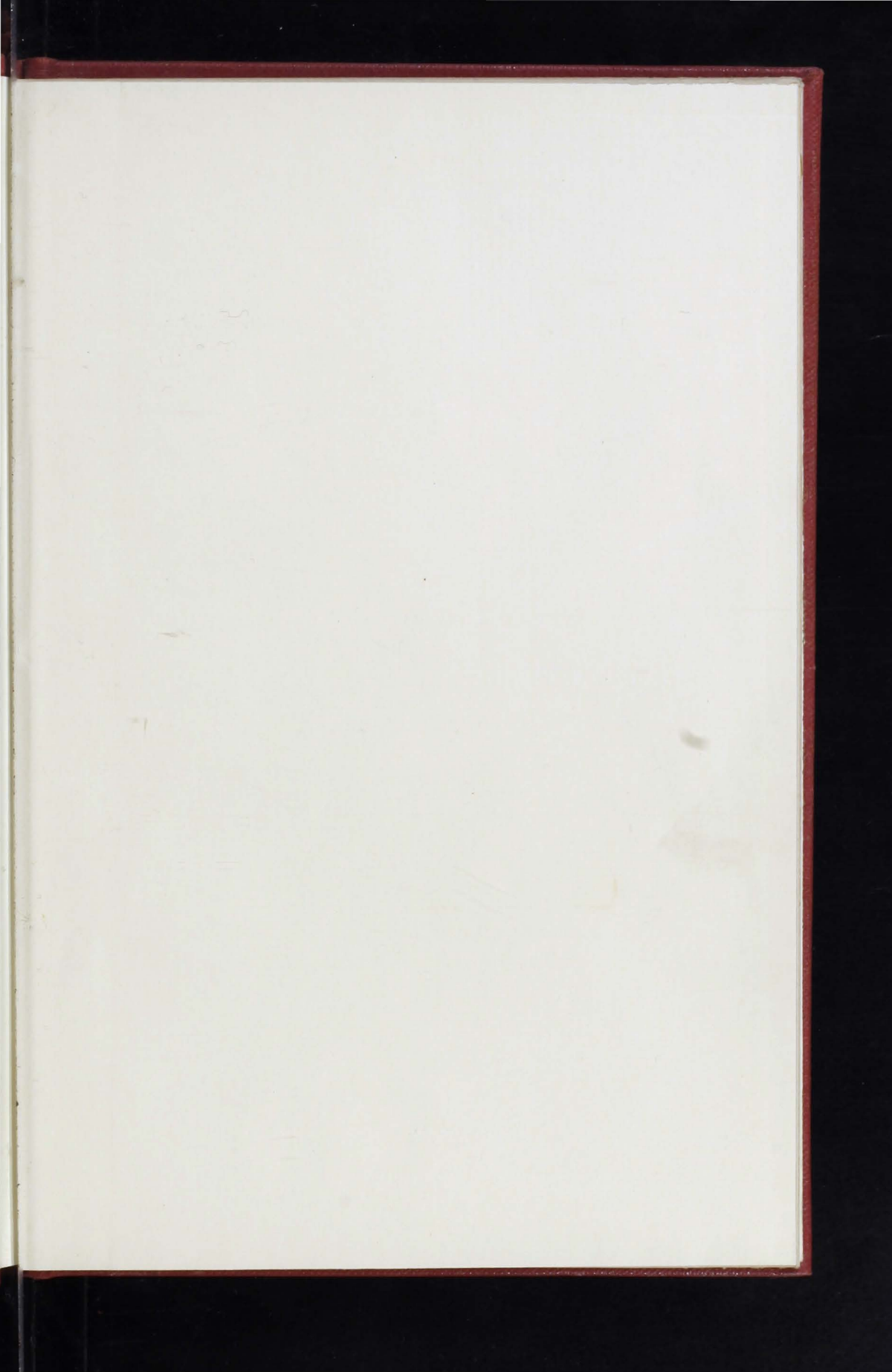




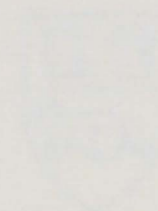
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