

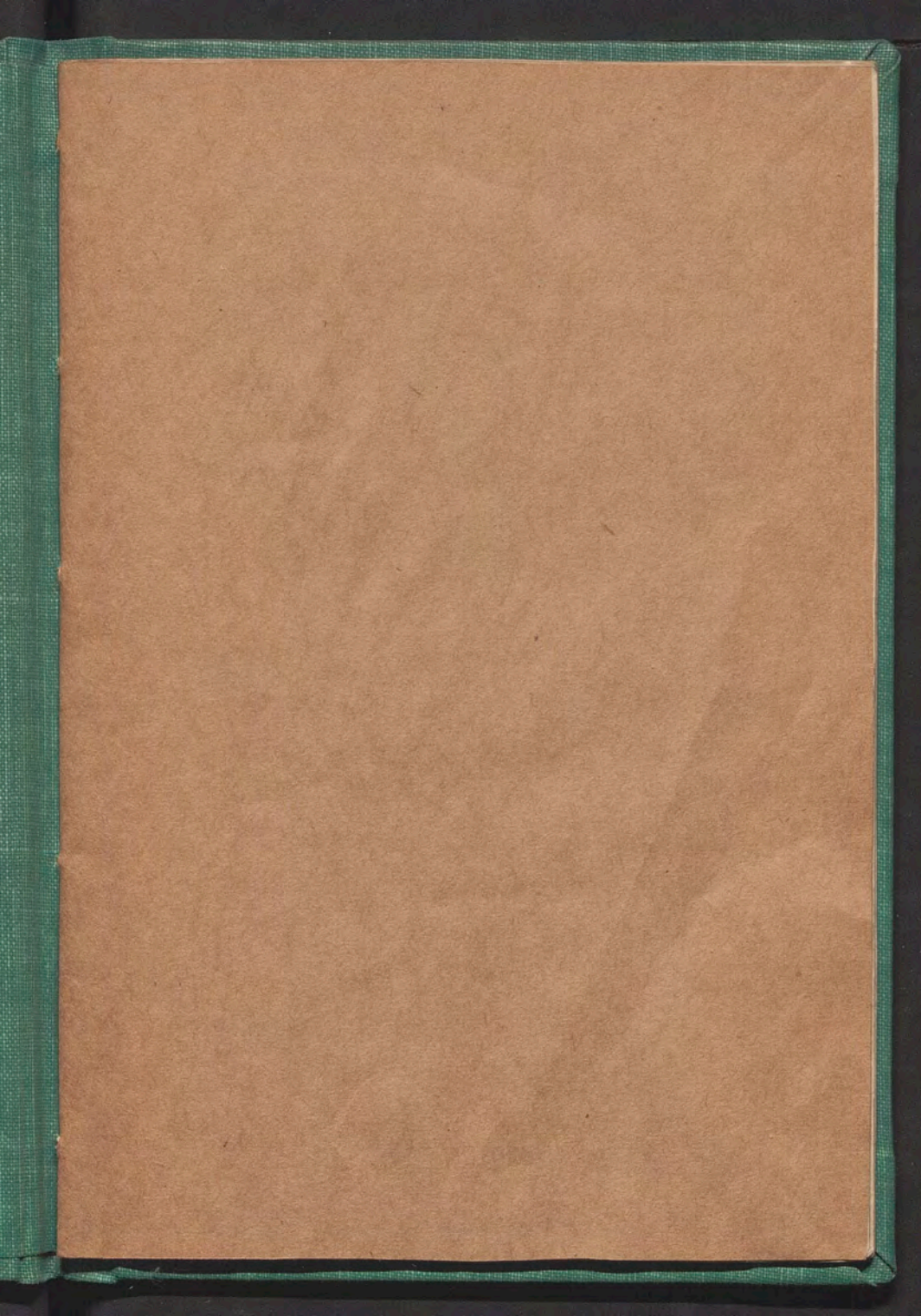
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