

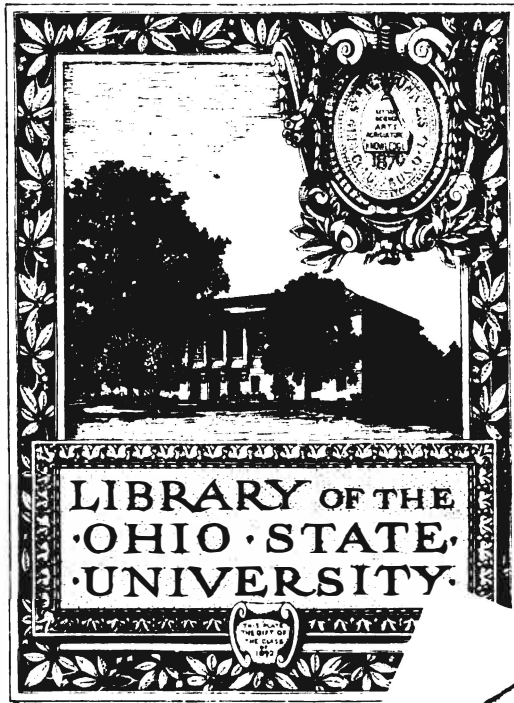
ELEGIAC SONNETS,

AND

OTHER ESSAYS

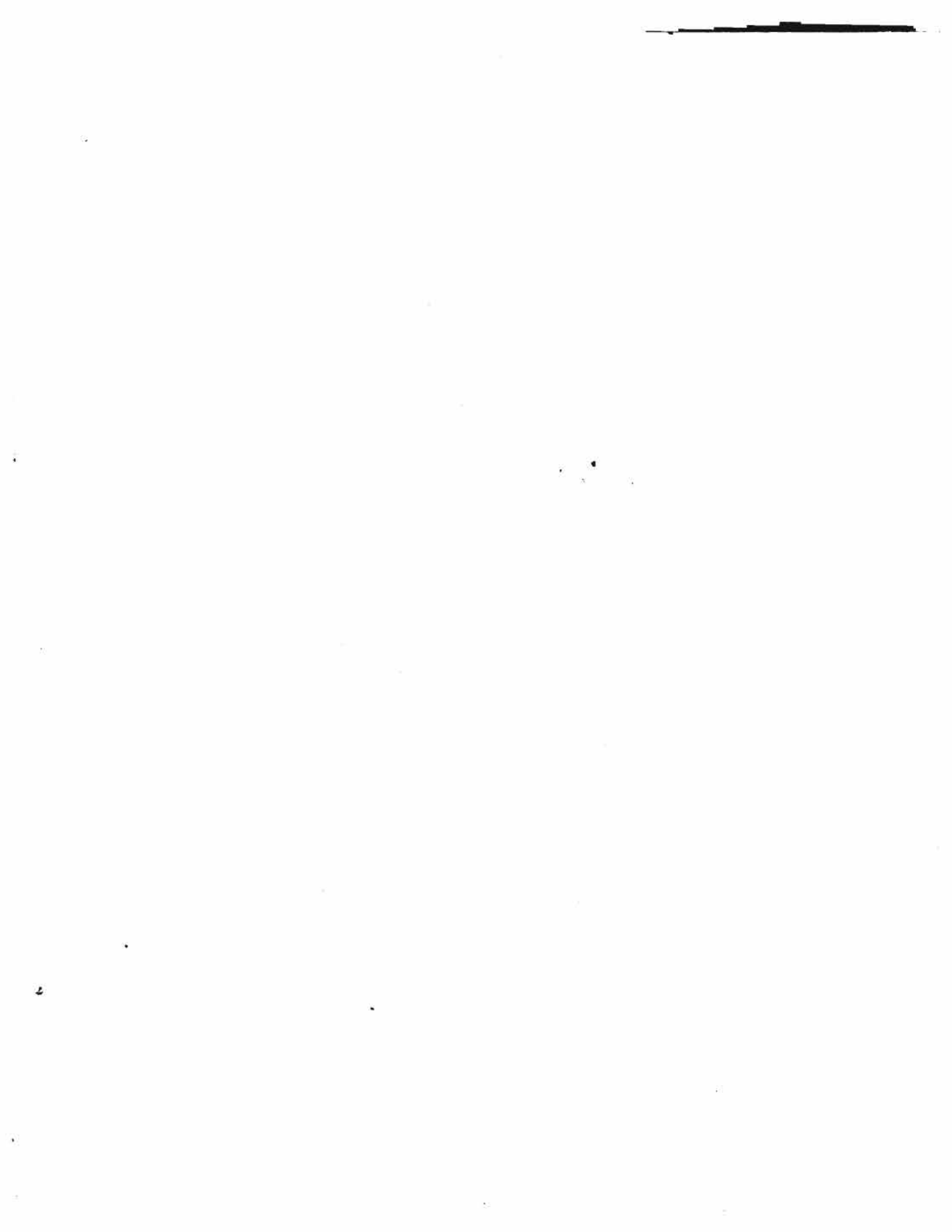
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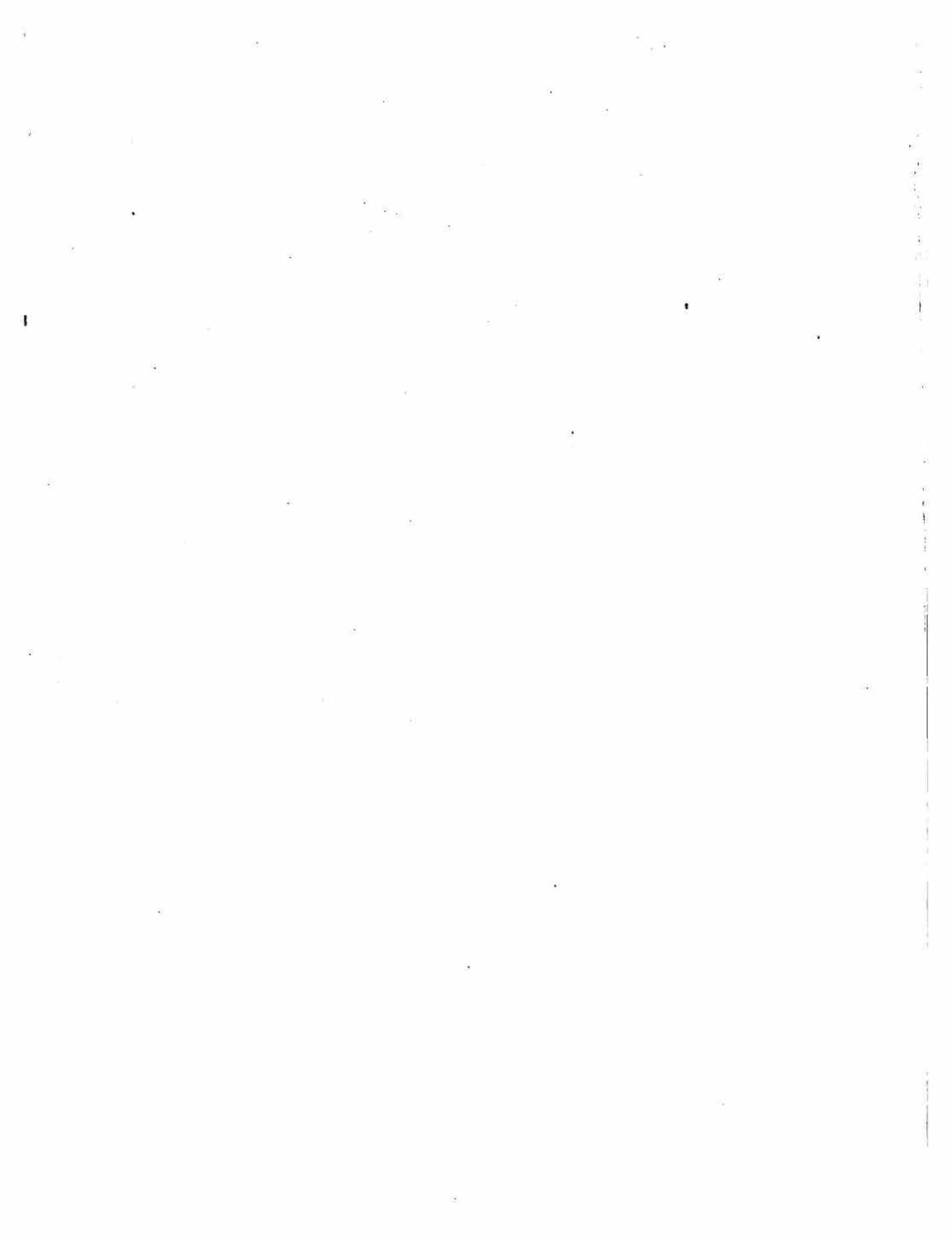


