

HANDBOOKS PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE  
HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE.—No. 134

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INTRODUCTION  
TO THE  
GUIANA COLONIES

LONDON:  
PUBLISHED BY H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE

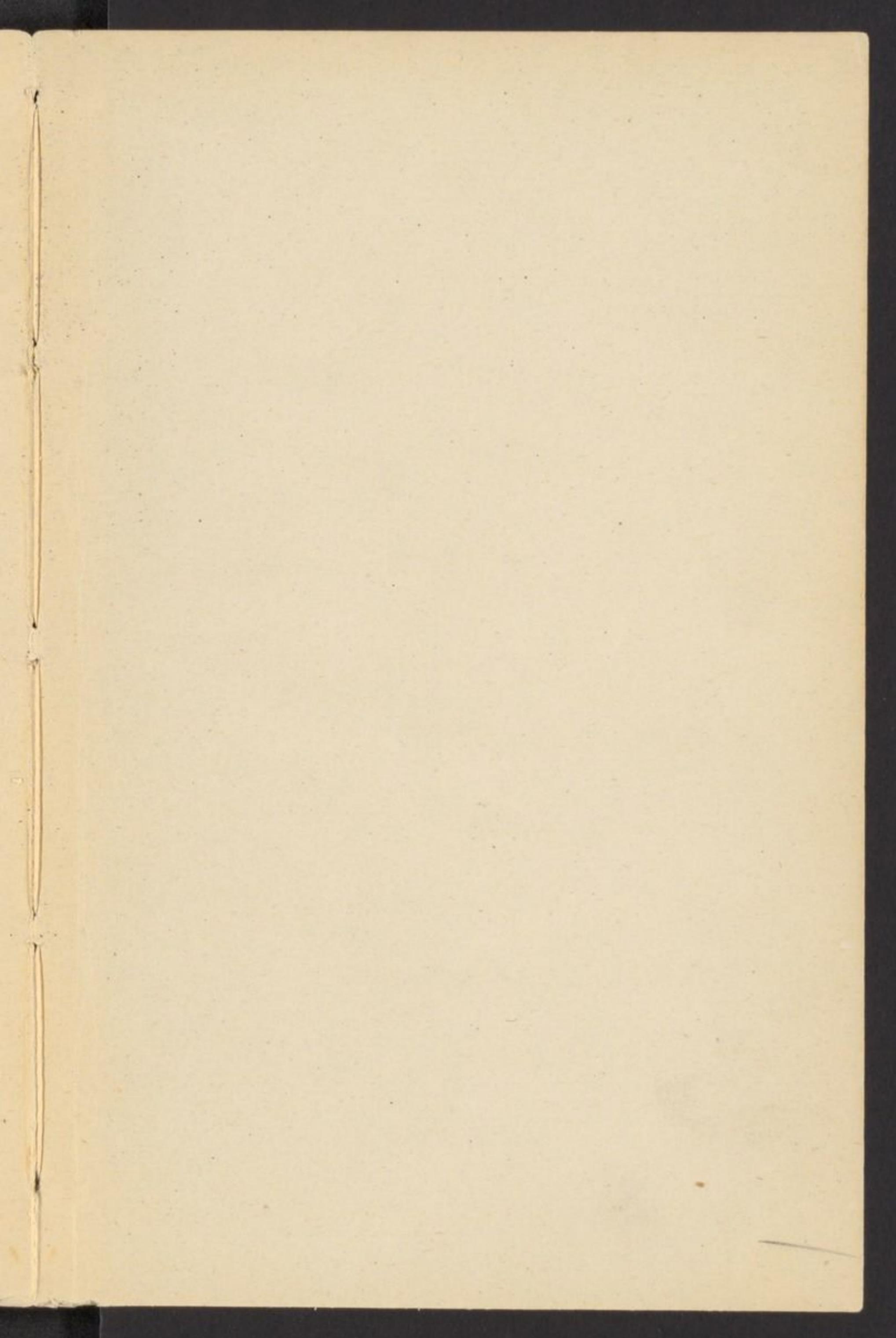
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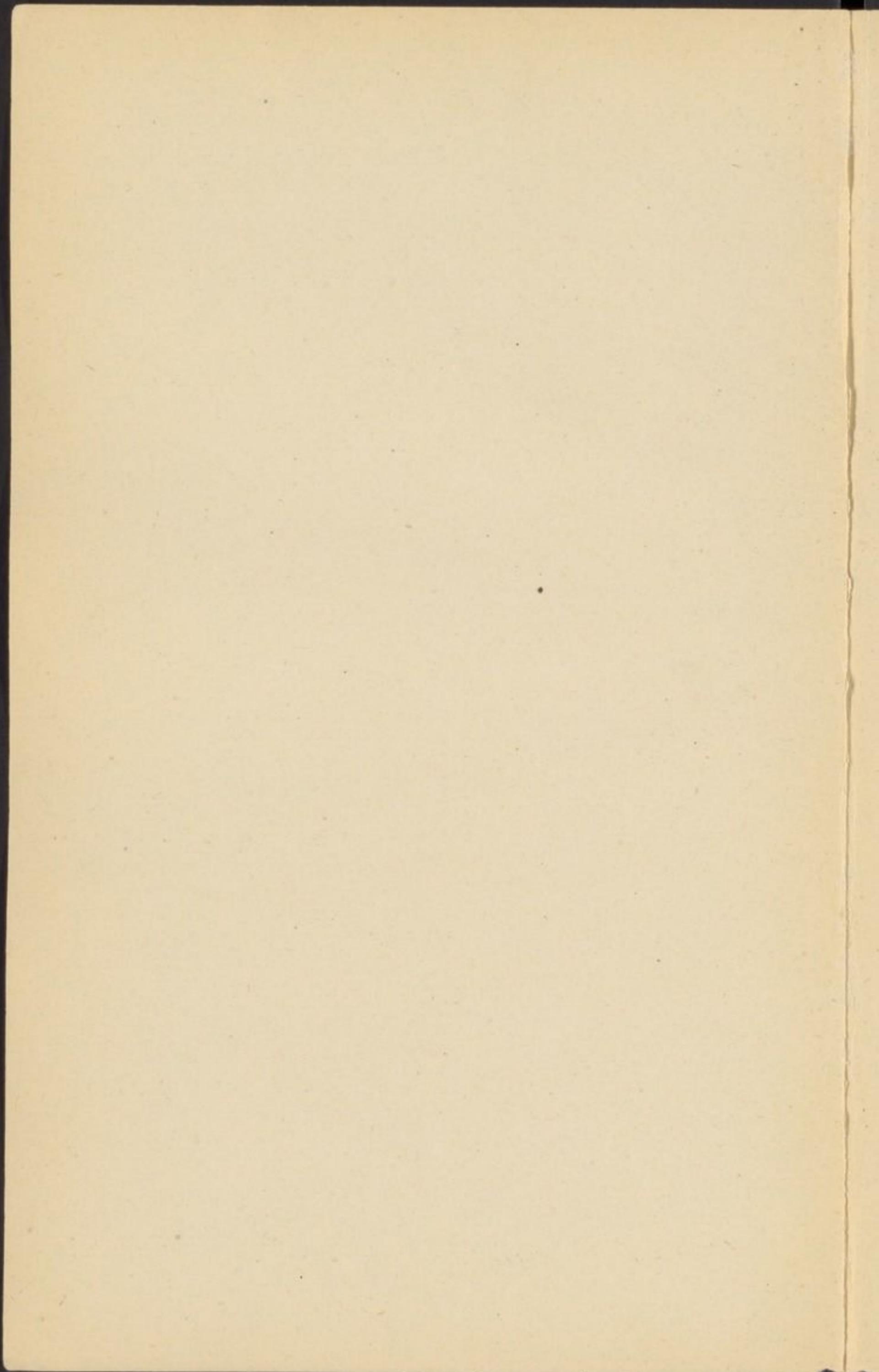


