

## PREFACE

UNTIL within the past ten years a study of Chinese court life would have been an impossibility. The Emperor, the Empress Dowager, and the court ladies were shut up within the Forbidden City, away from a world they were anxious to see, and which was equally anxious to see them. Then the Emperor instituted reform, the Empress Dowager came out from behind the screen, and the court entered into social relations with Europeans.

For twenty years and more Mrs. Headland has been physician to the family of the Empress Dowager's mother, the Empress' sister, and many of the princesses and high official ladies in Peking. She has visited them in a social as well as a professional way, has taken with her her friends, to whom the princesses have shown many favours, and they have themselves been constant callers at our home. It is to my wife, therefore, that I am indebted for much of the information contained in this book.

There are many who have thought that the Empress Dowager has been misrepresented. The world has based its judgment of her character upon her greatest mistake, her participation in the Boxer movement, which seems unjust, and