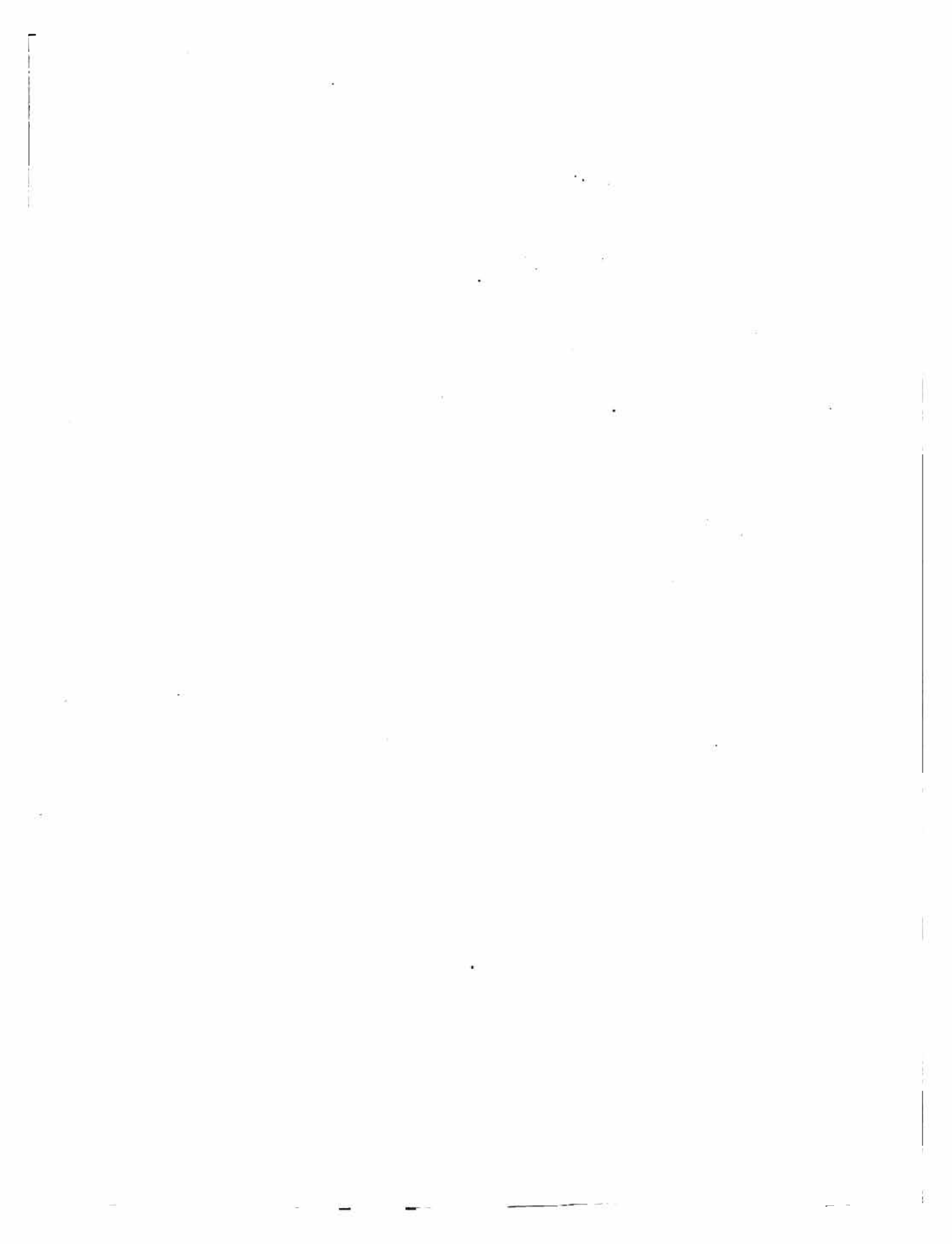
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ELEGIAC SONNETS,

