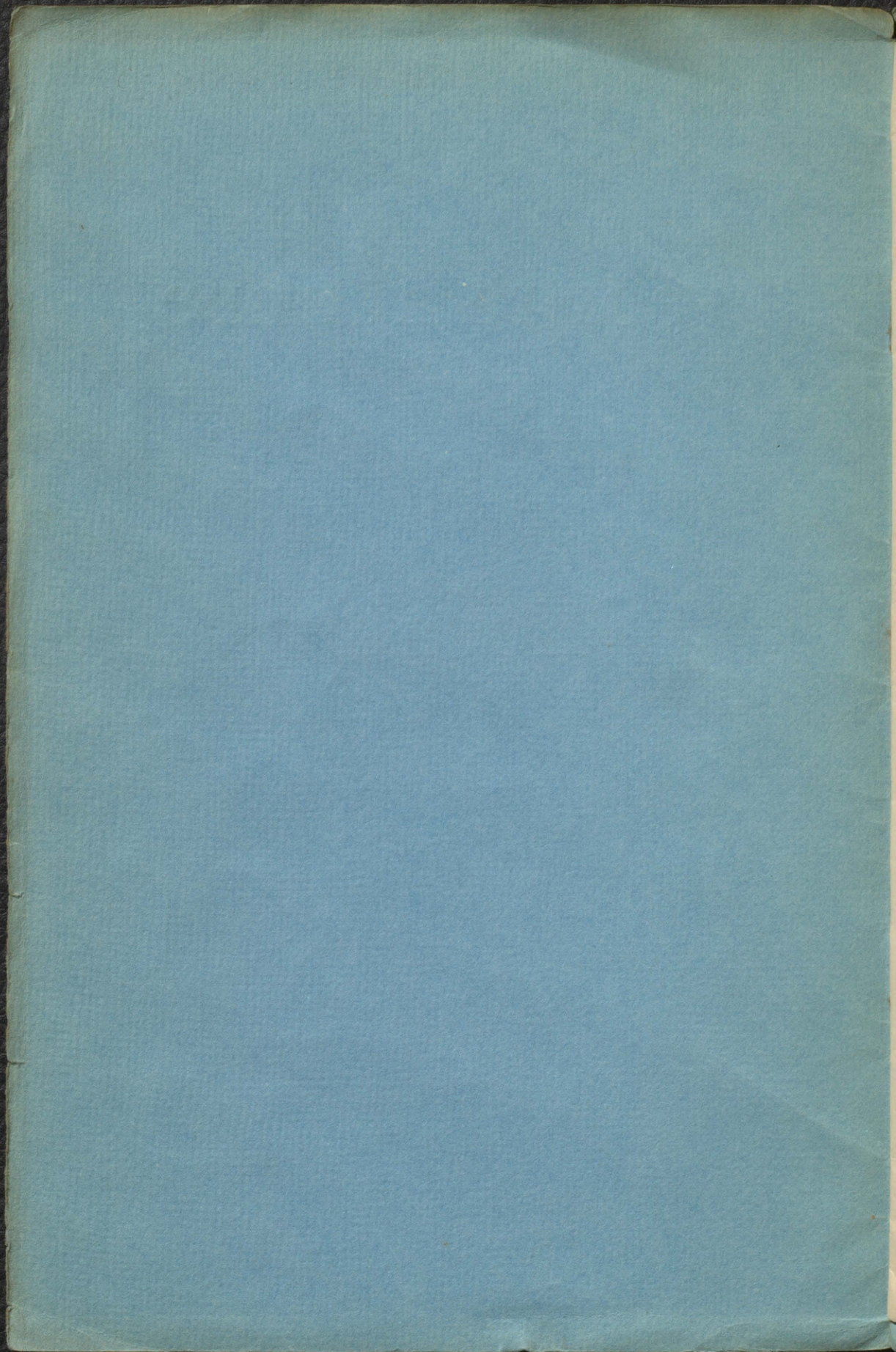


George Moore

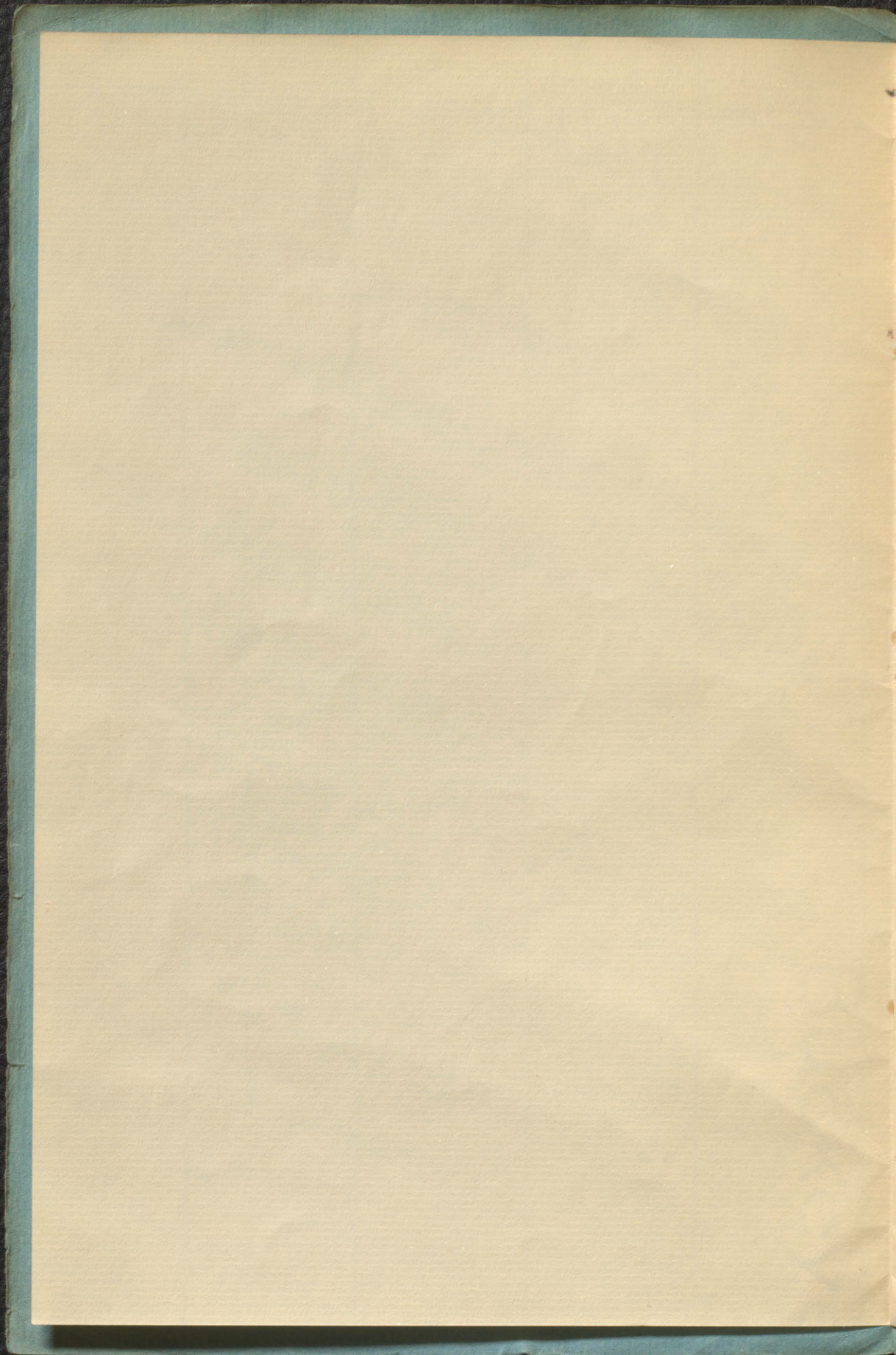
In Quest of

