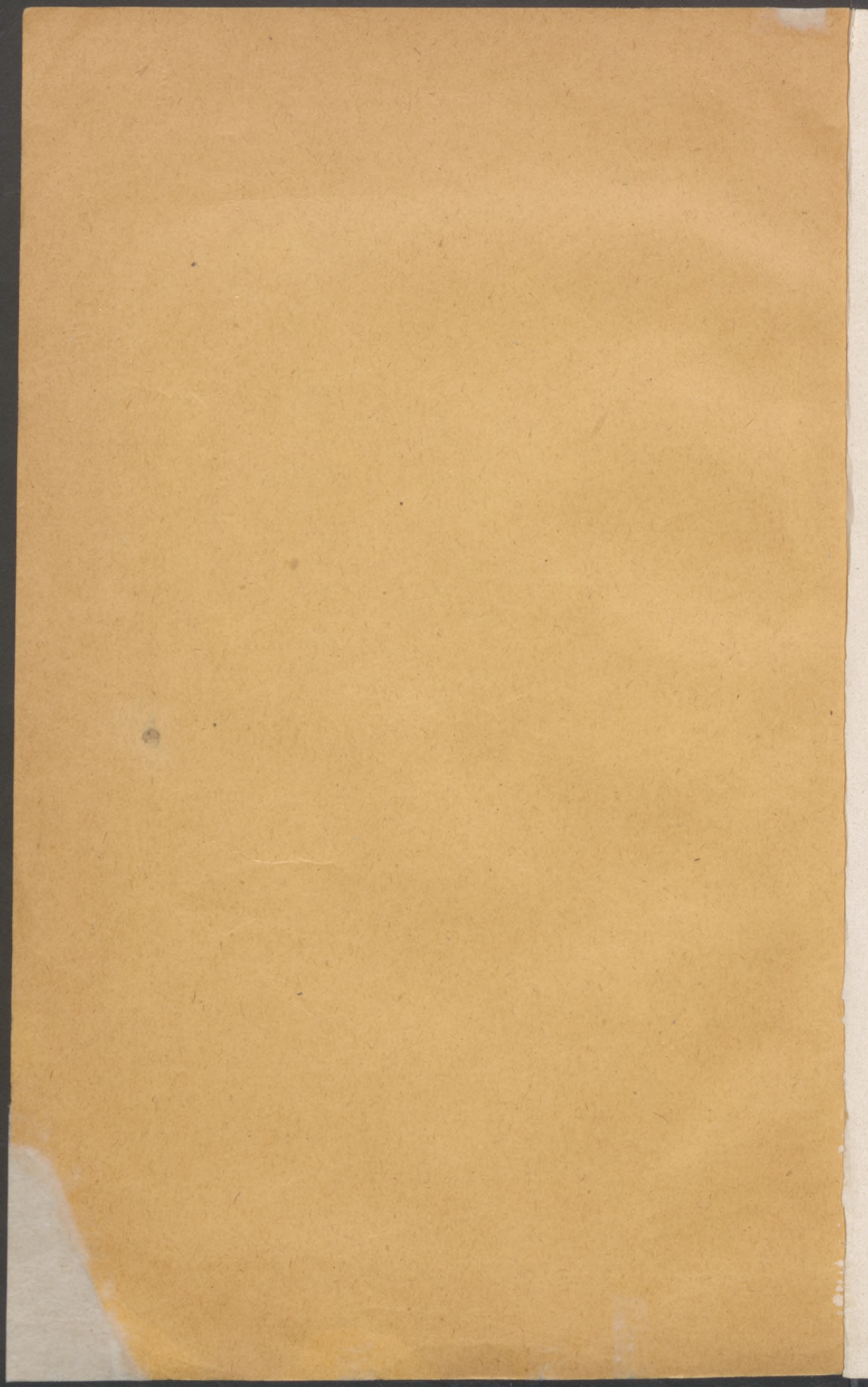
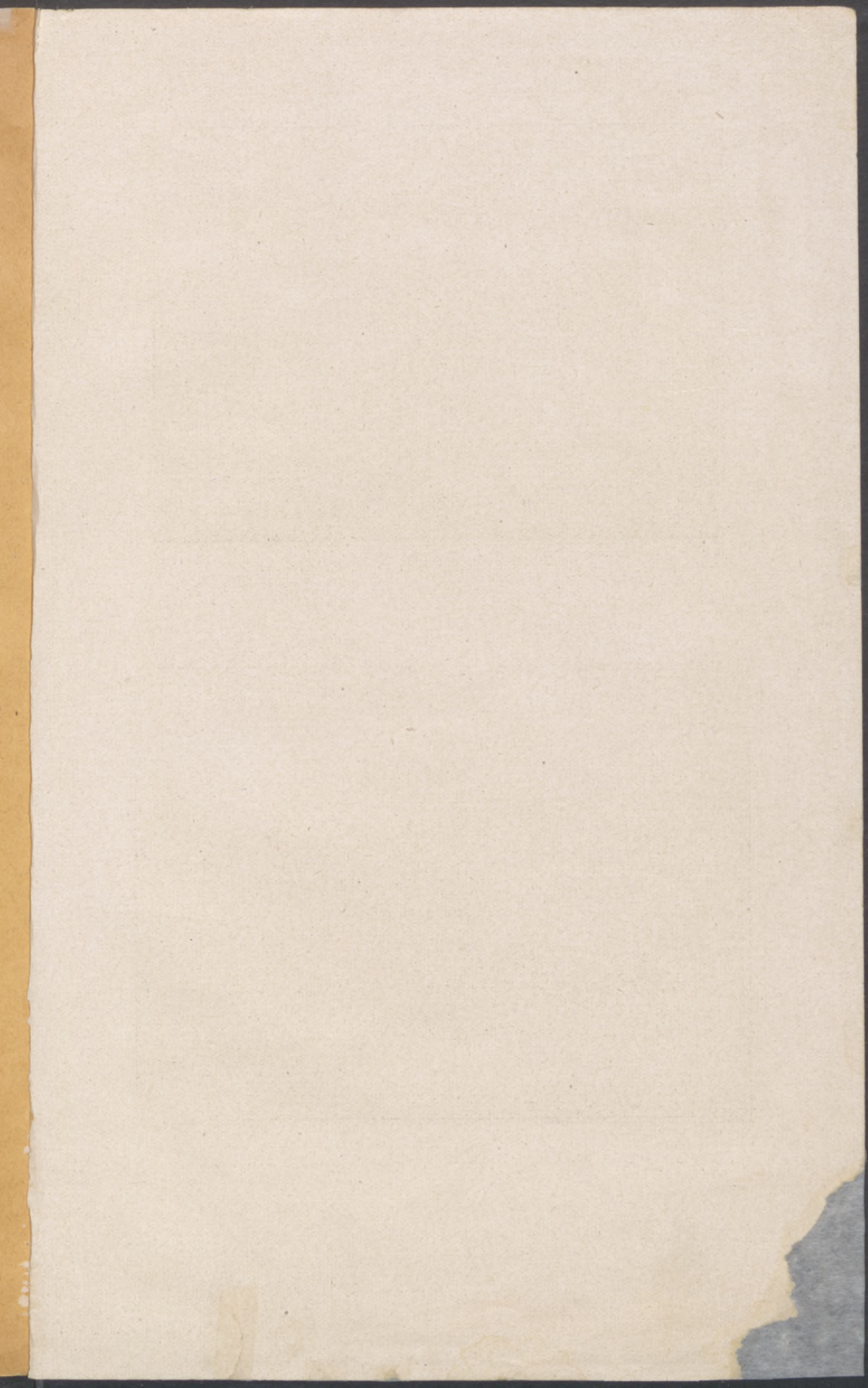