A N D

O T H E R E S S A Y S.

[Price 2s.]



ELEGIAC SONNETS,

A N D

O T H E R E S S A Y S.

By CHARLOTTE SMITH,

O F

BIGNOR PARK, IN SUSSEX.

THE SECOND EDITION.

OHIO STATE

UNIVERSITY

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1961
1962
1963

STATE OF
VIRGINIA

T O

WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.

S I R,

WHILE I ask your protection for these
Essays, I cannot deny having myself
some esteem for them. Yet, permit me to say,
that did I not trust to your candour and sensi-
bility, and hope they will plead for the errors
your

your judgment must discover, I should never have availed myself of the liberty I have obtained—that of dedicating these simple effusions to the greatest modern Master of that charming talent, in which I can never be more than a distant copyist.

I am,

S I R,

Your most obedient

and obliged servant,

BIGNOR PARK,
May 10, 1784.

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

P R E F A C E.

*T*HE little Poems which are here called Sonnets have, I believe, no very just claim to that title: but they consist of fourteen lines, and appear to me no improper vehicle for a single sentiment. I am told, and I read it as the opinion of very good judges, that the legitimate Sonnet is ill calculated for our language. The specimens Mr. Hayley has given, though they form a strong exception, prove no more, than that the difficulties of the attempt vanish before uncommon powers.

Some very melancholy moments have been beguiled, by expressing in verse the sensations those moments brought.

Some

Some of my friends, with partial indiscretion, have multiplied the copies they procured of several of these attempts, till they found their way into the prints of the day in a mutilated state; which, concurring with other circumstances, determined me to put them into their present form. I can only hope for readers among the few, who to sensibility of heart join simplicity of taste.

The readers of poetry will meet with some lines borrowed from the most popular authors, which I have used only as quotations. Where such acknowledgment is omitted, I am unconscious of the theft.

ELEGIAC SONNETS,

AND

OTHER ESSAYS.

S O N N E T S.

S O N N E T I.

THE partial Muse has, from my earliest hours,
Smil'd on the rugged path I'm doom'd to tread,
And still with sportive hand has snatch'd wild flowers,
To weave fantastic garlands for my head:
But far, far happier is the lot of those
Who never learn'd her dear delusive art,
Which, while it decks the head with many a rose,
Reserves the thorn—to fester in the heart.

B

For

For still she bids soft Pity's melting eye
Stream o'er the ills she knows not to remove,
Points every pang, and deepens every sigh
Of mourning friendship, or unhappy love.
Ah! then, how dear the Muse's favours cost,
If those paint sorrow best who feel it most!

SONNET

S O N N E T II.

WRITTEN AT THE CLOSE OF SPRING.

THE garland's fade that Spring so lately wove,
 Each simple flower which she had nurs'd in dew,
 *Anemonies, that spangled every grove,
 The primrose wan, and hare-bell mildly blue.
 No more shall violets linger in the dell,
 Or purple orchis variegate the plain,
 Till spring again shall call forth every bell,
 And dress with humid hands her wreaths again.
 Ah! poor humanity! so frail, so fair,
 Are the fond visions of thy early day,
 Till tyrant passions, and corrosive care,
 Bid all thy fairy colours fade away!
 Another May new buds and flowers shall bring;
 Ah! why has happiness no second spring?

* Anemony Nemeroso, the wood anemony.

S O N N E T. III.

TO A NIGHTINGALE.

POOR melancholy bird, that all night long
 Tell'ft to the moon thy tale of tender woe ;
 From what fad caufe can fuch fweet forrow flow,
 And whence this mournful melody of fong ?

Thy poet's mufing fancy would tranflate
 What mean the founds that fwell thy little breaft,
 When ftill at dewy eve thou leav'ft thy neft,
 Thus to the liftening night to fing thy fate.

Pale Sorrow's victims wert thou once among,
 Tho' now releas'd in woodlands wild to rove,
 Or haft thou felt from friends fome cruel wrong,
 Or diedft thou martyr of difaftrous love ?
 Ah! fongftrefs fad! that fuch my lot might be,
 To figh and fing at liberty—like thee!

S O N N E T

S O N N E T IV.

TO THE MOON.