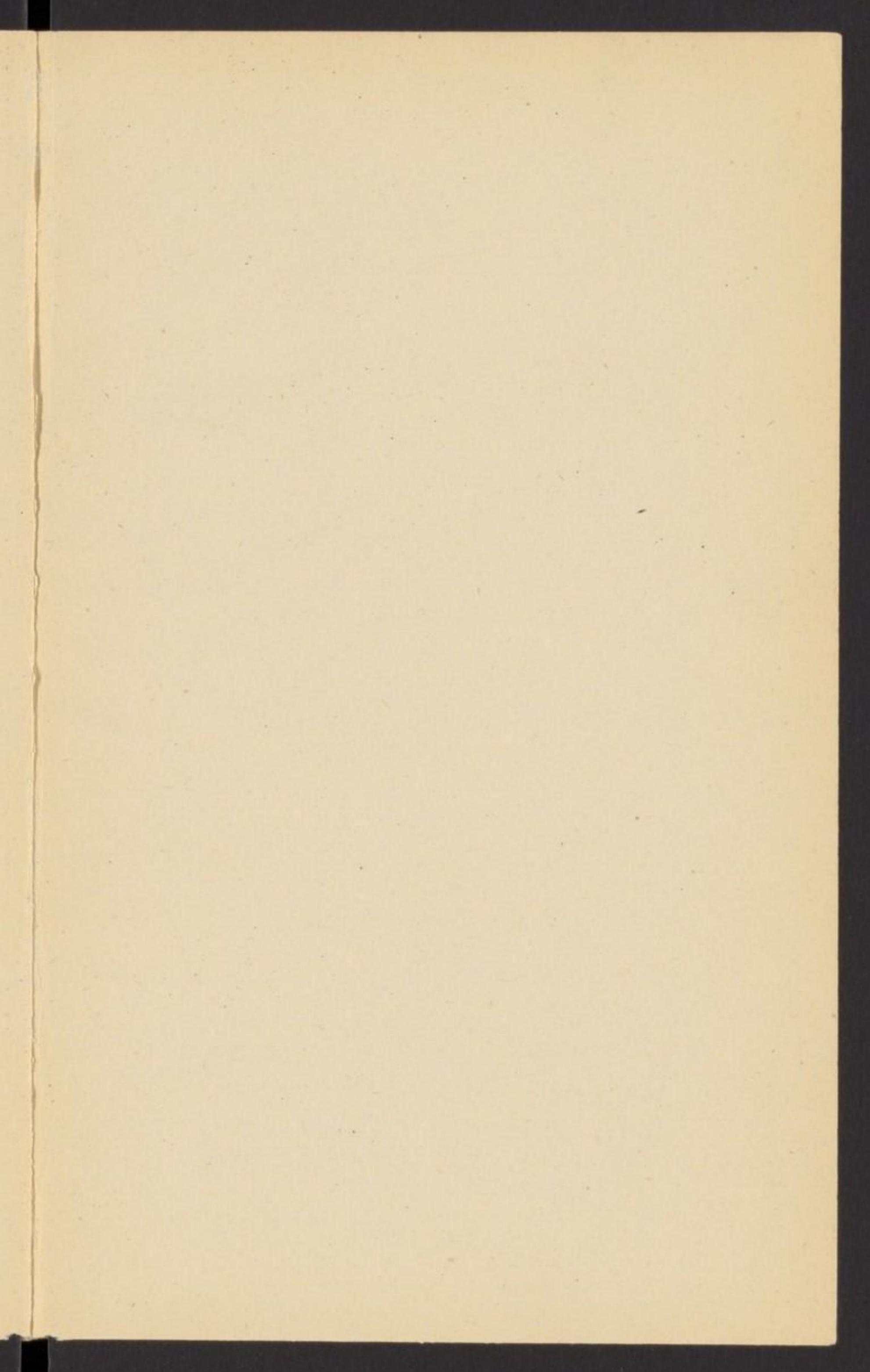


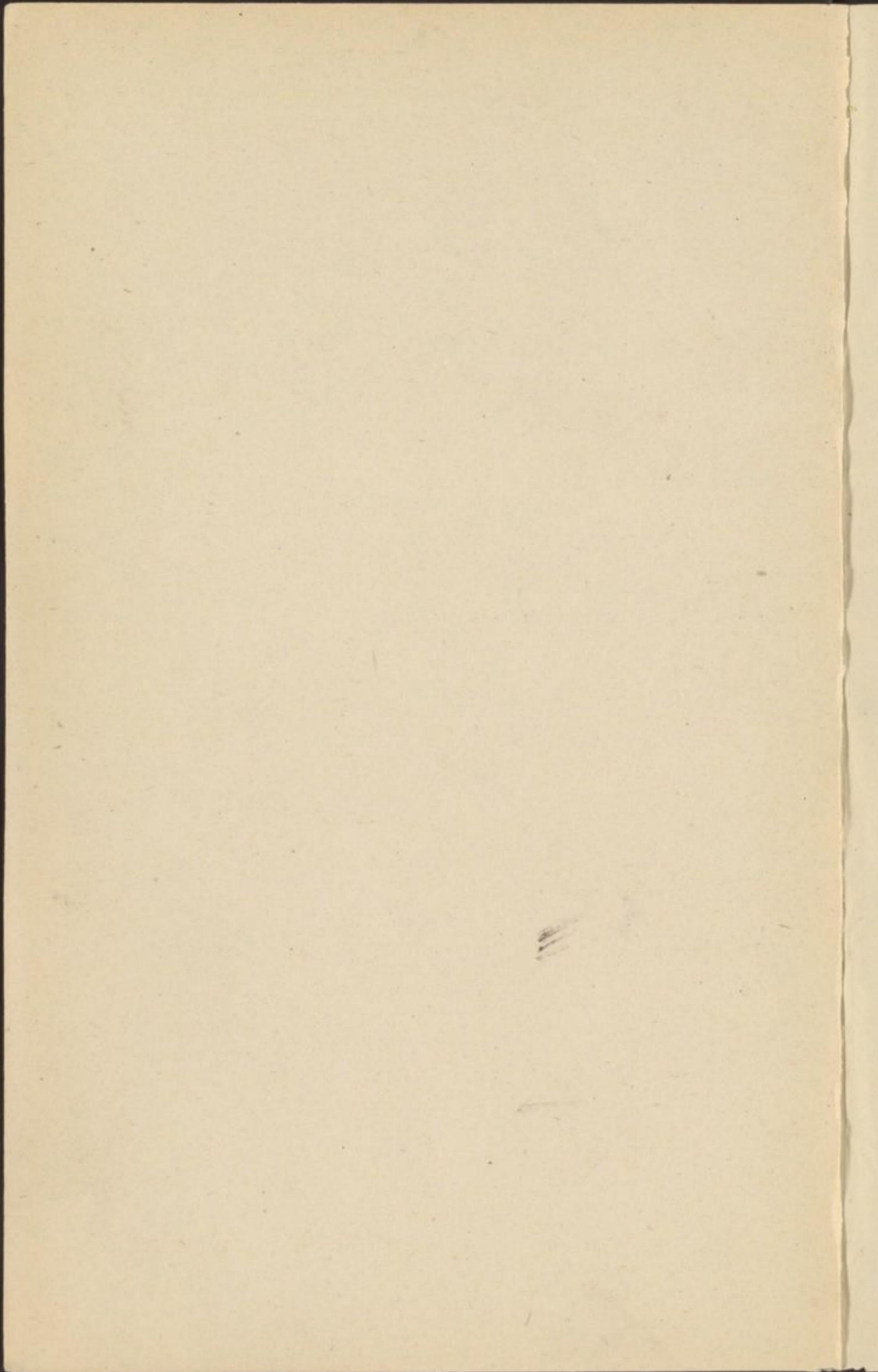
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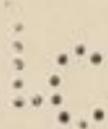
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# INTRODUCTION

TO THE

# GUIANA COLONIES



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## Editorial Note.

