

HANDBOOKS PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE  
HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE.—No. 147

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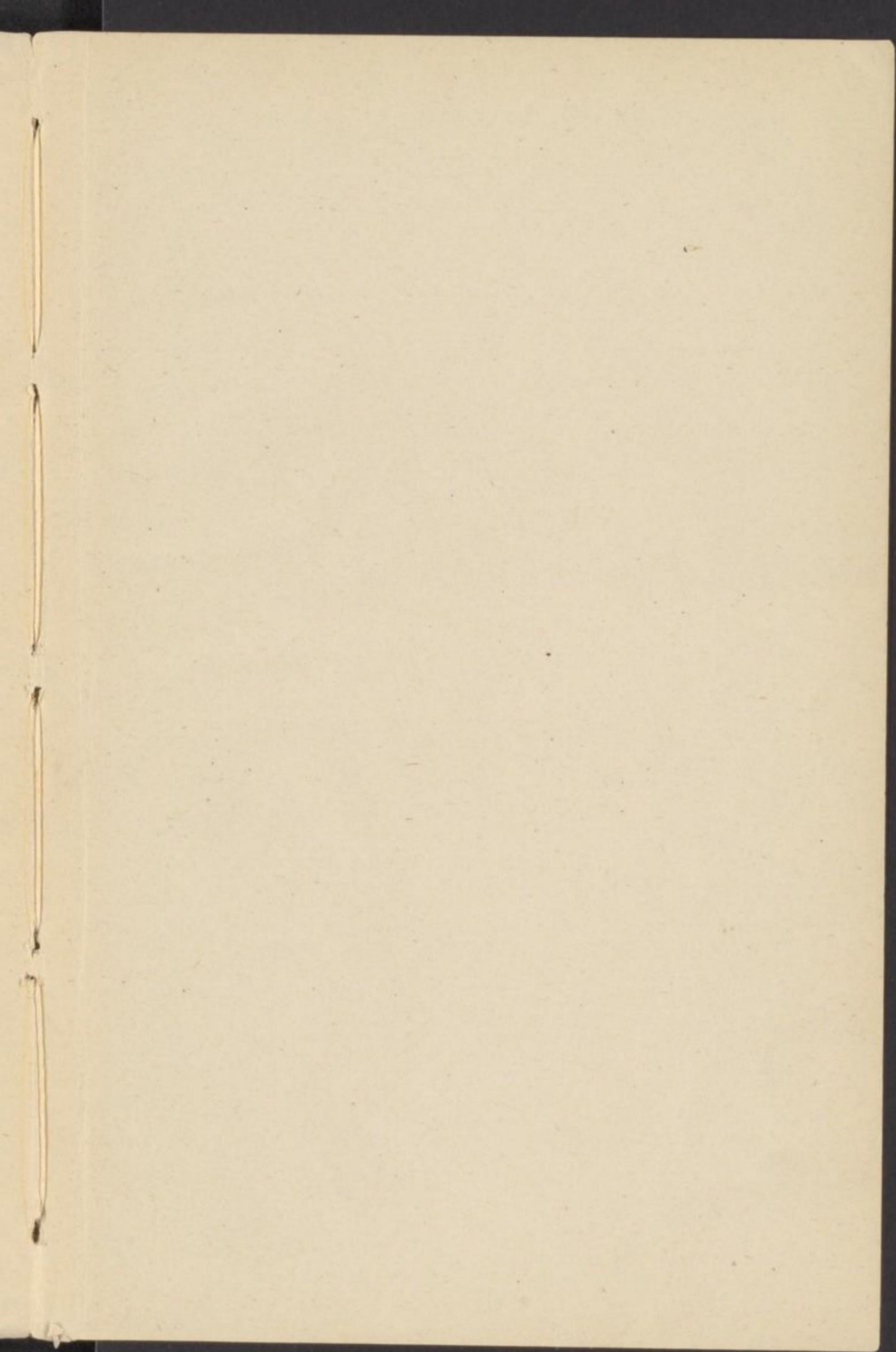
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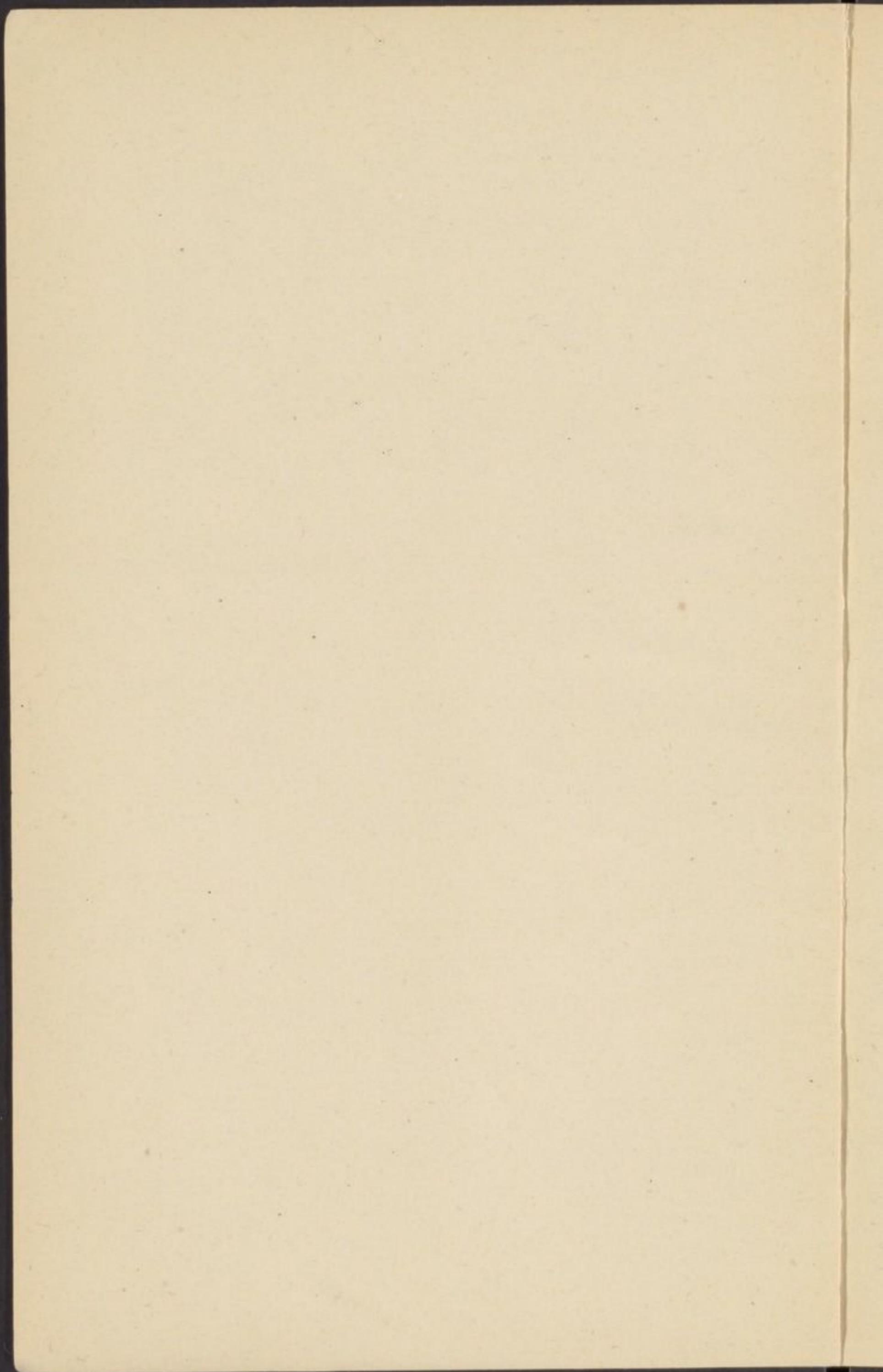