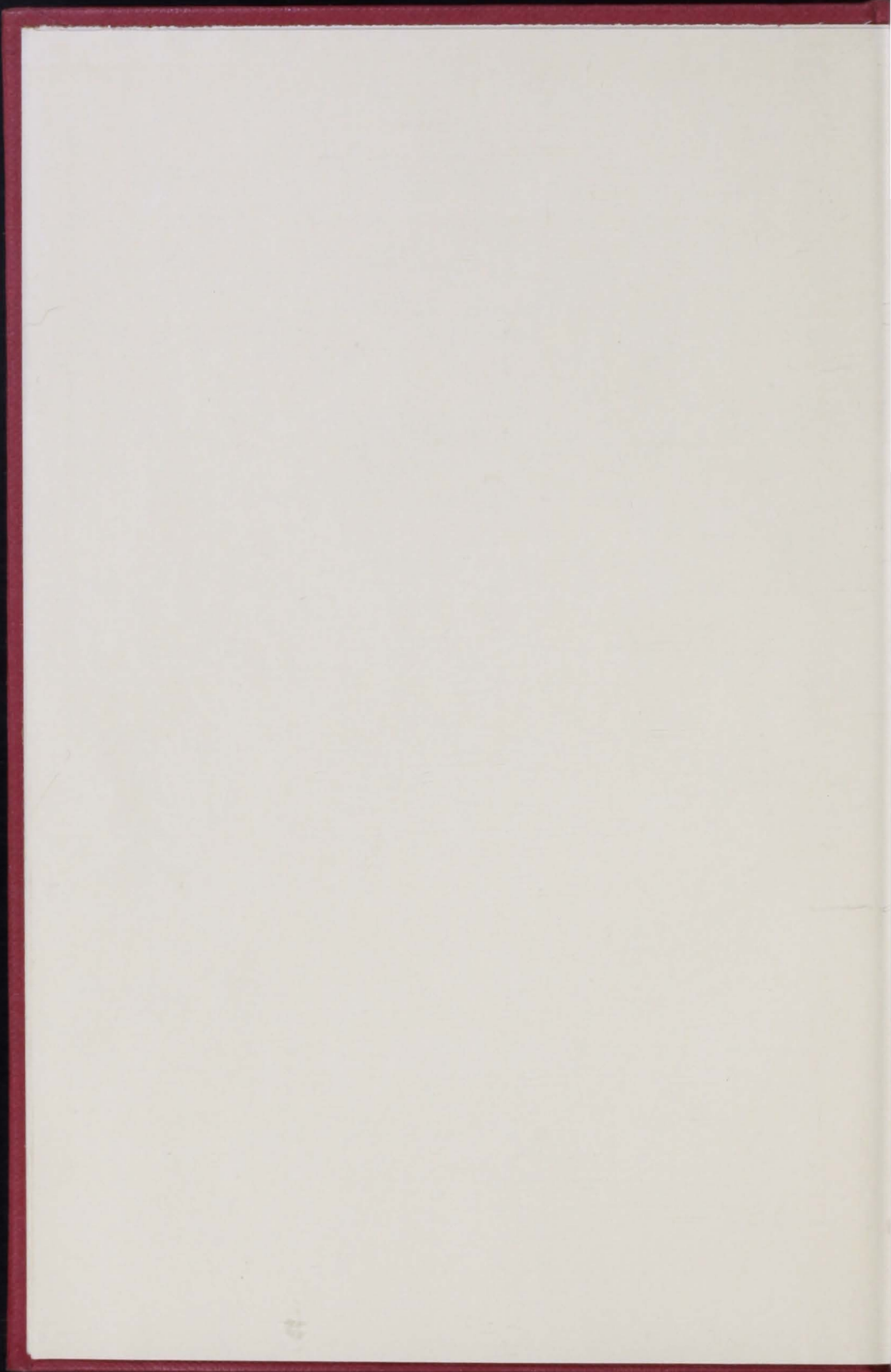
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