QUEEN of the silver bow, by thy pale beam,
 Alone and pensive, I delight to stray,
 And watch thy shadow trembling in the stream,
 Or mark the floating clouds that cross thy way.
 And, while I gaze, thy mild and placid light
 Sheds a soft calm upon my troubled breast;
 And oft I think, fair planet of the night,
 That in thy orb the wretched may have rest:
 The sufferers of the earth perhaps may go,
 Releas'd by death, to thy benignant sphere,
 And the sad children of despair and woe
 Forget, in thee, their cup of sorrow here.
 Oh! that I soon may reach thy world serene,
 Poor wearied pilgrim—in this toiling scene!

S O N N E T V.

TO THE SOUTH DOWNS.

AH, hills belov'd! where once, an happy child,
 Your beechen shades, 'your turf, your flowers among,'
 I wove your blue-bells into garlands wild,
 And woke your echoes with my artless song.
 Ah, hills belov'd! your turf, your flowers remain;
 But can they peace to this sad breast restore,
 For one poor moment soothe the sense of pain,
 And teach a breaking heart to throb no more?
 And you, * Aruna! in the vale below,
 As to the sea your limpid waves you bear,
 Can you one kind Lethean cup bestow,
 To drink a long oblivion to my care?
 Ah, no!—when all, e'en hope's last ray is gone,
 There's no oblivion—but in death alone!

* The River Arun.

S O N N E T

S O N N E T VI.

T O H O P E.

OH, Hope! thou foothersweet of human woe!
 How shall I lure thee to my haunts forlorn?
 For me wilt thou renew the wither'd rose,
 And clear my painful path of pointed thorn?
 Ah, come, sweet nymph! in smiles and softness drest,
 Like the young hours that lead the tender year;
 Enchantress, come! and charm my cares to rest;—
 Alas! the flatterer flies, and will not hear!—
 A prey to fear, anxiety, and pain,
 Must I a sad existence still deplore;
 Lo! the flowers fade, but all the thorns remain,
 'For me the vernal garland blooms no more.'
 Come then, ' * pale Misery's love,' be thou my cure,
 And I will bless thee, who, tho' slow, art sure.

* Shakespeare's King John.

S O N N E T

S O N N E T VII.

ON THE DEPARTURE OF THE NIGHTINGALE.

SWEET poet of the woods, a long adieu!
 Farewel, soft minstrel of the early year!
 Ah! 'twill be long ere thou shalt sing anew,
 And pour thy music on the 'night's dull ear.'
 Whether on * spring thy wandering flights await,
 Or whether silent in our groves ye dwell,
 The pensive Muse shall 'own thee for her mate,'
 And still protect the song she loves so well.
 With cautious steps the love-lorn youth shall glide
 Thro' the lone brake that shades thy mossy nest;
 And shepherd girls from eyes profane shall hide
 The gentle bird, who sings of pity best.
 For still thy voice shall soft affections move,
 And still be dear to sorrow and to love.

* This alludes to the supposed migration of the nightingale.

S O N N E T VIII.

T O S P R I N G .

A GAIN the wood and long-withdrawing vale
 In many a tint of tender green are drest,
 Where the young leaves unfolding scarce conceal
 Beneath their early shade the half-form'd nest
 Of finch or wood-lark; and the primrose pale,
 And lavish cowslip, wildly scatter'd round,
 Give their sweet spirits to the fighting gale.
 Ah, season of delight! could aught be found
 To soothe awhile the torturing bosom pain
 Of sorrow's rankling shaft, to cure the wound,
 And bring life's first delusions once again,
 'Twere surely met in thee:—thy prospects fair,
 Thy notes of harmony, thy balmy air,
 Have ' power to cure all sadness but despair *.'

* Milton.

D

S O N N E T

S O N N E T IX.

BL E S T is yon shepherd, on the turf reclin'd,
 Who on the varied clouds which float above
 Lies idly gazing—while his vacant mind

Pours out some tale antique of rural love!

Ah! *he* has never known the pangs that move

Th' indignant spirit, when, with selfish pride,

Friends, on whose faith the trusting heart rely'd,

Unkindly shun th' imploring eye of woe! The
 ills they ought to soothe with taunts deride,

And laugh at tears themselves have forc'd to flow!

Nor *his* rude bosom those fine feelings melt,

Children of Sentiment and Knowledge born,

Thro' whom each shaft with cruel force is felt,

Empoison'd by deceit, or barb'd with scorn.

S O N N E T

S O N N E T X.

T O S L E E P.

COME balmy Sleep, tir'd nature's soft resort,
 On these sad temples all thy poppies shed ;
 And bid gay dreams, from Morpheus' airy court,
 Float in light vision round my aching head!—
 Secure of all thy blessings, partial Power,
 On his hard bed the peasant throws him down ;
 And the poor sea boy, ' in the rudest hour*,'
 Enjoys thee more than he who wears a crown.
 Clasp'd in her faithful shepherd's guardian arms,
 Well may the village girl sweet slumbers prove ;
 And they, oh gentle Sleep ! still taste thy charms,
 Who wake to labour, liberty, and love.
 But still thy opiate aid dost thou deny,
 To calm the anxious breast, to close the streaming eye.

* Shakespeare's Henry IV.

C H A N S O N.

C H A N S O N.

PAR LE CARDINAL BERNIS

T E N D R E fruit des pleurs de l'Aurore,
Objet des baisers du Zephir,
Reine de l'empire de Flore,
Hate toi de t'épanouir,
Que dis je?—Helas ! crains de paroître,
Differe un moment de t'ouvrir ;
L'instant qui doit te faire naître
Est celui qui doit te fletrir.

Va meurs sur le sein de Themire,
Qu'il soit ton trône, et ton tombeau ;
Jaloux de ton fort, je n'aspire
Qu'au bonheur d'un trepas si beau.
Si quelque main a l'imprudence,
D'y venir troubler ton repos ;
Tu porte avec toi ta defence,
Garde une epine à mes rivaux.