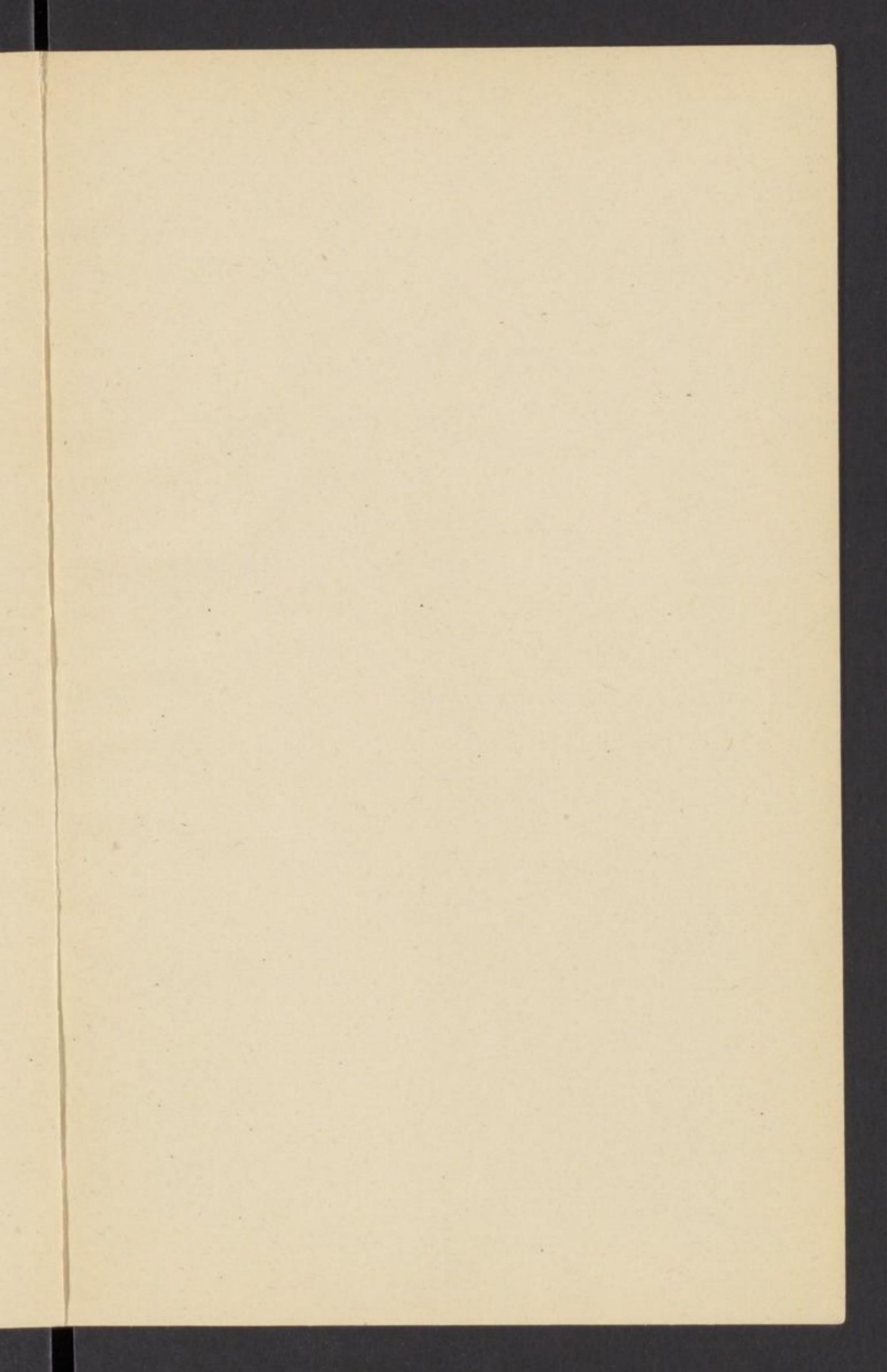


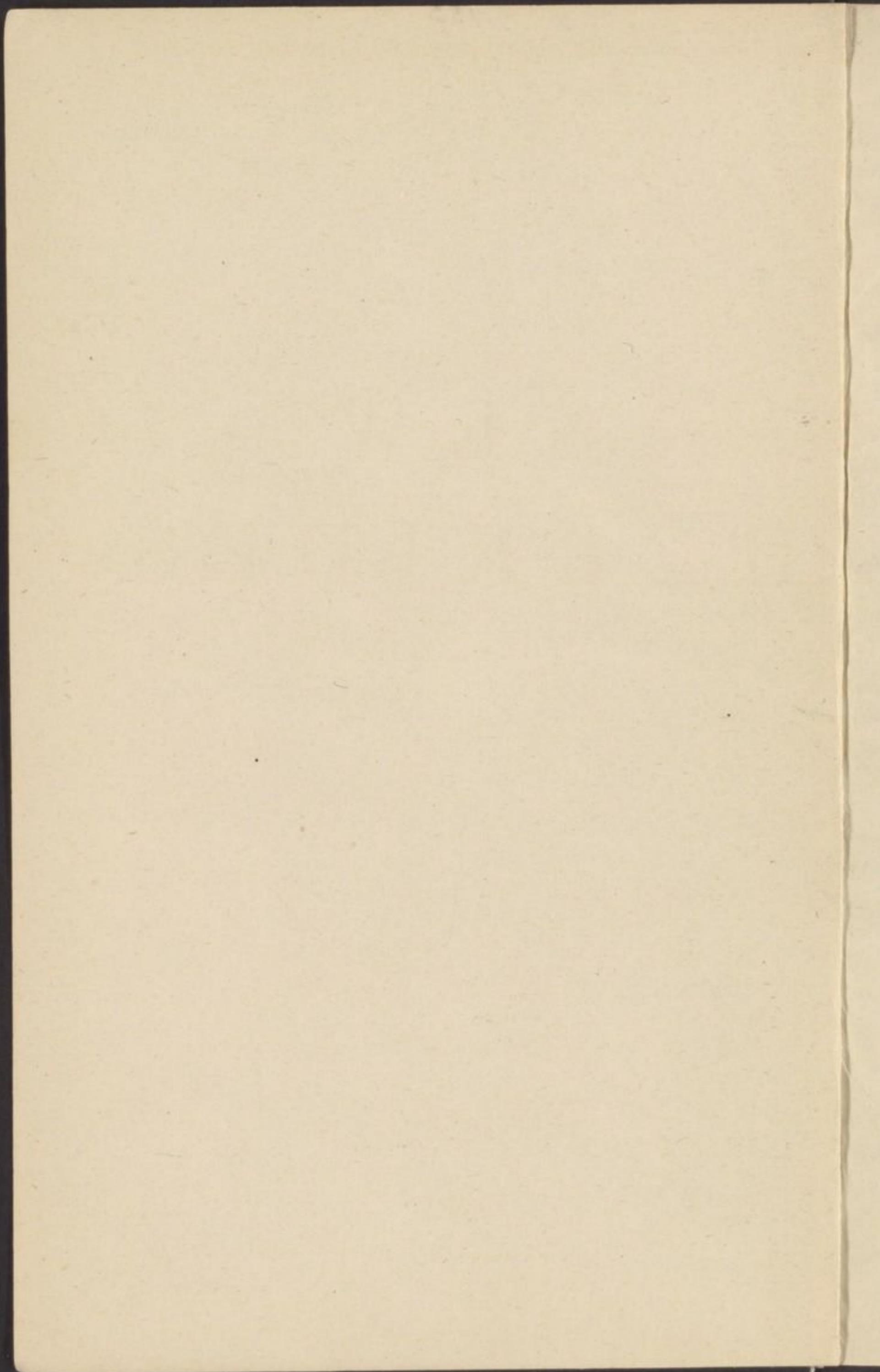
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## EDITORIAL NOTE

IN the spring of 1917 the Foreign Office, in connexion 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 inquiries 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. GEOGRAPHY PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL

## (1) POSITION AND EXTENT

THE New Hebrides, with which are generally included the Banks and Torres Islands, form a long chain of islands in the south-western Pacific, between  $13^{\circ} 5'$  and  $20^{\circ} 20'$  south latitude and  $166^{\circ} 30'$  and  $170^{\circ} 15'$  east longitude. The nearest groups are the Santa Cruz Islands (British) to the north, the Fiji Islands (British) to the east, and the Loyalty Islands and New Caledonia (French) to the south-west. The distance of the New Hebrides from the coast of Queensland is about 1,000 miles.