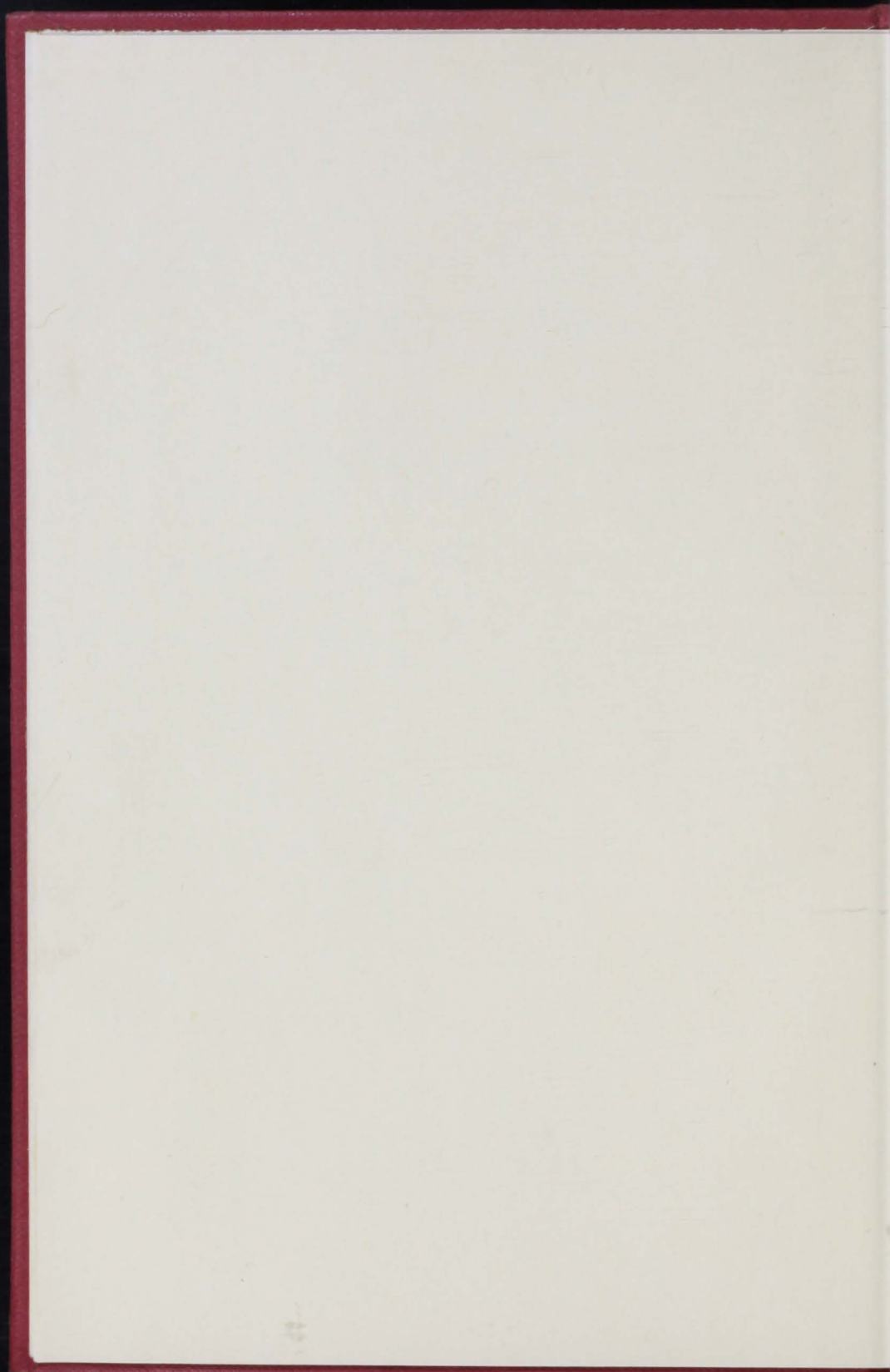
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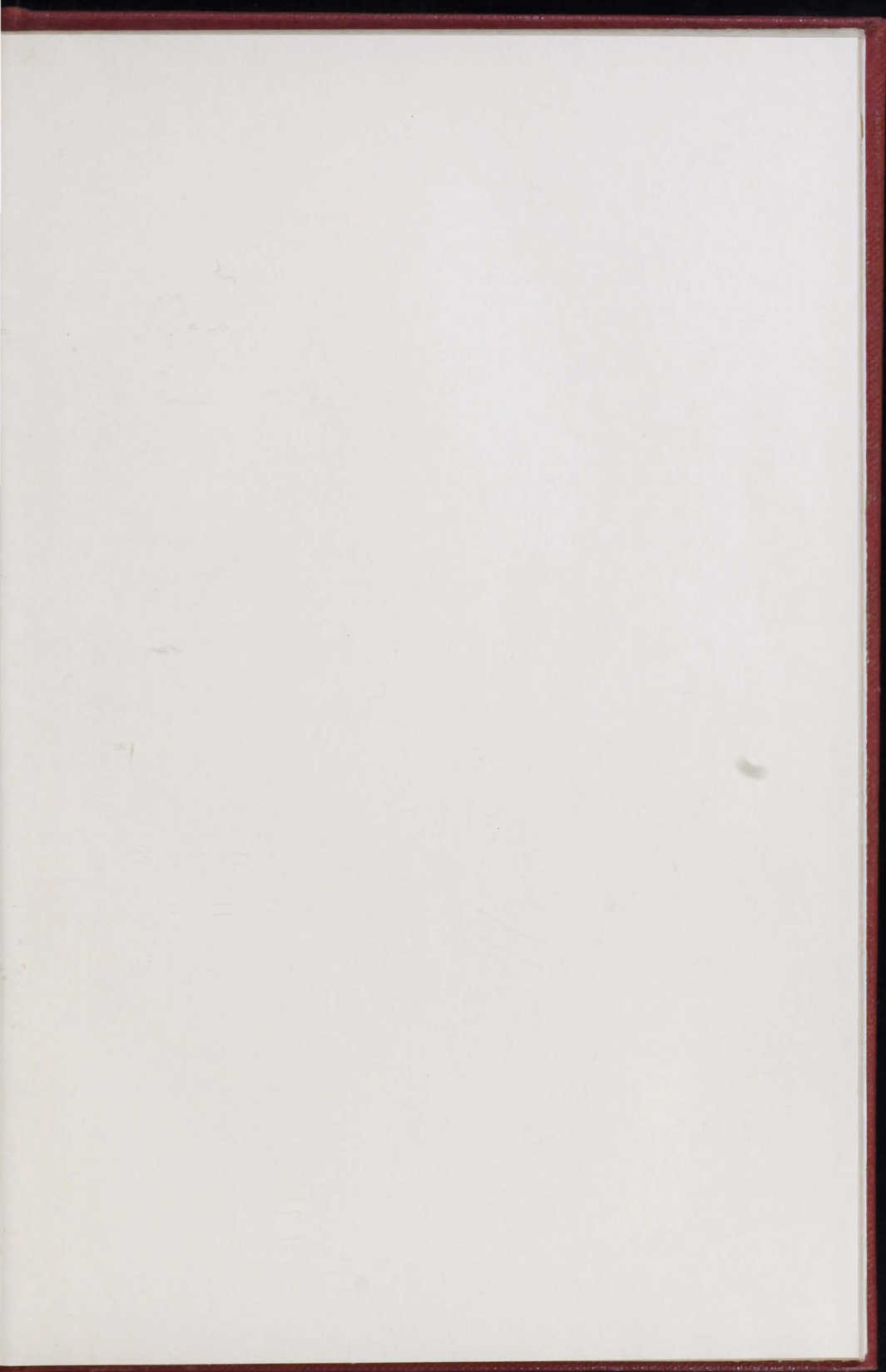