The cathedral of Marienwerder  
and  
The castle of Marienburg









The castle and the cathedral of Marienwerder  
By the original of Bendrat. B. G. Teubner Lipsia editor

Il castello e la chiesa cattedrale di Marienwerder  
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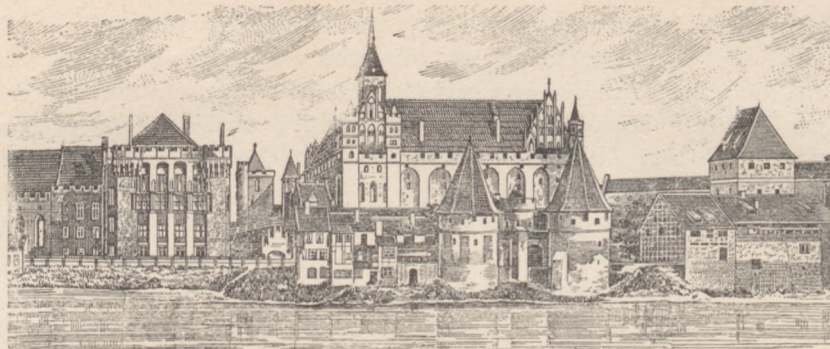


The castle of Marienburg  
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One of the first actions after crossing the Vistula just in the area of plebiscite was the erection of a strong fortress connected with a town, Marienwerder now-a-days, that often destroyed by the heathen Prussians always was reconstructed. Prussia as far as conquered by the Order had been divided into 3 bishoprics and in 1243 the new bishop of Pomesania choose the southern part of this territory, to which the present Kreise of Marienwerder and Rosenberg were belonging, his dominion. In 1235 when the last insurrection of the Prussians was beaten and finally peace came into the country, he removed the chapter of his bishopric into the city of Marienwerder. He had made up his mind to put it under the rules of the German Order and he at once started building a „Kapitel-Haus“ (house of chapter) close to the ancient fortress of the Order and erecting a cathedral instead of the ancient small parish-church of the town.