Locale

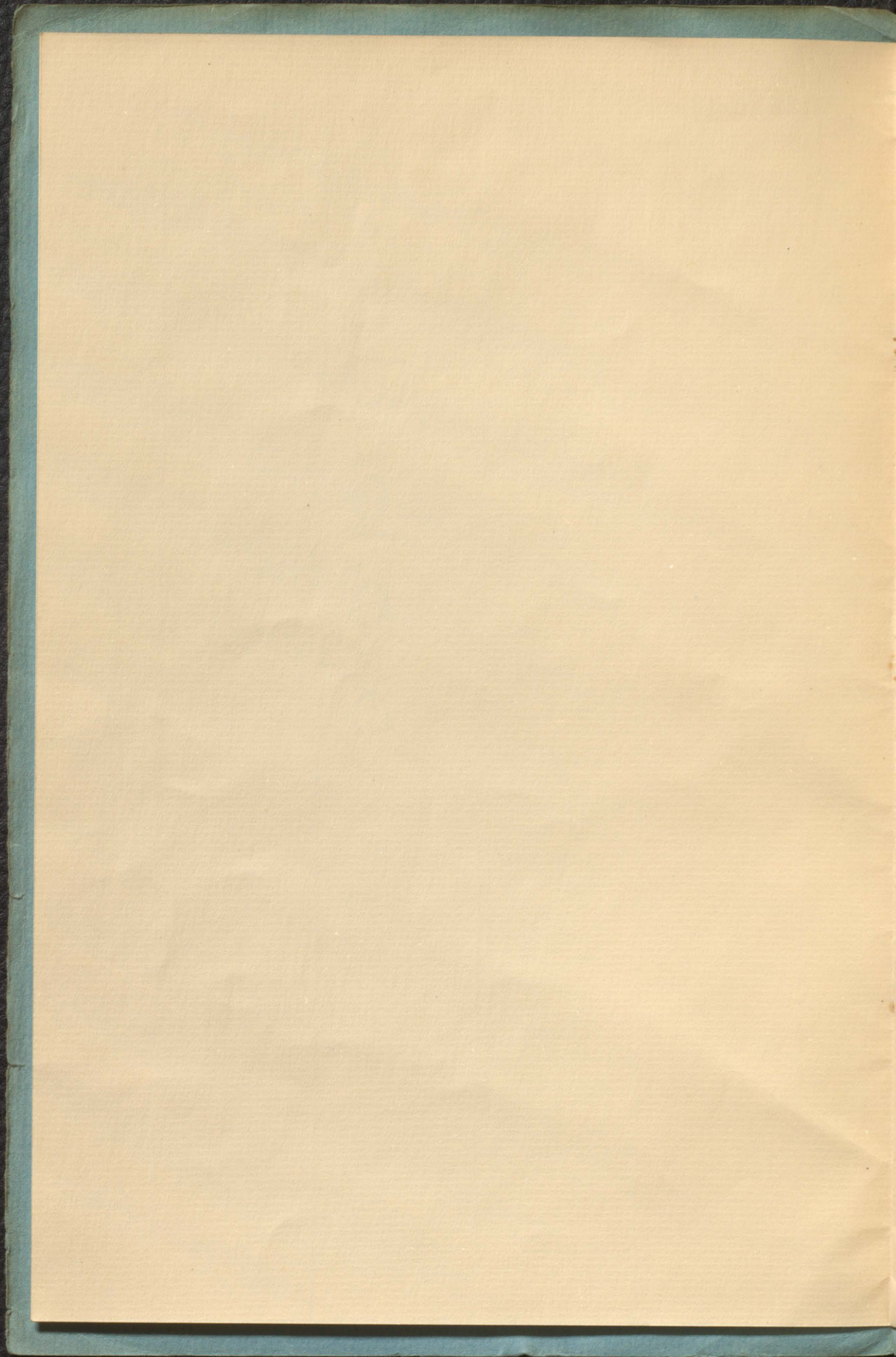


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THE HISTORY OF
THE
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NEW YORK
FROM
1609 TO
1812