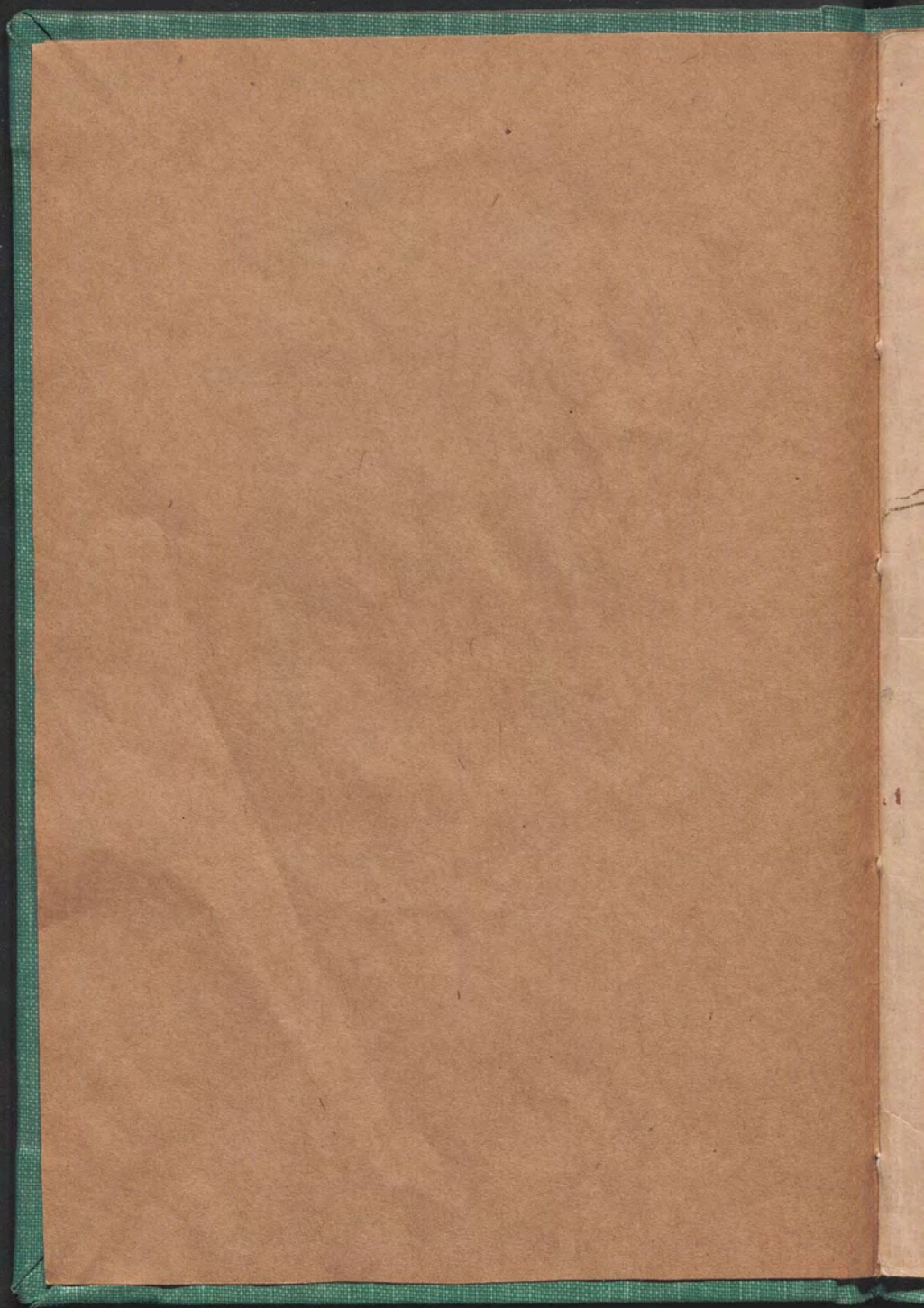
THE BEATING OF A
GOLDEN BRANCH