L'Amour

L'Amour aura soin de t'instruire
 De quel côté tu dois pancher,
 Eclate à ses yeux fans me nuire,
 Pare son sein, fans le cacher.
 Qu'enfin elle rende les armes
 Au Dieu qui doit former nos liens,
 Et qu'en voyant fletrir tes charmes,
 Elle apprend à jouir des siens.

I M I T A T I O N.

I.

FRUIT of Aurora's tears, fair rose,
 On whose soft leaves fond zephyrs play,
 Oh! queen of flowers, thy buds disclose,
 And give thy fragrance to the day;
 Unveil thy transient charms:—ah, no!
 A little be thy bloom delay'd,
 Since the same hour that bids thee blow
 Shall see thee droop thy languid head.

E

II. But

II.

But go! and on THEMIRA's breast
 Find, happy flower, thy throne and tomb;
 While, jealous of a fate so blest,
 How shall I envy thee thy doom!
 Should some rude hand approach thee there,
 Guard the sweet shrine thou wilt adorn;
 Ah! punish those who rashly dare,
 And for my rivals keep thy thorn.

III.

Love shall himself thy boughs compose,
 And bid thy wanton leaves divide;
 He'll shew thee how, my lovely rose,
 To deck her bosom, not to hide:
 And thou shalt tell the cruel maid
 How frail are youth and beauty's charms,
 And teach her, ere her own shall fade,
 To give them to her lover's arms.

T H E

O R I G I N O F F L A T T E R Y .

W H E N Jove, in anger to the sons of earth,
 Bid artful VULCAN give PANDORA birth,
 And sent the fatal gift, which spread below
 O'er all the wretched race contagious woe,
 Unhappy man, by vice and folly tost, 5
 Found in the storms of life his quiet lost,
 While Envy, Av'rice, and Ambition, hurl'd
 Discord and death around the warring world ;
 Then the blest peasant left his fields and fold,
 And barter'd love and peace for power and gold ; 10
 Left his calm cottage, and his native plain,
 In search of wealth to tempt the faithless main ;
 Or, braving danger, in the battle stood,
 And bath'd his savage hands in human blood :
 No longer then, his woodland walks among, 15
 The shepherd lad his genuine passion sung,

Or

Or fought at early morn his foul's delight,
 Or grav'd her name upon the bark at night ;
 To deck her flowing hair no more he wove
 The simple wreath, or with ambitious love 20
 Bound his own brow with myrtle or with bay,
 But broke his oaten pipe, and threw his crook away.
 The nymphs forsaken, other pleasures sought ;
 Then first for gold their venal hearts were bought,
 And nature's blush to sickly art gave place, 25
 And affectation seiz'd the feat of grace :
 No more simplicity, by sense refin'd,
 Or generous sentiment, possess'd the mind ;
 No more they felt each other's joy and woe,
 And CUPID fighting fled, and hid his useless bow. 30
 But with deep grief propitious VENUS pin'd,
 To see the ills which threaten'd womankind ;
 Ills that she knew her empire would disarm,
 And rob her subjects of their sweetest charm ;
 Too surely feeling that the blasts of care 35
 Would blight each blooming face, and plough deep
 wrinkles there,

Sore sigh'd the goddess at the mournful view,
 Then try'd at length what heavenly art could do
 To bring back pleasure to her pensive train,
 And vindicate the glories of her reign. 40
 From MARS's head his casque, by CUPID borne,
 (That which in softer wars the god had worn)
 She smiling took, and on its silver round
 Her magic cestus three times thrice she bound ;
 Then shaking from her hair ambrosial dew, 45
 Infus'd fair hope, and expectation new,
 And stifled wishes, and persuasive sighs,
 And fond belief, and ' eloquence of eyes,'
 And fault'ring accents, which explain so well
 What studied speeches vainly try to tell, 50
 And more pathetic silence, which imparts
 Infectious tenderness to feeling hearts,
 Soft tones of pity, fascinating smiles ;
 And MAIA's son assisted her with wiles,
 And brought gay dreams, fantastic visions brought, 55
 And wav'd his wand o'er the seducing draught.
 Then ZEPHYR came: To him the goddess cried,
 ' Go fetch from FLORA all her flow'ry pride

' To fill my charm, each scented bud that blows,
 ' And bind my myrtles with her thornless rose; 60
 ' Then speed thy flight to Gallia's smiling plain,
 ' Where rolls the Loire, the Garonne, and the Seine;
 ' Dip in their waters thy celestial wing,
 ' And the soft dew to fill my chalice bring;
 ' But chiefly tell thy FLORA, that to me 65
 ' She send a bouquet of her fleurs de lys;
 ' That poignant spirit will compleat my spell.*

—'Tis done: the lovely forceress says 'tis well.

And now APOLLO lends a ray of fire,
 The cauldron bubbles, and the flames aspire; 70
 The watchful Graces round the circle dance,
 With arms entwin'd, to mark the work's advance;
 And with full quiver sportive CUPID came,
 Temp'ring his favourite arrows in the flame.
 Then VENUS speaks, the wav'ring flames retire, 75
 And ZEPHYR's stronger breath extinguishes the fire.
 At length the goddess in the helmet's round
 A sweet and subtle spirit duly found,
 More soft than oil, than æther more refin'd,
 Of power to cure the woes of womankind, 80

And

And call'd it Flattery:—balm of female life,
 It charms alike the widow, maid, and wife;
 Clears the sad brow of virgins in despair,
 And smooths the cruel traces left by care;
 Bids palsy'd age with youthful spirit glow,
 And hangs May's garlands on December's snow.

85

Delicious essence! howfo'er apply'd,
 By what rude nature is thy charm deny'd?
 Some form seducing still thy whisper wears,
 Stern Wisdom turns to thee her willing ears,
 And Prudery listens, and forgets her fears.