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IN the spring of 1917 the Foreign Office, in connection with the preparation which they were making for the work of the Peace Conference, established a special section whose duty it should be to provide the British Delegates to the Peace Conference with information in the most convenient form—geographical, economic, historical, social, religious and political—respecting the different countries, districts, islands, &c., with which they might have to deal. In addition, volumes were prepared on certain general subjects, mostly of an historical nature, concerning which it appeared that a special study would be useful.

The historical information was compiled by trained writers on historical subjects, who (in most cases) gave their services without any remuneration. For the geographical sections valuable assistance was given by the Intelligence Division (Naval Staff) of the Admiralty; and for the economic sections, by the War Trade Intelligence Department, which had been established by the Foreign Office. Of the maps accompanying the series, some were prepared by the above-mentioned department of the Admiralty, but the bulk of them were the work of the Geographical Section of the General Staff (Military Intelligence Division) of the War Office.

Now that the Conference has nearly completed its task, the Foreign Office, in response to numerous enquiries and requests, has decided to issue the books for public use, believing that they will be useful to students of history, politics, economics and foreign affairs, to publicists generally and to business men and travellers. It is hardly necessary to say that some of the subjects dealt with in the series have not in fact come under discussion at the Peace Conference; but, as the books treating of them contain valuable information, it has been thought advisable to include them.

It must be understood that, although the series of volumes was prepared under the authority, and is now issued with the sanction, of the Foreign Office, that Office is not to be regarded as guaranteeing the accuracy of every statement which they contain or as identifying itself with all the opinions expressed in the several volumes; the books were not prepared in the Foreign Office itself, but are in the nature of information provided for the Foreign Office and the British Delegation.

The books are now published, with a few exceptions, substantially as they were issued for the use of the Delegates. No attempt has been made to bring them up to date, for, in the first place, such a process would have entailed a great loss of time and a prohibitive expense; and, in the second, the political and other conditions of a great part of Europe and of the Nearer and Middle East are still unsettled and in such a state of flux that any attempt to describe them would have been incorrect or misleading. The books are therefore to be taken as describing, in general, *ante-bellum* conditions, though in a few cases, where it seemed specially desirable, the account has been brought down to a later date.

G. W. PROTHERO,

*General Editor and formerly*

*Director of the Historical Section.*

January 1920.



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## I. EARLIER HISTORY

### CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- 1595-6 Voyages of Raleigh, Keymis, and Masham.  
1616 A Dutch trading post established on the Essequibo.  
1621 Foundation of the Dutch West India Company.  
1627 Settlement made on the Berbice by Abraham van Peere, of Flushing.  
1630 Captain Marshall's colony on the Surinam.  
1645 Marshall abandons Surinam.  
1650 New English colony planted on the Surinam by Lord Willoughby of Parham.  
1658 Settlement of Zeelanders on the River Pomeroon.  
1663 Grant of land between the Rivers Saramacca and Marowynne to Lord Willoughby and Lawrence Hyde by Charles II.  
1664 After several failures a permanent French colony established at Cayenne.  
1665 An English raiding force captures the Dutch colonies of Essequibo and Pomeroon, but is repelled from Berbice.  
1667 The Dutch Admiral Crynnsen takes Paramaribo and recaptures the Essequibo-Pomeroon Colony.  
1667 Peace of Breda. Surinam surrendered to the Dutch.  
1674 New charter granted to the Dutch West India Company.  
1674 Peace of Westminster confirms the Dutch in possession of Surinam.

#### i. *Boundaries and Natural Divisions*

GUIANA is that northern portion of the South American continent which lies between the mouth of the Amazon and that of the Orinoco and has for its well-defined boundaries the Atlantic Ocean, the Amazon River to its junction with its great affluent the Rio Negro, the Rio Negro to the point at which it is joined by the Casiquiare, this last-named waterway

to the Orinoco (from which river it flows out, thus uniting by a navigable stream the Orinoco and Amazon river-systems), and then the Orinoco to the ocean. Guiana thus forms a kind of giant island marked off from the rest of the Continent. It is further divided into two portions by a succession of mountain ranges, the Imataca, Pacaraima, and Tumuc Humac, forming the watershed between the Amazon-Orinoco basin and that of a number of rivers which run in a northerly or north-easterly direction from these mountains to the Atlantic Ocean. It is with this portion of Guiana between the mountains and the sea that this history is concerned—a history that is quite distinct from that of all other parts of South America, and has a character peculiarly its own. The Spaniards and the Portuguese have never at any time attempted to establish posts or to settle any portion of the coast-line of Guiana between the mouths of the Orinoco and the Oyapok; and into that large area between the coast-line and the above-named mountain ranges not a single Spanish or Portuguese expedition for exploration or adventure has ever been known to penetrate. It remained to them a *terra incognita*, but was an open field for the colonising efforts of other nations.

ii. *Early Expeditions to Guiana. Dutch Settlement on the Essequibo*

So much was this the case that down to the end of the sixteenth century practically nothing was known even of the coast-line of Guiana (the "Wild Coast" of the Dutch). Raleigh, fascinated by the myth that in the far interior of Guiana lay, on the shores of the inland sea of Parima, Manoa, the city of El Dorado (the "Gilded King"), sailed along the coast in 1595, and made his way some distance up the Orinoco. His voyage was followed by those of his lieutenants, Laurence Keymis and Thomas Masham, who conducted two other expeditions a year later, and visited all the

river-mouths between the Amazon and Orinoco.<sup>1</sup> Raleigh's narrative was translated into many languages, and its glowing descriptions aroused general interest, especially in Holland.

Accordingly in 1597-98 a Dutch expedition (of which an interesting record survives)<sup>2</sup> sailed in the tracks of Raleigh and Keymis from river-mouth to river-mouth; and from this time forward there was a continuous succession of Dutch and English efforts to effect settlements in Guiana. None of these earliest attempts, however, reckoned with the difficulties of communication or with the trying nature of the climate, and they met with disastrous failure. The first beginning of a permanent settlement was a trading post established high up the estuary of the Essequibo by a private company of Zeeland merchants about 1616. It owed its continuous existence to the fact that the Dutch West India Company was created in 1621, and that trading in the Essequibo and its affluents became the monopoly of the Zeeland Chamber of that company (of which the merchants above mentioned were leading directors). For many years, however, its fortified post at Kijkoveral<sup>3</sup> (on a little island overlooking the point of junction of the rivers Mazaruni, Cuyuni, and the Upper Essequibo, which here unite to form the large estuary of the Essequibo) remained a mere trading post and not a regular settlement. It depended for its subsistence mainly on the regular visits of vessels from the homeland, which brought a supply of articles for bartering with the native Indians, and carried back annatto dye, letter-wood, and other natural products of the land. Guiana, as long experience has shown,

<sup>1</sup> Raleigh, *The Discoverie of . . . Guiana*, 1596; Keymis, *A Relation of the Second Voyage to Guiana*, 1596; Masham, *The Third Voyage . . . to Guiana*, 1596.

