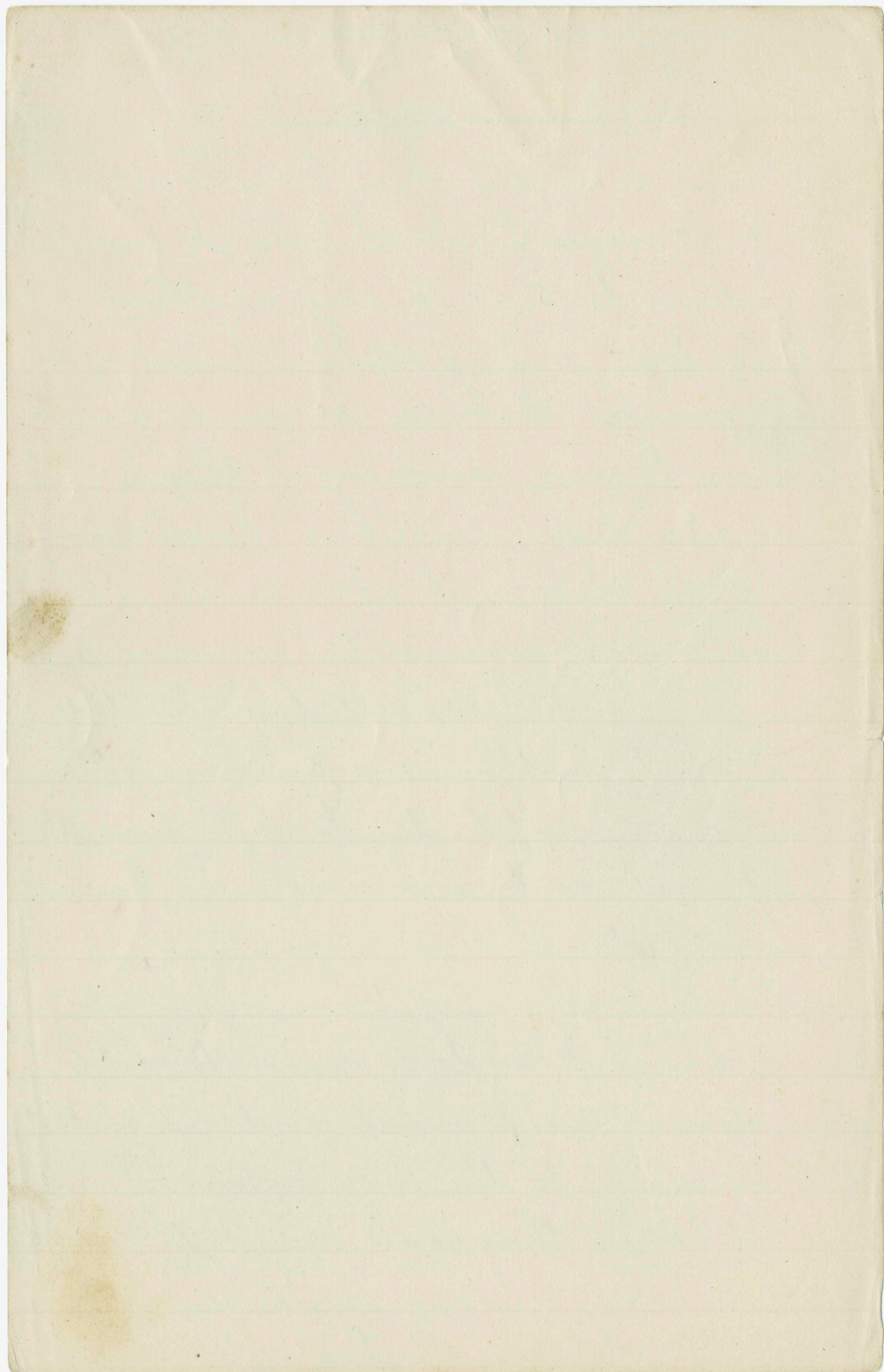


1.
The Genius of George Eliot.

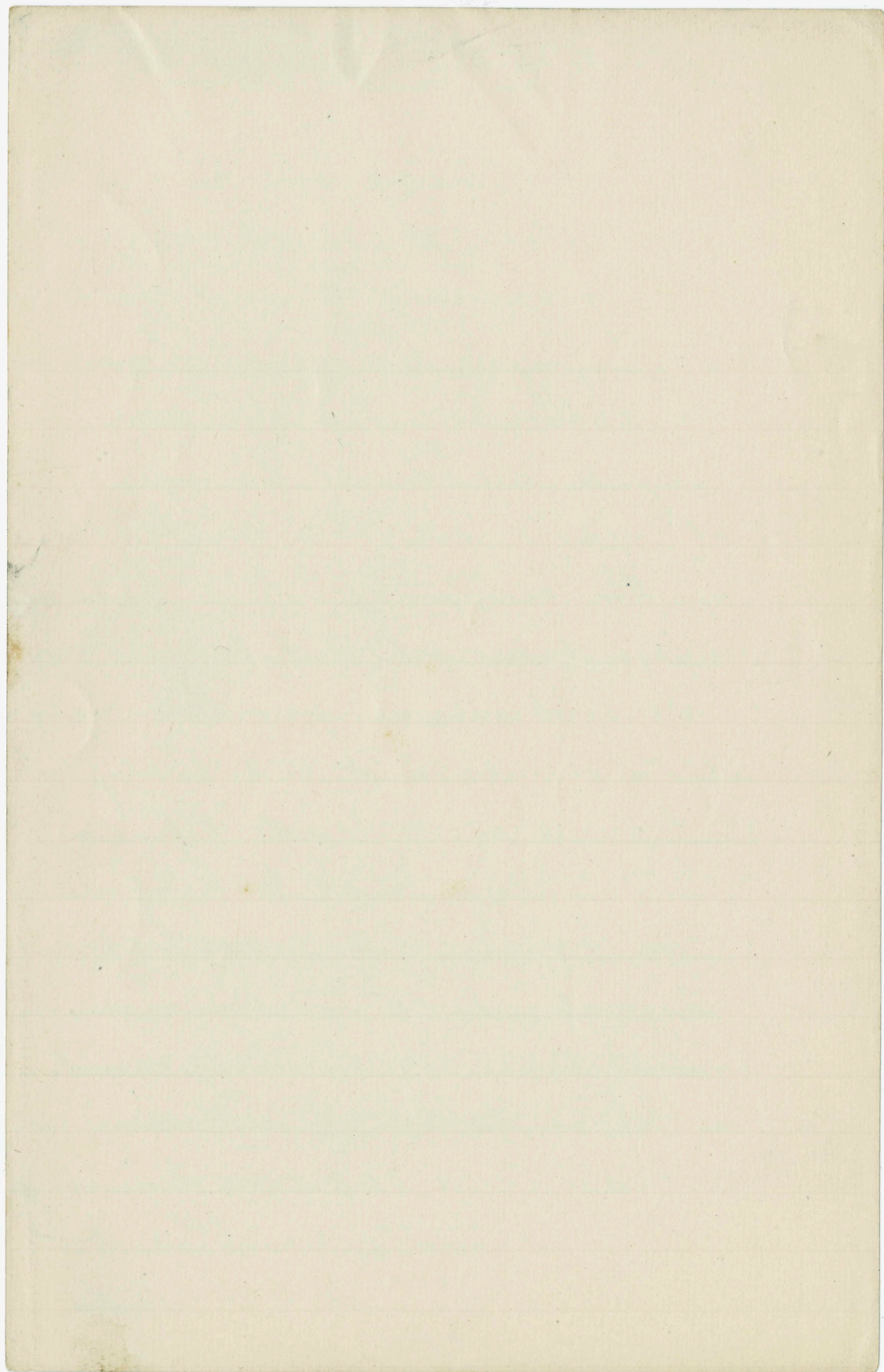
Since so much has been written about George Eliot of late, it would be useless to hope to say anything new that is true or true that is new of her lofty genius. But as it is a great pleasure to say audibly "I thank you" when one has received a kindness even if it does not stamp us with genius and originality, so everyone who has been benefited or elevated by a great author may claim the privilege of gratitude to tell his little world how and how much he has been helped.

