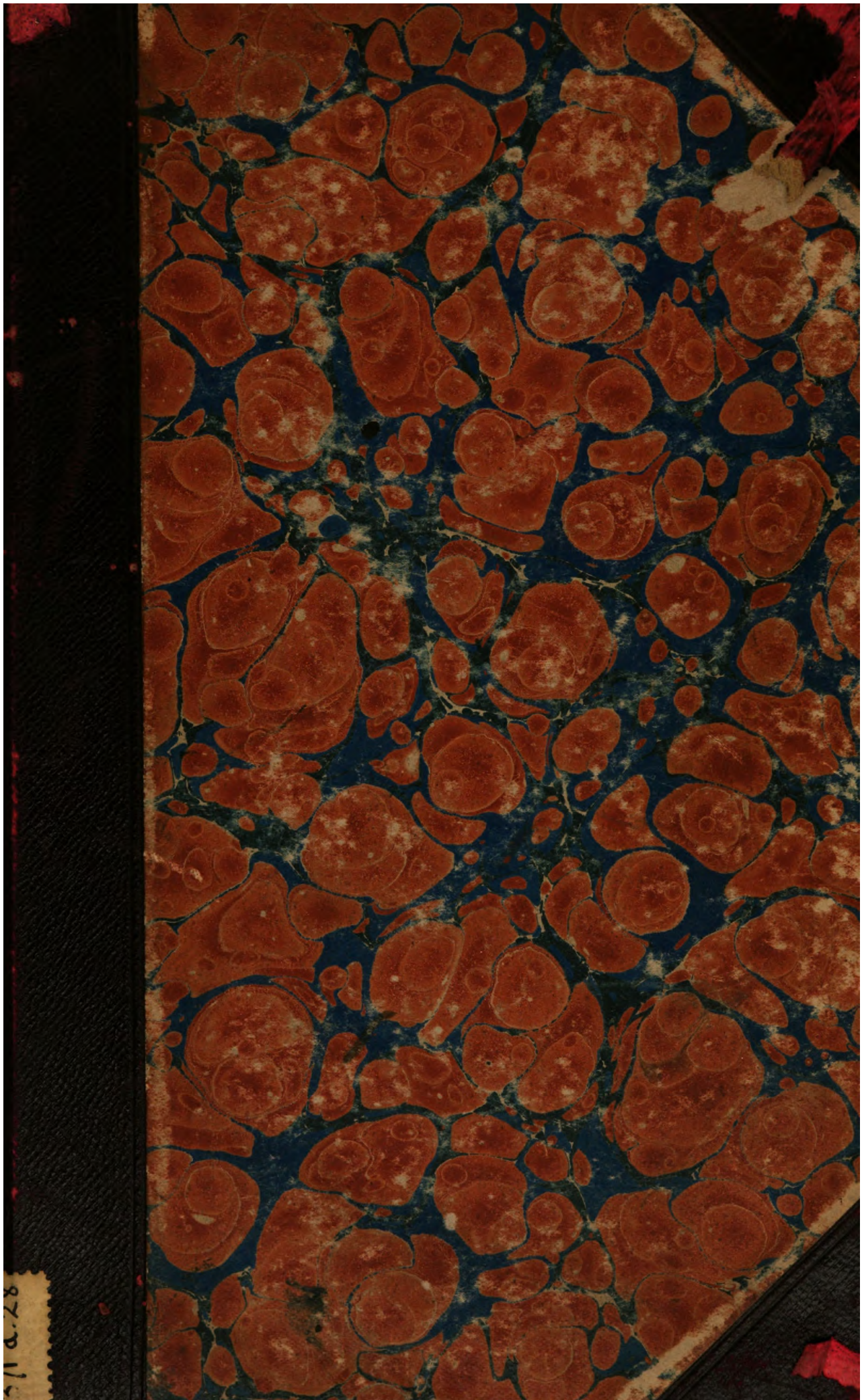
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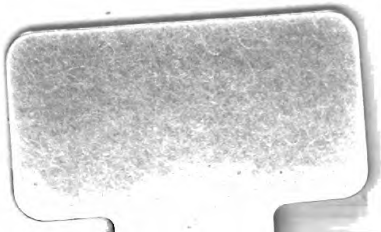
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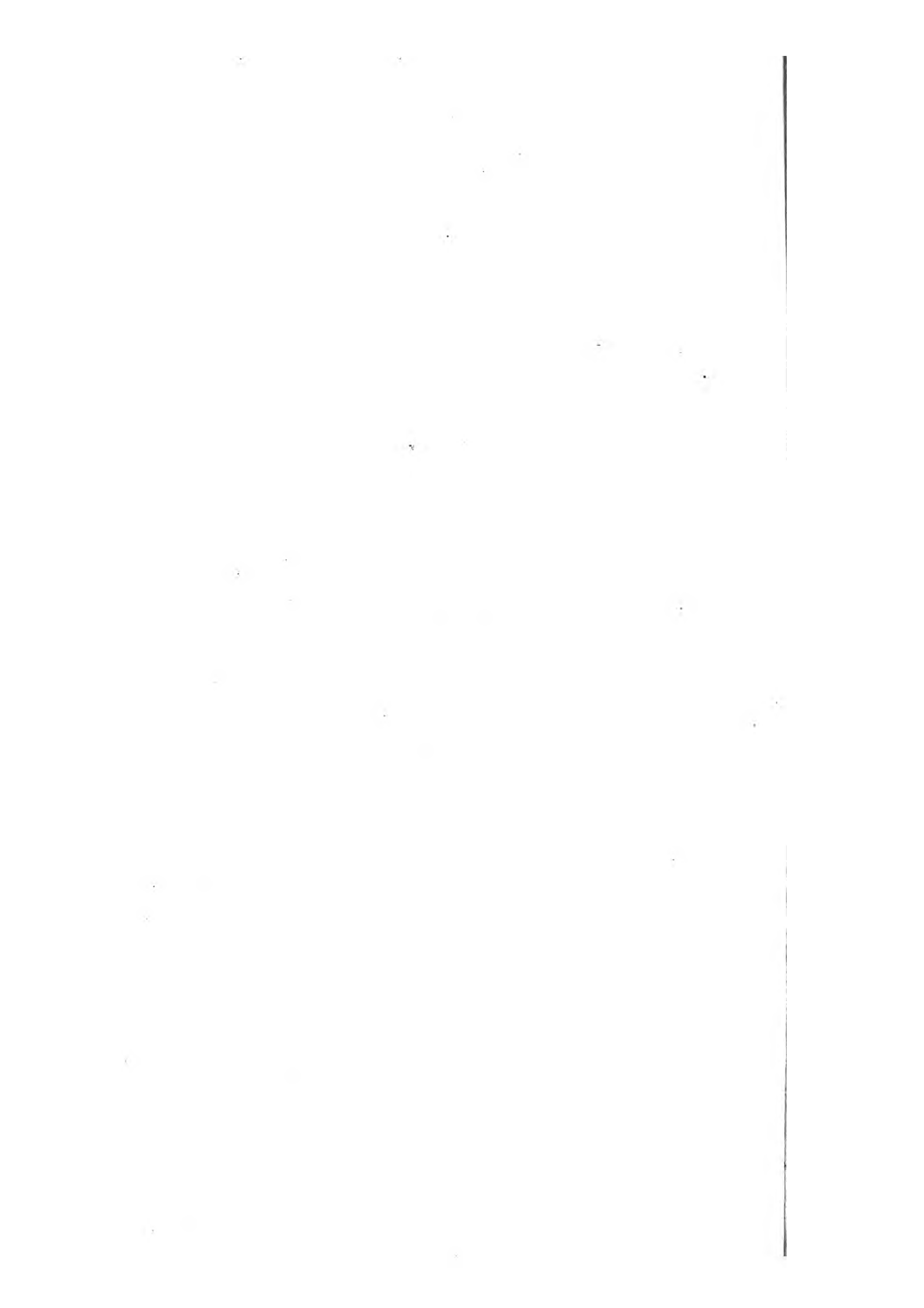
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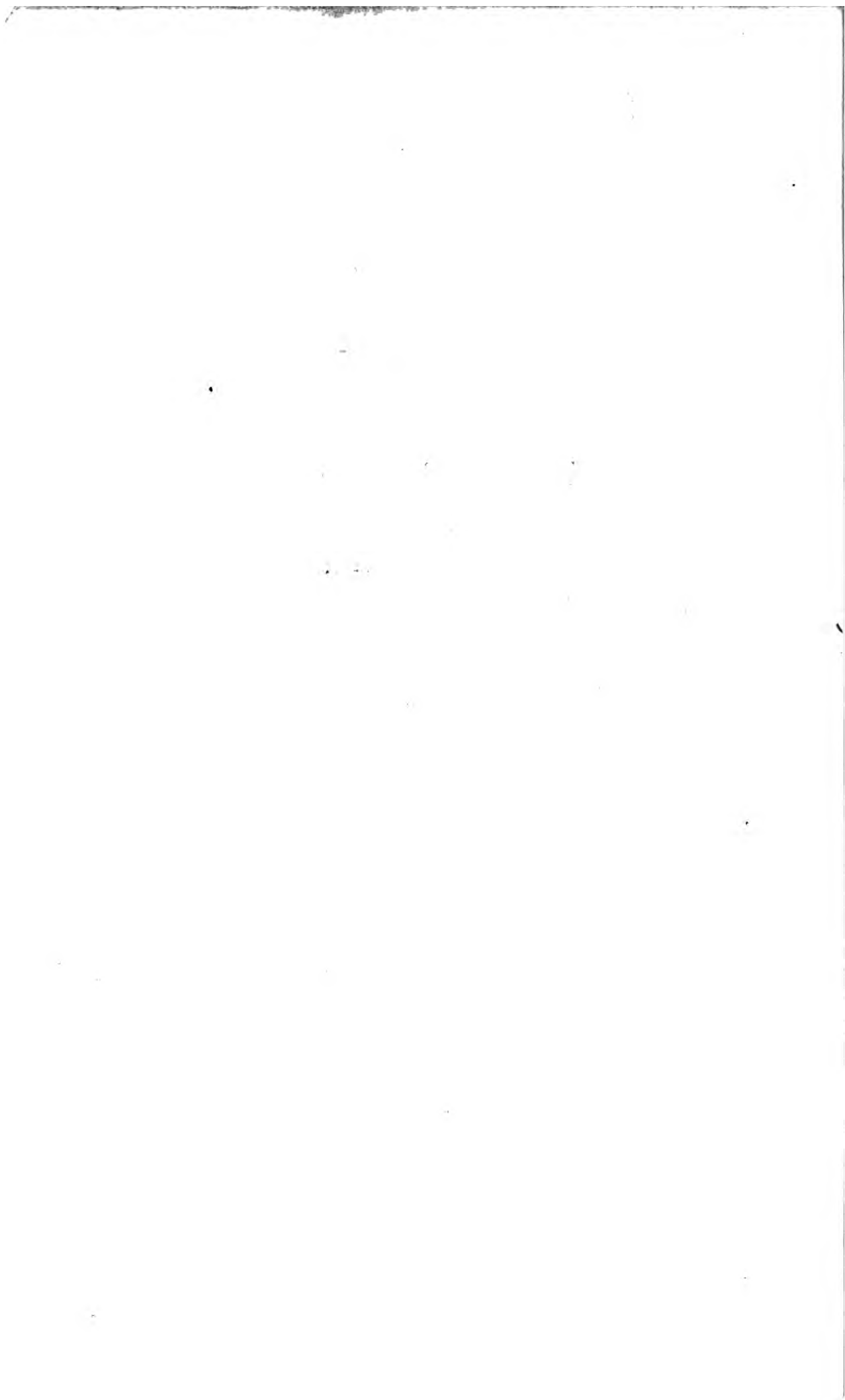