<sup>2</sup> *Verclaringe van de . . . voyage van America*, 1597-8; by A. Cabeliau, the Commissary-General of the expedition.

<sup>3</sup> The name, which signifies "outlook everywhere," is descriptive of the position.

has been no field for profitable colonization, save along the narrow fringe of alluvial soil upon its coast.

### iii. *Physical Character of the Country*

The physical character of the country has fixed its destiny from the time of Raleigh down to the present day. All along the shore (except at Cayenne) lies a strip of alluvial muddy detritus, from 25 to 30 miles broad, protected against the inroads of the sea only by a tangled mass of *courida* and mangrove roots, and separated by swamps from reefs of sea-shells and sand forming the original coast-line. This marshy strip is intersected by innumerable streams, intercommunicating, and affording a network of waterways navigable by canoes. Behind this coastal fringe the land gradually rises, and is covered with dense tropical forest. Only here and there are to be found savannahs of grass land and scrub. Through these interminable forests flow the rivers, which form the only means of communication with the interior; but in every case frequent rapids render them unsatisfactory as channels of commerce. The coastal fringe has, however, when empoldered, proved to be rich and valuable land for the production of sugar-cane, cotton, coffee, and in late years of rice.

All European settlements have been confined to this alluvial strip, mostly at the points where the mouths of rivers have become tidal estuaries. In dealing successfully with low-lying marshy land such as that which is found here, the Dutch, from their home experience, had an advantage denied to other early settlers. But, for any settlement to maintain itself in such a country, regular and frequent communication with Europe was essential; and it was, so far as possible, established. For the vessels employed on this service the course was dictated by the direction of the winds and tides. The Cape Verde Islands were the first halting-place for taking in fresh supplies. From these islands the trade winds carried the voyagers

across the Atlantic to the coast of Brazil near the mouth of the Amazon. A strong stream flows north-west along the coast of Guiana, accompanied by a favouring wind. The ships, therefore, hugging the shore, made their way from river-mouth to river-mouth, returning finally to the home ports by way of the West Indies. It was the adverse conditions of wind and tide which protected the early Guiana colonies from attack by the Spaniards from their establishments to the west.

#### iv. *Settlements at Berbice and Surinam*

The second permanent colony in Guiana was on the River Berbice, whose mouth is about sixty miles to the east of the Essequibo. A Flushing merchant, Abraham van Peere, in 1627 obtained from the Dutch West India Company permission to form a trading settlement on this river, he being the proprietor or patron. The first body of colonists consisted of forty men and twenty youths, who erected a fort some miles up the river, to which the name of Fort Nassau was given.

Three years later the River Surinam became the seat of the first English colony in Guiana that attained any measure of success. Its founder, Captain Marshall, brought with him some sixty settlers from Barbados, St. Kitts, and other West Indian islands. These men being more or less acclimatised, the settlement, Tararica, some way up the tidal river, prospered for several years. The Civil War in England unfortunately proved fatal to its prospects; and in 1645 the River Surinam was for a while abandoned. It was, however, resettled by Lord Willoughby of Parham, who became Governor of Barbados in 1650. He removed the seat of government of his new colony to the Indian village of Paramaribo, nearer the coast. In 1663 Charles II made Lord Willoughby<sup>1</sup> a grant of the land between the Rivers Saramacca and Marowyne, to which the

<sup>1</sup> The grant was to Lord Willoughby and Lawrence Hyde, second son of Lord Clarendon.

name of Willoughbyland was given. The Willoughby colony at this date, according to official reports, was in a highly flourishing condition, and the population was about 4,000. A large part of these were negro slaves brought from the coast of Guinea. The belt of alluvial land, when properly embanked and drained, was admirably suited for sugar-cane plantations; but white men were unable to bear the strain of hard manual labour in a tropical climate. The value of the Guiana colonies depended henceforth almost entirely upon the number of slaves imported and maintained.

v. *Effects of the Dutch Wars. Further Settlements*

The long struggle with the Portuguese for dominion in Brazil, followed by the disastrous war with England in 1653-54, had ruined the Dutch West India Company; and the colony on the Essequibo had only survived because the commander<sup>1</sup> (governor) from 1645 to 1664, Groenewegen by name, was the man who, as agent for a private company, had originally founded the settlement at Kijkoveral, and who in his residence of forty-eight years had ingratiated himself with the native Indian tribes and could rely upon their friendly help. It is recorded that with the aid of the Caribs he had even been able to conduct explorations into the far interior. Many refugees from Brazil (which was finally lost to the Dutch in 1654) fled to the West Indies; and, according to one authority,<sup>2</sup> a party of them effected a settlement on the River Pomeroon, to the west of the Essequibo, in 1650. The enterprise was short-lived; but it was probably through information brought by the survivors that in 1657 three Zeeland towns, Middelburg, Veere, and Flushing, entered into a contract with the Zeeland Chamber of the West India Company to plant a colony on the River Pomeroon. By the terms of the contract the

<sup>1</sup> Dutch "Commandeur."

<sup>2</sup> Sloane MS. 3662, ff. 47-48.

new colony was to be governed by a commissary subordinate to the Commander of Essequibo. In 1658 the settlers, many of whom were Jews, established themselves at New Middelburg, near the mouth of the Pomeroon, with a fort, Nova Zeelandia, for its protection higher up the river. This colony, as extant records tell us, became very flourishing; and a number of sugar plantations, both on the Pomeroon and along the shores of the Essequibo estuary, were successfully laid out and cultivated.

vi. *The Second Anglo-Dutch War*

The second Anglo-Dutch war, 1665-67, brought to a sudden end the prosperity alike of Surinam and of Pomeroon. An English force from St. Kitts, under Major John Scott (who has himself left an account of the expedition),<sup>1</sup> raided and destroyed in 1665 the Dutch settlements both on the Pomeroon and the Essequibo. An attack made on Berbice was, however, repelled. Scott claims to have captured 73,788 lb. of sugar, other goods to the value of £160,000, and 1,200 slaves. The triumph was short-lived; for a relieving force from Berbice compelled the garrison left by Scott to capitulate, and recaptured the slaves. The States of Zeeland despatched a fleet of seven vessels under Admiral Crynnsen in 1667, which attacked Paramaribo, and compelled the English Governor, Byam, to surrender the colony of Surinam. By the Treaty of Breda (April 1667) it was agreed that all captured places should be retained. The effect of this was that the English kept New York, which had been taken by an English squadron, and Surinam became a Dutch possession, but on the condition that Lord Willoughby and the settlers should be allowed to take away their slaves and other movable possessions. Complications, however, arose. After peace had been signed, but before news of it had reached the West Indies, the English admiral, Harmon, had captured the

<sup>1</sup> Sloane MS. 3662; see *English Historical Review*, October 1901.