The islands may be divided into four groups, which are, from north to south: (i) The Torres Islands or Vava (Ababa), five small islands; (ii) the Banks Islands, including Vanua Lava, Gaua (Santa Maria), and several small islands; (iii) the northern New Hebrides, including Espiritu Santo (Marina), Malekula, Epi, Efate (Vaté or Sandwich), Ambrym, Aragh or Pentecost, Aurora (Maiwo), and several smaller islands, all arranged in the shape of a Y, the two arms of which meet at Epi; and (iv) the southern New Hebrides, which are widely scattered and include Eromanga, Tana (Aipera), Aneityum, and certain small islands. Some of the islands are only partially explored; and the coasts, in places, are imperfectly charted.

The total land area of all the islands is about 6,000 sq. miles, but estimates vary a great deal and some are 5 per cent. lower. To this total the Torres Islands contribute 51 sq. miles, the Banks Islands 306 sq. miles, and the New Hebrides proper 5,646 sq. miles. The largest islands are Espiritu Santo, 1,900 sq. miles, Male-

kula, 980 sq. miles, Eromanga, 429 sq. miles, and Vanua Lava, 136 sq. miles.

## (2) SURFACE, COASTS, AND RIVERS

### *Surface*

All the large and most of the small islands of the New Hebrides proper and the Banks Islands are volcanic and rise to considerable elevations, the loftiest being the small island of Lopevi, which rises to 4,755 ft. The large islands have each several summits of 2,000 to 3,000 ft. Many of the peaks are volcanoes, but only three are known to be active—Ambrym, Lopevi, and Tana. Earthquake shocks frequently occur throughout the islands.

The Torres Islands are all of coral formation, as are also a few small islands in the southern New Hebrides and in the Reef Islets of the Banks group. Coral limestone enters into the formation of many of the volcanic islands.

All except the low coral islands are rugged; flat land is not extensive and is found chiefly at the mouths of valleys. Espiritu Santo has some undulating upland plains, and Ambrym has in its centre a plain of ashes five to six miles wide at a height of about 2,000 ft.

### *Coasts*

The coasts as a rule are steep. Coral reefs are generally absent, except on the east and south coasts of Malekula and a few of the other large islands; and good harbours, especially for small vessels, are numerous. Without shelter landing is frequently impossible, or at least dangerous, on the weather side of the islands.

Between the larger islands of all these groups there is as a rule deep water, and there are few dangers to navigation except strong tide-rips in many of the channels.

*Rivers*

The large islands have numerous clear streams which flow throughout the year. Only on the coral islets is there any shortage of water.

## (3) CLIMATE

The climate is warm and moist. January, February, and March are the warmest months, with mean temperatures of about 82° F. (28° C.). August is the coolest month, with a mean temperature ranging from 72° to 76° F. (22° to 24° C.) at the sea level. The prevailing winds are the trades, generally from south-south-east to east-north-east. During the fine season, from April to October, they are most regular and rise and fall in strength with the sun, but from November to April they are interrupted by frequent calms and north-westerly squalls. Occasional destructive hurricanes occur in January, February, and March, but the New Hebrides lie somewhat outside the regular cyclone track. Rainfall is heavy; it occurs principally between November and April, but in many islands the distinction between dry and wet seasons is not great. The total annual rainfall is about 75 in. (1.8 m.).

## (4) SANITARY CONDITIONS

The islands are on the whole unhealthy for Europeans, and this is especially true of the larger islands, where many marshes give ideal conditions for the breeding of mosquitoes. Malarial fevers and dysentery are common. Tuberculosis is said to be common among the natives on some islands, particularly in the Banks group. Elephantiasis also occurs. A frequent form of skin disease, characterized by ulcers, is often mistaken for leprosy, but it is said to be caused by the poisonous irritation of a plant called *salato*.

### (5) RACE AND LANGUAGE

The majority of the inhabitants are Melanesians, but in many islands there is a distinct Polynesian strain. This is most marked in Futuna, Mae, Aoba, and the Banks Islands. A pygmy race, of Melanesian or Papuan stock, has been found in the interior of Espiritu Santo. All the natives are termed *kanakas* (Fr. *canaques*) by the settlers, irrespective of race, *kanaka* being the Hawaiian for 'man'.

The native languages are various Melanesian and Polynesian dialects, each confined as a rule to one district and in some cases even to one village, and so divergent from one another that the inhabitants are mutually unintelligible. The Banks Islanders have a language of their own with many dialects. The *lingua franca* is *bêche-de-mer* English to which are added a number of Fijian and French words. The official languages are English and French. A knowledge of English has been widely spread by missionaries on islands like Aneityum, and it has also been acquired by many natives who have worked as contract labourers on Queensland plantations. French is little used.

### (6) POPULATION

#### *Distribution*

Most of the islands are well populated, and as a rule the population is denser round the coasts than in the interior. Only a few of the small islets are uninhabited. There is no accurate census, but an estimate made in 1910 gave the total native population of the New Hebrides, Banks, and Torres Islands at 65,000. Another estimate puts it at only 60,000. Each island has many villages. Vila (Fila) in Efate has been the seat of government since 1907; it has an excellent harbour. The British Residency is on Iririki Island in the centre

of the harbour, and the French Residency on the mainland in the centre of a part of the settlement called Franceville.

The white population of the islands in 1909 was 296 British and 546 French, scattered throughout the group. The French settlers probably hold the best land, and France has done a good deal to foster settlement and trade. In the Banks and Torres Islands British interests are the stronger.

#### *Movement*

The native population is reported to be decreasing practically everywhere, owing largely to civil war and the introduction of drink and disease, while in the past the recruiting of natives for Queensland plantations depleted the population of many islands. It is said that the early sandal-wood traders, by their wars with the natives of Eromanga, enormously reduced the population of that island. It is impossible, however, to give any figures for the general rate of decrease.

## II. POLITICAL HISTORY

### CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

1606. A Spanish fleet discovers Espiritu Santo.
1768. Bougainville's explorations.
1773. Cook's explorations.
1839. John Williams, British missionary, lands and is murdered at Eromanga.
1842. Two British missionaries sent to Tana.
1848. A British missionary sent to Aneityum.
1848. Père Rougeyron, the first French missionary, lands in Aneityum.
1850. The French missionaries abandon the archipelago.
- c. 1850. Period of whalers and sandal-wood cutters.
1853. France annexes New Caledonia.
- c. 1875. French and British colonization begins, and recruiters of native labour arrive.
1877. The missionary, John Paton, demands annexation.
1878. France and Great Britain repudiate any intention of annexing the islands.
1880. Governor of Fiji becomes High Commissioner for the Western Pacific.
1882. The Compagnie Calédonienne des Nouvelles-Hébrides founded at Numea.
1884. Foundation of the Anglo-Australian Company.
1886. French troops sent from Numea to Vaté and Malekula.
1887. French missions resume work.
- 1887-8. Creation of Joint (British and French) Naval Commission.
1888. French troops withdrawn.
1901. Governor of New Caledonia becomes General Commissioner for the Pacific.
1902. A British and a French Deputy Commissioner appointed for the New Hebrides.
1904. Great Britain and France agree to discuss the terms of a Condominium.
1906. The Condominium Convention signed.
1914. French and British delegates meet in London, June-August 1914, and agree on a Protocol, amending the Convention of 1906.