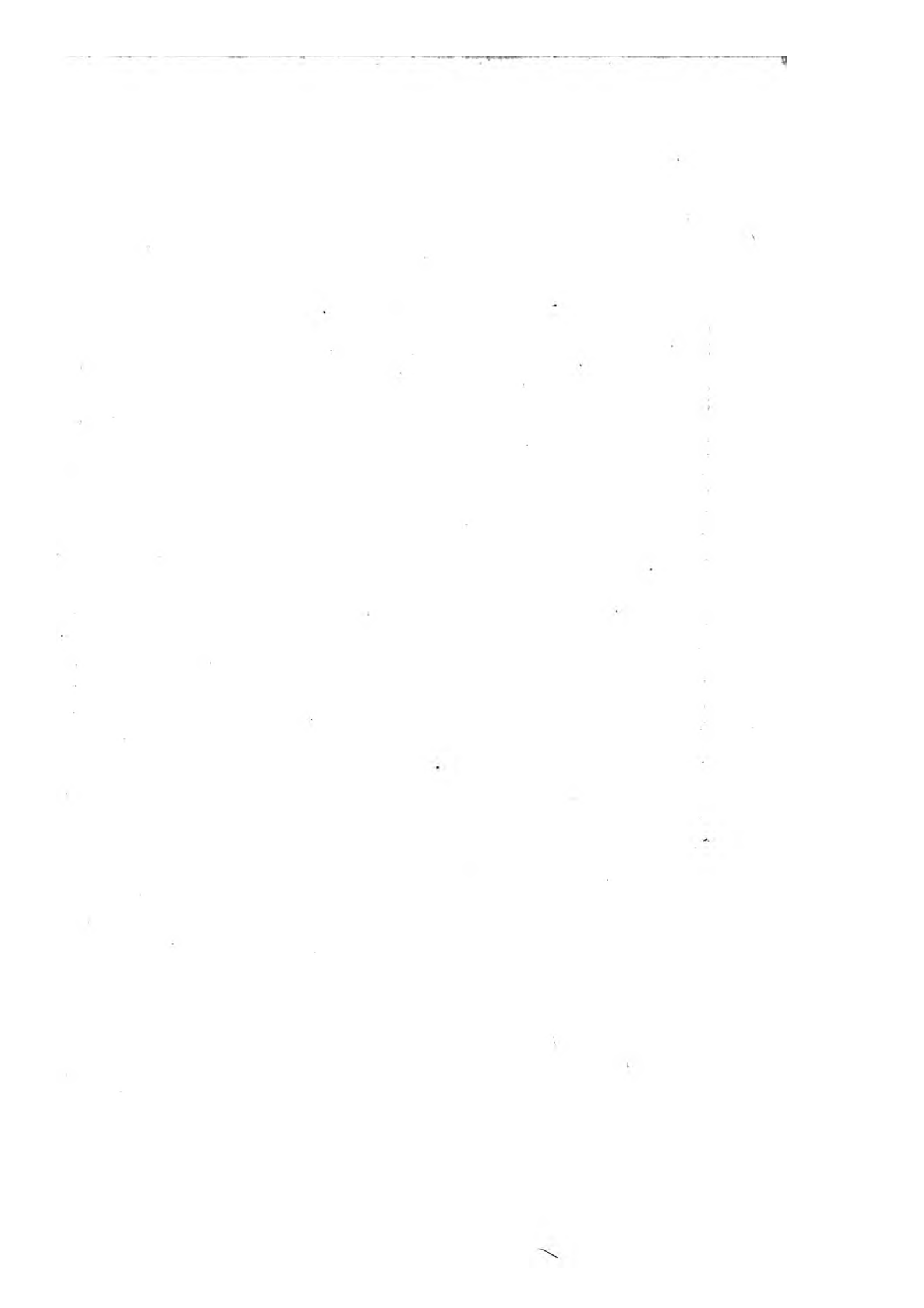
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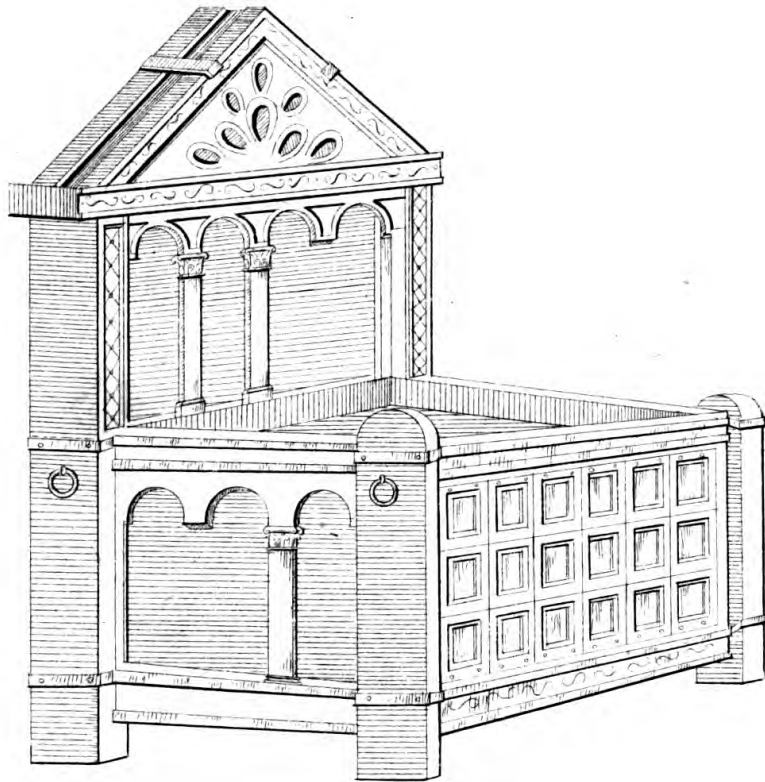