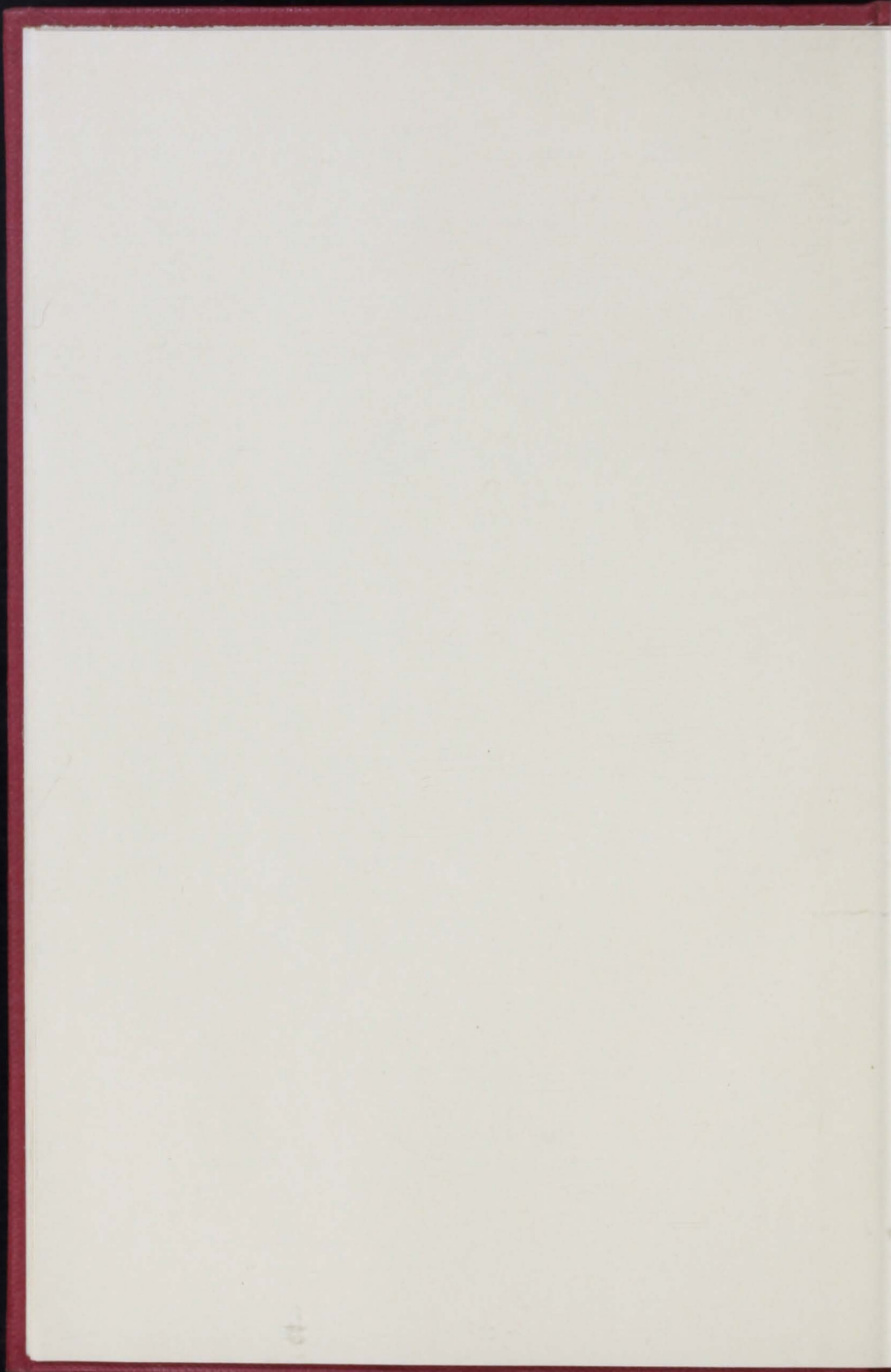




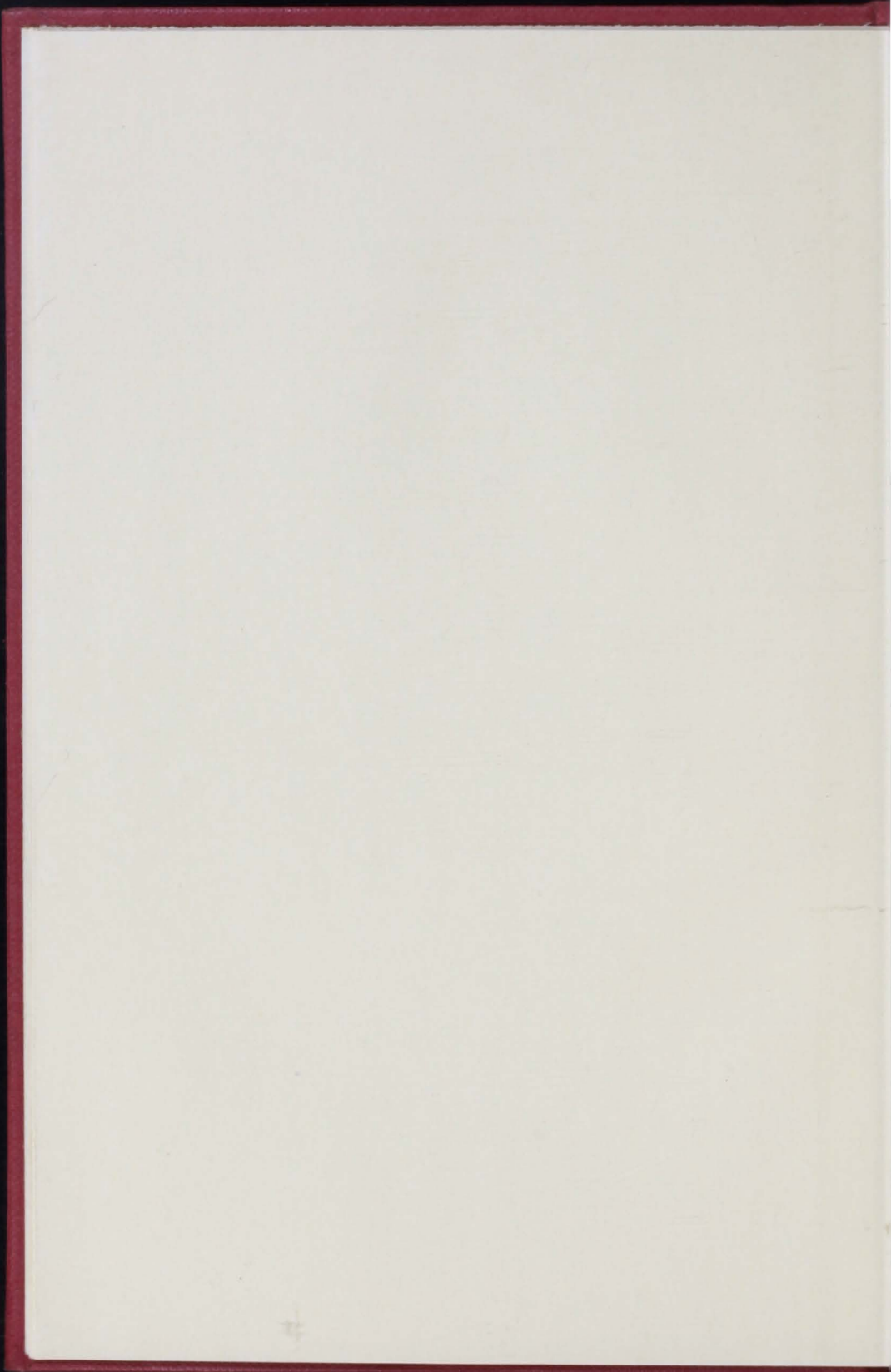


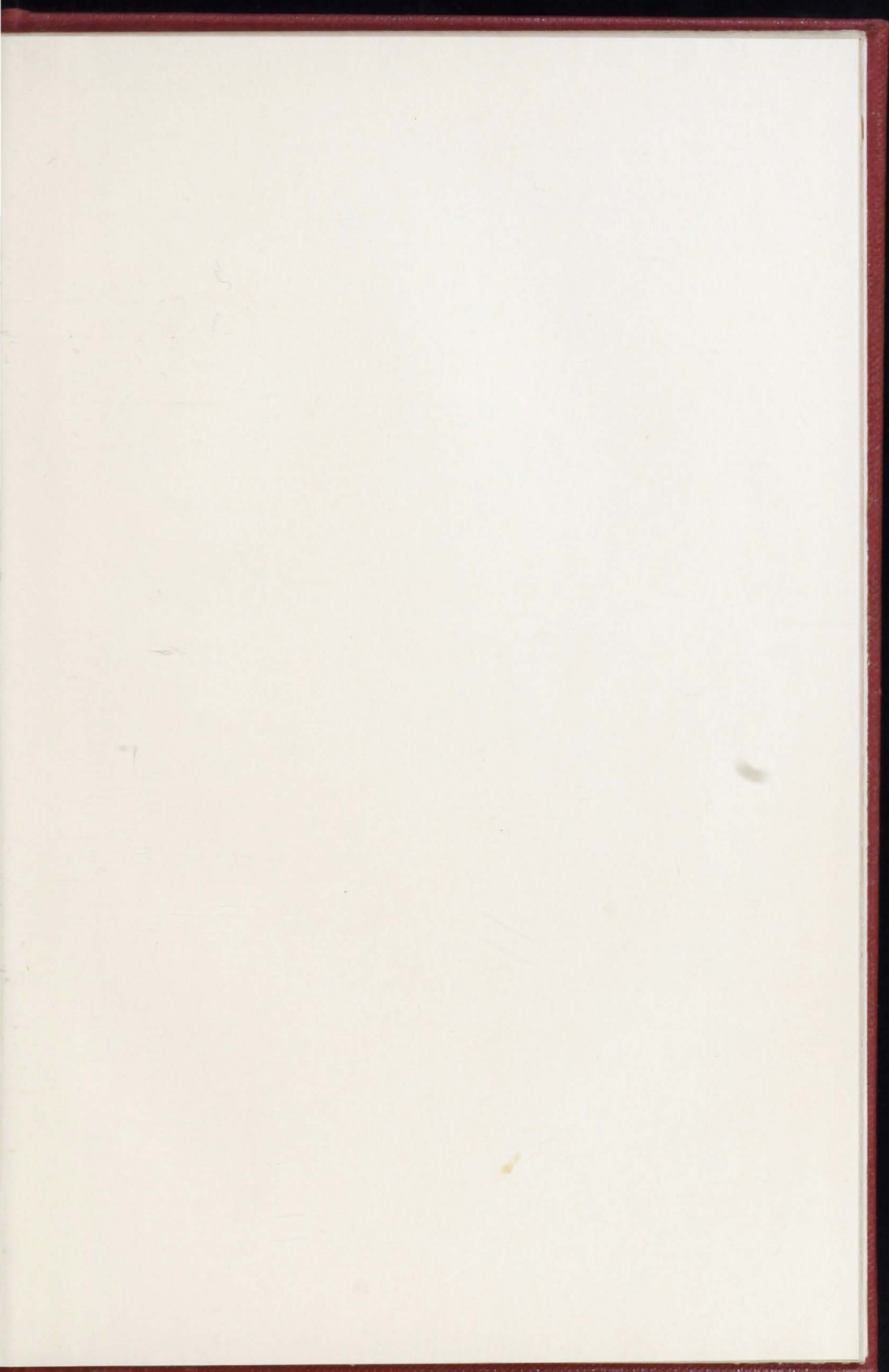


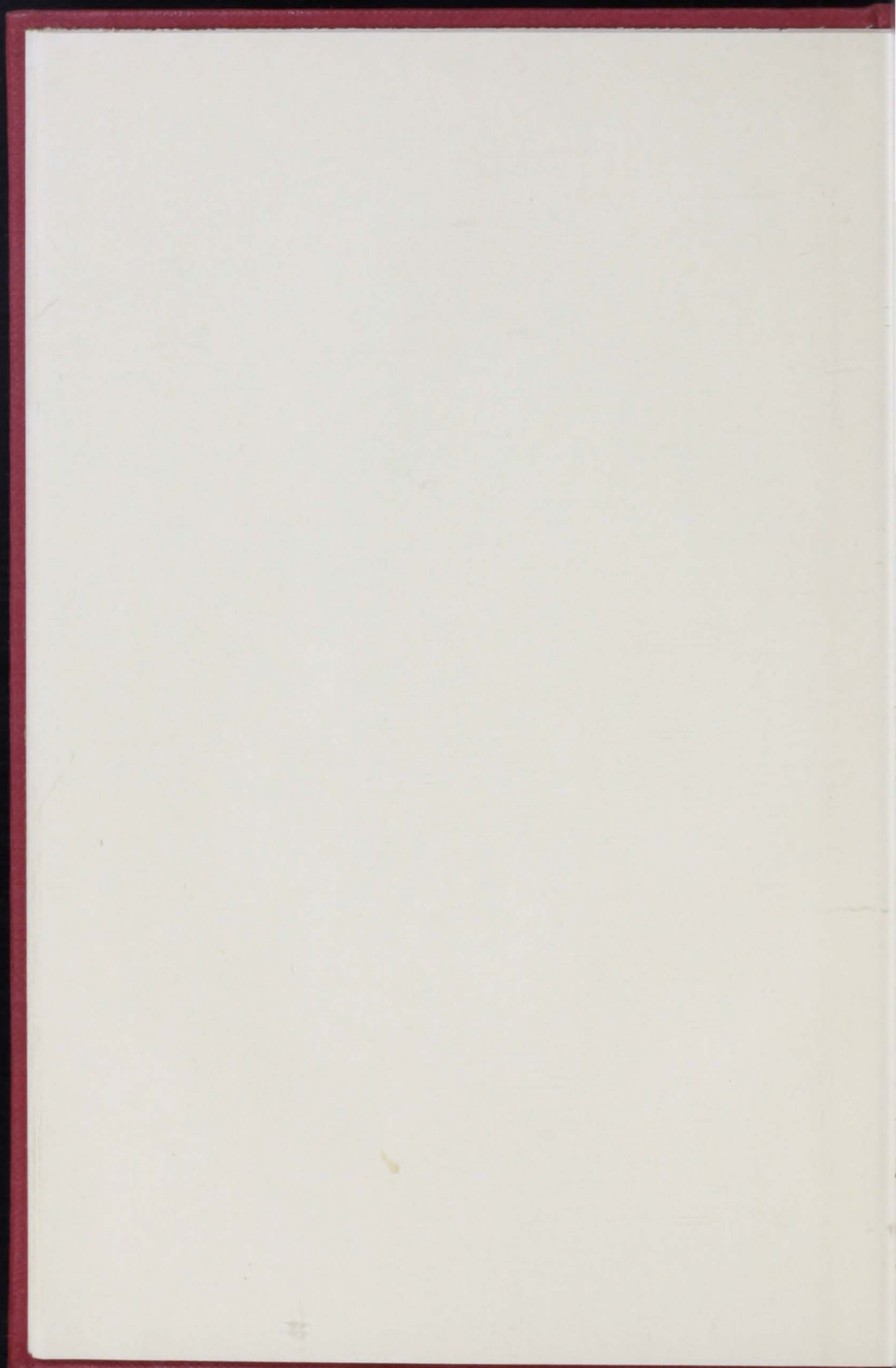






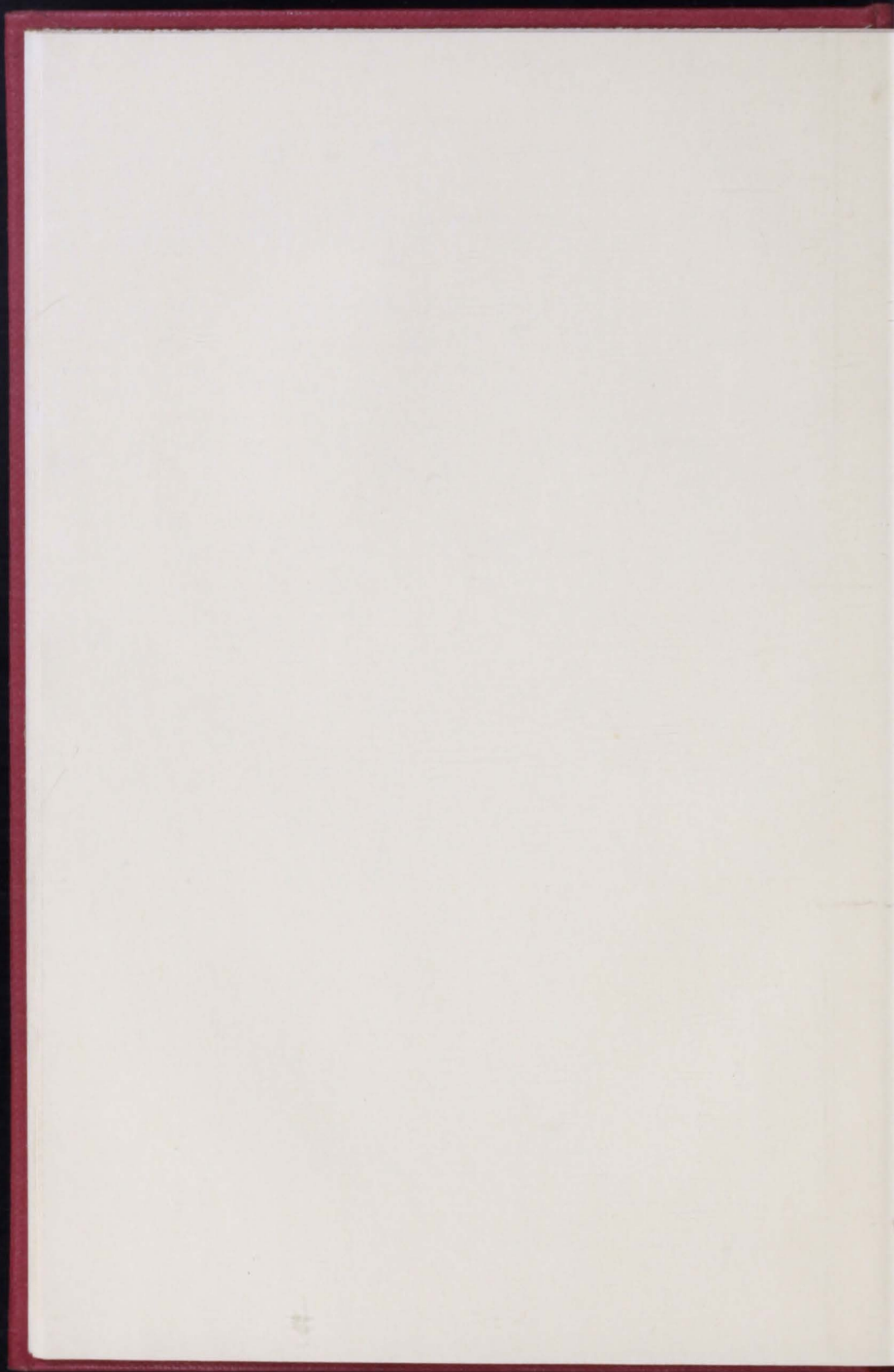












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(63)



FABIAN TRACT, No. 63.

# PARISH COUNCIL COTTAGES

## And How to Get Them.

No grievances are more keenly felt in English country districts than those connected with Laborers' Cottages. There are three things which want altering, and the Parish and District Councils already have power to do something, and ought to have power to do more.\*

The three grievances are :--

### I. Not enough Cottages.