### (1) DISCOVERY AND EARLY EXPLORATION

IN 1606 a Spanish squadron, which had sailed from Peru in quest of the Southern Continent, anchored in a bay of the largest and northernmost island of the archipelago to be known later as the New Hebrides. The commander, Queiros, took possession of the country, which he believed to be part of the great southern mainland, in the name of the King of Spain, and called it *Austrialia del Espiritu Santo*, while the port was named *La Vera Cruz*. But his stay was brief, for he quarrelled with the natives, and his men were decimated by fever. Nine months after his departure Queiros was back in Spanish America, where he attempted to interest the Government in his discovery. Failing to obtain official support he fell back on private enterprise; and he was on the point of starting a new expedition when he died, in 1614.

After the departure of the Spaniards the archipelago lay forgotten for a century and a half. In 1768 M. de Bougainville ascertained and announced to the world that the land discovered by Queiros was not a continent but one of a group of islands, to which he gave the name of the Great Cyclades. In 1773 Cook explored the entire group, which he renamed the New Hebrides. He gave names to the greater number of the islands, the capes, and the bays, and left subsequent navigators but little to discover or describe. The archipelago was subsequently visited by La Pérouse and a few other French and English navigators.

### (2) MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE

In the first half of the nineteenth century new actors began to appear on the scene. In 1839 an English missionary, John Williams, landed at Eromanga and was immediately murdered by the natives. In 1842 the

London Missionary Society sent to Tana two missionaries, who were quickly expelled by the natives; and a third was dispatched in 1848 to Aneityum, where the reception was more friendly. In 1856 George Selwyn, Bishop of New Zealand, arrived with John Coleridge Patteson, who was consecrated Bishop of Melanesia five years later. Meeting with a hostile reception from the Presbyterian missions in the southern islands, Patteson devoted himself at intervals to those in the north until his death. In 1857 Gordon settled at Eromanga, and in 1858 John Paton landed in Tana, which proved less inhospitable than in 1842. A mission was established in Efate (Vaté or Sandwich Island) in 1864, and in 1870 Goodwill started work in the chief island, Espiritu Santo. The English missions were well provided with money, and received supplies from a ship which was employed for that sole purpose.

French missionary enterprise began nearly a generation later than English. In 1848 Père Rougeyron and some other priests, who had been ejected from New Caledonia by a sanguinary persecution, landed in Aneityum; and in the following year a bishop arrived with a fresh contingent of missionaries. But sickness and the hostility of the natives compelled them one after another to leave the island, and in 1850 the mission work of the French in the archipelago was abandoned. It was not resumed till 1887, when four missionaries landed in Efate, accompanied by a Pro-Vicar of the New Hebrides. A second and more important post was founded in Malekula, whence missionaries were dispatched at intervals to several of the smaller as well as the larger islands.

### (3) BEGINNING OF COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

While the missionaries were endeavouring to teach and civilize the natives, French and British traders began to visit the islands in search of gain. After the whalers

who established fishing stations, came traders in search of sandal-wood, who cut down and destroyed whole tracts of valuable timber. Finally, the recruiters of native labour arrived from New Caledonia, Queensland, Fiji, Samoa, Honolulu, and even more distant islands. The visits of these ships were dreaded by the natives, who were in many cases carried off by force in large numbers. The story of these slave-raids, which reached their height in the sixties, aroused indignation in Australia, and petitions were sent to the British Government to secure the cessation of the horrors. The growing needs of the sugar-planters of Queensland, on the other hand, demanded large supplies of labour, which was at first recruited with considerable cruelty. 'The exasperation of the natives is very great,' wrote Bishop Patteson in 1870. 'They are talking of reprisals, and attack the ships without distinguishing between friend or foe.' A year later he was murdered.

The colonization of the islands did not begin till the last quarter of the nineteenth century. French interests were so small that, when France annexed New Caledonia in 1853, she considered it unnecessary to include the New Hebrides, believing that they could be taken later if desired. It was only during their visits to the remotest parts of the islands that the recruiters of labour discovered their potential wealth in copra and other tropical produce ; and some of them exchanged recruiting for settlement. To supply these pioneers and to market their wares a few commercial houses opened branches in Efate, where several French and British planters and traders had settled. As the settlements increased, communications were opened up with Numea (Nouméa), the capital of New Caledonia, two hundred miles to the south-west.

(4) BRITISH AND FRENCH INTERESTS IN THE NEW  
HEBRIDES. DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS

The rivalry of British and French missionaries, traders, and settlers differed in intensity at different times and in different islands; but it was generally agreed that the archipelago should be annexed by one or other Power. Indeed, the British settlers in Tana and Efate demanded annexation to France in 1875 and 1876, on the ground that the archipelago was a geographical and commercial adjunct of New Caledonia; and the movement was vigorously supported by Mr. Higginson, an energetic Irish trader who had been naturalized and lived at Numea since 1859. On the other hand, a movement towards annexation in the Pacific by Great Britain was set on foot in 1871 by the Methodist missions in Australia. Fiji was annexed in 1875, and in 1877 John Paton, one of the best-informed of British missionaries in the New Hebrides, demanded their annexation at a meeting at Melbourne.

On receiving information of the growing ferment of opinion in Australia, the French Government sent the following dispatch to the British Foreign Secretary :

*January 1, 1878.* Commercial relations have been established between New Caledonia and the New Hebrides, which have rapidly developed, and which possess considerable importance for the prosperity of our colonial empire. My Government, which strongly desires that these relations should continue on the same footing, is somewhat alarmed by a recent movement of opinion in Australia. The press has denounced the intention, which they attribute to France, of annexing the New Hebrides, and demands that in order to prevent this step the archipelago should be placed under the sovereignty of the British crown. Without attaching too much importance to this movement of opinion, my Government feels bound to declare that, for its part, it has no designs on the independence of the New Hebrides; and it would be glad to know that the Government of Her Majesty is equally disposed to respect it.

On February 20 Lord Derby sent the desired reply :

I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that it is not the intention of Her Majesty's Government to propose to

Parliament measures of a nature to modify the independence which the New Hebrides at the present possess.

The arrangement was obviously a temporary one, and traders of both races endeavoured to create as many national interests as possible in the archipelago. In 1880 the Governor of Fiji was made High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, and his orders were executed by a British warship which was told off to patrol its waters. A French counterblow was struck in 1882 when, under the auspices of the indefatigable Higginson, the *Compagnie Calédonienne des Nouvelles-Hébrides* was founded at Numea. The object of the company, which selected Efate as the theatre of its operations, was to ensure the preponderance of French interests in the archipelago by the purchase of unoccupied lands and of any British property which came into the market, by the encouragement of immigration, and by the development of ports and communications. In 1884 the Australians retaliated by founding an Anglo-Australian Company, which chose Malekula as its headquarters. On hearing of this step, Higginson, accompanied by French officers, promptly sailed to Malekula in order to purchase the land surrounding Port Sandwich, and thereby to block the settlement contemplated by the new company. A 'treaty' was quickly arranged, by which the chiefs demanded the protection of the *Compagnie Calédonienne* and of France, promising in return to protect the agents of the company and to observe the laws of France. The Australian missionaries at once petitioned Lord Derby, the Colonial Secretary, to proclaim a protectorate; and, when a rumour arose that New Caledonia was about to export its surplus convicts to the New Hebrides, a demand was made in the Parliament of Victoria for the renunciation of any such design. The other Colonies expressed the same opinion, and the Prime Minister of Victoria informed the British Government that the Australian

Colonies were ready to meet any expenses involved in taking possession of the archipelago. The reply of the British Government, after consultation with Paris, was that the self-denying ordinance of 1878 must be maintained.