**REMARKS**  
**ON**  
**LADY MORGAN'S**  
**STATEMENTS REGARDING**  
**ST. PETER'S CHAIR.**









*J. M. C. J.*

**REMARKS**  
ON  
**LADY MORGAN'S**

STATEMENTS REGARDING  
**ST. PETER'S CHAIR**

PRESERVED IN THE VATICAN BASILIC.

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*BY*  
**N. WISEMAN, D.D. M.R.L. & A.S.**  
RECTOR OF THE ENGLISH COLLEGE, PROFESSOR OF  
ORIENTAL LANGUAGES IN THE ROMAN  
UNIVERSITY.



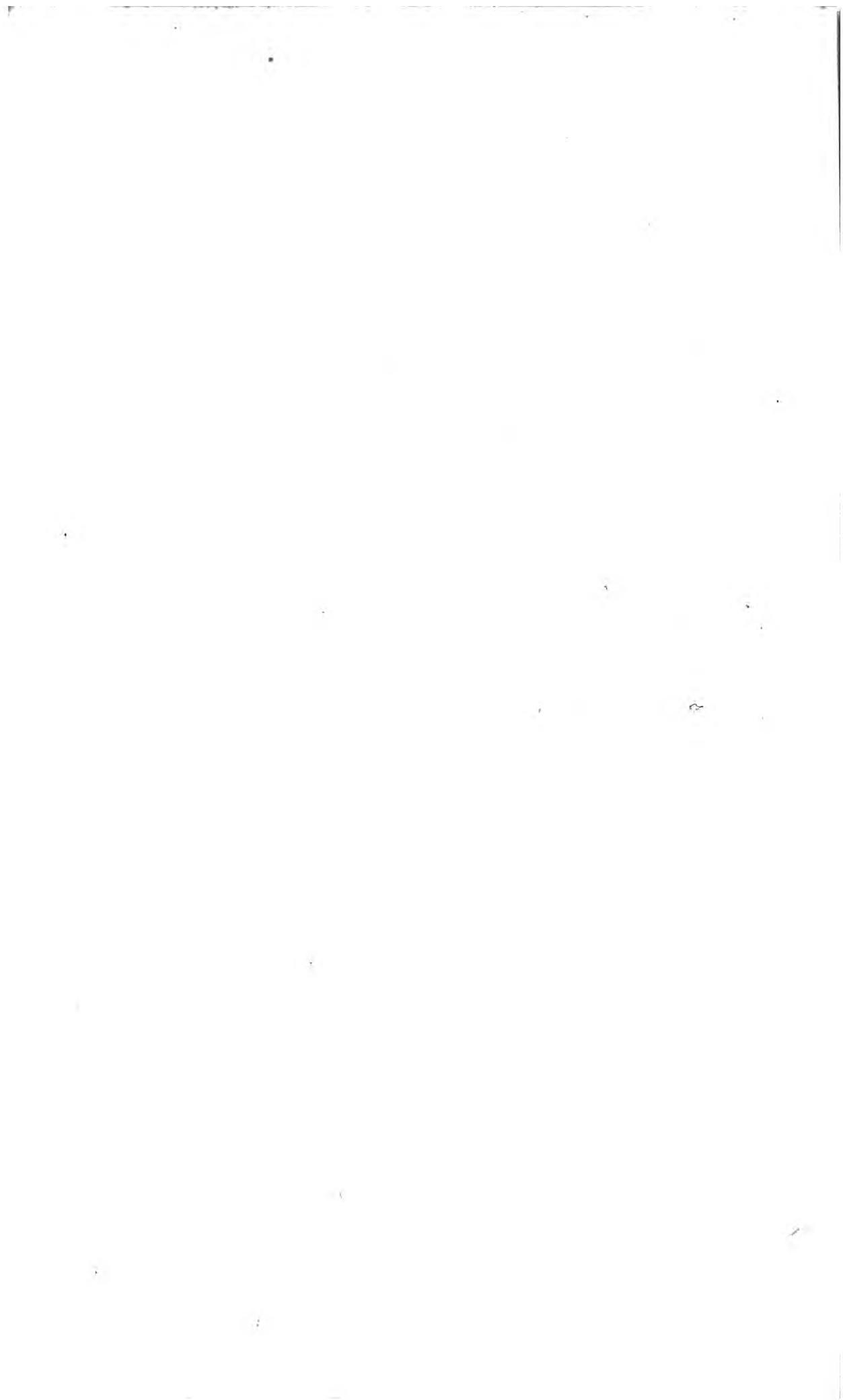
**ROME**  
JOSEPH SALVIUCCI AND SON  
1833.