French colony of Cayenne, and had succeeded in forcing the Dutch garrison in Surinam to surrender. The treaty, however, was an accomplished fact, and Lord Willoughby seized the opportunity to order his plantations to be destroyed and to remove all that was of value. The Dutch and French protested, and Admiral Crynnsen was despatched from Holland, carrying with him letters ordering the British Governor, Bannister, to deliver up the colony. On Bannister's insisting that the terms of the treaty with regard to Lord Willoughby's property had not yet been executed, he was carried as a prisoner to Holland. Matters now became serious, and the Surinam question was ultimately one of the causes alleged for the declaration of war by Great Britain against Holland in 1672. At the peace of Westminster (1674) the Dutch retained Surinam; but the English colonists were permitted to take away their slaves and their goods.

#### vii. *Cayenne*

It has already been told that Admiral Harmon in 1667 captured the French colony of Cayenne. This colony had been the result of persevering efforts. A company was formed at Rouen in 1643, called the Cape North Company; and in that year a large number of settlers under the Sieur de Brétigny went out to Cayenne. Brétigny was, however, utterly unfitted for his task. He drew upon himself the hatred both of his own people and of the Indians, by whom finally he and almost the whole of the settlers were massacred. In 1652 another Cape North Company was formed, which obtained letters patent from Louis XIV for the exclusive right of trading and settling in Guiana; and no less than 800 persons set sail from Havre for Cayenne under the command of a Norman gentleman, named De Royville. This settlement also was short-lived. Internal dissensions, disease, privations, and the hostility of the Indians quickly wrecked the enterprise. Undeterred by failure, another company, the Equinoctial Company, came into existence in 1663; and 200 colonists

left La Rochelle for Cayenne in 1664. Their Governor, De la Barre, a politic and conciliatory man, by securing the goodwill of the Indians, was able at last to lay the foundations of what was to prove a permanent settlement.

The result of the wars of 1665-67 and 1672-74 was the destruction and devastation of all the Guiana colonies. Berbice alone had escaped capture. A new chapter is opened at this point in the history of Guiana colonization; and for upwards of a century England had no part in it. On the other hand, the Dutch possessions extended without a break from the Orinoco to the Marowyne, i.e. to the borders of the French settlement at Cayenne.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the later history of the Guiana Colonies see No. 135 of this series, *British Guiana*, No. 136, *Dutch Guiana*, and No. 137, *French Guiana*.

## II. COMPARATIVE SKETCH OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

### *Introductory*

IN view of the physical and geographical unity of the Guianas, and of the similarity in their natural resources, it may be appropriate to sum up briefly the material results achieved by the three nations which have guided the destinies of these colonies.

Existing conditions result in the main from the degree of success with which the colonies have withstood the economic cataclysm which befell them in the emancipation of the slaves; and the extent to which difficulties have been surmounted, and the potentialities of the region turned to account, seems to depend in the last resort upon the energy and resource of the Home and Colonial Governments and the commercial enterprise and colonizing aptitudes of the peoples.

### A. FRENCH GUIANA

#### i. *General Condition of the Colony*

The economic condition of French Guiana is not satisfactory. Its one important industry, gold-mining, is stationary, if not actually declining; and it suffers in a special degree from the want of efficient means of communication, the scarcity of labour and capital, and the lack of external support which hamper development more or less in the whole Guianese region. Cayenne has no railway, no adequate shipping facilities, no indentured immigration,

nothing which could be called an agricultural labour force, and no agricultural activity. The absence of a railway is rendered the more serious by the character of the rivers, which are broken by rapids more frequently and at shorter distances inland than those of British and Dutch Guiana, and are periodically made almost unnavigable by floods or drought.

In all the Guianas a greater or less want of facilities of communication reacts adversely upon the enterprises which are carried on in the interior, but the position in Cayenne is particularly serious in this respect by reason, on the one hand, of the greater difficulties which have to be encountered, and, on the other, of the fact that the industries carried on in the interior virtually constitute the whole economic life of the colony. Thus, her exports of balata are negligible in comparison with those of her neighbours; and, except for a small but growing trade in the extraction of essence from her more easily handled rosewood trees, she makes no other appreciable use of her forest wealth. The same difficulties have hampered her gold-fields; their natural richness is counterbalanced by their inaccessibility, for many of them are far remote from civilization and may be reached only by rivers upon which the canoe ascends laboriously over an interminable series of dangerous rapids.

### ii. *Inadequacy of the Labour Supply*

Finally, Cayenne has a very small population; and among the causes which have arrested development none has been more potent than the inadequacy of the labour supply, the lack of an efficient recruiting system, and the defective arrangements which prevail with regard to the organization and employment of such labour as exists. The economic crisis provoked by the emancipation of the slaves has persisted in varying degrees of intensity ever since; and the chief need of the country has been the replenishment of the labour market and the creation of an

agricultural population. The devices by which similar needs have been relieved in the neighbouring colonies have failed in Cayenne; and the failure has been intensified by the gold fever which has been epidemic in the country for over half-a-century, and has diverted to the "placers" what little remained of capital, labour, and enterprise.

Of the existing population, the aboriginal Indians are of small economic value, the Bush negroes hold aloof from the economic life of the colony too much to exercise a helpful influence upon it, and the descendants of the freed slaves have inherited from their fathers an aversion to work on the land, which they regard as incompatible with the dignity of the free man and the citizen. In these circumstances it has been of supreme importance to the colony that she should be endowed with an efficient system of indentured immigration; but an attempt to continue the supply of imported negroes had to be stopped by the French Government because of the abuses to which it gave rise in Africa, and, for somewhat similar reasons, Great Britain was constrained to denounce the convention which had sanctioned recruitment by the French in her East Indian dominions.

### iii. *The Penal Establishments*

Nor has Cayenne ever derived any material benefit from her Penal Establishments. The convicts, it is true, help to carry out public works, make some contribution to forest and agricultural development upon the penal concessions, and may be hired for private service under contract; but they are rated low as labourers, and their limited utility in no way makes amends for the disadvantages of their presence. A report on colonial railways made in 1905 by M. Bourrat, a deputy, said: "Our penal colonies seem to be under the spell of an evil destiny. It is strange, to say the least, to find that the very regions where for

years the Government has had at its disposal a considerable labour force destined by the very conditions of its existence to the execution of public works, are just those which stand out from amongst our colonial possessions as being particularly destitute of means of communication . . . . . Rightly or wrongly, moreover, the presence of criminals in a colony causes it to be regarded with disfavour, and helps to keep away colonists and capital. Our two penal colonies most certainly suffer in these respects.”<sup>1</sup>

#### iv. *Possibilities of Development*

If present prosperity be the true measure of a country's capacity for expansion, then Cayenne is much behind her neighbours in fitness to turn her potentialities to account. Yet the natural wealth of Cayenne is great. With money and labour to drain the swamps she might redeem thousands of acres of fertile land, where sugar, cacao, coffee, fruits, spices, and other colonial produce would grow in abundance and yield valuable crops. With the same assistance she could turn to account the immense and varied resources of her unlimited forests. Of mineral development the future is, perhaps, more obscure; there are some who think that Guianese gold-fields have seen their best days; but others believe that, if once railway connections were to render access to the interior rapid, the carriage of stores cheap, and the transport of machinery possible, the output of the present workings might be largely increased, and great profits derived from mineral sources which are now untapped.

<sup>1</sup> R. Cuvillier-Fleury, *La Main-d'œuvre dans les Colonies françaises de l'Afrique occidentale et du Congo*, pp. 150-152. Paris, 1907.