GEORGE MOORE
IN QUEST OF
LOCALE

TWO LETTERS
TO
W. T. STEAD

GEORGE MOORE
IN QUEST OF
LOCAL

TWO LETTERS
TO
W. T. STEAD

George Moore

In Quest of

Locale



George Moore

In Quest of

Locals



THE two letters which follow (from the collection of Mr. James D. Hart) were written by George Moore to a "Mr. Stead," presumably W. T. Stead, a celebrated and even notorious English journalist of the 80's and 90's. Stead introduced into England a brand of journalism which, if not yellow, was at least of a decidedly primrose tinge. He was a reformer and "vice crusader," and the author of books with such sensational titles as *The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon*, *The Americanization of the World*, and *If Christ Came to Chicago*. In connection with some of his acts in procuring evidence for the first-named of these, Stead had served three months' time in Holloway Gaol. For all that he was a mild enough person. In an early volume of the English *Who's Who* he listed his "recreations" as "cycling, boating, playing with children." His death became his journalistic activities: he perished at sea in the "Titanic" disaster of 1912.

It is to be supposed that these letters from Mr. Moore concern the novels *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa*, the first of which appeared in 1898 and the second in 1901.

Mr. Moore explained in a preface to the latter book that the two novels were actually one, and were so written, being divided into two for purposes of publication. Most of the convent scenes occur in *Sister Teresa*.

No date occurs on either of these letters, but it would appear that they were written not long after the publication of *Esther Waters* (1894). They were written from King's Bench Walk, in the Temple, where, it will be remembered, Moore had composed that novel.

The letters are interesting in more than one respect. They illustrate the technique of the naturalistic novelist — the punctilious care for "local color," the search for the "human document," as the Goncourts and Zola had called it. There is enunciated in the second of them an idea that has been a favorite with Mr. Moore: ". . . out of the good subject comes the good book." In the choice of this particular subject there is betrayed that unceasing interest in Roman Catholicism which Moore, the professed "Protestant", has exhibited throughout his career as an author.

Finally, although there emerges in the letters the

characteristic Moore "idiom," they are carelessly composed, and demonstrate what was pointed out by Mr. Freeman in his monograph on George Moore — the need that Mr. Moore had to polish his prose, and the care that he must have exercised in revision. For the essence of what have been called the "middle" and the "later" manners of Mr. Moore is the exquisite and easy colloquial flow of his writing. His spontaneous style is here revealed to have been confused and stumbling.

But the chief interest of these letters to the fanciful mind may well lie in the vision they evoke of the interview that perhaps finally resulted from them. The picture of the sinuous-minded, the feline George Moore subtly cross-examining — perhaps in some musty, faded "Victorian" interior "in the south-west of England" — a vague figure, whom loss of faith or a sense of mistaken vocation had induced to return to "the world," is itself no mean subject for literature, of the very sort that would delight the author of *Hail and Farewell*.