90 }

The rustic nymph, whom rigid aunts restrain,
 Condemn'd to dress, and practise airs in vain,
 At thy first summons finds her bosom swell,
 And bids her crabbed *gouvernantes* farewell;
 While, fir'd by thee with spirit not her own,
 She governs fashion, and becomes the *ton*.

95

By thee dim-sighted dowagers behold
 The record where their conquests are enroll'd;
 They see the shades of ancient beaux arise,
 Who swear their eyes exceeded modern eyes,

100

And

And scenes long past, by memory fondly nurs'd,
 When GEORGE the Second reign'd, or GEORGE the First;
 Compar'd to which, degenerate and absurd
 Seems the gay world that moves round GEORGE the Third.
 Nor thy soft influence will the train refuse, 106
 Who court in distant shades the modest Muse,
 Tho' in a form, more pure and more refin'd,
 Thy dulcet spirit for the letter'd mind.
 Not death itself thy empire can destroy; 110
 Towards thee, even then, we turn the languid eye;
 Still trust in thee to bid our memory bloom,
 And scatter roses round the silent tomb.

SONNET,

S O N N E T,

FROM PETRARCH.

L O O S E to the wind her golden tresses stream'd,
 And form'd bright waves with amorous Zephyr's sighs;
 And, tho' averted now, her charming eyes
 Then with warm love and melting pity beam'd.
 Was I deceiv'd?—Ah! surely, nymph divine,
 That fine suffusion on thy cheek was love;
 What wonder then those lovely tints should move,
 Should fire this heart, this tender heart of mine!
 Thy soft melodious voice, thy air, thy shape,
 Were of a goddess, not a mortal maid;
 But tho' thy charms, thy heavenly charms should fade,
 My heart, my tender heart could not escape;
 Nor cure for me in time or change be found;
 The shaft extracted, does not cure the wound.

G

S O N N E T,

S O N N E T,

FROM PETRARCH.

WHERE the green leaves exclude the summer beam,
 And softly bend as balmy breezes blow,
 And where, with liquid lapse, the lucid stream
 Across the fretted rock is heard to flow,
 Pensive I lay ; when she whom earth conceals,
 As if still living, to my eyes appears,
 And pitying Heaven her angel form reveals,
 To say, Unhappy PETRARCH, dry your tears ;
 Ah! why, sad lover, thus, before your time,
 In grief and anguish should your life decay,
 And, like a blighted flower, your manly prime
 In vain and hopeless sorrow fade away ?
 Ah ! wherefore should you mourn, that her you love,
 Snatch'd from a world of woe, survives in bliss above ?

SONNET,

S O N N E T,

FROM PETRARCH.

YE vales and woods, fair scenes of happier hours,
 Ye feather'd people, tenants of the grove,
 And you, bright stream, befring'd with shrubs and flowers,
 Ah! see my grief, ye witnesses of love!

For ye beheld my infant passion rise,
 And saw thro' years unchang'd my faithful flame;
 Now cold in dust the beauteous object lies,
 And you, ye conscious scenes, are still the same.

While busy memory still delights to dwell
 On all the charms these bitter tears deplore,
 And with a trembling hand describes too well
 The angel form I shall behold no more!
 To heaven she's fled, and nought to me remains
 But the pale ashes which her urn contains.

S O N N E T,

S O N N E T,

S U P P O S E D . T O B E W R I T T E N B Y W E R T E R .

GO, cruel tyrant of the human breast!
 To other hearts thy burning arrows bear;
 Go where fond hope and fair illusion rest;
 Ah! why should love inhabit with despair!
 Like the poor maniac * I linger here,
 Still haunt the scene where all my treasure lies;
 Still seek for flowers where only thorns appear,
 And drink delicious poison from her eyes.
 Towards the deep gulph that opens on my sight
 I hurry forward, passion's helpless slave;
 And, scorning reason's mild and sober light,
 Pursue the path that leads me to the grave.
 So round the flame the giddy insect flies,
 And courts the fatal fire by which it dies.

* See the story of the lunatic.

S O N N E T,

S O N N E T,

S U P P O S E D T O B E W R I T T E N B Y W E R T E R .

OH, Solitude! to thy sequester'd vale
 I come to hide my sorrow and my tears,
 And to thy echoes tell the mournful tale,
 Which scarce I trust to pitying friendship's ears.
 Amidst thy wild-woods and untrodden glades
 No sounds but those of melancholy move;
 And the low winds that die among thy shades,
 Seem like soft pity's sighs for hopeless love.
 And sure some story of despair and pain
 In yon deep copse thy murmuring doves relate;
 And hark! methinks, in that long mournful strain,
 Thy own sweet plaintive songstress weeps my fate.
 Ah, nymph! that fate assist me to endure,
 And bear awhile—what death alone can cure!

S O N N E T,

S O N N E T,

S U P P O S E D T O B E W R I T T E N B Y W E R T E R.

MAKE there my tomb, beneath the lime-trees shade,
 Where grass and flowers in wild luxuriance wave;
 Let no memorial mark where I am laid,

Or point to common eyes the lover's grave:

But oft at twilight morn, or closing day,

The faithful friend with fault'ring step shall glide,
 Tributes of fond regret by stealth to pay,

And sigh for the unhappy suicide.