## B. DUTCH GUIANA

### i. *Limited Prosperity of the Colony*

If the exports of Dutch Guiana do not much exceed in value those of French Guiana, and are greatly inferior to those of British Guiana, it may at least be said of them that they have a proportionately wider basis, for there is no dominance here of any one article, as of gold in the one case and of sugar in the other. Surinam has an agricultural industry, the prosperity of which would have been greater had not the exceptional fertility of the soil been neutralized in recent years by the loss of crops through virulent disease. In spite of much better facilities than Cayenne can offer, the colony suffers from inadequate means of external and internal communication; in spite of a more active land settlement policy than that of British Guiana, she suffers from want of population; and she suffers also from want of capital supplies and other material support from the mother-country, which has reserved her favours for her dominions in the East. The rivers of the colony are, it is true, numerous; the coastal region is furnished with a remarkable network of waterways; and the river services maintained by the Government are not inadequate, having regard to the thinness of population and to agricultural and industrial conditions. But, broken as they are by dangerous rapids and often rendered almost useless by the variations of their water supply, the upper rivers are but imperfect arteries of communication with the forest and mineral regions; their deficiencies are by no means counterbalanced by the one railway, of which the utility is limited; and the difficulty and cost of transport are serious obstacles to development. Not less serious is the lack of population. Want of population, and especially of labour, said an official report for 1908, is a complaint from which Surinam has suffered much in the past, and beneath which she

might still succumb. By the care with which Hindu and Javanese immigration has been organized, and by the excellence of the land settlement policy framed to accompany it, Surinam has nevertheless been spared the disasters which have attended the failure of immigration in Cayenne; more than 50,000 immigrants have been introduced since the middle of the last century; and, although the conditions of indenture of the British Indian coolie have been less favourable than those enjoyed in British Guiana, the Government has been able to record a satisfactory growth in population, a distinct improvement in economic conditions, and a steady increase in the general welfare.

### ii. *Indications of Increased Prosperity*

If the circumstances of the nineteenth century be compared with those of to-day, it will certainly appear to the credit of Dutch perseverance that Surinam should have saved so much as she has from the imminent wreck of her fortunes. If her agricultural operations cannot compare in magnitude with those of British Guiana, where the enterprise of the planters has kept large areas under the sugar-cane, despite all the obstacles presented by the dislike of the negroes for work on the land and the serious competition of beet sugar, yet they make up in a measure by their variety for what they lack in extent. The soil in Surinam is of remarkable fertility; the average yield of the cane fields is relatively higher than in British Guiana; and in addition to an experiment, somewhat unfortunate, it is true, in the growth of bananas for export and to a small but expanding cultivation of coffee, many hundred acres are devoted to cacao, which will once again become a valuable crop when the diseases which have lately ravaged the fields have been successfully eliminated. The decline, due to scarcity of labour and capital, which threatened agriculture with extinction in the nineteenth century, has been arrested, and since the beginning of the

present century there have been indications of renewed prosperity. Ample supplies of capital are still to seek, but immigration has eased the labour situation, the cultivated area is again expanding, agricultural exports are once more rising, and there are grounds for the belief that the policy of the Colonial Government and the patience and resource of the planters will recapture something of the lost prosperity. Amongst the forest industries a striking expansion has taken place in the collection of balata, exports which were worth on the average £57,000 a year at the beginning of this century rising to over £250,000 in the period 1910-14.

### iii. *Future Possibilities*

In the matter of future possibilities Surinam has no cause to fear comparison with her neighbours, for here, too, are the great areas of rich alluvial soil, the unlimited forests, the savannahs, and the valuable mineral deposits which characterise the whole Guianese region. But although the opportunities may exist, there can be no thought of using them in the conditions which prevail to-day. The management of the Surinam Bank has lately said of the economic conditions that "there will be lasting improvement when agriculture attains a certain degree of prosperity. The gold and balata industries do not suffice, and agricultural development is needed to raise the colony to prosperity." In his report of 1910-12 His Majesty's Consul expressed the view that Surinam had failed to keep up with the rapid progress of the last fifty years in other tropical countries. Pointing to the absence of roads, the fluctuating utility of the rivers, the character and course of the one railway, and the scarcity of labour, he declared that the country presented obstacles to progress which could be removed only by the expenditure of much money, which is not forthcoming. The result is that her great natural riches cannot be turned to proper account.

## C. BRITISH GUIANA

i. *Prosperity of the Colony*

British Guiana has some pretensions to the possession of a road-system in the occupied districts. Her rivers are more readily navigable in their lower reaches than those of French Guiana; and, if she has not the extensive network of waterways which is so remarkable a feature of the coastal region in Surinam, yet the upper reaches of her rivers appear to experience far less of those great variations in water level by which the streams in the Dutch and French colonies are deprived of their utility for considerable periods in the year. Her ocean communications are so greatly superior that she acts as a distributing agency to her neighbours; and, whereas the ports of French Guiana are visited annually by 55,000 tons of shipping, approximately, and those of Surinam by 180,000 tons, her harbours are entered by vessels with a tonnage of 452,000 tons. Until the recent suspension of immigration, she has also enjoyed a great advantage in the vital matter of labour supplies—there were over 130,000 East Indians in the colony at the end of 1915—and by her greater prosperity she offers more opportunities, and therefore more inducements, to free immigrants.

ii. *Exports contrasted with those of French and Dutch Guiana*

As regards export trade, which is a certain indication of the condition of a plantation colony, the exports of the Dutch and French colonies are worth on the average half-a-million a year or less, whilst those of British Guiana are worth two millions and more. Whilst the agricultural exports of Cayenne are negligible, and those of Surinam are worth about £270,000, hers are worth upwards of a million and a half. In the value of forest exports there is not much difference between the British and Dutch colonies, taking the average of

fifteen years at the beginning of this century, although it must be said that Surinam has lately made much more rapid progress than British Guiana in the collection of balata. In the matter of gold export the advantage is with Cayenne, which exports gold to the value of about £400,000 a year, whilst British Guiana exports the metal to the value of about £250,000, and Surinam exports it to the value of about £100,000; but Cayenne loses almost as much as she gains by the way in which this one industry dominates her economic life.

### iii. *Future Possibilities*

British Guiana is thus in a better position to turn her future possibilities to account, and those possibilities are considerable. Sugar production has great prospects, for there are no less than one and a half million acres of good sugar-cane land over and above the area now in cultivation; and large as the present output looms in the Guianese economy of to-day, it would seem quite insignificant, if the greatest amount of suitable land were utilised with the maximum of capital, labour, and enterprise. It has been officially declared that the maximum output of the colony may be fixed at two and a half million tons a year, and it is believed that such a result would far surpass anything which could be achieved in any other part of the British Empire. A considerable area is also suitable for the growth of rice; and the progress already made, by which a large import has been superseded by an export worth £200,000 a year, suggests interesting possibilities in the future. The forest wealth of the country is also of scarcely calculable value; and if gold is less plentiful than in Cayenne, yet the mineral resources in general would appear to be more varied than those of the adjoining colonies.

### iv. *Undeveloped Wealth*

The more remote possibilities of British Guiana cannot be made the subject of a precise calculation.