*Presented to the*  
**ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY**



THE following Essay first appeared in an English Periodical. It has since been translated into Italian, and published in the Giornale Arcadico. Rome, however, is the place where its subject must naturally excite most interest; and it is to English readers, who have probably heard or read Lady Morgan's statement, that a confutation of it should be principally addressed. These considerations have induced the author to reproduce it in its present form.

*English College, Rome,*  
*Feb. 25. 1833.*



**R E M A R K S**  
**O N**  
**L A D Y M O R G A N ' S**

**STATEMENTS REGARDING**

**ST. PETER'S CHAIR.**



LADY Morgan was originally known to the public as a writer of romance. So long as she persevered in that character, she had a right to invent amusing tales, to gratify the curiosity of her readers. Yet even the regions of fiction are subject to the great laws of justice and good faith; nor can that writer hope for indulgence, who, under the disguise of a fabulous narrative, conceals an attack upon the reputation and character of others. If so, what name can we give to the writer, who, soberly professing to instruct and inform, scruples not to fabricate or propagate an untrue story, which would suffice, if proved, to blight for ever the character of many

respectable and dignified individuals, to hold up to public abhorrence the hierarchy of a religion professed by millions of christians, and record against that religion itself a weighty charge of hypocrisy and imposture. And this has her Ladyship done in the passage to which I wish to call the attention of my readers. No longer professing to be a novel-writer, she stood before the public as one who would enlighten and improve it, by new information upon a distant land, its inhabitants, its customs and religion; and the public had a right to expect from her, veracity and accuracy in her statements: and the obligation, thus contracted by her, was doubled by the claims which those of whom she wrote, had to a just and true representation. Instead of this, she has, too often, drawn a most unfaithful portrait of their characters, and opinions, and has treated their most holy sentiments with an indecent levity and a cruel inattention, which, whether we consider her as a lady, a christian, or a writer, cannot be reprobated in terms too severe for her deserts.

The following is the passage which I now desire principally to take into consideration.

“The sacrilegious curiosity of the French broke through all obstacles to their seeing the chair of St. Peter. They actually removed its superb casket, and discovered the relic. Upon its mouldering and dusty surface were traced carvings, which bore the appearance of letters. The chair was quickly brought into a better light, the dust and cobwebs removed, and the inscription, (for an inscription it was,) faithfully copied. The writing is in Arabic characters, and is the well known confession of Mahometan faith. —“There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet.” It is supposed that this chair had been, among the spoils of the Crusaders, offered to the Church, at a time when a taste for antiquarian lore, and the decyphering of inscriptions were not yet in fashion. This story has been since hushed up, the chair replaced, and none but the unhallowed remember the fact, and none but the audacious repeat it. Yet such there are, even at Rome.”\*

The charge contained in this paragraph is of a serious nature. It boldly asserts that the relic venerated in the Vatican basilic as

\* Italy, by Lady Morgau, vol. 2. p. 285, note † 4to. ed.



the chair of St. Peter, is only a mohamedan monument; and what is infinitely worse, that the clergy, having discovered this, have nevertheless wickedly continued to deceive the people, by directing their respect towards an object which they knew to be a spurious relic, and which bears upon it a blasphemous inscription denying the truth of christianity. The most compendious course to confute this unblushing calumny, would be to quote the attestation of those, who have been in the service of St. Peter's church, since a period antecedent to the invasion of Rome by the French, to the fact that the seals were never violated, nor the relic inspected by them. But it would be replied to this, that the men who could deceive the public, in the impious manner which Lady Morgan supposes, would have little scruple in giving any testimony necessary to countenance their cheat.

But it is my wish to set this calumny at rest for ever, and at the same time to give my Catholic readers information, which may not be uninteresting, upon this sacred relic of antiquity. I will first briefly describe the chair of St. Peter; by this description it will

at once be proved that it is not of mohamedan origin, and that all antiquarian arguments tend to confirm the pious tradition of the Church. I will next give the strong grounds whereon this tradition rests, and thereby demonstrate, that this relic existed long before the Crusades, or even Mohammed himself. In order to remove every shadow of doubt regarding the falsehood of her Ladyship's tale, I will lastly give a brief account of the circumstances, which most probably led to its fabrication.

A superb shrine of gilt bronze, supported by four gigantic figures of the same materials, representing four Doctors of the Church, closes the view of the nave of St. Peter's Church, and cannot have failed to attract the attention of my readers. The shrine is in the form of a throne, and contains a chair, which the Prince of the Apostles is supposed to have occupied, as Bishop of Rome. It is a tradition, certainly of great antiquity that St. Peter was received into the house of the senator Pudens, and there laid the foundation of the Roman Church.\* According to the custom of the

\* See the Acts of S. Pudentiana, Bolland. May. 19. p. 297.

Jews, and of all the early churches, a chair or throne would be occupied by him when teaching, or assisting at the divine worship. It is in fact from this circumstance that the term *sedes, cathedra, θρονος, seat, chair, or throne*, became the ordinary appellation of episcopal jurisdiction.\* The chair of St. Peter is precisely such a one as we should have supposed to be given by a wealthy Roman senator to a ruler of the Church, which he esteemed and protected. It is of wood almost entirely covered with ivory, so as to be justly considered a curule chair. It may be divided into two principal parts; the square or cubic portion which forms the body, and the upright elevation behind, which forms the back. The former portion is four Roman palms in breadth across the front, two and a half at the side, and three and a half in height. It is formed by four upright posts, united together by transverse bars above and below. The sides are filled up by a species of arcade consisting of two pilasters of carved

\* See Suicer, *Thesaur ecclesiast.* Amst. 1728, tom. I. p. 1410. Hence the episcopal authority is symbolised on christian monuments by a throne or chair; see examples in Aringhi, *Roma subterranea*, Rome, 1651. tom. 2. pp. 55, 666, and Mamachi, *Orig. et antiq. christ.* tom. 5. Rome, 1755, p. 596.

wood, supporting, with the corner posts, three little arches. The front is extremely rich, being divided into eighteen small compartments disposed in three rows. Each contains a basso-relievo in ivory of the most exquisite finish, surrounded by ornaments of the purest gold.\* These bassi-relievi represent, not the feats of Mohammed, or Ali, or Osman, or any other paynim chieftain, as the readers of Lady Morgan might expect, unless they knew that the religion of the prophet does not tolerate any graven images at all, but the exploits of the monster-quelling Hercules.† The custom of adorning curule chairs with sculptured ivory is mentioned by the ancients :

*Signa quoque in sella nossem formata curuli,  
Et totum Numidæ sculptile dentis opus.‡*

*Conspicuum signis cum premet altus ebur.\*\**

The back of the chair is formed by a series of pilasters supporting arches, as at the sides; the pillars here are three in number, and the arches four. Above the cornice, which

\* De identitate cathedræ in qua S. Petrus Romæ primum sedit. Romæ 1666, p. 69. † Ib. p. 31. § Ovid, Pontic, Lib. iv. ep. ix. 27, 28. \*\* Ib. ep. v. 18.

these support, rises a triangular pediment, giving to the whole a tasteful and architectural appearance. Besides the bassi-rilievi above-mentioned, the rest of the front, the mouldings of the back, and the tympanum of the pediment, are all covered with beautifully wrought ivory. The chair, therefore, is manifestly of Roman workmanship, a curule chair, such as might be occupied by the head of the Church, adorned with ivory and gold, as might befit the house of a wealthy Roman senator; while the exquisite finish of the sculpture forbids us to consider it more modern than the Augustan age, when the arts were in their greatest perfection. There is another circumstance, which deserves particular mention in the description of this chair, and exactly corresponds to the time of St. Peter's first journey to Rome. This event took place in the reign of Claudius; and it is precisely at this period that, as Justus Lipsius has well proved, *sellæ gestatoriæ* began to be used by men of rank in Rome.\* For it is after this period, that Suetonius, Seneca, Tacitus, Juvenal and Martial mention the practice of being borne in chairs. This was done by

\* Just. Lips. Elector. C. i. cap. 19.

means of rings placed at their sides, through which poles were passed; and thus the chair was carried by slaves upon their shoulders. At each side of St. Peter's chair are two rings, manifestly intended for this purpose. Thus, while the workmanship of this venerable relic necessarily refers its date to an early period of the Roman empire, this peculiarity fixes it at a period, not earlier than the reign of Claudius, in which St. Peter arrived at Rome.