Cottages are scarce in very many country places. It was the policy of the landlords in old days to keep "the poor" out of their villages, for fear that the cottagers might come upon the poor-rate. Even now well-built cottage property does not "pay," and thus in many parts of the country cottages are so scarce that laborers can with difficulty secure one.

Mr. R. C. Richards, an Official Assistant Commissioner, reports to the Labor Commission in 1893: "I do not remember in any district to have found a good cottage vacant, whilst in many . . . in the event of a marriage, the newly-married couple would have to lodge with the parents of one until a cottage should become vacant" (C. 6894, IV., page 12).

### II. Insanitary Cottages.

Some landlords, it is true, have of late years built a few model cottages; but in many places the hovels in which the laborers are forced to live are miserable in the extreme. The Labor Commission Report states: "There is abundant evidence to show that a large proportion of the cottages inhabited by laborers are below a proper standard of what is required for decency and comfort, whilst a considerable number of them are vile and deplorably wretched dwellings" (C. 7421, p. 209).†

It is now the duty of the Rural District Council to see that every cottage is put in proper repair, is not overcrowded, has a good supply of water and proper drainage, and generally is fit for human beings to live in. If the District Council fails to attend to this business, the Parish Meeting or Parish Council should pass resolutions calling upon it to do so, and can if necessary appeal to the County Council on the matter. Moreover, by Section 75 of the Housing of

\* See Fabian Tract No. 62, "Parish and District Councils."

† See also the Red Van Report for 1894, published by the English Land Restoration League, 8 Duke Street, Adelphi, price 1d.



the Working Classes Act, it is enacted that an agreement to let any cottage rented at less than £8 a year shall contain an implied condition that "the house is at the commencement of the holding in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation." A landlord therefore cannot recover arrears of rent by law if he lets a cottage which is not in a proper state of repair, and may be sued for damages if any sickness arises from this cause. Parish Councils can also obtain from their District Councils power to make byelaws for any new buildings to be erected in the parish.