The country has an estimated acreage of 57,000,000 acres; of this 7,000,000 acres are mountain and high plateau region, 3,000,000 are pastoral savannahs in the interior, 36,000,000 are forest-clad, rolling, and hilly land, and 11,000,000 are land which is easily accessible and suitable for arable and pastoral pursuits. At present out of all this area only a small portion of the alluvial fringe along the coast is cultivated; yet the old planters found the richest soil up the rivers, and men who have lived in the interior assert that the interior lands are far more productive than the sea coast, and that, too, with half the labour. So far as the possibilities of the country are limited, therefore, it is rather by want of capital, uncertainty in the labour supply, and inadequacy of the means of communication than by anything in the character of the country itself. It has been declared by a competent authority<sup>1</sup> that British Guiana could support a population fifty times as large as that which now inhabits the colony. "The undeveloped Crown lands of British Guiana," said a former Commissioner of the Imperial Department of Agriculture, "are among the richest existing in any part of the Tropics. It is almost inconceivable that such lands should have been so long neglected, while comparatively poorer and less accessible lands are being sought for in the heart of Africa or in such distant parts of the world as Borneo and New Guinea. I know nowhere of such an extensive area of rich and fertile lands with a comparatively healthy climate and within easy reach of good markets as in British Guiana. They can grow nearly every tropical product in demand either in the New World or in the Old."

<sup>1</sup> Watson Griffin, Canadian Special Trade Commissioner, *Canada and the British West Indies*. Ottawa, 1915.

## D. TRADE INTERESTS IN THE GUIANAS.

A few words may be added as to trade interests<sup>1</sup> in the Guianas regarded as a whole. The British colony being the most prosperous, and trade tending to follow the flag, the United Kingdom and the British possessions take the lion's share in the trade as a whole. They supply imports to the value of £1,260,283, or 46 per cent. of the total imports, purchase exports to the value of £1,773,055, or 60 per cent. of the total exports, and thus handle a total trade of £3,033,338, or 53 per cent. of the whole. Next in importance comes the trade of the United States, which, although unsupported by territorial interests, is considerably greater than the share of Holland or of France. The United States supply imports to the value of £625,394, or 23 per cent. of the total imports, purchase exports to the value of £425,711, or 14 per cent. of the total exports, and thus handle a total trade of £1,051,105, or 18 per cent. of the whole. In addition there is a further trade between the United States and the Dutch and French colonies, which, since it passes by transshipment through British colonies for want of direct communication, is credited to British possessions in the official statistics. On the other hand, the United States are losing their hold upon the most valuable portion of their Guianese trade—that with British Guiana—in consequence of the effect of the Preferential Tariff Agreement between that colony and Canada and for other reasons. French possessions supply imports to the value of £389,475, or 14 per cent. of the total imports, purchase exports to the value of £333,816, or 11 per cent. of the total exports, and thus handle a total trade of £723,291, or 13 per cent. of the whole. Dutch possessions supply imports to the value of £390,273, or 14 per cent. of the total imports,

<sup>1</sup> The figures given in this Note are averages for the decennial period for 1905-14. For other figures see the statistical tables appended to No. 135 of this series, *British Guiana*, No. 136, *Dutch Guiana*, and No. 137, *French Guiana*.

purchase exports to the value of £271,872, or 9 per cent. of the total exports, and thus handle a total trade of £662,145, or 12 per cent. of the whole. It will be observed that the share of the United States, though amounting in value to only about one-third of the British share, is approximately half as large again as that of either the French or the Dutch. In view of the fact that the United States have no territorial interests in the region, the comparative magnitude of their commercial interests is the most interesting feature of the trade of the Guianese colonies regarded as a whole.