Who that has enjoyed even one of her books, has not had occasion to add one stone (however small and rough that stone may be) to the mausoleum of fame raised by a thankful world to George Eliot's memory? Every writer is in some degree the mirror of his times; the age in

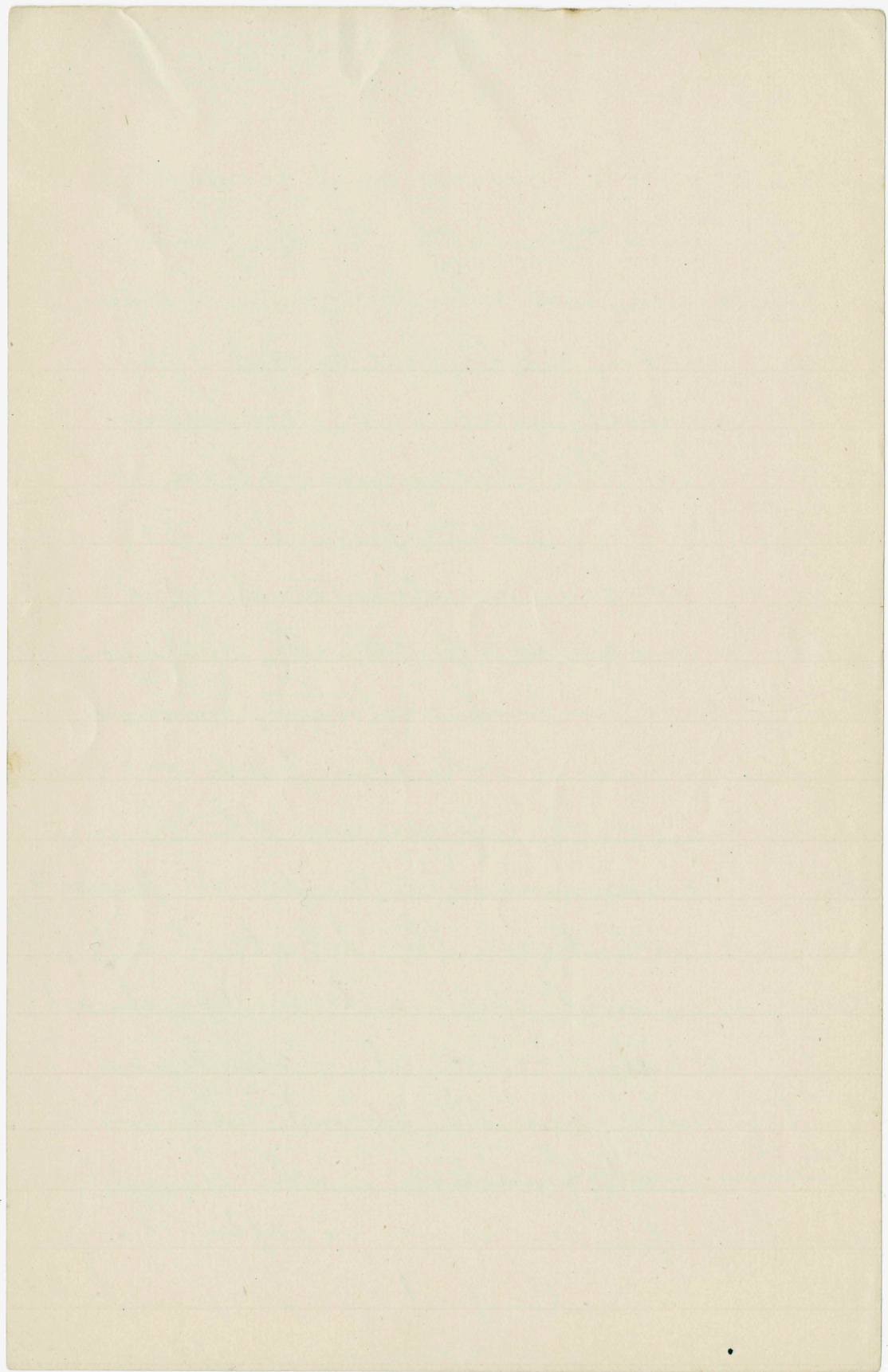


which he lives hangs over him like the moon above the earth, compelling an image from the tiniest pebble as well as from the greatest mountain. While no author is wholly a creature or wholly a creator of his age, she certainly was more the creator than she was the creature of hers. Some authors live their allotted time leaving little or less impression upon their age, while others permeate it so entirely that the age becomes almost identified with them. George Eliot looked far beyond her because she more fully felt and realized its tendencies.