The episcopal castle soon fell into ruins, because since the 14th century the bishops removed their residence to Riesenburg. It disappeared entirely in the 16th century. The castle of the chapter of the dome too, portions of which can be seen even now, had a varied fate. Originally it had been constructed round a square place having four wings and four towers on each corner. Moreover ther was a big tower still existing called „Dansker“. This tower was connected with the main building by a corridor 55 meters long and resting on 5 big bows. Underneath this tower there was a flowing water, which was used for the highly important purpose of a sewer.

Since the Reformation the castle lost its importance as residence of the dome-chapter, and for this reason its existence was threatened. In the 16th and 17th century it was kept in a good state and used for lodging travelling sovereigns, but having been changed into a store-house in 1728 it fell into ruins in so high a degree, that it proved evidently necessary to break down the southern wing and part of the eastern. But finally people remembered the historical importance of this building, and as soon as Prussia recovered from the terrible blows of the Napoleon wars, they started restoration, which by a 20 years'work gave to the

existing part of the castle as well as to the dome their present form. For centuries had done great damage to the dome too. The numberless wars of the 16th and 17th century and before all the profanation by the French which in 1807 accomodated a drilling-ground and a store of gun-powder, had brought the venerable building almost to complete ruin.

The establishment of a „Komturei“ (headquarters of a commander) in 1280 in the desert of the river Nogat was of no little importance. This „Komturei“ like Marienwerder too got the name of the Order's patron: Marienburg (Castle of St. Maria). The military and economical purpose of this foundation, which contained, as it was usual, both fortress and town, was the protection of the communications between the Kulm territory and the sea. The castle bore very much resemblance with that of Marienwerder. It was built round a square place with a fore-part, farm-houses and stables. Like in Marienwerder a „Dansker“ over flowing water was used for sanitary purposes.

The first construction of the castle corresponded with the importance of the town. The famous reputation however was bestowed on this place on the entrance of the „Hochmeisters“ (Grand-Master's) government that gave an ever-lasting glory to this famous building of the east. When the city of Akkon was taken by assault, the last dream of the kingdom of Jerusalem was dreamt and the „Hochmeister“ (Chief) of the German Order took up quarters in the country of his fresh task. So he removed his residence from Italy to Prussia and choose Marienburg the capital of the Order. This was a measure of great historical importance. By going to Marienburg the Order made Prussia the main object of their politics and this was the cause of Prussia's rapid rise. Everywhere the Order maintained peace and security, they built colonies of towns and villages, protected commerce and traffic and gained immense riches.

This splendid period can be judged from the magnificent activity of building that rendered Marienburg in the course of the 14th century the most brilliant monument of this style in Germany. They spent a busy life at the court of the „Hochmeister“. Arts were practised, as well as war-like work peaceful festivities were held and here was the centre of comprehensive politics. But this splendour did not last for a long time. The Estate of the Order was in spite of its cultural performances an artificial building, the vigour of which did not come forth from the own people but from abroad. Therefore it could not brave very long an eager enemy.

The battle of Tannenberg in 1410 was the first blow against this estate created by the Order. The Order did not succumb at once, a fact that may be derived not from their own strength but from the greater feebleness of their Polish enemy.

Since the 15th century the inner decay made rapid progress and 50 years later on the bad fate was completed. After a war of thirteen years in the course of which the own country had risen against the Order and joined the Polish, the Order succumbed. West-Prussia with the

exception of the two Kreise of Marienwerder and Rosenberg, which besides East-Prussia remained with the Order, came to Poland. This was a bad fate, for things happened soon after, of which the West-Prussians never had had an idea before their treason. In the first time the Polish kings promised perfect independance, confirmed by many treaties. But a hundred years later on these treaties were broken, West-Prussia notwithstanding the vehement resistance was created a Polish province and henceforth was delivered to perfect decay.

Even the traces of this period can distinctly be recognised in the fate of the proud Marienburg. Brilliant life vanishes within its walls. Marienburg, it is true, becomes a Polish royal castle, but it is not the residence of the king but that of a Polish garrison. Indifference, plunderings during the Swedish war in the 17 th century, conflagrations and negligence laid waste to the glory and destroyed the grandeur. As well as the country sank from its flourishing height to the lowest degree of utmost poverty, the castle from its ancient magnificence fell into ruins under the Polish government.