And sometimes, when the sun with parting rays

Gilds the long grass that hides my silent bed,
 The tear shall tremble in my CHARLOTTE's eyes;

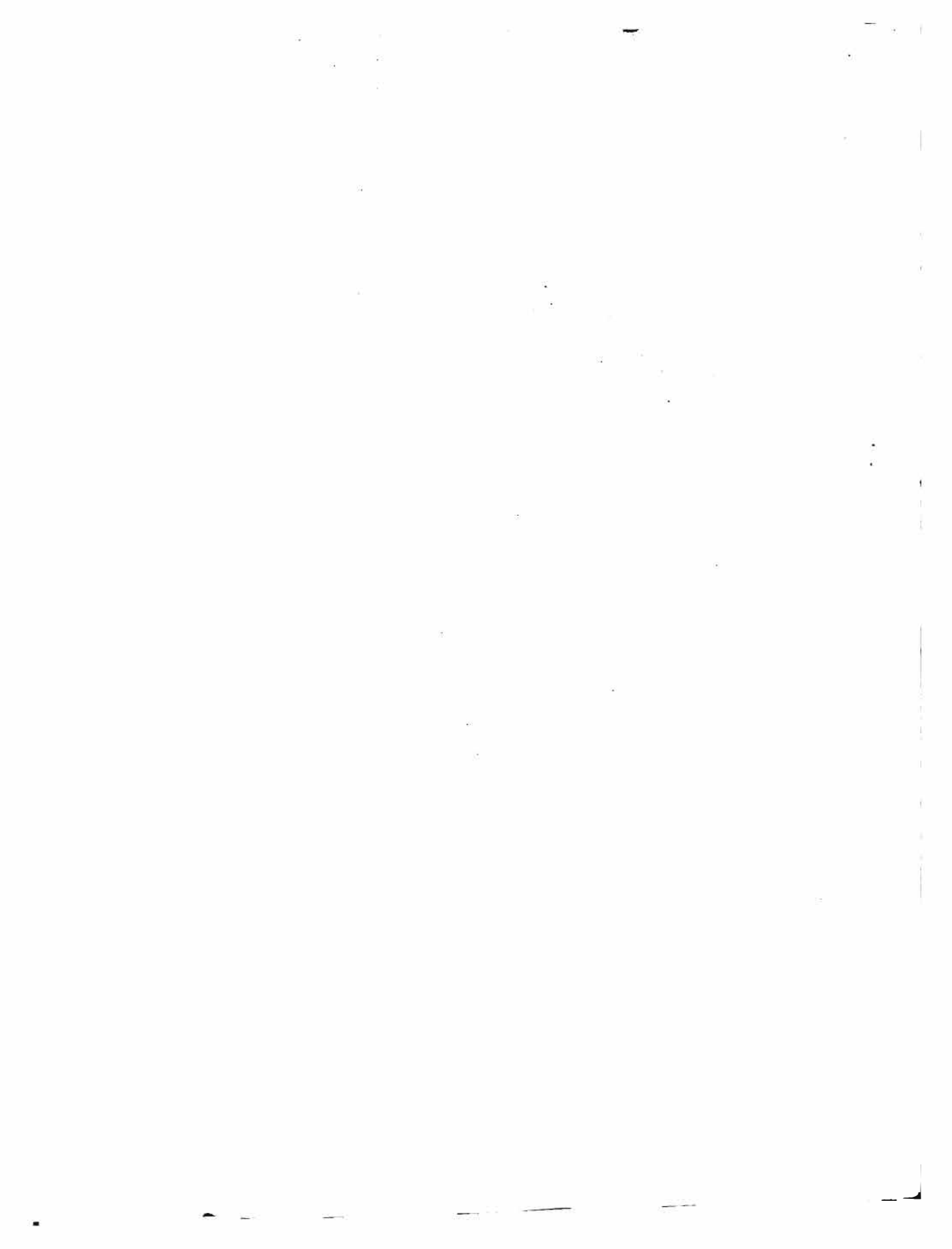
Dear precious drops! they shall embalm the dead.

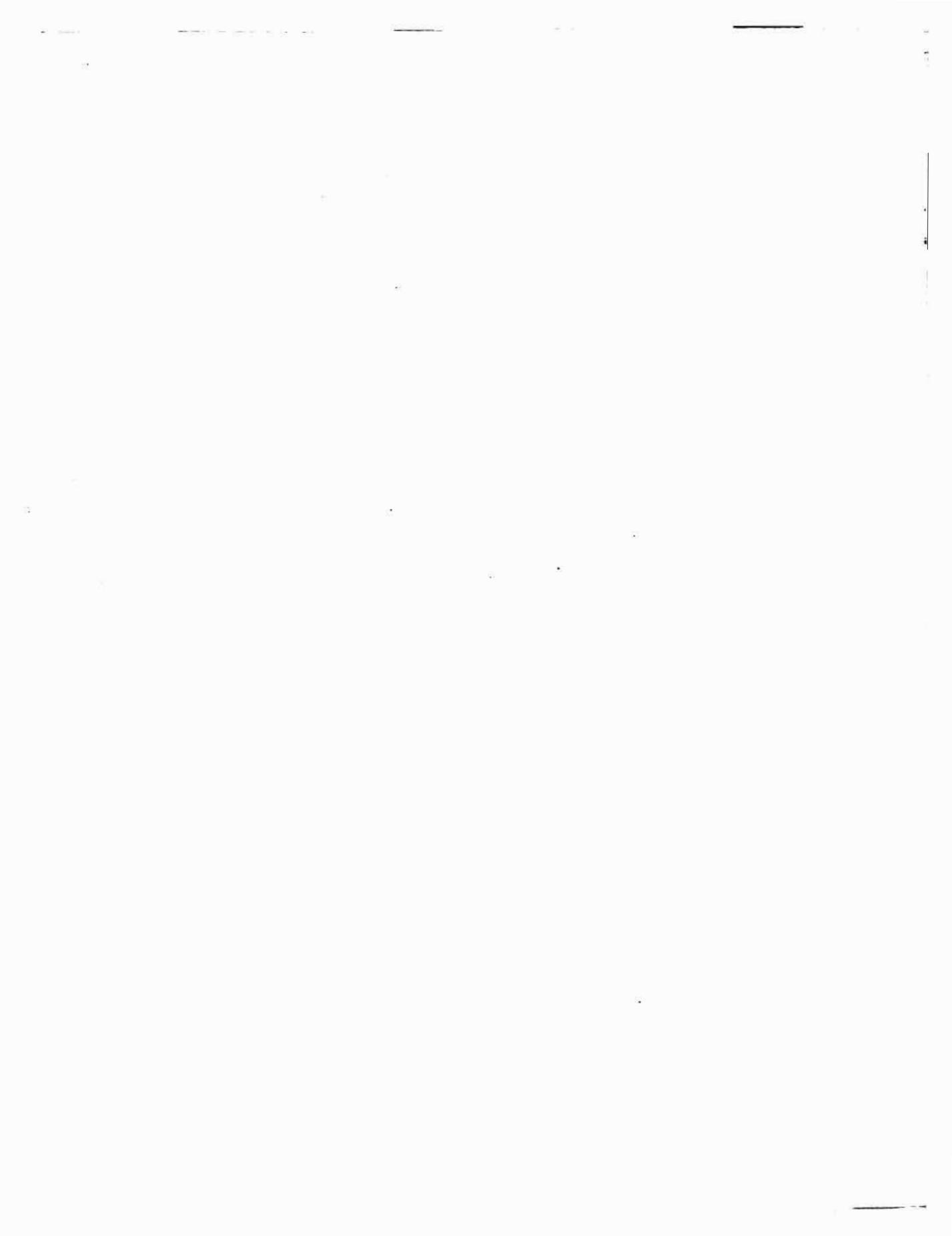
Yes! CHARLOTTE o'er the mournful spot shall weep,
 Where her poor WERTER and his sorrows sleep.