Criticism looks a shining mark. She has been spoken of as possessing certain faculties in a supreme degree while others were sadly wanting. But to me she seems the richly endowed woman of the modern world; As Com-

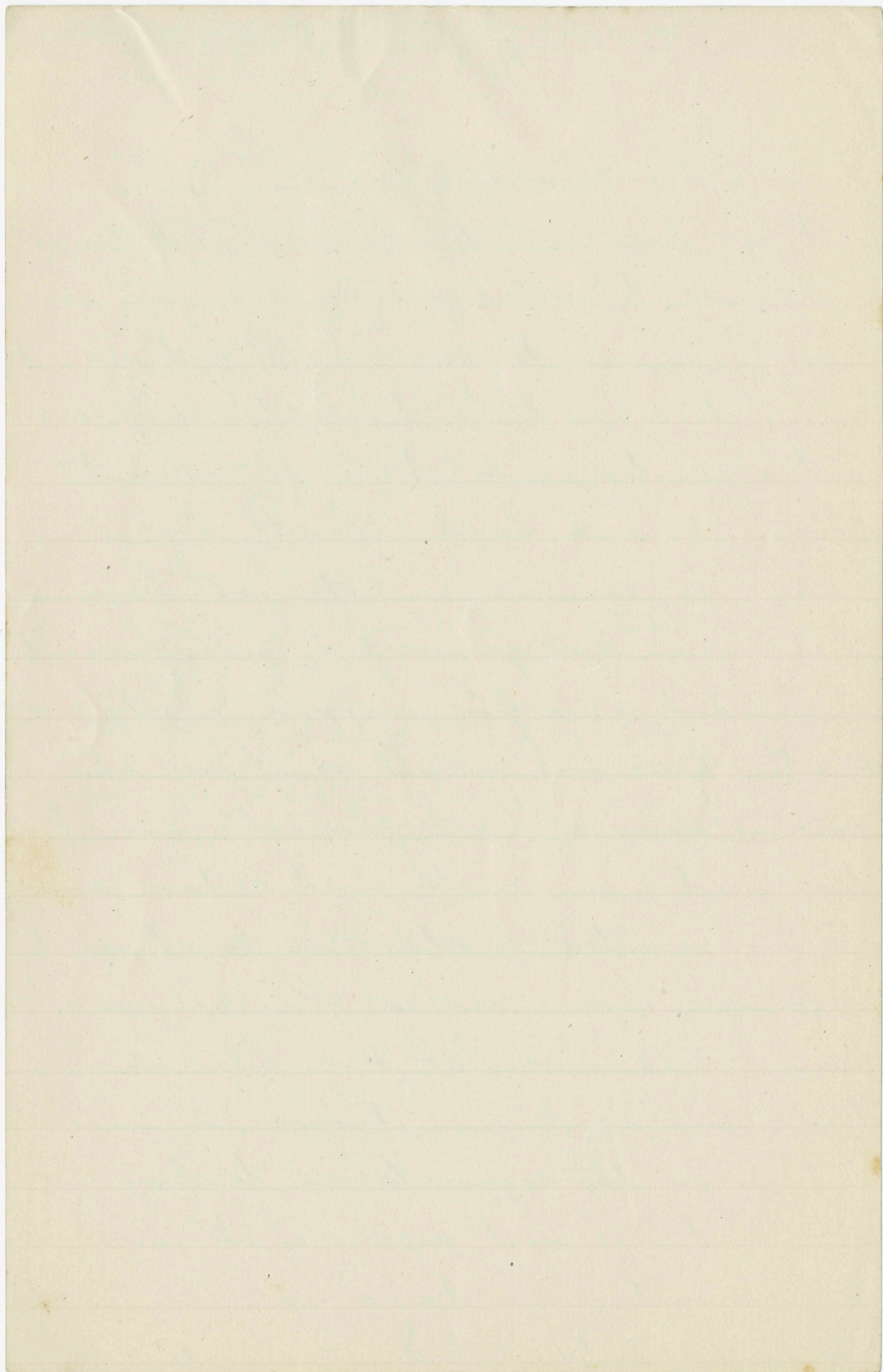


plite in all forms and accomplishments
 as her own Isabella. Every faculty
 of her mind was well developed and finely
 harmonized, and her broad grasp
 of a subject was as comprehensive,
 as her subtle discrimination of
 small things was perfect. She had in
 a large degree understanding, the
 power which comprehends; memory,
 the power which retains; imagina-
 tion the power which produces and
 combines, and eloquence the power
 which communicates. Besides she possessed
 in no small degree the talents of wit,
 sarcasm, and rhetoric. Even the character
 of the sophist was hers at will. One always
 writes best upon the subject with which
~~they are~~ ^{he is} most familiar and George Eliot
 stands supreme as a sculptor of human
 nature; from the first page of her book
 one sees her models develop and grow



beneath her practical hand.