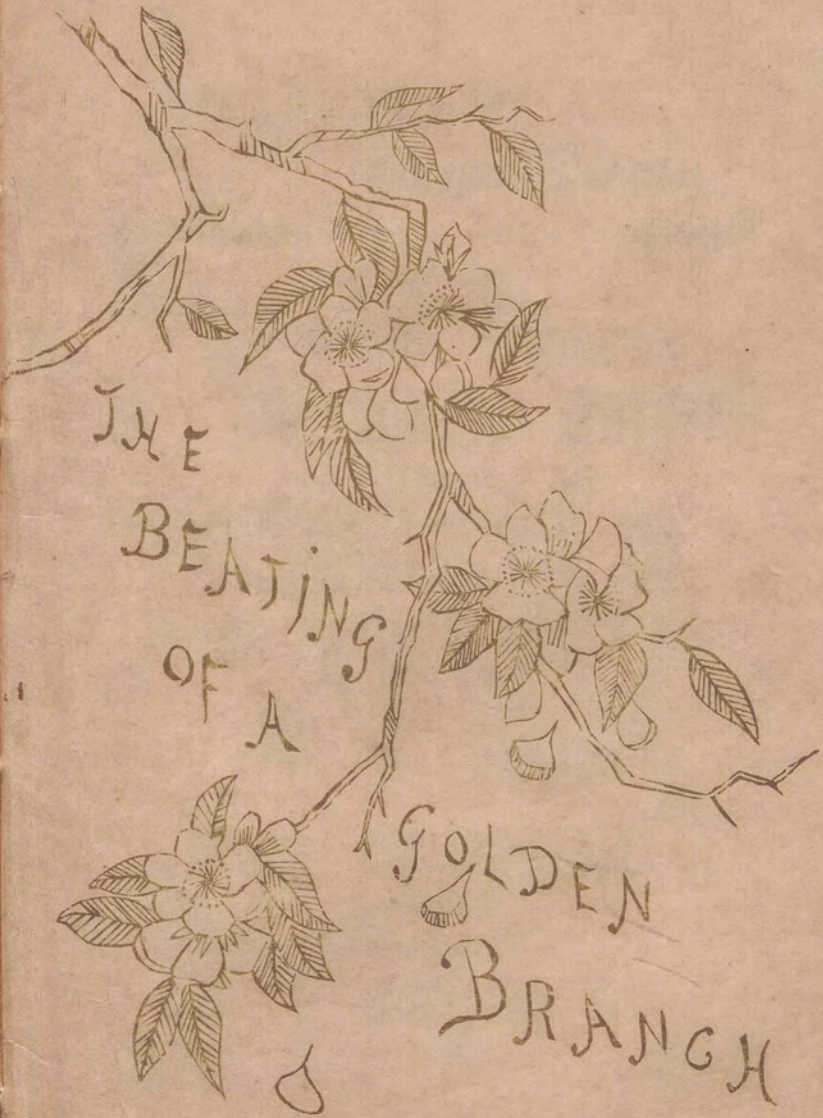
BREWITT-TAYLOR



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THE
BEATING
OF A
GOLDEN
BRANCH

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“THE BEATING OF A
GOLDEN BRANCH,”

A CHINESE DRAMA OF THE T'ANG DYNASTY
PERFORMED BEFORE

THE GRAND SECRETARY

LI, VICEROY OF CHIN-LI,

&C., &C., &C.

AT THE BANQUET IN HONOUR OF HIS

SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY

IN THE “GORDON HALL,” TIENTSIN.

11TH FEBRUARY, 1892.

DONE INTO ENGLISH

BY

C. H. BREWITT-TAYLOR,
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TIENTSIN:
THE TIENTSIN PRESS.
MDCCCXCII.

"THE BEATING OF A GOLDEN BRANCH."

SCENE I.

EMPEROR. (*Outside*). Prepare the chariot.

(*Enter EUNUCHS.*)

EUNUCHS. Attention!

(*HIS MAJESTY enters to slow music*)

EMPEROR. The "Golden Raven" rises in the east, the "Jade Hare" sets. The shining deep-toned bell is calling me to my daily duties. Great calamities happened to the dynasty of T'ang, and troubles fell upon it through Yang *Kuei Fei*. An Lu Shan raised the standard of rebellion in the east while warlike men besieging Ch'ang An threatened the Imperial power. Poor Yang Yü-Huan fell a victim, and I myself was a prisoner at Hsi Shu. Much I owe to him whom I style Imperial Brother Kuo; bloody battles and constant alarms were his fate for three long weary years. Again and again he smote the rebels, till now at last reigns peace. Rivers are clear, seas are calm, and the winds breathe righteousness.

EUNUCHS. Attention!

EMPEROR. If the Emperor is wise his days are long in the land.

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(EMPRESS *enters.*)

EMPRESS. I have left my palace to see your Majesty.
May my Lord live for ever!

EMPEROR. Draw near.

EMPRESS. Hail, Eternal One!

EMPEROR. Be seated.

EMPRESS. I thank your Majesty.

EMPEROR. On what errand come you hither?

EMPRESS. Now has Kuo Ai in his anger beaten my
child; my Lord must adjudge it.

EMPEROR. I cannot believe it.

EMPRESS. Your Majesty scarce believes it; then cause
the Princess to attend and question her. Thus the truth will
appear.

EMPEROR. Command the Princess to attend.

(*Attendant EUNUCHS pass on the command.*)

PRINCESS. I have heard the Imperial command.

(*Four MAIDS OF HONOUR lead in the PRINCESS; they sing:—*)

Tearful and sadly behold whom we bring,
To the dread throne of her father the King.
As forward we lead her before him to kneel,
Slowly the pearly tears down her cheeks steal.

EMPEROR. I see the tears of anguish, the torn head-
dress and marks of woe. Tell me, my daughter, whence comes
this; tell me the cause of grief.

PRINCESS. Father-King and Mother-Queen, let me speak
I pray you, and I will show you all. This is my husband's
doing, ruffian that he is. After a riotous feast he returned
to the palace drunken, and for no cause he beat me. No
question did he ask but struck me foul blows with clenched
hand and gave me many a kick. He said my father's lands
and all his wide possessions were due to him, due to his

wounds and labours. Harshly he spoke to me and put me to open shame, casting me aside for some new favourite he has found. Can I suffer this in silence, I, the daughter of a King? O my father and my mother, take counsel and decide whether he or I am in fault.