(5) ANGLO-FRENCH AGREEMENTS, 1887-8

This decision failed to tranquillize colonial opinion, which continued to press the Home Government with complaints as to the escape of convicts from New Caledonia. In 1885, accordingly, Lord Lyons presented a note requesting that the French convicts should no longer be sent thither. The ensuing discussions examined the possibility of territorial exchanges; but it was found impossible to reach agreement. While the Government was attempting without success to discover a solution, the situation in the islands was becoming intolerable. Several agents of the *Compagnie Calédonienne* having been murdered by the natives, a detachment of troops was sent from Numea in 1886 to Efate and Malekula, where they remained for two years. This step was generally regarded in the islands as a preliminary to annexation by France; but the Governments were still afraid of the consequences of decisive action. Further discussions resulted in an Anglo-French Convention, signed on November 16, 1887, supplemented by a joint declaration of January 26, 1888.

I. A Joint Naval Commission (ran the Declaration) shall be immediately constituted composed of naval officers belonging to the British and French naval stations in the Pacific, charged with the duty of maintaining order and of protecting the lives and property of British and French subjects in the New Hebrides. II. The said Commission shall be composed of a President and two British and two French naval officers. . . . The President shall be in alternate months the Commanding Officer of the British and French naval forces respectively present in the group. . . . The Commission shall assemble at the request of either Commanding Officer. . . .

An Annex added Regulations for the guidance of the Commission :

1. In the event of a disturbance of peace and good order in any part of the New Hebrides where British or French subjects may be settled, or in any case of danger menacing the safety of life or property, the Commission shall forthwith assemble, and take such measures as it may think best under the circumstances for repressing the disturbance or for the protection of the interests endangered.

2. No British or French Naval Commander shall take independent or isolated action, except as hereinafter mentioned.

3. Military force shall not be resorted to unless the Commission shall consider its employment to be indispensable.

4. In the event of the landing of a naval or military force, such force shall not remain longer than may be considered necessary by the Commission.

5. Where the circumstances may not admit of any delay, . . . the British and French Commanders nearest the scene of action shall, in concert if possible, or separately if such concert be not practicable, take the necessary measures for the protection of the interests endangered, and shall report such action forthwith to their respective Senior Naval Officers on the Station, and await the further orders of the Commission. Each Senior Naval Officer, on receiving such report, shall at once communicate it to the other.

6. The Commission shall have no further or other powers than are expressly delegated to it by these Regulations, and shall not interfere in disputes concerning the title to land, or dispossess of their lands any persons, natives or foreigners. (Hertslet's *Treaties*, xviii. 392-3).

This Mixed Commission was the first attempt by the British and French Governments to introduce orderly rule into the archipelago ; but its powers were too narrowly limited to fulfil the hopes to which its creation gave rise. Equally impotent to prevent or to repress conflicts, it was condemned by both races ; and the naval officers performed their distasteful police duties without zeal or conviction. The impotence of the Commission was quickly revealed ; and in 1888 Great Britain sent to Efate an agent with consular prerogatives, whose recommendations, after his withdrawal in 1890, formed the basis of an administrative code of 146 articles published in 1892. This ' Pacific Order in

Council', as it was called, extended the powers of the High Commissioner, and allowed him to delegate part of his authority to a Judicial Commissioner, who was to hear and to decide the claims of British settlers and traders in the Pacific for the protection of their persons and property. It was not, however, till 1902 that a Deputy Commissioner was appointed to reside in the islands. Following the British precedent after an interval of several years, the French Government conferred on the Governor of New Caledonia in 1901 the title of General Commissioner for the Pacific, with the same powers as those enjoyed by the Governor of Fiji; and in 1902 a Deputy Commissioner was appointed for the New Hebrides. Thus the rivalry continued, and the lack of an organized administration was felt more keenly than ever.

#### (6) THE CONDOMINIUM

On April 8, 1904 an Anglo-French declaration was signed 'concerning Siam, Madagascar, and the New Hebrides'. The part relating to the New Hebrides was as follows:

The two Governments agree to draw up in concert an Arrangement which, without involving any modification of the political *status quo*, shall put an end to the difficulties arising from the absence of jurisdiction over the natives of the New Hebrides.

They agree to appoint a Commission to settle the disputes of their respective nationals in the said islands with regard to landed property. The competency of this Commission and its rules of procedure shall form the subject of a preliminary Agreement between the two Governments.

The two Governments being subsequently in correspondence with regard to the land claims and the establishment of a Lands Claims Tribunal, and representatives having been named to discuss the matter, the French Government in December 1905 suggested

that the scope of their inquiry should be enlarged, so as also to discuss the best means of terminating the difficulties caused by the absence of jurisdiction over the natives.<sup>1</sup> In the previous August the Australian Prime Minister had written that 'a permanent joint Protectorate, representative of both countries, founded upon conditions giving security for investment and settlement, preventing any preferences being granted to settlers of a particular nationality, and establishing a government capable of protecting the natives, securing religious liberty, and fostering civilization in the group, would certainly be preferable to the state of affairs that now prevails';<sup>2</sup> and, though the suggestion was expressly stated to be 'tentative'—for the Australians held from first to last that the only satisfactory solution was annexation by Great Britain—it seems to have been understood by the British Government as a formal approval of a Condominium. New Zealand, on the other hand, was in favour of partition if exclusive possession of the New Hebrides could not be obtained by concessions elsewhere. The negotiations with regard to a Convention were carried through without the presence of Australasian advisers;<sup>3</sup> and though the final agreement required their formal approval, they were, in effect, told that it represented the best terms that were possible, and must be accepted or rejected as a whole.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, certain amendments were suggested by the Australasian Governments. Meanwhile, 'large interests, other than British or French, were being created in

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Papers, 1907, Correspondence relating to the Convention with France dated Oct. 20, 1906, respecting the New Hebrides, Cd. 3288, p. 6.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Sir J. Forrest was, however, informally consulted. *Colonial Conference, 1907, p. 562.*

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Deakin on p. 554 of *Colonial Conference, 1907.*

New Hebrides' <sup>1</sup>; and, 'in order to avoid possible complications', it was decided at once to ratify the draft Convention.<sup>2</sup> In these circumstances the Commonwealth Government could only acquiesce, leaving the whole responsibility with the Home Government.<sup>3</sup> The Draft Convention,<sup>4</sup> dated February 27, 1906, was formally confirmed by a Convention of October 20, 1906, and ratified in January 1907. It was followed by rules respecting the Mixed Tribunal (May 17, 1907), by exchange of notes on August 29, 1907, and by joint and separate instructions to the French and British High Commissioners.<sup>5</sup>

The Condominium applies to the whole territory of the New Hebrides, including the Banks and Torres Islands; but each Power retains its separate jurisdiction and control over its own subjects or citizens. No fortifications can be erected in the group; and no penal establishment of any kind can be established. Such public services as police, posts, and telegraphs, public works, ports and harbours, buoys and lighthouses, public health and finance, are undertaken in common; and common expenses are met by taxes imposed by the High Commissioners jointly.

The regulation of native affairs belongs to the High Commissioners jointly, who are 'to respect the customs and manners of the natives, when not contrary to the maintenance of order and the dictates of humanity'.<sup>6</sup>

#### (7) QUESTION OF CLAIMS TO LAND

The most difficult question to be dealt with was the principle on which claims to land were to be settled.

<sup>1</sup> Cd. 3288, pp. 37-50.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-35.