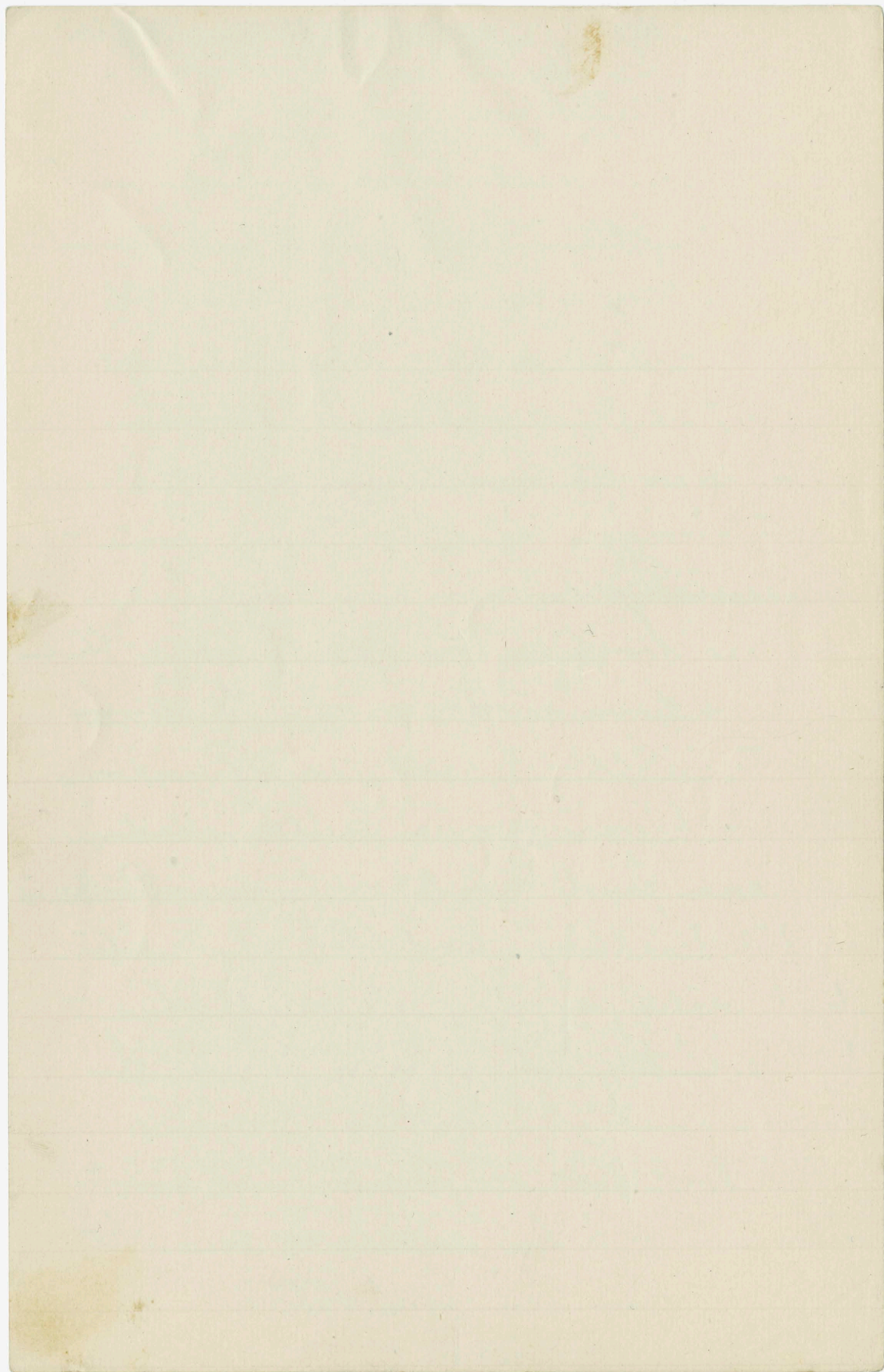
It has been said she confined herself principally to country life because she was unequal to cope with Dickens and Eugene Sue in their descriptive city scenes and characters. Was it not in the country she found and tried array the learning which was commensurate with her genius? And upon ^{which} that genius fed, full, free, and unbounded, as a fire upon a mighty fuel. Was the time lost which spent in the contemplation of rural character, gave to the world Mary Gauth and Adam Bede? Her character breathe the sweet spirit of English land-scapes. The mill on the shore grinds slowly; but it grinds exceedingly true. Having known it once we will not allow the acquaintance to drop; but renew it oft and again if its images begin to fade. The dancing river, the old homestead, the Red Dups, are scenes we



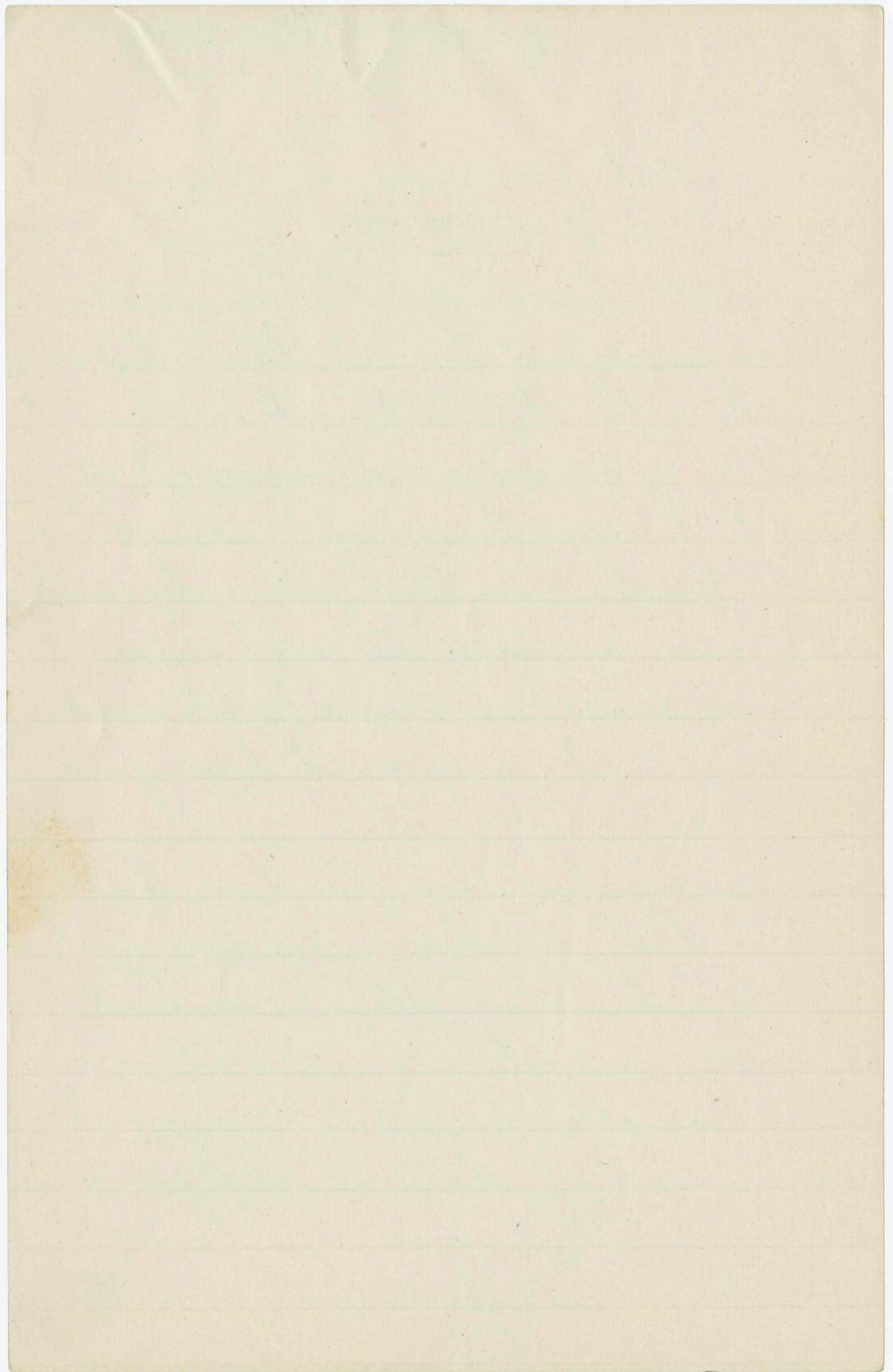
have known and loved and are not easily forgotten. Country life and character is never so true, so pure, or so ideal as when her pen paints the picture. Can one imagine Dinah Morris developing in Lincoln's Inn Field or on the Boulevard without thinking of the incongruity of a Parma violet blossoming on an ash heap!