EMPRESS. Your Majesty sits in state, and I in all humility wish a myriad years of joy. Kuo Ai has acted like a villain, and he surely is guilty of a great crime. In a drunken fit to beat our daughter! If he is not in fault I lose my faith hence forward in my Lord.

EMPEROR. Wife, 'tis not your place to teach me my duty, nor need our daughter weep so bitterly. Kuo Ai has surely sinned against Ourselves. I will look to it, and meanwhile you may return to your palace. Depart.

EMPRESS. If he is not put to death I lose faith in my Lord.

PRINCESS. I thank my father that he has heard my prayer; I go to await the revealing of the Imperial mind.

(Exeunt.)

SCENE II.

EMPEROR. Eunuchs, convey Our will, and quick command the presence here of Kuo Tzu-I, Prince of Fêng Yang.

EUNUCHS. His Majesty commands Kuo Tzu-I to attend.

KUO TZU-I. (*outside*) I hear.

KUO TZU-I. The Prince of Fêng Yang has bound his rebellious son to teach him propriety.

(*Enter KUO TZU-I and KUO AI, his son, bound*)

TZU-I. Harshly must I speak to you my son for your failure in decorum. O ungrateful boy! An Lu-Shan raised the standard of rebellion in Ho Tung, and His Majesty, on T'ai Po's recommendation, sent me thither. Three years I fought, three years of bloody strife and constant watchfulness. At last my trusty sword fell on their necks; rebellion checked, I was created Prince, and you were mated with my master's daughter. And this is the end! In a drunken fit you return home and beat your wife, a scion of the Royal stock. Alas! how soon your head must fall at the palace gate and mine be bowed with sorrow.

KUO AI. Father, do not thus reproach me; let me explain. It was your birthday, and I, impelled by love and duty, ought to bow before you. All the household came pair by pair and only I alone. In the depths of her palace sat my wife, in her pride holding my father and mother as nought. True, my wife is a jade leaf with golden stem, but my anger arose, and I beat her; now you know the truth. If His Majesty finds me in fault, then she may rejoice in a new spouse, and one, perhaps, more to her mind.

TZU-I. Truly the lad speaks well. My boy, tell His Majesty 'twas but a drunken fit in which you acted rashly.

You may pass through the pool of mercy. But I see the chariot of my Liege. May Your Majesty live for ever!

EMPEROR. A wondrous light is seen in the palace gates; my brother Kuo Tzu-I is here. Yesterday was your birthday. I did not come to felicitate you in person, yet did I send a royal feast. My land and all I have I owe to you. Hereafter do not perform obeisance at your entrance; the eunuchs are commanded to conduct you in; come, sit by me and let us talk.

AI. How painful are these bonds!

EMPEROR. There sits bound a subject's son; I pray you tell me why.

TZU-I. The bound one is my worthless son, guilty, alas! of treason. Your Majesty will speak but a word and he will be led to death.

EMPEROR. Gently. Worthy brother, you are too hasty. He is but a youth and the Princess scarce a bride. Of old they said the trusty servant knows nought of his home affairs, of the unceasing quarrels of his women folk. I am slow to impute wrong to you. Loose his bonds, lead him away, and dress him in court costume.

AI. I thank the Eternal One.

TZU-I. The Most Correct speaks his will, and both my son and I rejoice. May Your Majesty live for ever!

EMPEROR. Come, sit by me.

TZU-I. I thank Your Majesty.

EMPEROR. Knew you of this quarrel?

TZU-I. I did; a servant came and told me all.

EMPEROR. Bring in Kuo Ai.

EUNUCHS. We hear. Bring in the noble one.

AI. I hear. A thousand waves rolled over me, buried was I in the deep. I thank the Eternal One for sparing my life.

EMPEROR. Advance. You and Our daughter quarrelled. Why was that?

AI. I will explain.

EMPEROR. Speak on.

AI. Your servant has heard that Yao and Shun by filial duty reduced the world to order, Chieh and Chow by arrogance lost their crowns. I, by Your Majesty's favour, received a Princess to wife, and am son-in-law to the Eternal One. More than life I owe. But since my wedding the "red lamp,"^o has often hung at the palace gate, and only by permission could I enter; only after much ceremony was I allowed to embrace my bride.

TZU-I. Surely you speak too freely!

EMPEROR. The Princess has been in fault. Hear now my commands. No longer shall the red lamp be displayed, and you are free to come and go at will. Speak on.

AI. Yesterday was the birthday of my parents, eighty years old were they. All the court officials came in crowds to offer their felicitations. Only I, of all my family, came alone with the painful thought that my wife, the Princess, remained in her palace forgetful of my father and mother.