Thus far, then, it is evident, that this chair is precisely such a one as the antiquarian would expect to find, claiming the honour of having been the episcopal throne of the first Roman pontiff. This alone would be sufficient to overthrow the calumnious statement of Lady Morgan; and the confutation will be much more complete when we give the grounds of moral probability that it is the identical chair used for this purpose.

It was, undoubtedly, the custom, in the apostolic churches, to preserve, with great devotion, the chairs occupied by their first bishops, and thereon enthrone their successors. Eusebius, in the fourth century, has the following testimony regarding the church

of Jerusalem. "The chair of James, who was appointed bishop of Jerusalem by our Saviour and the Apostles, having been preserved until our days, is honoured with the greatest reverence by the brethren of that church from ancient times."\* Upon another occasion, speaking of the accession of Hermon to that see, he expresses himself in these terms: "he obtained the apostolic chair of James, which is preserved there as yet."† Nicephorus asserts the same fact: "We know that the throne of James has been preserved until our days. His successors have venerated this relic."§ Valesius, in his notes upon the passage last quoted from Eusebius, observes, that, in the acts of St. Mark, his chair is said to have been long preserved in the church of Alexandria. The acts of St. Peter, bishop of that see, relate, that out of respect to it and to a vision which appeared to him, he refused to seat himself in that chair, and, at most, would only occupy its footstool.\*\* This proves that such objects were not kept merely as curio-

\* Euseb. *Histor. eccles. lib. vii. c. 19.* Ed. Turin, 1746, tom. i. p. 301. † *Ib. c. xxxii, p. 326.* § Niceph. *Cal. lib. vi. c. 16.*

\*\* *Acts of St. Peter of Alex. ap. Baron. ad. an. 310.*

sities, but were truly revered in those early and happy times of christianity.\*

These two instances, to which others might be added, will suffice to render it highly probable that the Roman church would exhibit no less veneration for the throne of its first bishop, and preserve it for the installation of his successors. At any rate, they abundantly remove every prejudice which might exist against the venerable tradition of the Roman church, upon the ground that the early Christians would hardly have thought of preserving such a relic, or that it is improbable that it could have been so long preserved.

\* It seems this custom is not solely catholic. In the *Saturday Magazine*, published by the *Society for promoting Christian Knowledge*, July 14. 1832. p. 16, we are favoured with a drawing of *Wickliffe's Chair*; which, we are told, "is still preserved in Lutterworth church, together with the pulpit from which he was accustomed to preach, a piece of his cloak, and an oak table which belonged to him." What is the meaning of these objects being kept in a Protestant church? This cheap periodical may be useful: it is a pity, however that so little pains should be taken to give correct information upon religious points. A few pages after the passage just quoted, we are gravely told that "the exploded doctrine of the church of Rome concerning bells is, that they have merit, and pray God for the living and the dead." p. 20. Such is the valuable information vended to the people, at a penny a week, by a learned society bearing an edifying title. It would have been fair to favour us with a catholic authority for such a marvellous opinion.



For, if the chairs of James and Mark were held in such veneration, and preserved entire till the time of Eusebius, and even of Nicephorus, it is even more probable that the chair of Peter would be kept by the Roman church, as a more valuable treasure. And if it thus once reached the æra of Constantine, there could be no farther difficulty as to its having been preserved until our own times.

I will now proceed to adduce a few passages from ancient ecclesiastical writers, confirmatory of the tradition of the Roman Church. I will begin with Tertullian: though most of my readers will instantly recognise a passage, to which they have been accustomed to give a less material interpretation. I will quote it, however, leaving the decision of its certain meaning to the critics. "Run through the apostolic churches, in which the very chairs of the apostles, as yet, preside, in their proper places."\* Certainly, if

\* *Percurre ecclesias apostolicas, apud quas ipsæ adhuc cathedræ apostolorum suis locis president: si Italiæ adjaces, habes Romam, unde nobis quoque auctoritas præsto est. De præscrip. hæretic. c. xxxvi.* The learned Valesius, in the place above quoted, adopts the same interpretation of this passage of Tertullian as our author.

by *chair* is here to be understood the same as *see*, there is not much strength in the expression; for, as an apostolic church is exactly a church, which was founded by the Apostles, and has a bishop descending from them, to say, with so much emphasis, that in the apostolic churches, the *very* sees of the Apostles were, *as yet*, preserved, (*ipsæ adhuc apostolorum cathedræ*) is not, surely, in Tertullian's usual style of terse reasoning. The very words, *ipsæ* and *adhuc*, seem to imply something extraordinary and unexpected. Tertullian, after this, mentions Rome as being one of these Churches.

The testimony of St. Optatus, in the fourth century, has considerable force: it is as follows. "Render an account of the origin of your chair; since you claim to be the holy church, and even say that you have a portion in the city of Rome.—But if you ask Macrobius *where* he sits in that city, will he be able to reply, *in the chair of St. Peter? I doubt if he even know it by sight; and to its church (memoriam\*) he does not approach.* Behold there are

\* *Nos in martyribus nostris non templa sicut Diis, sed memorias sicut hominibus mortuis, quorum apud Deum vivant spiritus, fabricamus.* St. Aug. De Civ Dei lib. 22. cap. 10. The word is used in the same sense by SS. Paulinus and Jerome, the council of Car-

the churches (*memoriæ*) of the two apostles; say if he have been able to enter there, or have there offered sacrifice?"\* St. Optatus here speaks of the *cathedra* as something visible and material, distinguishes it from Rome, or the apostolic see, and mentions its church as that of the apostle, where sacrifice used to be offered. Indeed, it seems difficult to read this passage without understanding in it something different from episcopal jurisdiction.

In the year 503 we have a testimony which admits of no controversy. It is a passage of Ennodius of Pavia, in his apologetical work against the impugnors of the fourth Roman Synod. He tells these that by their machinations "*mundi caput Romam esse prostratam, et nutricem pontificii cathedram quasi ultimum videri sedile despectam.*" †

thage, etc. The mention of sacrifice in the text also proves its meaning there.

\* *Vestræ cathedræ vos originem reddite, qui vobis vultis S. Ecclesiam vindicare, sed et habere vos in urbe Roma partem aliquam dicitis.—Denique si Macrobio dicatur, ubi illic sedeat, numquid potest dicere in cathedra Petri? quam nescio si vel oculis novit, et ad cujus memoriam non accedit. Ecce præsentis sunt ibi duorum memoriæ apostolorum; dicite si ad has ingredi potuit ita ut obtulerit illic. Lib. 2. adv. Parmenian.*

† In Labbei concilia, tom. 4. Par. 1671, p. 1356. C. "Rome, the head of the world, is laid prostrate, and the chair which nourishes pontifical authority is seen despised like any mean seat."