In 1772 when West-Prussia came to Prussia, the heavy tasks that were to be brought about in this decayed country by the war-tired poor Prussia, forbade any care for the castle. During the French wars from 1806—14, the destruction of the castle apparently was complete, for it was used as store-house. But during the wars of deliverance people recollected the ancient grandeur. Enthusiastically all classes of the population called for a worthy restoration of this monument of German culture in the east. Government did not oppose in spite of being forced to greatest economy. The work of reconstruction in the first time was pushed but very slow and in a small extent, but they were continued incessantly during the 19 th century up to the present time with the result, that the main part and the middle part of the castle now arise in their ancient splendour.



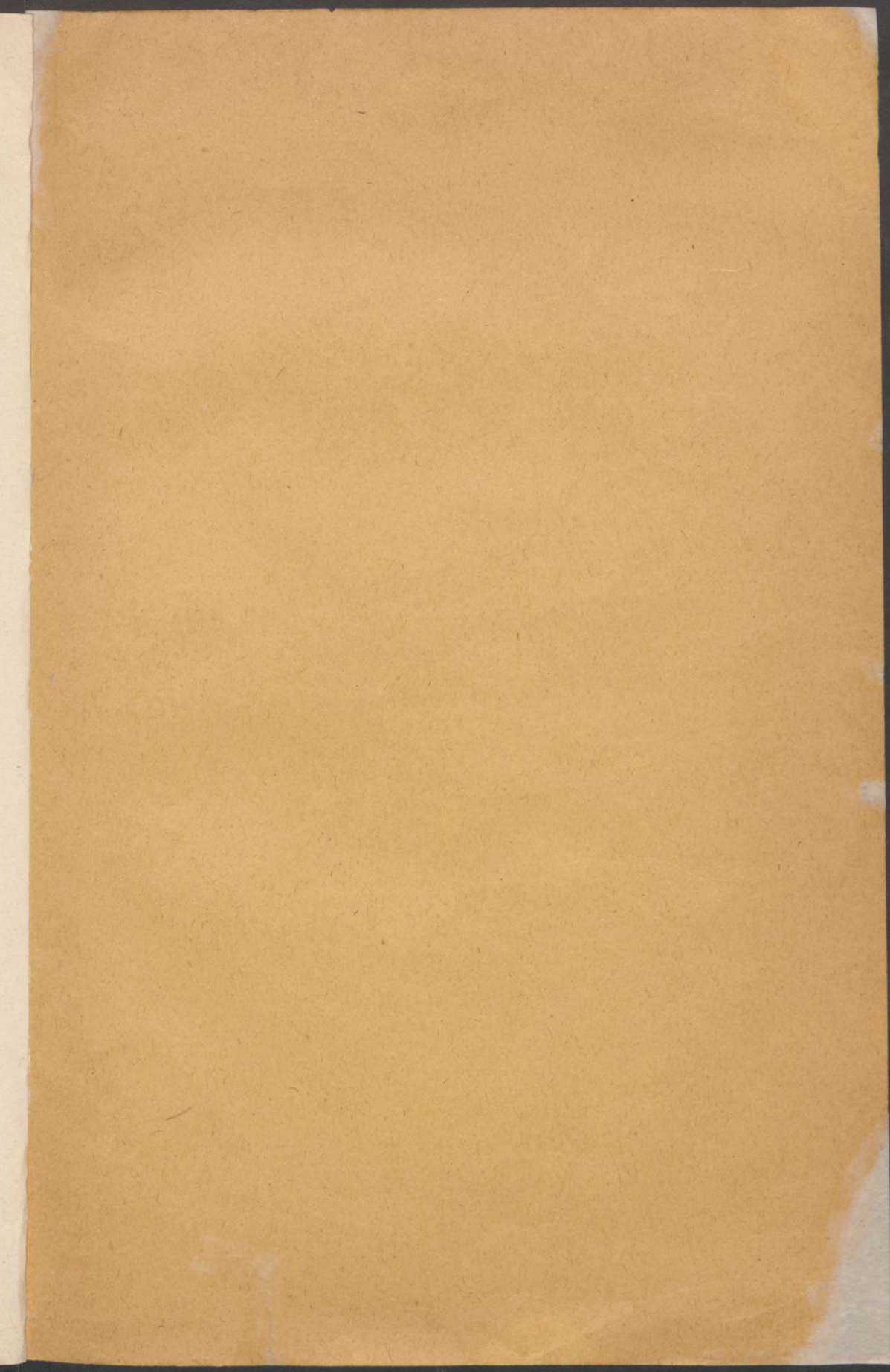
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