### III. Tied Cottages.

But perhaps the worst of all these grievances is that the cottages belonging to the big landlord are often let by him to the farmers. This means not only that the laborers are liable to be evicted if they do not think and vote and act as the farmer or landlord pleases; but what is worse than all, that they will be turned out of their house and home if they strike for better wages, or make themselves well-known as active Parish Councillors. Says the Commissioner before mentioned: "Where the cottage is held from the employer there is a general understanding that notice to leave employment carries with it notice to leave the cottage" (C. 6894, IV., p. 29. See also pp. 30 and 79). And a laborer rightly says of this system: "It is handing oneself over body and soul to one's employer" (C. 6894, IV., p. 41).

For instance, in a parish of 2,000 acres in Wilts, an absentee landlord lets every cottage to one or other of the two farmers, and no one can live in the parish save by their permission.—*Echo*, 16th December, 1893. "In seventeen parishes in East and South Wilts there are 1,002 cottages, and of these 777 are tied to the farms."—*Daily Chronicle*, 14th November, 1893.

The same thing is true of mining villages, where all the cottages belong to the mine owners, and it has happened that the leaders of a strike are evicted in order to awe the strikers into submission; whilst in one extreme case notices to quit were served on every inhabitant.

#### The Remedy: Parish Council Cottages.

We want, therefore:

- (1) Good cottages to be built wherever they are needed.
- (2) Proper repairs and sanitation, and no overcrowding.
- (3) Permanent tenure so long as rent is paid; and freedom from control by landlord or by farmer.

And we can only get all these when the laborers themselves, by means of the Parish Meeting or Council and the District Council, build and own and manage Parish Council cottages.

#### What has been done in Ireland.

Ireland is the country where the cottage folk have learnt how to make their grievances known, and so in many respects they have got far better laws than the laborers in England.

The cottages there have been very bad indeed, but between 1883 and 1892 laws were passed giving the Guardians power to build cottages, and in less than eleven years up to April 1894, no less than 12,937 cottages have been authorized, and 10,352 actually built. Of these, 9,455 are let at not more than 1/- per week, and only 80 were unlet at the date of the return (C. 7454, p. 34). They have in many cases an acre of garden attached to them. Why should Ireland be so much better off than England? A Bill has been introduced by Mr. Cyril Dodd, M.P., called the Parish Councils (Laborers' Cottages) Bill, to confer on Parish Councils the powers possessed by the Irish Boards of Guardians; and if it were passed, it would do much good.

#### District Councils can build Cottages now.

TOWN AND URBAN DISTRICT COUNCILS.—Under the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, Part III., these Councils can erect cottages for the working classes with not more than half-an-acre of garden. They can buy land compulsorily (Sec. 57) and can borrow the money to build with. Any costs or expenses will be paid out of the Poor Rate.

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCILS have the same powers, but they must first apply to the County Council, which must appoint some person to hold an enquiry on the spot. If this person is satisfied that cottages are wanted, and will not be provided by other means, and that the scheme is not likely to be unprofitable, the County Council may authorize the District Council to build the cottages.

PARISH COUNCIL COTTAGES.—The District Council may (by Sec. 55) decide that the cost of building cottages shall be borne by one parish only, or by two or three together. This means that the District Council may build cottages for the parish at the request of the Parish Meeting and Parish Council; that the cost of the cottages will be charged on the rates of the parish, and, of course, the practical management of them will be entrusted by the District Council to the Parish Council concerned.

BUYING AND FURNISHING COTTAGES.—District Councils have also power to buy or rent cottages already built (Sec. 57-8), and they have even the extraordinary power (Sec. 59) "to fit up, furnish, and supply" the cottages "with all requisite *furniture*, fittings, and conveniences."

#### What has already been Done.

The Rural District Council of Thingoe (Bury St. Edmunds) possesses eight cottages built under the Act. Four acres of land cost £160, and eight cottages £1,370. This money was borrowed from the Public Works Loan Commissioners at 3¼ per cent, and will be repaid by instalments in thirty years. The cottages are let at £5 10s. each a year, and the land at 2d. per rod. The town of Bridgnorth has also adopted the Act, and other places are taking steps to do so.



### Difficulties.

**LOW RENTS.**—Often it would cost the Parish Council £200 to buy half-an-acre of land and build a cottage, which could only be let at £5 or £6 a year because other tumble-down cottages in the village are let at that rent, and the laborers can afford no more. Sometimes a saving in the cost of building might be effected by the adoption of the Baths and Washhouses Act, under which the Parish Council could build a Washhouse for the use of all the parishioners.

**LEGAL CONDITIONS.**—The second difficulty is the absurd mass of conditions to be fulfilled by Rural District Councils before they can use their powers to build cottages under the Act. Enquiries have to be held, certificates published, and delay made till after an election. All these conditions (set out in Clause 55) apply only to *Rural* District Councils, and they make the Act difficult to adopt in country places. A bill to amend the Act by removing all these needless restrictions has been introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Diamond, and another by Mr. Stern for the same purpose.

If any laborer wants to know more about how to proceed he will be given full information, free of charge, on sending a post-card to the Secretary of the Fabian Society, 276 Strand, London, W.C.

### What must be Done.

Agitate and petition in favor of Mr. Dodd's Bill, and the Bills to amend the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890.

When any one of these Bills is passed, it will be easy for Parish Councils to have their own cottages.

But remember, Parish Councils can now have their own cottages. Every laborer who wants a good cottage with half-an-acre of garden, rented from the District Council, should go to his Parish Meeting and move a resolution calling on the Rural District Council to

PUT IN OPERATION THE HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES  
ACT, 1890, PART III.

And he should vote only for those Parish and District Councillors who will promise to do their best to get the cottages built.

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