<sup>5</sup> *Treaty Series*, No. 3, 1908. *Exchange of Notes between the United Kingdom and France*, Cd. 3876.

<sup>6</sup> Article VIII.

The Compagnie Calédonienne des Nouvelles-Hébrides had been active since 1882 in acquiring native lands. At the time of the Convention it was the apparent owner of at least 784,000 hectares. The largest claim of any one British company did not amount to more than 81,000 hectares.<sup>1</sup> The British contention, following New Zealand and Fiji precedents, was that purchases made before the institution of the Condominium were not valid in law, but must be the subject of revision under a special commission of inquiry. (It must be admitted that Australian interests in this matter coincided with those of the natives.) The French contention was that the natives had been free agents, and that, in the absence of fraud, land sales must be considered binding.

A compromise was arrived at, under which the burden of proof was thrown upon the party desiring to upset the contract; valid grounds being insufficiency of signatures, ignorance on the part of the seller, fraud, violence, or bad faith on the part of the purchaser, failure to fulfil necessary conditions, and want of title in the seller. Occupation without title was held good, when it was *bona fide*, had been in existence at least three years, and had been supplemented by building, planting, &c.<sup>2</sup> In case of failure of title a *bona fide* occupier was given, after eviction, the right of pre-emption in the event of the land again being for sale.<sup>3</sup> Land reserved for the natives remained inalienable until the Joint Court or High Commissioners cancelled or modified their decisions.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> N. Politis, *Le Condominium franco-anglais des Nouvelles-Hébrides*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Article XXII.

<sup>3</sup> Article XXIV. On the whole subject see Chapter V of *Le Condominium franco-anglais des Nouvelles-Hébrides*.

<sup>4</sup> Article XXVII (9).

The Joint Court constituted under the 1906 Agreement consists of three judges, together with a public prosecutor. One of the three judges is appointed by each Government; the third, who is President of the Court, is a subject of a neutral nation, appointed by the King of Spain, and the public prosecutor is also a neutral subject. A distinguished Spaniard, the Conde de Buena Esperanza, accepted the position of President of the Supreme Court.

#### (8) QUESTION OF NATIVE LABOUR

Another difficult question was that of the recruitment of native labourers. The New Hebrides had been a recruiting ground for planters in Queensland, Fiji, and New Caledonia. In spite of the provisions of Imperial and Queensland Acts of Parliament and of the Decrees of French Commissioners, abuses continued to exist. In a period of 30 years the Queensland plantations had absorbed some 50,000 *kanakas*, of whom no less than 10,000 died during their period of indenture. Meanwhile, the population of the New Hebrides dwindled to one-fourth or one-fifth of what it was formerly.<sup>1</sup> Queensland and Fiji no longer required *kanaka* labourers, and the Australian Government suggested that New Caledonia should also be debarred from importing them.<sup>2</sup> This proposal did not take effect, but elaborate provisions were made to render harmless the working of the system.<sup>3</sup>

#### (9) NEGOTIATIONS IN 1914

In June 1914, French and British delegates met in London with a view to improving the system introduced in 1906. Neither of the two parties to the Convention of that year was prepared to cede its rights

<sup>1</sup> Politis, *op. cit.*, p. 84. See also Report of Sir Everard im Thurn, Cd. 3288, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Articles XXXI—LVI.

and interests, and the division of the islands was not discussed. The task of the delegates was to correct the defects of the Condominium and to amplify the provisions of the Convention in the light of the experience of eight years' working. From the outset a certain divergence in the point of view of the two delegations was apparent. The British were anxious to remedy the evils arising from joint control by increasing the scope and the powers of the joint authority, both administrative and judicial, and thereby limiting the scope and powers of the National Administrations and National Courts. The French, on the other hand, laid great stress on the retention by each Power of the sovereignty over its own nationals expressly recognized by Article I of the Convention of 1906. The general principles of French law applicable to colonial possessions rendered it more difficult for France than for Great Britain to consent to any derogation from national authority; and certain proposals put forward by the British delegates would have required legislation in the French Parliament which, they were informed, had no prospect of being passed. Despite the limitations, however, under which the British delegates were compelled to work, and the compromises which they were obliged to accept, the Protocol signed on August 6 embodied substantial improvements of the existing machinery.

Among the very numerous agreed amendments the following may be mentioned. The period within which the subjects of third Powers must opt for the British or French system is reduced from six months to one. The authority of each Power over corporations no less than over individuals is expressly asserted. Foreign labourers introduced into the islands by the authority of either Power are to be regarded as dependants of that Power during their residence—a pro-

vision necessitated by the introduction of indentured labourers from Java under French auspices. Two agents, one British and one French, are to be appointed for each district, dividing between them the work of native administration, exercising authority over their own nationals, making joint tours of inspection, and reporting to both Resident Commissioners. The list of joint services is extended to include the Joint Court, the Courts of First Instance, Native Courts, Joint Native Prisons, the Land Registry, the service of the administrative districts, and the Department of Survey.

A code of native law is to be prepared, and Native Courts are to be established under the presidency of the Condominium agents, for dealing with the offences of natives against natives. The jurisdiction of the Joint Court is largely extended, its members receiving power to deal with serious offences by natives against natives, and to review the decisions of Native Courts. The relations between the Joint Courts and the National Courts are regularized. All charges justiciable by a Joint Court against any subject of either Power are to be brought to the notice of his national authorities; and when the charge has come before the Joint Court suitable action by the national authority is to follow as a matter of course. The Joint Court receives power to sentence offenders to imprisonment in default of payment of fines and to issue warrants of arrest, the latter prerogative not having been hitherto recognized in the case of French citizens. The Native Advocate, who had hitherto appeared in court only when expressly requested by the natives, is now bound to appear on behalf of all natives concerned in civil and criminal proceedings before the Joint Court; and he may also appear when a native is concerned in a case in the National Courts. In view of the fact pointed out by the President of the Joint Court, that in many cases

the judgement of the Court had not been executed, the principle of joint execution by the two national authorities is accepted. To relieve the pressure on the Joint Court, and to meet the needs arising from the infrequent and uncertain means of communication between the islands, local Resident Magistrates, with power of summary jurisdiction, are to be appointed. A complete system of registration of titles to land is to be introduced, and steps are to be taken to check the advance of fraudulent claims based on occupation. New safeguards are introduced with regard to the recruitment, engagement, and employment of native labour. The issue of recruiting licences is entrusted to the Resident Commissioners alone, and cases of violence and fraud are to fall within the jurisdiction of the Joint Court. The Resident Commissioners may prohibit or restrict recruiting in any area, owing to the presence of unrest or the decline of the population, and recruiting operations are to be supervised by a competent authority in the actual district where it is taking place. Restrictions are placed on the recruitment of women. Each Power is to appoint inspectors of labour.

The signature of the Protocol synchronized with the outbreak of war, and no further action has been taken ; but it stands on record, to be ratified and put into practice hereafter if existing political conditions remain unaltered. In the opinion of the British delegates it constituted ' a substantial advance ' on the provisions of the Convention of 1906 ; and they expressed their belief that the cordial spirit in which the discussions were carried on would be reflected in improved official relations.

### III. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

#### (1) SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS

THE archipelago is inhabited by about 65,000 natives of Melanesian race with a slight mixture of Polynesian blood. Their numbers have rapidly decreased since the coming of the white man and are still diminishing. They belong to a singularly low human type, and are described as fierce and treacherous by the earlier missionaries, who have at times almost despaired of their task. Fighting has been common till recently, and poisoned arrows are used in the tribal wars. The women occupy a degraded position; and in some islands widows are buried alive with the bodies of their husbands. Infanticide is common; and old and helpless parents are sometimes killed off. No common sentiment unites the natives, who are divided not only by caste and totems but by difference of tongues. Their savage instincts were inflamed rather than repressed by the arrival of the white man in their islands, and the cruelties of the early traders and recruiters or kidnappers of labour were revenged not only on their successors but on the missionaries. No real native polity exists, and most of the chiefs possess but little power. Customs and superstitions vary from island to island and often from village to village; but belief in sorcery and omens is general. Prayers and offerings are addressed to the spirits of the recently dead; and another class of spirits is held to exist in certain stones and animals. Their religion may be roughly described as composed of the dread of evil spirits, fetishism, and the worship of ancestors.