Who can compare the beggarly bit of blue sky seen from a corner of a London Garret, with the dread magnificence of heaven bending over Benlomond. Who can find beauty or inspiration in the trickling puddles of a city street after a day of rain, when he thinks of the red roaring torrents from the hills which meet at Comrie.

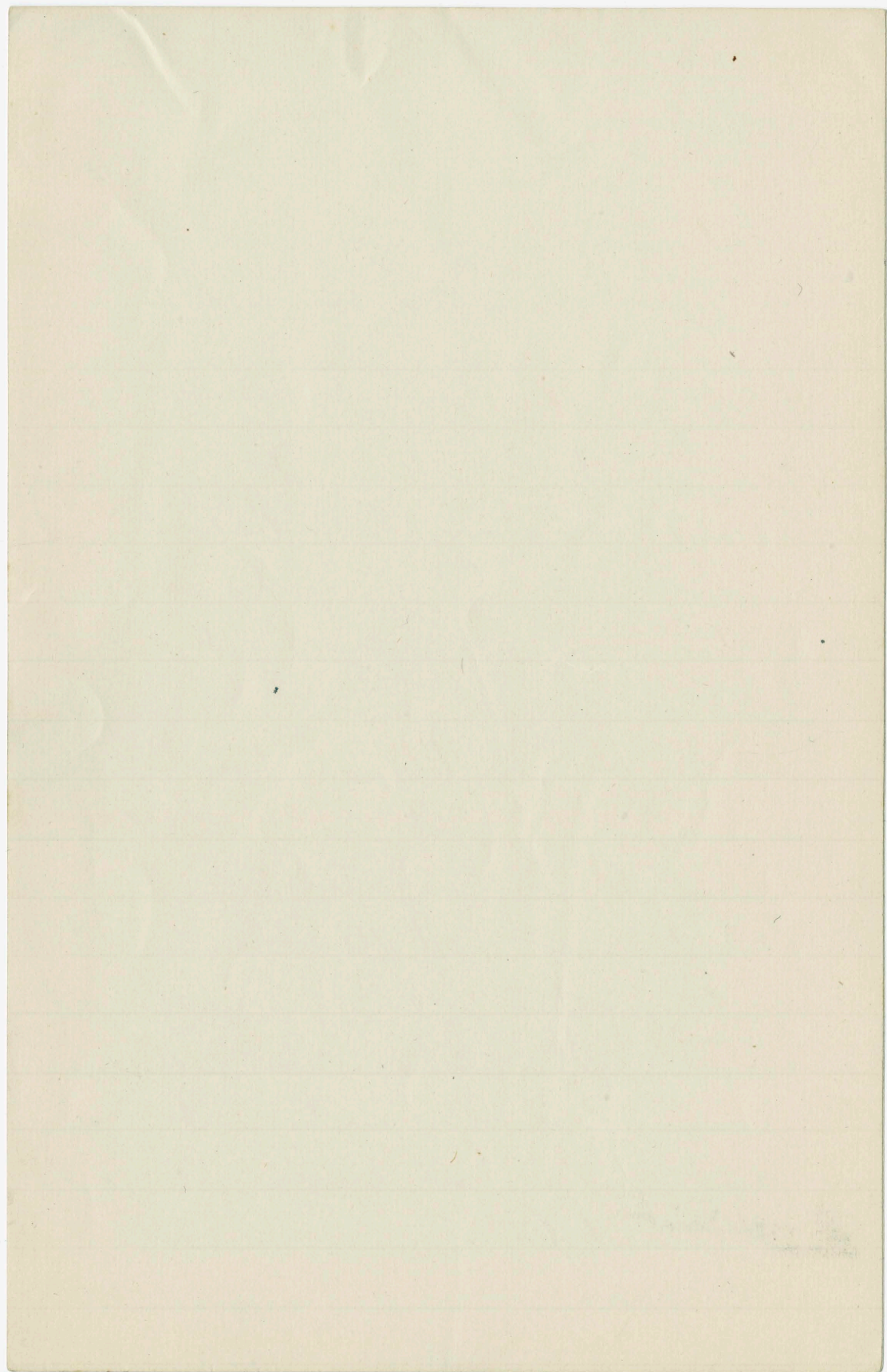
The fact that she paints from nature and is true to her model, has been the most fruitful source of criticism. In the heroine of the mill on the floor she shows