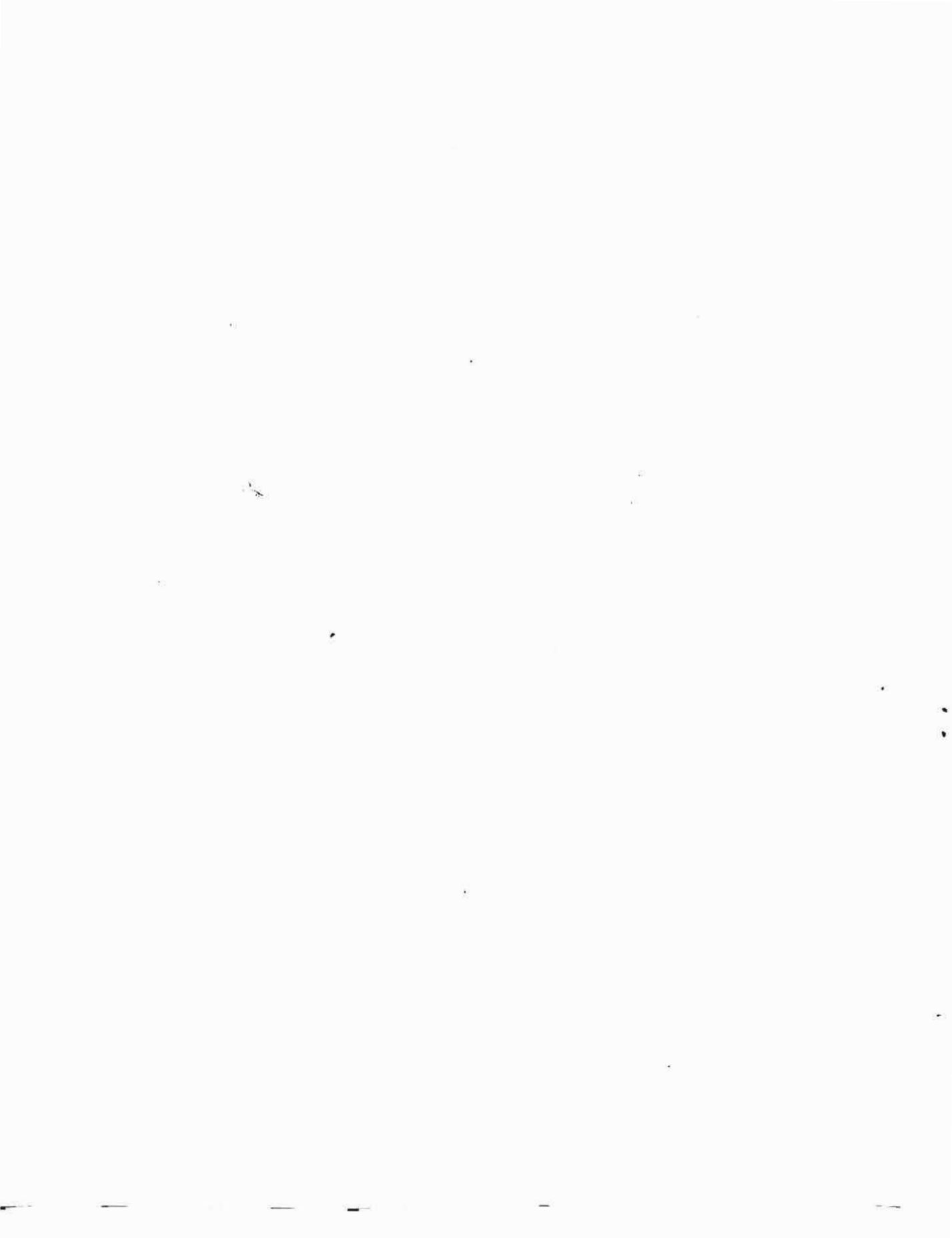
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