TZU-I. The Princess should not come to visit a simple subject.

AI. The Heir to the Dragon Throne, he who awaits the day in the east palace, came to bow.

TZU-I. That was—

EMPEROR. I hear and understand. Yesterday, on your birthday, the Princess did not appear; that is an offence.

AI. O most noble and omniscient!

EMPEROR. My brother.

TZU-I. Your servant hears.

EMPEROR. I hear the words of your son, and he is in the right. He has told me all, and my heart is glad that he knows

* A signal that Kuo Ai was not to enter the palace.

the three-fold duty and the five-fold virtue. The extremest happiness of a faithful minister is to gain the approval of his lord, every blessing is his and every joy. Yesterday this saying was exemplified in you: to rejoice your age came seven sons and eight daughters, sons with wives and daughters with husbands. I do not wonder that your son's heart was sad when he alone was unable to lead in his wife. Brother, return to your palace, your son and the Princess shall settle the rest.

TZU-I. I thank the Eternal One. The noble and omniscient Prince has declared his mind and I am sent away rejoicing. Great is his kindness! May Heaven grant happiness! (*Exit.*)

EMPEROR. Kuo Ai, come near and hear my commands, for sweet it is to find a faithful minister and a dutiful son. Every great and good man is a defence to the throne. Your father in many a bloody battle proved his loyalty, and from of old the King has ever rewarded faith. I make you a Prince as well as your father; truly when one man is good all the world is bettered. You are now my son, husband of my daughter, and I will not question any shortcomings. You may have returned home not quite yourself, but that is a venial offence in youth. Hereafter let there be a little more forbearance and let not your petty squabbles reach my ears. I confer on you the deep red python dress, a satin cap, a jewelled belt, and all that befits your rank. This royal sword I give you with which to slay my enemies, and with it the right to use it according to your own judgment. Now return to your palace. I adjudge the Princess in fault, and she shall proceed to Fêng Yang to ask her pardon.

AI. I thank the Eternal One. I feel glad at heart and my joy overflows. My fault is not even mentioned, and I have received royal gifts. (*Exit.*)

EMPEROR. Eunuchs, command the Princess to attend.

EUNUCHS. We hear. The Princess is to attend.

(PRINCESS *enters.*)

PRINCESS. Little did I think my husband would thus be treated when my Imperial father began to enquire into our quarrel.

EMPEROR. You did not go to see your parents on their birthday, thereby you went aside from perfect virtue's way. Here I give you Imperial presents which you will convey to your father-in-law. Retire.

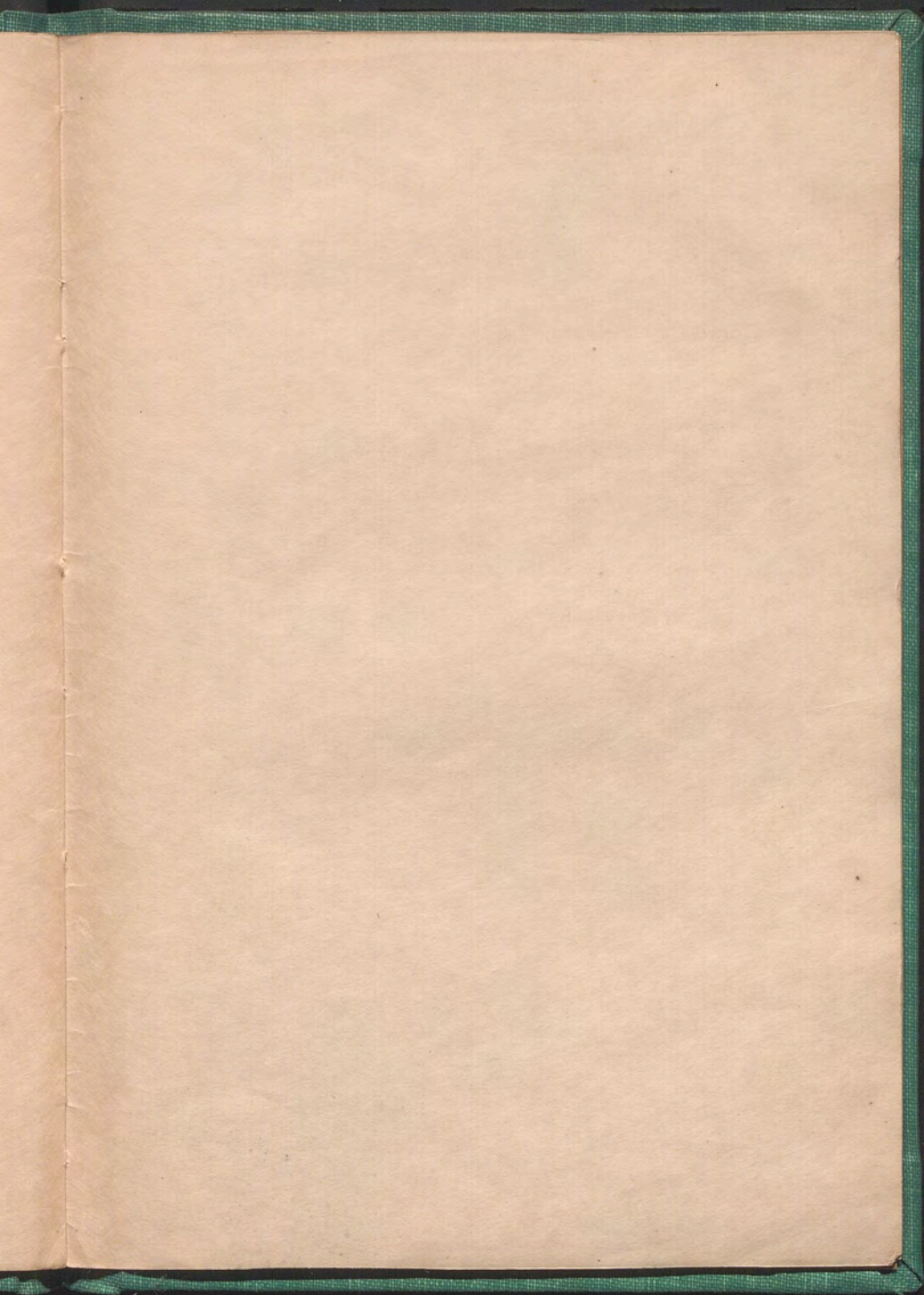
PRINCESS. My father gives me his commands, though sore against my heart I must obey. My husband is not even reprimanded. Slaves, prepare my chariot to proceed to the Kuo Palace. Alas! without an Imperial command I can return hither no more. (*Exit.*)