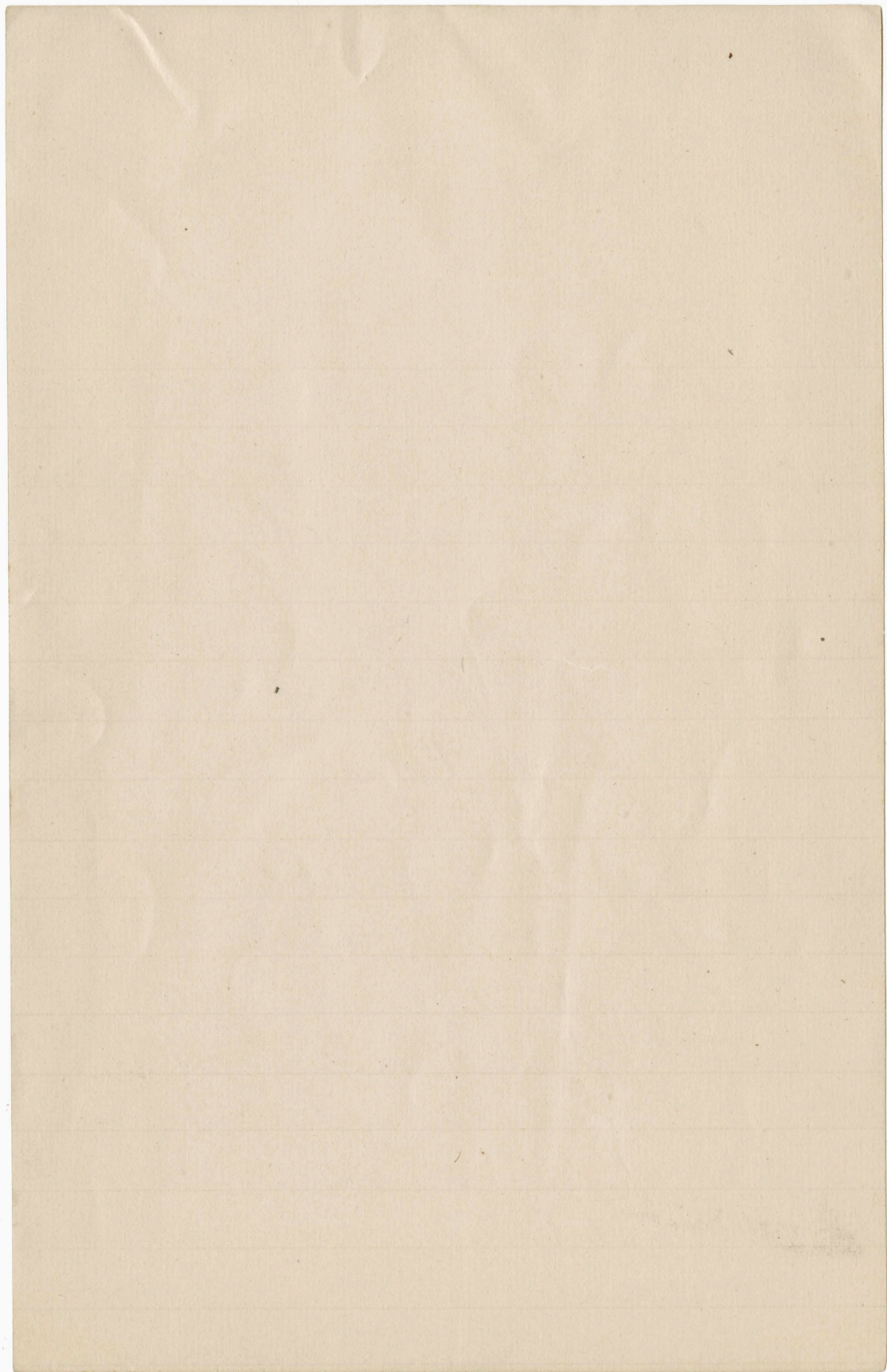
her greatest power as a character
 builder and it is this same crea-
 tion that has received strong criticism.
 The chief situation in the book, Maggie's
 flight with Stephen Guest is termed
 "needlessly weak and ignoble". If we
 could only exterminate all actions
 and tendencies that do not accord
 with our highest ideas of ethics, by
 terming them "needlessly weak and
 ignoble", what a grand inaugura-
 tion of the millennium we would
 soon have. But we find in human
 nature that weakness predominates,
 whether it is needlessly weak and
 ignoble or not. If we had only
 the strength of will to carry out
 our sense of duty; if our judgements
 were never overcome by our senti-
 ments, in what respect would we
 differ from gods. Given such a nature



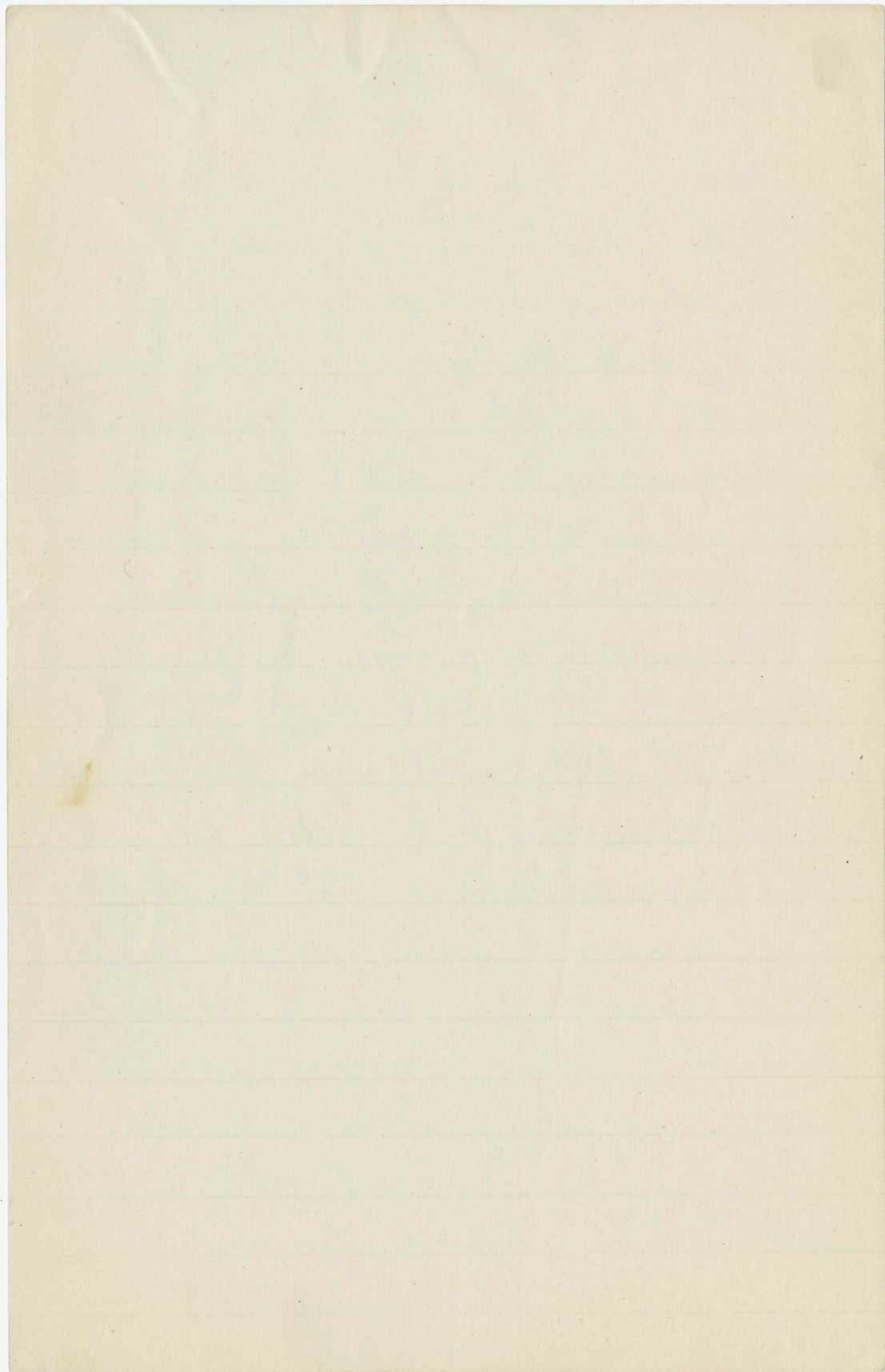
as Maggie Tulliver (and the possibility of such a ^{nature} character may be granted without libel on the race) with the environment in which she was placed and the flight with Stephen Guest becomes not a thing of beauty - but a necessity. The true portrait painter may be put to the pain of spoiling the loveliest of violet eyes and the perfection of well turned ruby lips with a pug nose, but if that pug nose does obtrude itself between those eyes and lips down on the canvas it must go. We might entertain a feeling of injury to our idea of ethics if Maggie had never awoken to the fact of her mistake and had been allowed with an easy conscience to live a successful, ^{and happy} life with Stephen Guest; but the great genius who gave Maggie a name and a place