— JOHN McCLELLAND

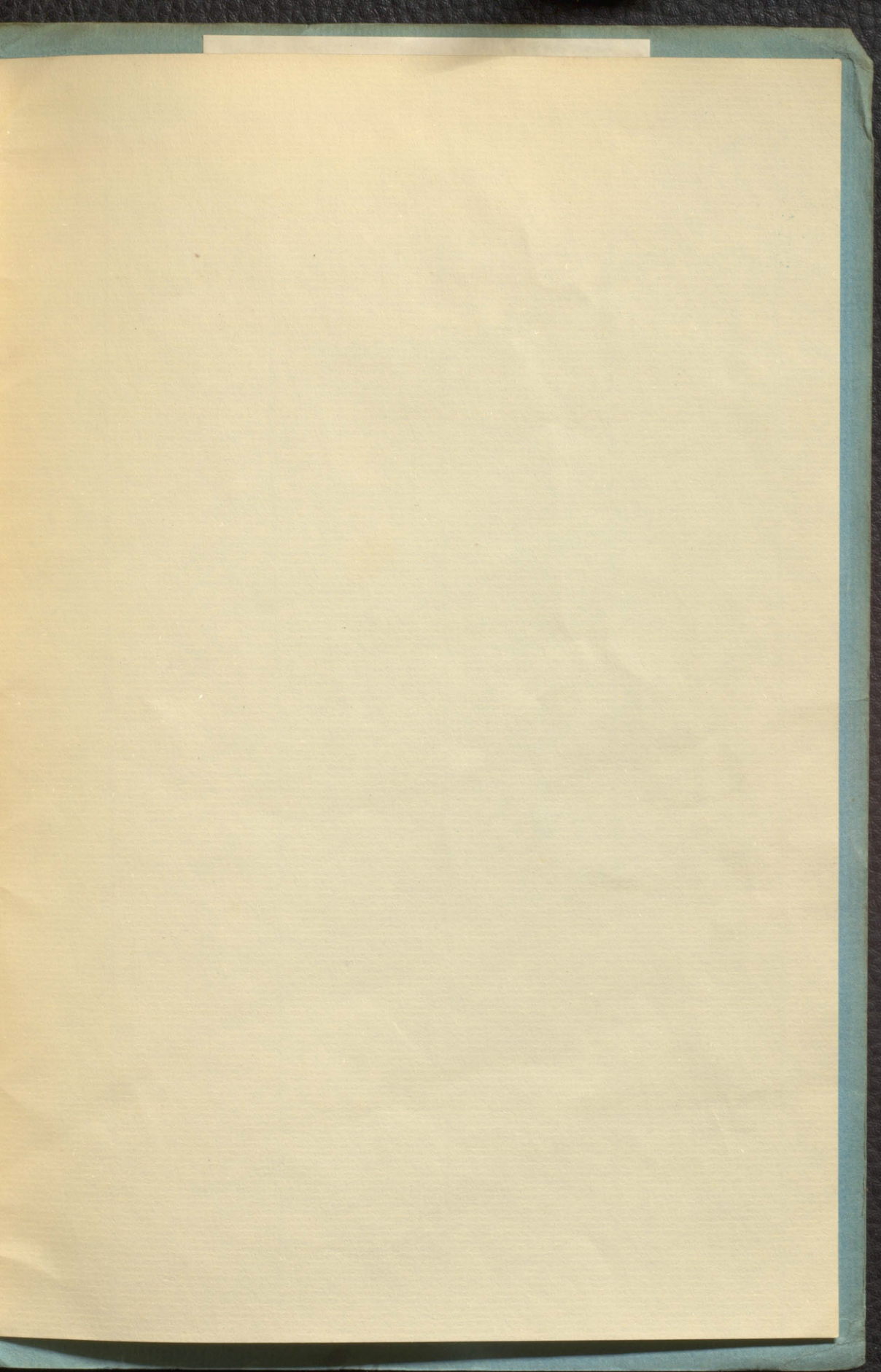
I AM considering a story, the greater part of which passes in a convent of cloistered nuns. I shall write the story if I can obtain necessary information regarding the discipline of such convents. I want very little, very little, but the little I want is indispensable. I dare say there are books published on the subject but books are no use to me, every one has his own way of working, I work from word of mouth description. I can describe a scene that has been related to me better than if I had witnessed it. So I should like to meet someone who had been in a convent, a professed nun would be best of all, that of course would be almost impossible to obtain, but one who had served her novitiate might not be. My nuns are Roman Catholic and I should like best a Roman Catholic, failing that one who had been in a convent of Anglican nuns would do, for the point of my story is not the discipline of any particular order but the entire question of a cloistered life. It was Mr. Massingham who suggested that I should write to you. Your experience is so varied that you may know such a