This comparison is sufficiently clear; but the words which follow remove the slightest shadow of doubt. “*Ecce nunc ad gestatoriam sellam apostolicæ confessionis uda mittunt limina candidatos.\**” These words seem to allude to some visit made by the newly baptised to the confession of St. Peter, as is done at the present day by baptised adults; and the description which we have given of the chair will demonstrate how accurately it is designated by the expression *gestatoriam sellam apostolicæ confessionis*.

These testimonies are, I trust, more than sufficient to overthrow the foolish story with which Lady Morgan has treated her readers. I might add the festival in its honour mentioned by St. Augustine, and the very fact of a chair of such ancient and pagan workmanship being preserved for so many ages in such a church. No one doubts the identity of the coronation chair of our Kings of England with that of Edward the confessor, simply from the fact that it has ever been

\* Ibid p. 1358. B. “See how the baptistery sends the newly baptised, in their white robes, to the portable chair of the confession of the apostles.” Most visitors to Rome will probably be aware, that the tomb of St. Peter was, and is yet, called his confession.

preserved in Westminster Abbey for that purpose; the same tradition exists in favour of St. Peter's chair.

But a serious objection to the authenticity of this chair seems to have been raised by protestants, from the labours of Hercules being sculptured upon it. Is it credible that an apostle would have used so profane a seat? Would he have taught christianity from a chair adorned with the emblems of paganism? Such is the objection first brought by more ancient adversaries, and repeated with a smile of self-applause by the Rev. H. J. Owen, in his sermon entitled, "Christ and not Peter the Rock."\* His words are these: "The Church of Rome was long supposed to possess another decisive confirmation of the same fact. This was the identical chair on which the Apostle Peter had been accustomed to sit. So universal and uninterrupted had the tradition respecting this point been, that the 18th of January was (*is*) regularly observed as the festival of the Holy Chair, and, on that occasion, it was exposed to public adoration. In 1662, when it was being cleaned,

\* Preached at Tavistock Chapel for the auxiliary reformation society for St. Giles's. p. 26. note.

in order to its being placed in some conspicuous place in the Vatican, the gazing spectators, to their great astonishment, were presented with the *Labours of Hercules*, engraved upon it." In one respect, this writer treats us more leniently than our female censurer; he seems to suppose that all veneration, or, as he chooses to call it, adoration, ceased upon this fatal discovery. He speaks in the past tense, little aware that we yet consider the tradition as strong as ever.

Truly, we Catholics are in a hard case; whether the chair is to be proved modern, by Lady Morgan's arabic inscription, or ancient, by Mr. Owen's pagan sculpture, either is to be a sufficient proof of its spuriousness. How then, would these antiquarians have had it? With Christian representations? Then should we have been told, that Jablonsky had triumphantly demonstrated, that such abominations were first introduced into the Church by the Carpocratians, or some other Gnostics; that graven things, and the likeness of things on earth, &c. save always, we must loyally suppose, the rampant lion and unicorn, were not permitted in places of worship, till popery had corrupted it. Then suppose it had been as

plain as a presbyterian pulpit or the walls of a meeting house? oh, then we should have been told that there were no data by which to decide its antiquity, that it might be a forgery of any time, or any place. In fine, when one is determined not to believe, there is no difficulty in finding reasons to doubt.

But no one versed in ecclesiastical antiquities will allow the slightest force to Mr. Owen's argument. It is a demonstrated fact that the early christians, well knowing that "an idol is nothing," made no scruple of turning to pious uses, and employing in the worship of the church, objects adorned with the symbols of idolatry. Aringhi has sufficiently proved this, regarding many emblems of pagan worship which are to be found applied to the christian doctrines.\* He has dedicated a particular chapter to the numerous representations of Orpheus, which are to be met with in the most ancient paintings of the catacombs, and which he supposes to symbolize our Saviour.† Boldetti also, in illustrating the sarcophagus of Aurelia Agapetilla, which, though manifestly belonging to a christian, is adorned with heathenish sculptures, fully

\* Roma subterranea. tom. ii. p. 450.

† p. 560.

discusses the same question, and proves, by numerous instances, that the early christians had no hesitation in converting to their own use monuments bearing pagan representations.\* The learned Marangoni has written a work expressly upon this subject, entitled, *Delle cose gentilesche ad uso delle chiese*. To these authorities may be added the names of Bottari, Ciampini, Mamachi, Allegranza, and the Senator Bonarroti, all men of the first order in the illustration of sacred monuments, who agree in the same opinion. But the most modern demonstration of this point is the dissertation of the Canon Giuseppe Antonio Botazzi, entitled "On the emblems or symbols of the very ancient sarcophagus of Tortona."† This monument of the age of Adrian had been supposed by Mabillon and Montfaucon to be pagan, in consequence of its heathen emblems. The learned antiquarian is acknowledged to have defeated their objections to its christian original, and to have proved satisfactorily that

\* Osservazioni sopra i cimiteri de' SS. martiri, Rome 1720. p. 465.

† Degli emblemi o simboli dell'antichissimo sarcofago Tortonese. Tortona 1824. In consideration of this work, his Majesty the King of Sardinia conferred upon him the title of his sacred antiquarian.



those symbols may occur upon christian monuments. We have numerous instances of such a use made of pagan ornaments. Many sarcophagi are used as altars in the oldest basilicae: many churches, which were once temples, were allowed to retain the ornaments which embellished them. The mausoleum of Constantia on the Via Nomentana yet preserves the paintings which it bore as a temple of Bacchus; Anastasius tells us that Pope Simplicius consecrated the church of St. Andrew on the Esquiline, called the *Catabarbara*,\* and yet left untouched the history of Diana and her chase, which was represented there in mosaic. Those who have travelled in Sicily will remember the magnificent urn at Girgenti (Agrigentum,) used as a baptismal font in the cathedral, and enriched with the most superb Grecian reliefs. A valuable monument of this class is the ivory casket, given by St. Gregory the Great to the monastery of Bobbio, containing the ashes of martyrs. It was published, for the first time by Bottazzi, at the end of his Illustration of the Tortona sarcophagus, and represents, the fable of Orpheus.

\* De vitis Romanorum pontificum, ed. vatic. 1731, tom. i. p. 61.

No objection, therefore, can be brought against the authenticity of our relic from its pagan sculptures, any more than from Lady Morgan's pretended arabic inscription. These sculptures, on the contrary, we have shewn to be decided proofs of its antiquity, and indeed we may observe that they are also arguments of its authenticity; for after a certain period in the history of the Church, when we reach the ages popularly designated as the dark times of ignorance and superstition, it would have been difficult, not to say impossible, to introduce to public veneration any emblems of paganism. For the men of those times, and especially the ecclesiastics, are generally criticised, and that in no very measured terms, by modern archæologists, for having carried their zeal against idolatry so far as to break in pieces and utterly destroy many valuable monuments, purely because they were heathen. It is rather inconsistent therefore, on the one hand, to accuse them of being so stern in their bigotry as to spare nothing that had been pagan, and yet to charge them on the other, with treasuring up such things as relics, and exposing them to public veneration. Add to this the

great improbability of a pagan chair, composed of materials so frail as wood and ivory, so tempting as pure gold, escaping the ravages of war, the accidents of ages, or even the pious cupidity of zealots, unless some religious recollections had been attached to it, and piety had been interested in its peculiar preservation. Thus we may consider the pagan embellishments of our relic, a proof, not only of its antiquity, but of its authenticity.