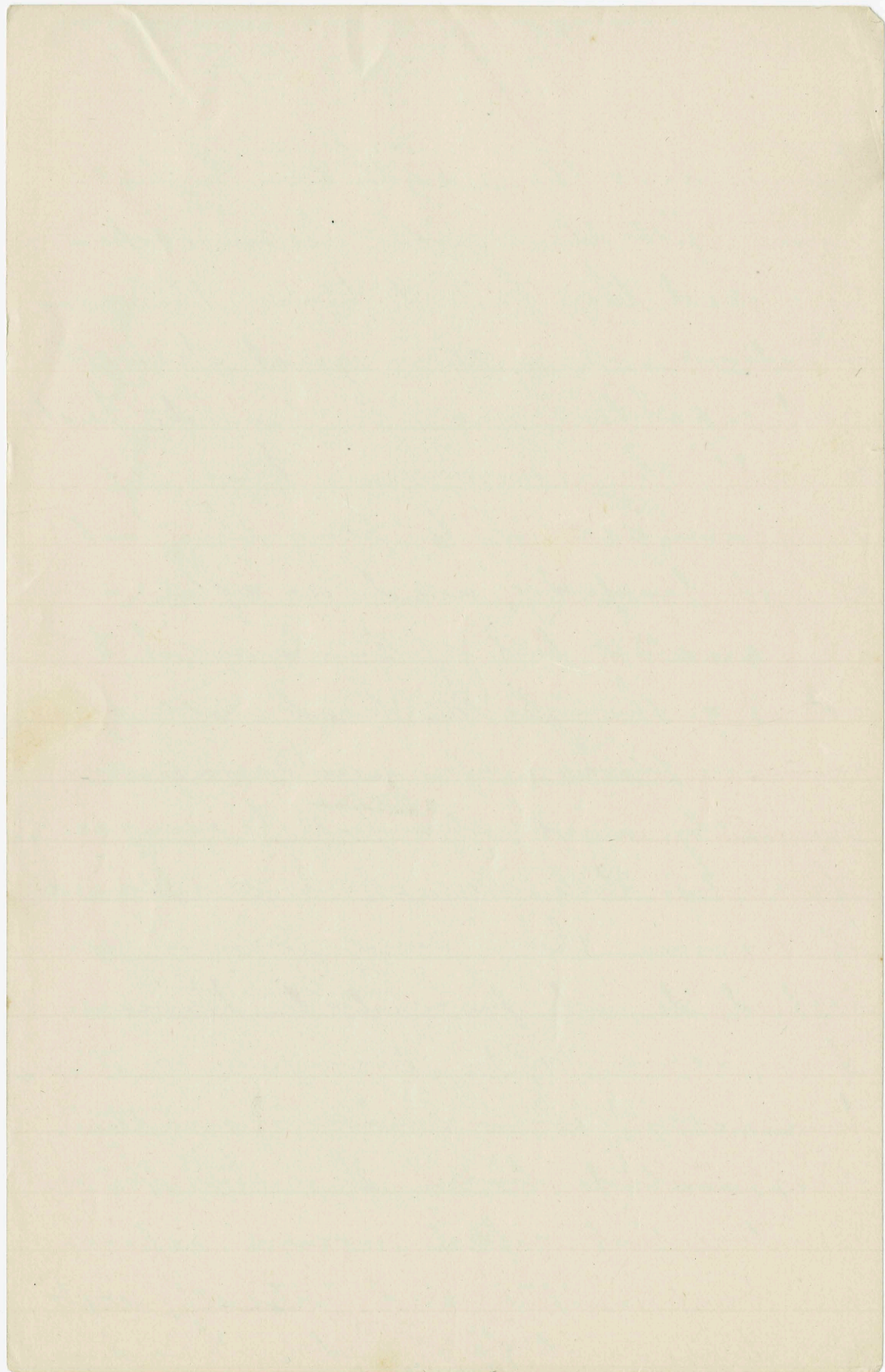
among mortals, while she painted human nature with all its faults never painted them care to warn and to rebuke and she as fully realized the fact as does the reader that Inaggie must be drowned or do violence to her art. The same critic Abba Gould Woolson thinks it an outrage that a woman of such brilliant parts as Romola should have fallen in love with the first handsome young man she ^{ever} saw and have had her life blighted by the false Tito. Do we suppose the world thinks every time a wealthy, eastern girl of bluest blood whose ^{is supposed} ~~is supposed~~ ^{could} ~~could~~ have been expunged of all the noxious vapors of sentiment by a long course at Smith College or the Harvard Annex, elopes with her father's coachman. We may as well take warning from all the