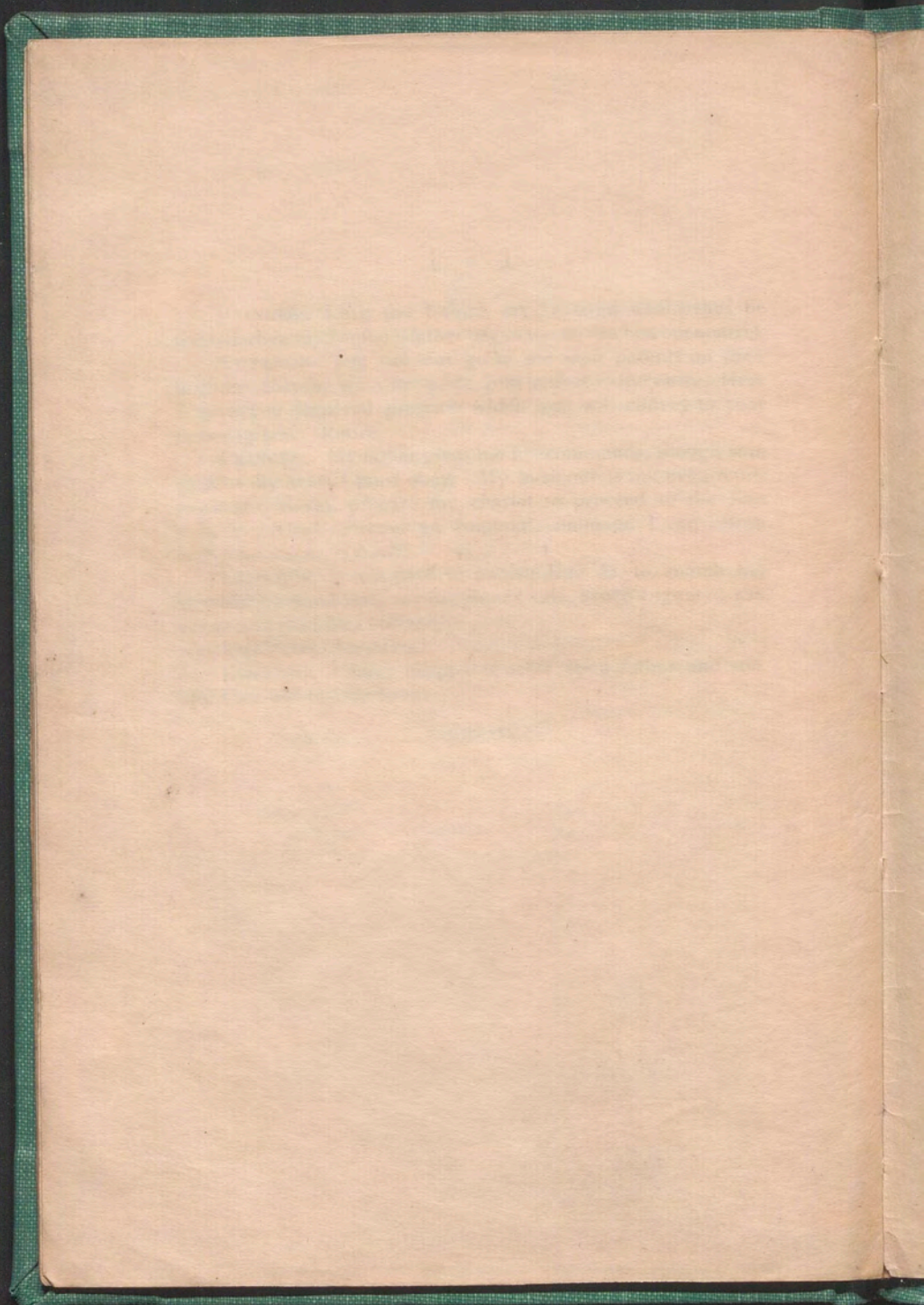
EMPEROR. It was hard to punish Kuo Ai, to snatch her youthful husband from my daughter's side, hence I ignored the crime and paid him honour.