It will perhaps appear to my readers that the confutation of Lady Morgan's mis-statement ought to end here. But there is one point, which I think may be still wanting to satisfy the incredulity of some of her admirers. The story, these will say, may not be perfectly correct: but it is impossible that it should not have had some foundation in fact. Is it credible that her Ladyship, or her informers, should have fabricated a mere tale, without the slightest grounds? To satisfy even such adversaries as these, I will state the circumstances, which, I doubt not, served as its groundwork, and thus leave no objection unanswered. The literary controversy, which I shall have to detail, is little, if at all known

in England, and may therefore be interesting under another point of view.

In the Church of St. Peter at Venice, which was the patriarchal Church till 1807, has long been preserved a chair of stone, called by the people, the *chair of St. Peter*. It is not upon any altar, but stands against the wall, between the second and third altars. In 1749, Flaminio Cornaro, or Cornelius, published his *Ecclesiæ venetæ antiqua monumenta*. In the second volume, p. 194, is an engraving of this monument, accompanying his description of it. The history which he gives is the same as is recorded upon a tablet over the chair, that it was given by the Emperor Michael to the doge Peter Grandonicus, in 1310. The back of the chair was however adorned with a rich cufic inscription, and Cornaro desired the learned Jos. Assemani to decypher it for his work. It is useless to attempt to account for, or excuse, the erroneous interpretation which he gave. One thing is evident, that he did not wish by it to encourage any deceit. The writing contained, according to his reading, several portions of the second psalm, and among them the words, "The work of Ab-

dalla, the servant of God," and "Antioch the city of God." The learned orientalist Norberg, in the main, confirmed this explanation. Upon the calculations which Assemani made, in consequence of this inscription, Cornaro came to the following conclusion regarding the date of the monument. "This chair therefore was constructed in the eighth century, nor assuredly was it ever used by the Prince of the apostles, nor by any of his successors in the see of Antioch, before the year 742."\*

To those who have never attempted to decypher inscriptions, and above all, to those who know not the difficulties of the Arabic language and the cufic character, it may appear wonderful, that an inscription like this, should have been such a mystery. There have however been always but few men in Europe, who could undertake the explanation, with great probability of success, and one of those few, at the close of the last century, was the learned professor of Rostock, Olaus Gerard Tychsen. From the engraving in Cornaro's work he decyphered the inscription, and published it in an interesting

\* Apud Tychsen, ubi inf. p. 8.

dissertation, which soon went through two editions. The first appeared in 1787, the second, printed at Rostock, two years later, was entitled "Interpretatio inscriptionis cu-  
ficæ in marmorea templi patriarchalis S. Pe-  
tri cathedra, qua S. Apostolus Petrus An-  
tiochiæ sedisse traditur." In this dissertation  
he clearly proves the inscription to be mo-  
hammedan, and composed of several verses  
of the Koran.\* It is singular that in the title-  
page just quoted the name of Venice never  
occurs; so that a superficial reader might  
easily understand by *the patriarchal church  
of St. Peter*, the Vatican basilic.

My readers will at once perceive that this  
work must have given rise to the tale, adopt-  
ed without investigation, and given with such  
assurance by Lady Morgan. But in the pre-  
sent instance, did the catholic clergy seek to  
suppress the discovery? We have already  
seen the conduct of Cornaro and Jos. Asse-  
mani; what followed was stamped with the  
same candid love of truth. Monsignor Gio-  
annelli, Patriarch of Venice, upon the first

\* The verses are Sura iii, 194 xxxiii. 118. The first edition  
Buetzouvii, 1787, contained an error in the title placing the chair  
in St. Mark's instead of St. Peter's Church.

appearance of Tychsen's essay, communicated it to the celebrated Simon Assemani, the *treasure of Padua*, as Sacy used to call him. This learned and amiable orientalist, who, by his death in April 1821, closed the long literary career of the Assemanis in Europe, at once approved of it, with the exception of a few words, which were incorrect in Cornaro's engraving, and which a more accurate inspection of the monument enabled him to amend. But there were two points whereon Assemani differed much from Tychsen; these he communicated to him through their common friend, De Rossi of Parma. They did not arrive in time for the second edition; Assemani thought their being omitted arose from some other cause; an active correspondence ensued, which Tychsen published,\* and which does equal credit to both. The points at issue were these. 1st.—Assemani conceives the two verses of the Koran to be manifestly applicable, not to a chair, but to persons who had died in battle against christians; therefore the back, on which it is en-

\* In his Appendix ad inscriptionis cuficæ Venetiis in marmorea templi patriarchalis S. Petri cathedra conspicuæ interpretationem, Rostock, 1790.

graved, forms no part of the chair, but is a cippus or sepulchral stone. 2nd.—This is further confirmed from the fact of its being a detached piece of stone, of a different quality from the rest. Indeed he considers the whole as made up of seven pieces, the arms are of *Verona marble*, and consequently of neither Sicilian nor Moorish origin, as Tychsen thought the chair to be. He never calls it by any other name than, *così detta cattedra*,\* *pretesa cattedra*.† Tychsen appealed to the absence of a date on the tomb-stone, to the donation of the Emperor Michael Balbus which mentioned the *whole* chair, and to other circumstances. Assemani replied; the donation he proved to be spurious; and, after a careful perusal of the printed controversy, and inedited papers upon the subject, I think that Assemani made good his point. The fact seems to be that this stone, brought as a trophy from Sicily, or the east, was deposited in the church, in order to receive much the same respect, as the Turkish flags in the church of the Knights of St. Stephen at Pisa, or the colours of the Spanish Armada in St. Paul's.

\* Append. p. II. † *ib.* p. 12.



In fact, the very guide books of Venice treat this monument without much respect: the following is the account of it, given by Quadri, the first whom I have happened to open. "A very ancient marble chair, believed, by the vulgar, to be the one used by St. Peter at Antioch. There have appeared various opinions concerning it, which have not, however, placed the point beyond doubt. It has graven upon it an inscription in cufic Arabic characters, which consists, according to some learned men, of two verses of the Koran. Others consider it the throne of some African prince."\* There is no festival in its honour, and I have been assured by persons, many years resident at Venice, that they have been very frequently in the church, but, till my mentioning it to them, had never noticed the chair, nor heard of it as a relic.

But it would be injustice to my cause, if I did not notice, as a contrast to Lady Morgan's story, the conduct of literary men among the catholics of Spain and Italy, upon this discovery of Tychsen's; though he was a protestant, writing against what some had considered a relic. Mariano Pizzi at

\* *Quattro giorni a Venezia*, Milano, 1827, p. 83.

Madrid, wrote him a letter, dated June 28, 1788, which fully approves of the interpretation, expresses his astonishment at the elder Assemani's mistakes, and offers an opinion regarding the origin of the monument.\* The learned Areta of Madrid, wrote on the 13th of September, 1787, in the same strain, and promised to make the work known in Spain. Tychsen also wrote upon the subject to the learned Perez Bayer of Valencia, his victorious antagonist, upon another occasion, and to the distinguished canon, D. Juan B. Herman, also to D. Ignacio de Asso, the count of Floriblanca, and F. Antonio, Arabic professor of Lisbon; and not one of them seems to have looked upon it in any other light than as a literary contest.† In the *Memorial literario* of Madrid 1788, pp. 579. 582. is a notice of Tychsen's work, of which he remarks: "quæ sive stylum, sive *sentiendi libertatem*, candorem, humanitatem et eruditionem eximii scriptoris spectes, summam

\* Tychsen's Appendix, p. 38.