While the traders, kidnappers, and liquor-sellers have further degraded the inhabitants, the missionaries have laboured with zeal and success to civilize them. They have proved themselves the best friends both of the natives and of the white man; for it is owing to them alone that life on the islands has become possible for European settlers. For a time the inhabitants made no difference between their enemies and their friends, and impartially murdered trader and missionary; but the influence of example and teaching has tamed them, and to-day the white man has little to fear except when the native possesses fire-arms, and is under the influence of drink. The first step away from heathenism is taken when the convert is induced to wear clothes. Mr. Jacomb<sup>1</sup>, a barrister formerly of Vila who writes with considerable authority, pronounces mission work the one bright spot in the history of the New Hebrides.

The merit of this achievement is shared between French and British, Catholic and Protestant missionaries; but the larger share falls to Scottish Presbyterians, who have worked for a longer period, have been far more liberally supported with funds, and have opened a larger number of schools. The Presbyterian Mission combines medical work with its other functions, and has established hospitals in the larger islands. It possesses a training college for teachers, and the missionaries have mastered a number of the native languages, thereby establishing communication on subjects which the resources of *bêche-de-mer* English, the *lingua franca* of the archipelago, are too limited to express. The next task before the missionaries is to organize industrial training. The converts to Christianity number to-day about one-third of the population.

<sup>1</sup> *France and England in the New Hebrides*, Melbourne, &c. [1914], quoted by B. Fletcher, *The Problem of the Pacific*, pp. 164-7.

## (2) POLITICAL

The Condominium roughly corresponds to existing facts. New South Wales has the larger share of the commerce of the islands. On the other hand the French, led by the New Hebrides Company, have been far more active in acquiring land, though many of the claims at present only exist on paper. French and British settlers, traders, and missionaries are to be found on all the important islands. For details of the administration, see above, pp. 14-21.

## II. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

### (A) MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

#### (1) *Rivers*

ON Espiritu Santo the River Sarakata has shallow water on the bar at its mouth, but is navigable for small craft to nearly three miles above that point.

#### (2) *Ports*

There are numerous good harbours, especially for small vessels. Without shelter, landing is frequently impossible, or at least dangerous on the weather side of the islands. The best harbours are Port Aneityum in the island of that name, Vila (Fila) and Havannah Harbours in Efate Island, and Port Sandwich in Malekula. Segond Channel, Hog Harbour, and Port Olry in Espiritu Santo are also good. In the Banks Islands the only harbours are Port Patteson in Vanua Lava and Dives Bay in Ureparapara Island. There are one or two fairly good but small anchorages in the Torres Islands, the best being Hayter Bay in Tegua Island. Pigs, goats, and fowls can be obtained at most of the islands, besides vegetables and fruit.

*Havannah Harbour.*—Havannah Harbour, like Vila, is well sheltered, but so deep that there are few spots where anchorage can be obtained. It has an area of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  square miles navigable for the largest ships. Supplies are not plentiful.

*Port Aneityum.*—The harbour at this place is easy of access, but, being open to the west, is considered not to have very good anchorage. It is, however, well sheltered from April to October, when the south-east

trade wind blows steadily, and it can accommodate large vessels. It is connected with several other places in Aneityum by telephone and road.

*Port Patteson.*—The harbour here consists of two bays called North Bay and South Bay respectively. The South Bay affords the better anchorage, which, however, is described as only moderately good.

*Port Sandwich.*—This is the best harbour in the New Hebrides. It is about 4 miles long, by about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile in average width, and is very well protected and easy of access, with good holding-ground in reasonable depths. There is a short stone pier. Supplies, including coal, may be obtained in small quantities.

*Ureparapara.*—The interior of the submerged crater which forms this island is said to make an excellent harbour, called Dives Bay, but it is exposed to the north-east.

*Vila Harbour (Franceville).*—This is a deep harbour, well sheltered except from the west. As its area is over 2 square miles, it could accommodate many big vessels at a time. There is a pier served by a tramway. Meat, vegetables, and water are obtainable in small quantities. Two coal hulks are moored in the harbour, but the amount of coal in stock is not known. Vila is the only port of entry in the New Hebrides.

### (3) *Shipping Lines*

Communication with Australia is afforded every five weeks by vessels belonging to Burns, Philp & Co., and every month by those of the Messageries Maritimes. The vessels of Burns, Philp & Co. call at all ports in Epi, Malekula, Ambrym, and Espiritu Santo. There are other small steamers carrying on inter-insular trade. The Messageries Maritimes receives a subsidy of £15,000 a year from the French Government in respect of its Pacific Islands service *via* Numea.

## (B) INDUSTRY

## (1) LABOUR

A great obstacle to the economic progress of the islands is the difficulty of obtaining sufficient labour. The shortage is partly due to the recruiting of labour in the past for Queensland, Fiji, and New Caledonia, which caused a permanent decrease in the population; but the inhabitants are still numerous enough to furnish an adequate local supply of labour if only their services could be made available. But those who live on the windward side of the islands are difficult to reach, owing to the dangers of navigation, and moreover the people of the southern islands refuse to work in the north. Consequently, the sources from which the colonists can draw labour are extremely limited, and many colonists feel that the only satisfactory solution of the problem lies in the introduction of foreigners.

## (2) AGRICULTURE

*(a) Products of Commercial Value*

The chief products of the islands are copra, cotton, coffee, maize, and cocoa.

The coco-nut palm is not extensively cultivated by the colonists, and most of the copra exported is prepared from coco-nuts self-planted.

The cultivation of cotton was only started in 1911, but it has now become one of the chief articles of export of the islands.

The production of coffee is increasing, though it has recently suffered very considerably from the ravages of the pest *Hemileia vastatrix*.

Cocoa is grown in steadily increasing quantities. It has been stated that the soil of these islands and the character of the climate are well adapted to its cultivation, which should be greatly extended in future.

Bananas, vanilla, sugar, and tobacco are also cultivated, in small quantities, and, in the Banks Islands, nutmegs and pepper. There are also native crops of plantains, bread-fruit, pine-apples, sago, yams, taro, and arrowroot. The native plantations are well tended, and on Aneityum the natives have extensive irrigation works.

Before the outbreak of war, cultivation by the British colonists was confined to maize and coco-nuts. Later information is not available. The remaining products were for the most part in the hands of the French, who greatly outnumber the British (see p. 5).

#### (b) *Forestry*

Thick forests cover most of the islands. The forests contain several useful timber trees, including sandalwood, *tamanu*, and a variety of *kauri* pine. Sandalwood has long been sought after but is now far less abundant than formerly. Rosewood occurs in the Banks Islands.

#### (c) *Land Tenure*

The land actually occupied by French planters amounts to 62,000 acres, of which about 15,000 are at present under cultivation. No information is available as to the amount of land owned by British colonists. Of the 62,000 acres occupied by the French, two proprietors on Efate Island own nearly 30,000. The titles to property in the islands are very diverse and, as elsewhere in Oceania, give rise to continual litigation. The impossibility of obtaining satisfactory titles has proved a serious obstacle to the development of the resources of the island. The Société Française des Nouvelles-Hébrides, which was founded in 1894 as a general agricultural development company, with a capital of 200,000 francs, claims some sort of proprietary rights over nearly half of the total area

of the islands; of the 62,000 acres now under French occupation, the company itself exploits some 8,500 acres, whilst it has leased 19,015 acres to colonists.