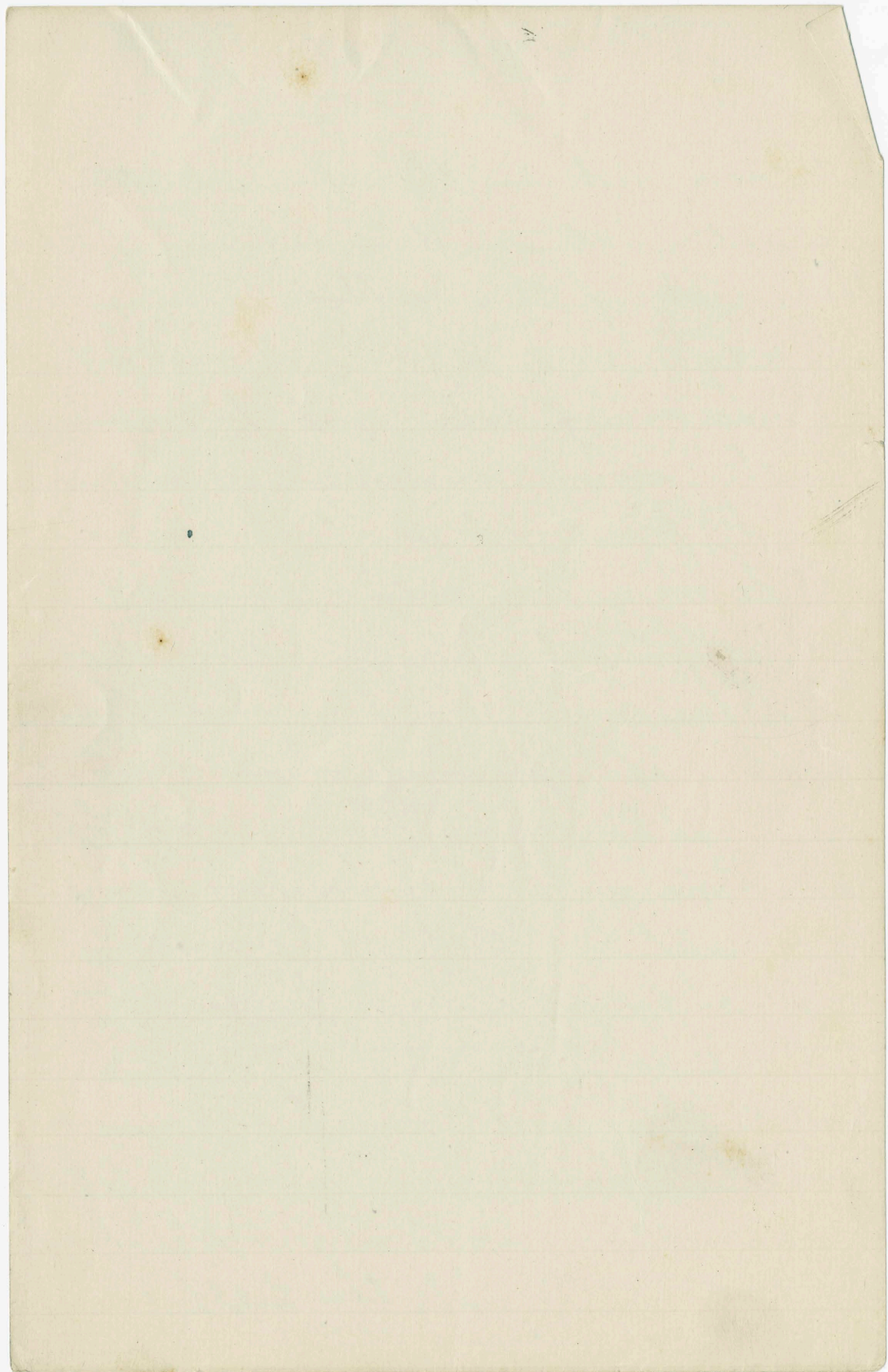
mistakes in the lives of Geo. Eliot's
 characters and fortify ourselves against
 similar occurrences in our lives or
 the lives which we may influence.
 It will not do to condemn Geo. Eliot
 for allowing such weakness to show
 itself in the lives of Maggie Tulliver
 and Romola and to say such
 would have been impossible among
 people as respectable as we. You know
 blood will tell and our grandmother
 was weak enough to be betrayed into
 partaking of "that forbidden fruit
 whose mortal taste brought death-
 into our world, and all our
 woe with loss of Eden" and that
 too after having been warned of
 its consequences by God himself.
George Eliot
~~she~~ has also suffered the charge of
 inadequacy of action. Critics tell us
 that she makes women of the noblest



type, endows them with the highest
 powers, fills them with burning aspira-
 tions and then fails to place them in
 situations where their great strength
 and capabilities may be proved; Just
 as with the women in true life.
 They are ^{not} called to play the part
 of high tragedy; and so after all
 the greatest test of heroism is to be
 able to go through the tread mill of a
 common place life and answer
 promptly and cheerfully to every call
 of duty. Still more she is complained
 of because these same women when
 baffled do not precipitate themselves
 from some lofty precipice or otherwise
 tragically put a quit to on their
 disappointed lives. It is still the way
 of nature that gifted women aspire,
 are disappointed and patiently accept
 the decrees of fate and live the life she assigns
 to them.



We can not in the space allotted
 us enter into a discussion of all
 the merits of this gifted woman.
 Her life was a self-denied life;
 It was one of labor and toil save
 for the secret sunshine of her own
 breast. She could hear the voice
 of fame "the nations praising her
 afar off." But there were spots upon
 her life and she possessed peculiar
 vanities of opinion which pained
 her very human. ^{close} May we not hope
 that Stein's note of uncle Toby may
 be true of her, "that the recording
 Angel as he jotted down her faults
 dropped a tear upon the page and
 blotted them out forever" } Her work
 was the gathering of material by the
 imagination and arranging it so
 as to have in it, the helpfulness
 of life, as well as the harmonies



12.

and emotion of life. She succeeded,
and if the unwritten record of
her own heart was checkered with
shadows of "hope deferred" for many
years — the written lines she gave
to men and women have taught
many lessons of truth, candor
and excellence.