† See the substance of these correspondences in A. Th. Hartmann's work entitled, *Oluf. G. Tychsen, oder Wanderungen durch die mannigfaltigsten Gebiete der biblisch-asiatischen Literatur*, vol. 2, part 2, Brem. 1820. pp. 164. 168.

omnino meretur attentionem, *censuræque Hispanicæ, a maledicis tam inique perstrictæ, præstantiam in aprico ponit.*"\* In Italy, in addition to the approbation of Assemani and De Rossi, I may notice that of the learned Prince of Torremuzza at Palermo.†

Here then is laid open the origin of Lady Morgan's foolish and wicked tale. The stone chair, called by the vulgar that of St. Peter, and kept in the Patriarchal Church of that Apostle in Venice, has been confounded with the ivory throne of the Vatican basilic, by some blundering or malicious person; the story has been repeated to her Ladyship, she deemed it too well suited to her purposes of misrepresentation to merit examination, and gave it to the public with all the assurance which points, and all the levity which wings, the worst shafts of calumny. There is something truly profligate in her waste of human character, whether we consider her assassinating private reputations by personal anecdote, or cutting down whole classes of men, as in the instance I have been confut-

\* Tychsen's Appendix p. 39.

† Hartmann's Wanderungen, p. 165.

ing. In her former capacity, we may say of her in the words of the poet :

“ Coepit per honestas  
Ire domos, impune minax : doluere cruento  
Dente lacessiti ; fuit intactis quoque cura,  
Conditione super communi ; quin etiam lex,  
Pœnaque lata.”\*

Admitted into good society, she has repaid hospitality by public exposure ; many in Italy have suffered severely from her mistatements, and most of the Continent has been shut up against her, for fear of a fresh display of her dangerous talents. As I have touched upon this subject, and the course of my disquisition has brought us to Venice, I cannot refuse the request of a learned and amiable friend, that I should take this opportunity of publicly contradicting her Ladyship's account of an interview with him. The narrative which I allude to is towards the close of her work, where she relates her visit to the celebrated convent of the Mechitarist Armenians in the Island of St. Lazzaro at Venice. I am requested by Father Pasquale Aucher, to say that the version of his conversation with Lady Morgan, given in her

\* Horace, Epis. lib. 2 ep. I, 150.

pages, is totally incorrect. Indeed no person, who is acquainted with him could suspect that he had spoken in such a strain. One observation especially was too absurd, and too contrary to his known sentiments, to have escaped his lips. He is made to say, that "the Popes had received their congregation (the Mechitarists) *though an heretical one* under their special protection."\* The Holy See has no subjects more truly catholic, and more wholly devoted to it, than the Armenians of St. Lazzaro. They do not differ from us in the slightest point; and the Rev. Father Aucher in particular, from his fluency in the English language, omits no opportunity of convincing his protestant acquaintance and visitors upon this head.

So much for an example of the liberty which this lady takes with individual reputation; the subject of this long disquisition may serve as an instance of her wholesale slander. Had I deemed it probable that it would have been confined to her pages, I should have hardly reckoned it worth so formal a confutation. Here, as in the rest of noxious things, the poison is united to its

\* Italy, vol. ii. page 465.

antidote. But it is too pretty an addition to the standard misrepresentations of catholic practices to be long monopolised, by the person who may claim its *brévet d'invention*. Accordingly we find it repeated word for word by Mr. Hone, in his Every-day book,\* a work destined to circulate among the middling and lower orders; and it has probably found its way into many other works of greater circulation than Lady Morgan's Italy. This consideration leads me to hope, that a full confutation, like the present, will not be deemed superfluous.

\* Vol. i. page 122.

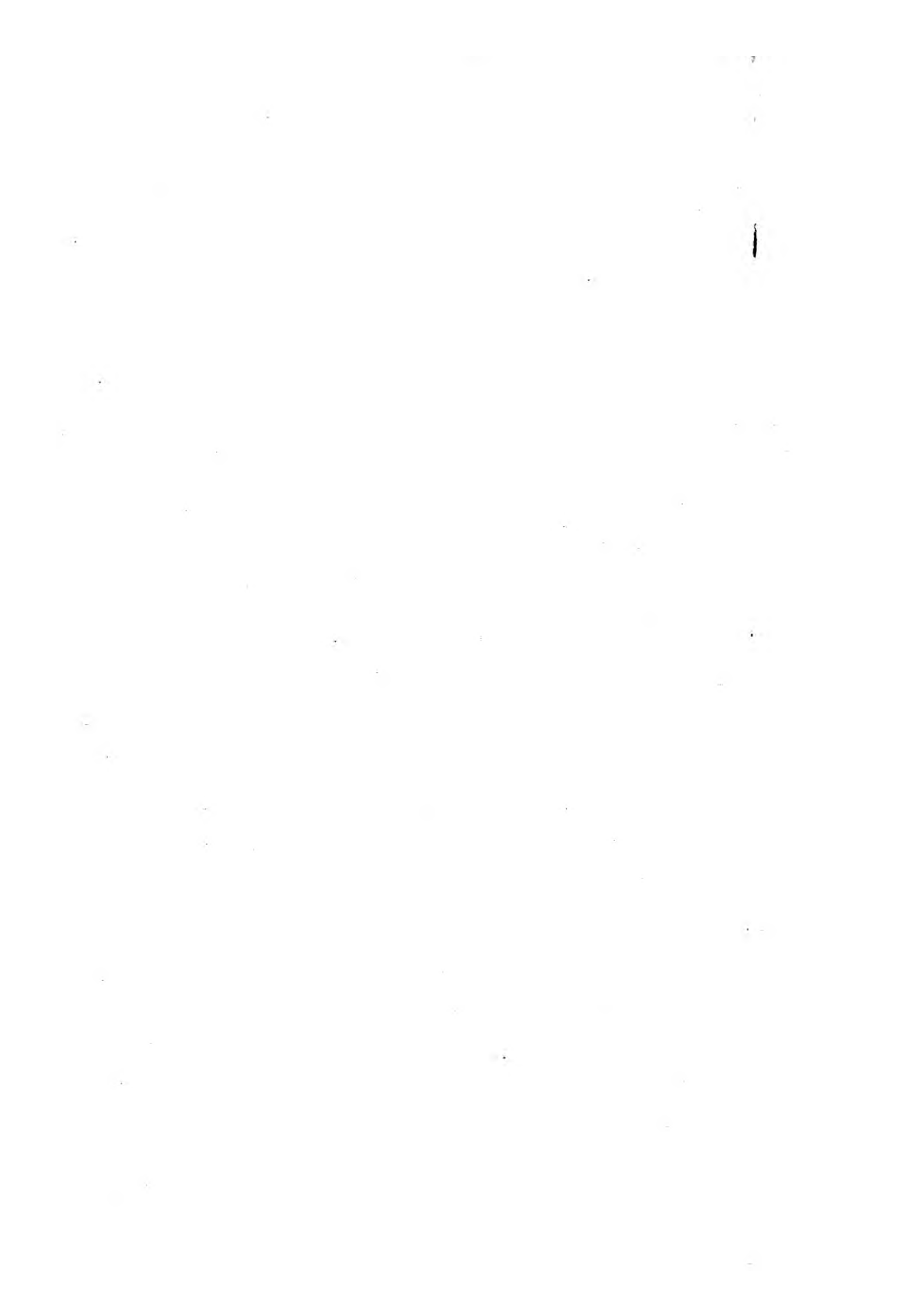
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