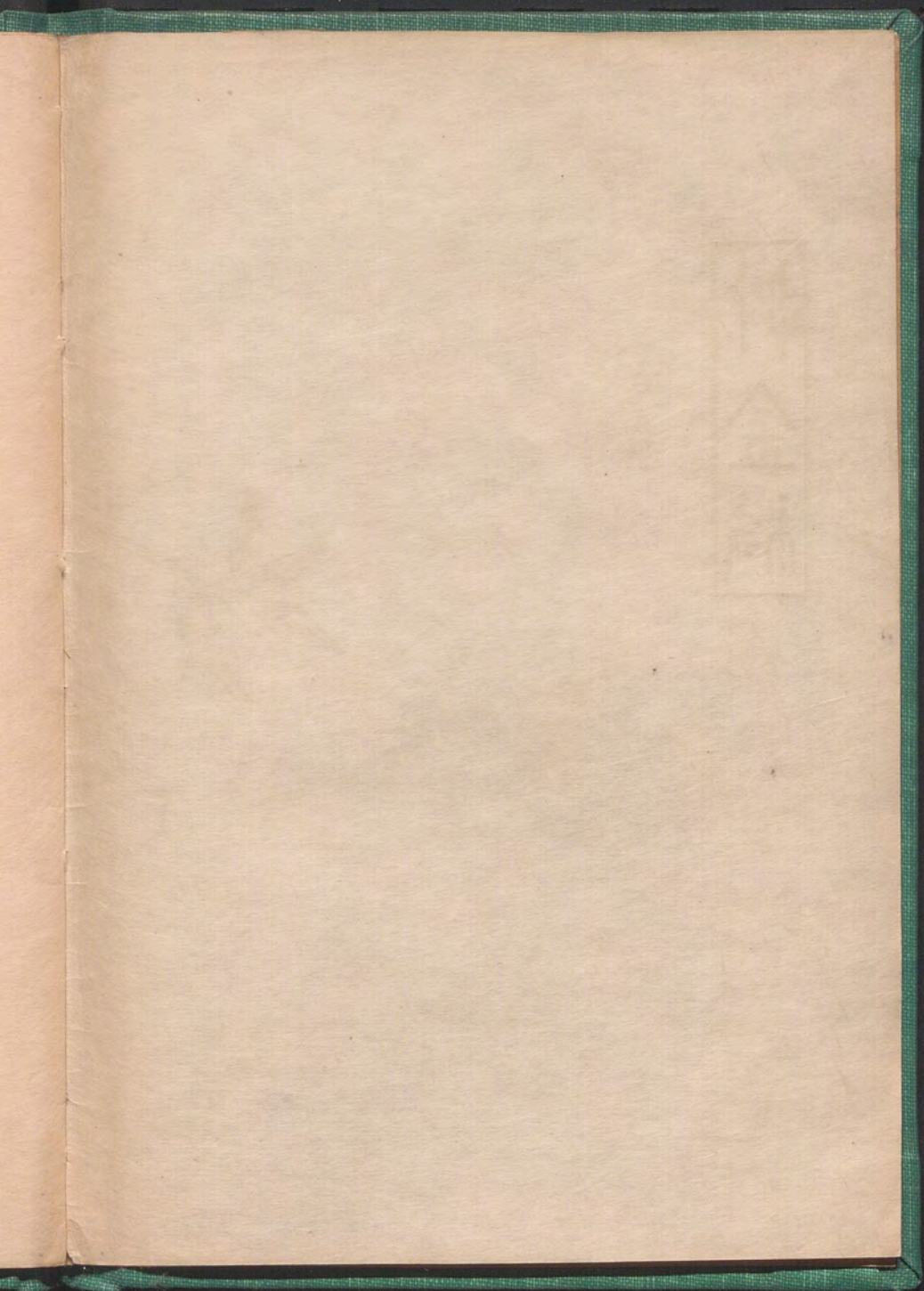
EUNUCHS. Attention!