### (3) FISHERIES

The Banks Islands have some mother-of-pearl fisheries.

### (4) MINERALS

Copper and nickel ores and gold have been reported, the last from Omba (Aoba), but there is no information as to the nature of the deposits, none of which have been worked. Deposits of sulphur have been found on Tana and Vanua Lava. The Tana deposits have not been worked. Efforts made about eighteen years ago to work the Vanua Lava deposits failed, partly through mismanagement and partly, it is said, owing to the inadequacy of the supply of sulphur.

## (C) COMMERCE

### (a) Exports and Imports

The trade of the islands is steadily increasing. The figures for the principal exports of the New Hebrides in recent years are as follows: <sup>1</sup>

	1914.		1915.		1916.	
	Tons.	Value. £	Tons.	Value. £	Tons.	Value. £
Cocoa . . . . .	43	3,135	77	5,671	225	19,232
Coffee . . . . .	148	10,837	372	27,233	265	19,401
Copra . . . . .	3,284	66,670	4,029	81,802	4,104	83,332
Cotton . . . . .	681	13,825 <sup>2</sup>	1,557	31,625	1,726	35,038
Maize . . . . .	458	22,794	1,489	9,074	1,525	7,649
Sandal-wood . . . . .	100	2,868	105	3,016	134	4,384

<sup>1</sup> These figures are taken from the *Report of the Inter-State Commission of Australia on British and Australian Trade in the South Pacific* (1918). They do not everywhere agree with the figures as given in the *Statistiques du Commerce des Colonies françaises* (1914).

<sup>2</sup> The *Statistiques du Commerce* give 546,552 francs (£21,500) as the value of the export of raw cotton from the New Hebrides to Numea (New Caledonia) alone in 1914.

The principal product exported is copra, but the export of cocoa and cotton is increasing, and that of coffee, though its record is less consistent, also tends to grow. The exports are mostly shipped to New Caledonia and Australia. In 1914 the value of the goods sent to the former was £69,300, and in 1916 £125,000. The exports to Australia in 1914-15 (July to June) were valued at £22,668.

The imports of the New Hebrides were valued in 1916 at £90,000. In 1913, however, the value of the goods imported from Australia alone was £96,354, of which £34,000 was accounted for by goods of Australian origin. In 1914-15 the corresponding figures were £50,000 and £19,900.

The trade of the islands with New Zealand is negligible.

#### (b) *Customs and Tariffs*

The tariff is fixed and administered jointly by the British and French authorities. There are special rates for certain articles, and a few enter free; all other imports pay a 10 per cent. *ad valorem* duty.

Of the exports from the islands, maize and coffee have special advantages. The Australian Government at present refunds half the duty on maize imported into Australia, if grown by British planters in the New Hebrides, and grants a bonus of £4 per ton on imported coffee of like origin. The French planters, in their turn, benefit from an arrangement whereby for a specified period maize grown by them is admitted free into New Caledonia up to a quantity of 1,800 metric tons, while their coffee, up to 50 metric tons, is exempt from duty in other French colonies.

### (D) FINANCE

No information is available as to the cost of the administration of the islands.

British coin and notes are current, though scarce; French coin and notes are current and plentiful. There are no banks.

### (E) GENERAL REMARKS

There is little doubt that these islands are among the most fertile in the Pacific, but their development is at present hindered by the insufficiency of labour and, in a minor degree, by the impossibility of securing a clear title to land and the consequent difficulty in obtaining financial assistance from banks or commercial houses. Their general importance is to be found largely in the fact that they possess three of the best harbours in the Pacific.

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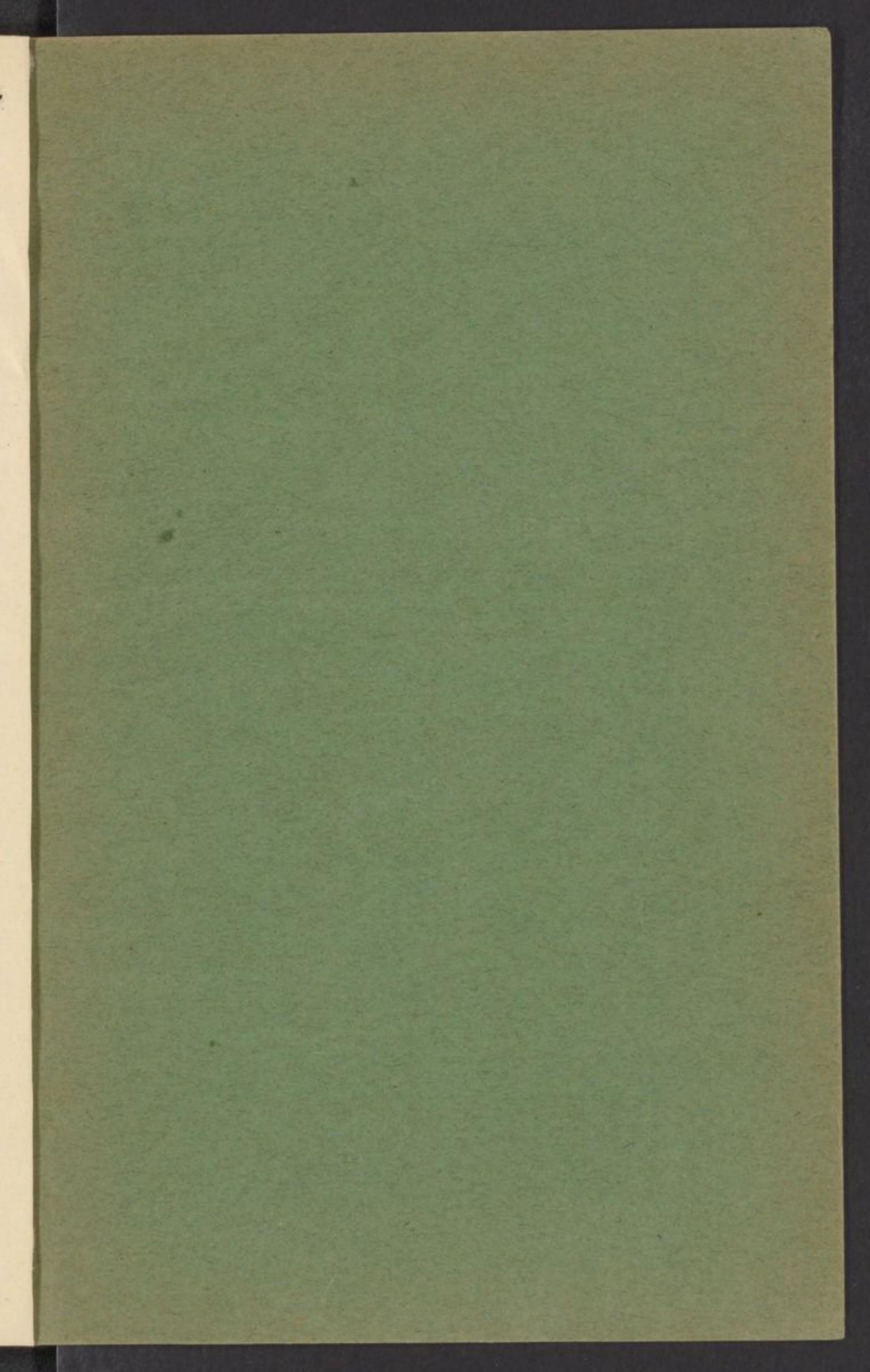
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## MAPS

The Naval Staff Intelligence Division have issued a map of the New Hebrides, Banks, and Torres Islands, on the scale of 1 : 3,000,000 in connexion with this series. Their position relative to other islands is shown in Stanford's Map of the Pacific Islands (see note to No. 139).



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