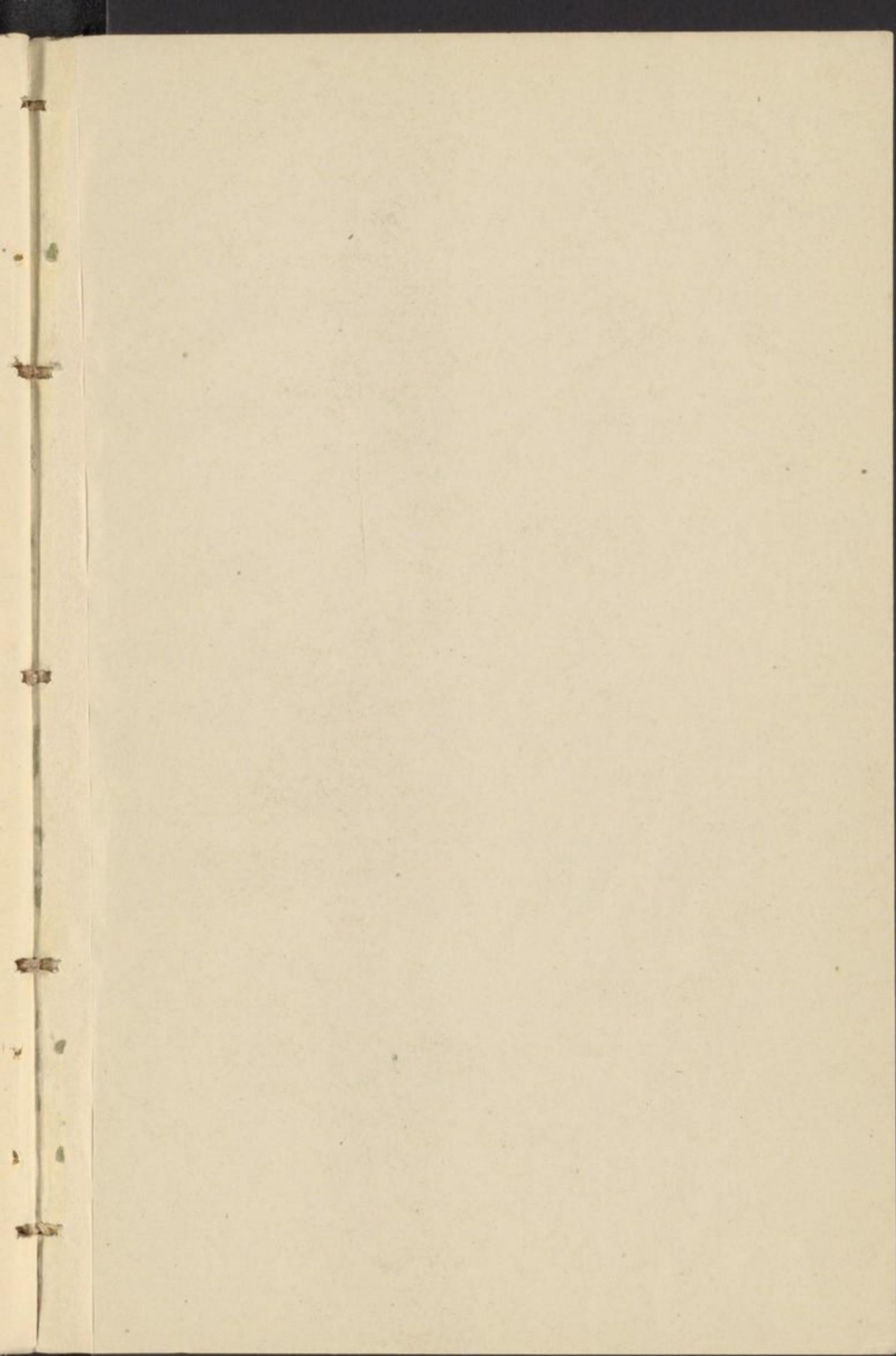
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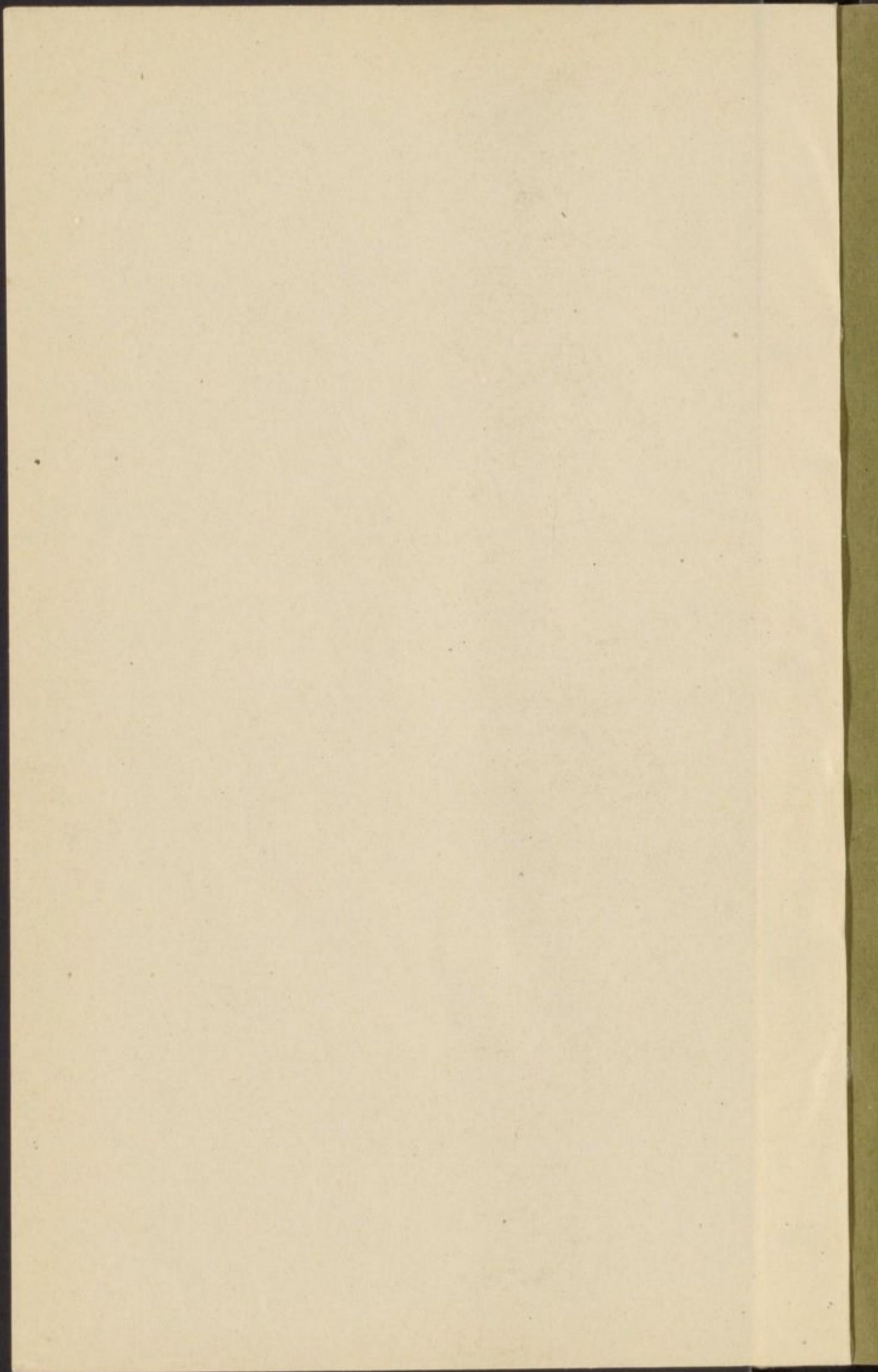
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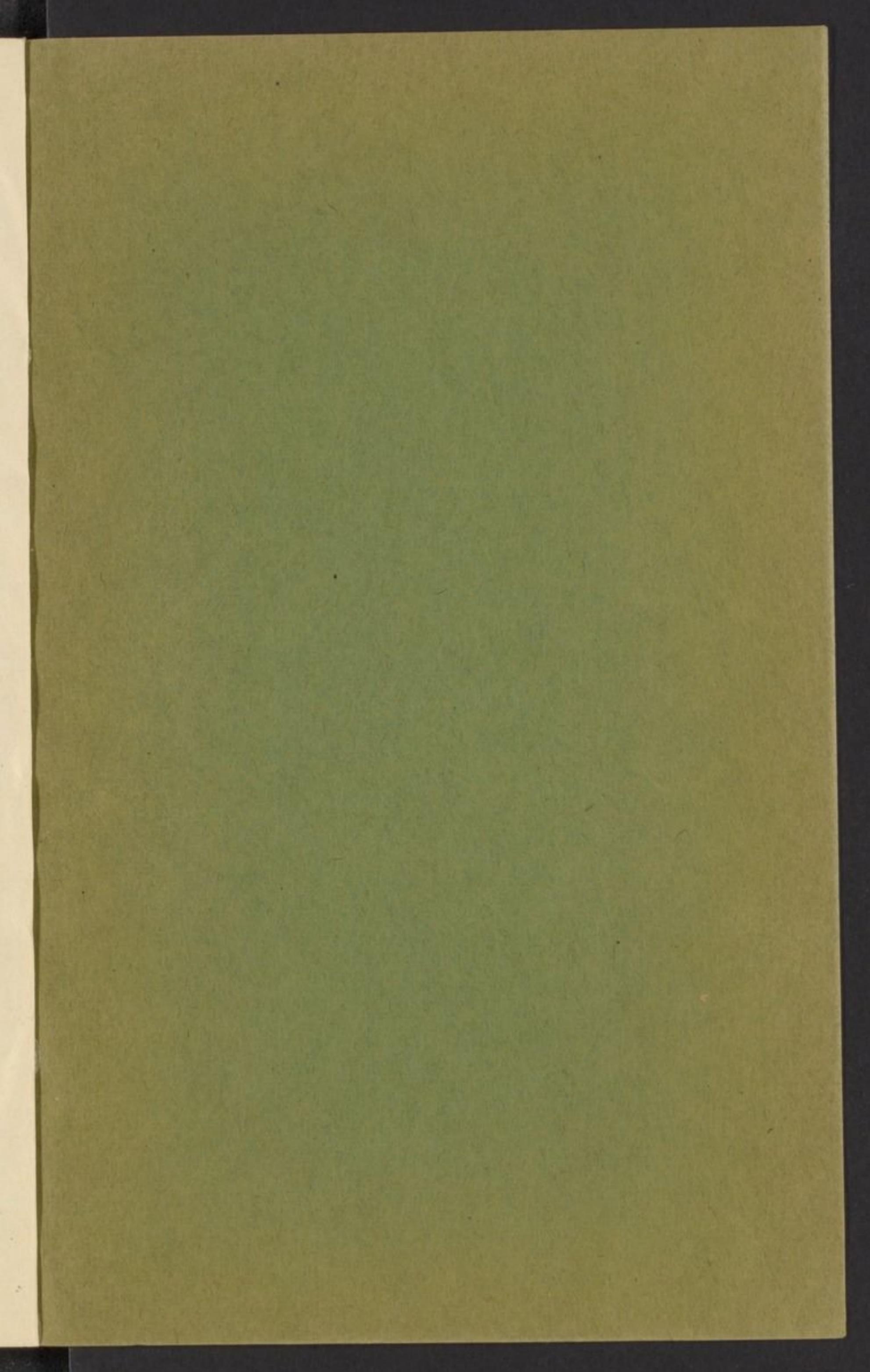
#### MAPS

The Guiana Colonies are covered by Stanford's map of *Guiana and Venezuela* (London Atlas Series), in one sheet, 83 $\frac{1}{4}$  miles to one inch.









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