EMPEROR. I have heaped benefits upon father and son, and they will be true to me.

CURTAIN.

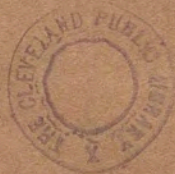


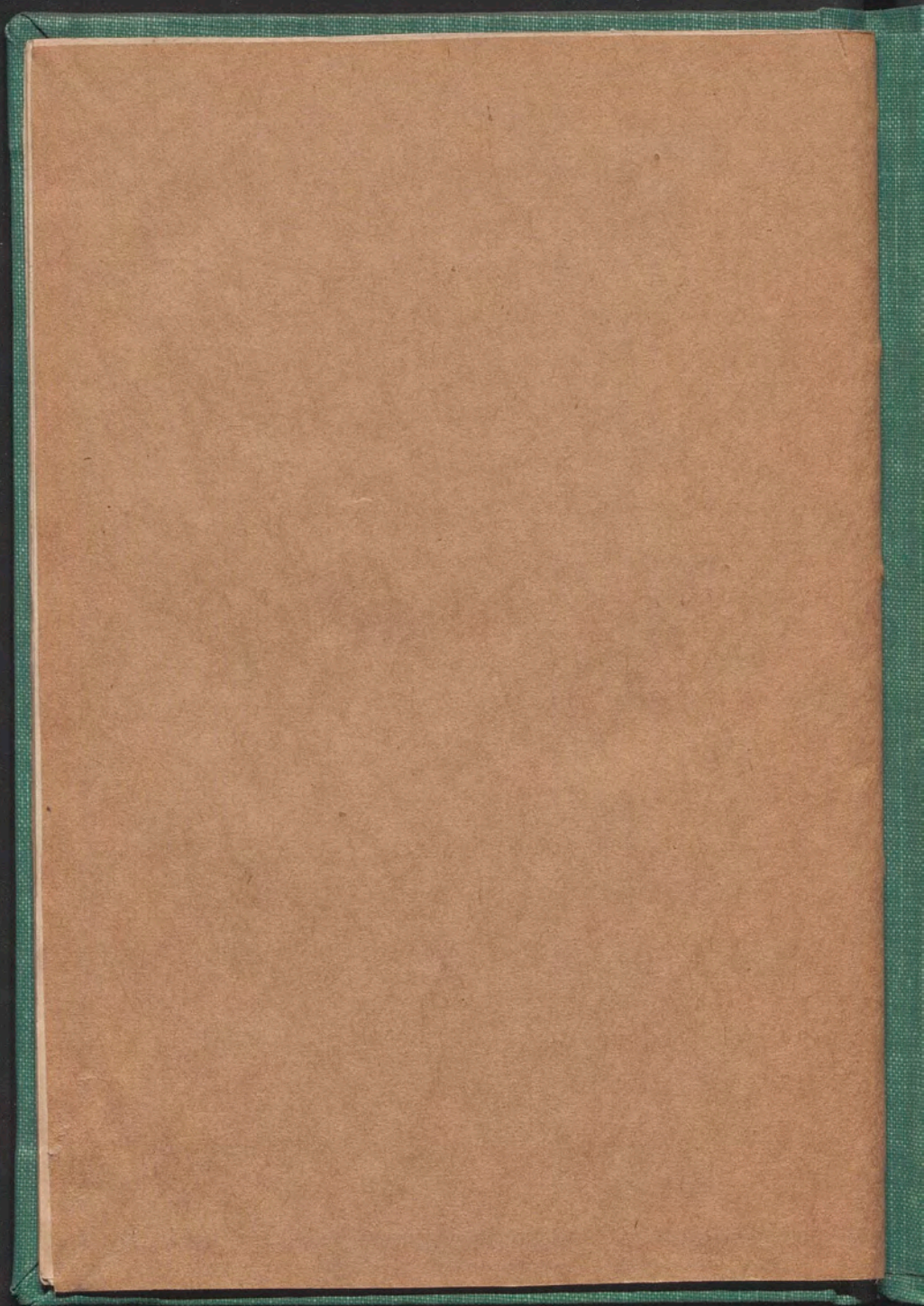




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