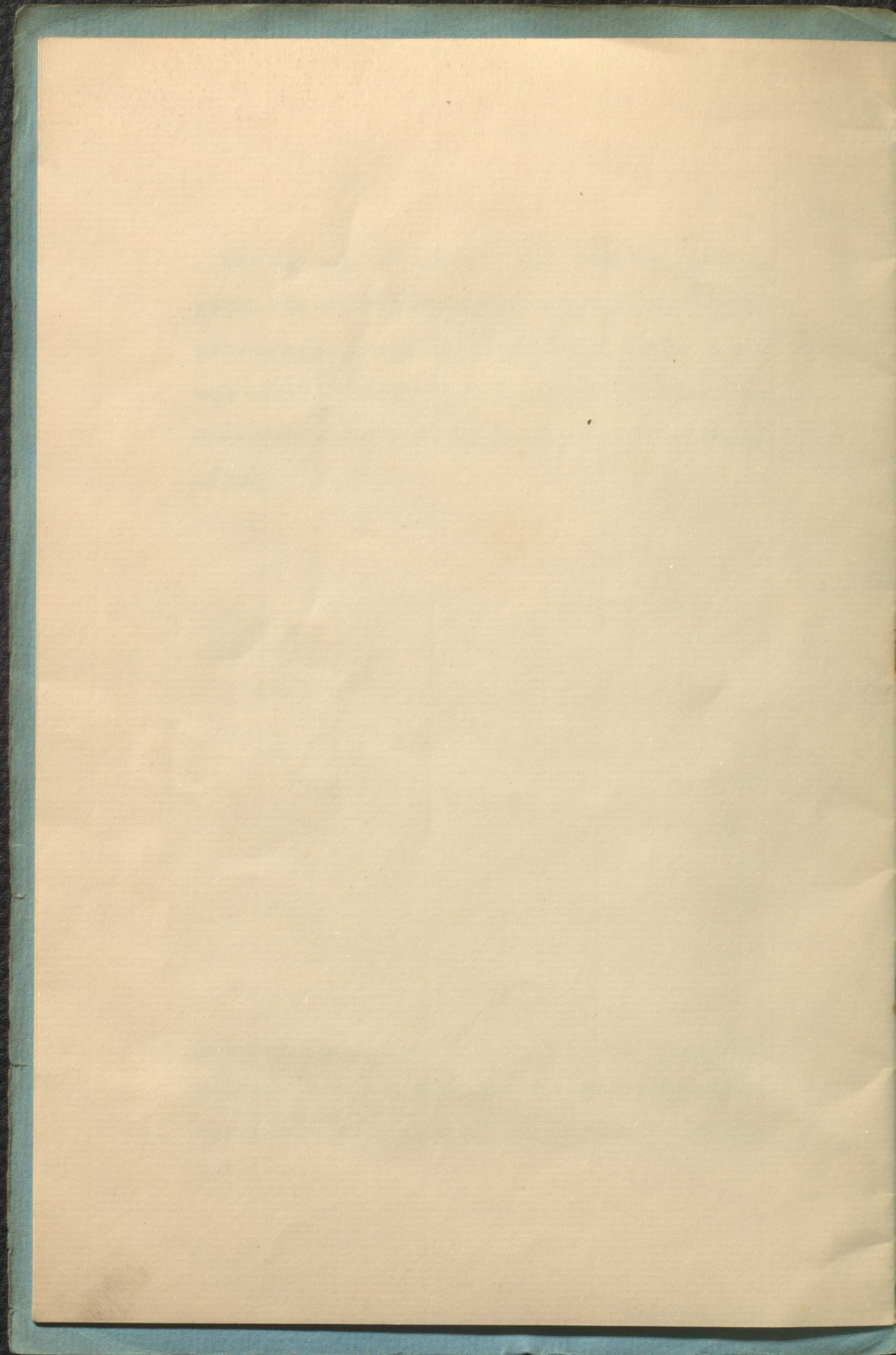
person as I am in quest of. If you do you will do me a service by putting me in communication with her. I should be glad to pay her for loss of time. You may know someone who would be glad to earn the money.

THANKS for your promise of help. It is very kind of you. The success of *Esther Waters* makes me very nervous about choice of subject. Everything depends on that, out of the good subject comes the good book. If I can get the information — I don't like the word — but I can't think of a better one for the moment, I think I can do something worthwhile with the correct subject. To live your life or to put your life aside that is the question. I shall have to hear the experiences of three or four. You speak of a lady now living in the southwest of England; you say she is not accessible. But I should think nothing of going to the southwest. I might write and ask her if she would see me.

You say you will write to some Catholic friend of yours. You will let them understand that I do not propose to write a word that would give offence to any nun of any order, to do so would ruin my book. You are very kind and I am touched by your kind promise of help.

Of this pamphlet seventy-five copies only have been printed from hand set 12-point Bodoni Bold by James D. Hart at The Harvest Press for Christmas 1931. This is copy number 27





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