

# **JATAKA TALES**



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**RE-TOLD BY**

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**With illustrations by**

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**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS**

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**Dedicated**

to

**DOT**



## FOREWORD

LONG ago I was captivated by the charm of the Jataka Tales and realized the excellent use that might be made of them in the teaching of children. The obvious lessons are many of them suitable for little people, and beneath the obvious there are depths and depths of meaning which they may learn to fathom later on. The Oriental setting lends an additional fascination. I am glad that Miss Babbitt has undertaken to put together this collection, and commend it freely to teachers and parents.

FELIX ADLER.



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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Jatakas, or Birth-stories, form one of the sacred books of the Buddhists and relate to the adventures of the Buddha in his former existences, the best character in any story being identified with the Master.

These legends were continually introduced into the religious discourses of the Buddhist teachers to illustrate the doctrines of their faith or to magnify the glory and sanctity of the Buddha, somewhat as medieval preachers in Europe used to enliven their sermons by introducing fables and popular tales to rouse the flagging interest of their hearers.

Sculptured scenes from the Jatakas, found upon the carved railings around the relic shrines of Sanchi and Amaravati and of Bharhut, indicate that the "Birth-stories" were widely known in the third century B.C., and were then considered as part of the sacred history of the religion. At first the tales were probably handed down orally, and it is uncertain when they were put together in systematic form.

While some of the stories are Buddhistic and depend for their point on some custom or idea peculiar to Buddhism, many are age-old fables, the flotsam and jetsam of folk-lore, which have appeared under various guises throughout the centuries, as when they were used by Boccaccio or Poggio, merely

as merry tales, or by Chaucer, who unwittingly puts a Jataka story into the mouth of his pardoners when he tells the tale of “the Ryotoures three.”

Quaint humor and gentle earnestness distinguish these legends and they teach many wholesome lessons, among them the duty of kindness to animals.

Dr. Felix Adler in his “Moral Instruction of Children,” says:

The Jataka Tales contain deep truths, and are calculated to impress lessons of great moral beauty. The tale of the Merchant of Seri, who gave up all that he had in exchange for a golden dish, embodies much the same idea as the parable of the priceless Pearl, in the New Testament. The tale of the Measures of Rice illustrates the importance of a true estimate of values. The tale of the Banyan Deer, which offered its life to save a roe and her young, illustrates self-sacrifice of the noblest sort. The tale of the Sandy Road is one of the finest in the collection.

And he adds that these tales “are, as everyone must admit, nobly conceived, lofty in meaning, and many a helpful sermon might be preached from them as texts.”





# THE MONKEY AND THE CROCODILE

## I

A MONKEY lived in a great tree on a river bank.

In the river there were many Crocodiles. A Crocodile watched the Monkeys for a long time, and one day she said to her son: “My son, get one of those Monkeys for me. I want the heart of a Monkey to eat.”

“How am I to catch a Monkey?” asked the little Crocodile. “I do not travel on land, and the Monkey does not go into the water.”

“Put your wits to work, and you’ll find a way,” said the mother.

And the little Crocodile thought and thought.

At last he said to himself: “I know what I’ll do. I’ll get that Monkey that lives in a big tree on the river bank. He wishes to go across the river to the island where the fruit is so ripe.”

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So the Crocodile swam to the tree where the Monkey lived. But he was a stupid Crocodile.

“Oh, Monkey,” he called, “come with me over to the island where the fruit is so ripe.”

“How can I go with you?” asked the Monkey. “I do not swim.”

“No—but I do. I will take you over on my back,” said the Crocodile.

The Monkey was greedy, and wanted the ripe fruit, so he jumped down on the Crocodile’s back.

“Off we go!” said the Crocodile.

“This is a fine ride you are giving me!” said the Monkey.

“Do you think so? Well, how do you like this?” asked the Crocodile, diving.

“Oh, don’t!” cried the Monkey, as he went under the water. He was afraid to let go, and he did not know what to do under the water.

When the Crocodile came up, the Monkey sputtered and choked. “Why did you take me under water, Crocodile?” he asked.

“I am going to kill you by keeping you under water,” answered the Crocodile. “My mother wants Monkey-heart to eat, and I’m going to take yours to her.”

“I wish you had told me you wanted my heart,” said the Monkey, “then I might have brought it with me.”

## THE MONKEY AND THE CROCODILE

“How queer!” said the stupid Crocodile. “Do you mean to say that you left your heart back there in the tree?”

“That is what I mean,” said the Monkey. “If you want my heart, we must go back to the tree and get it. But we are so near the island where the ripe fruit is, please take me there first.”



“WHY DID YOU TAKE ME UNDER WATER, CROCODILE?”

“No, Monkey,” said the Crocodile, “I’ll take you straight back to your tree. Never mind the ripe fruit. Get your heart and bring it to me at once. Then we’ll see about going to the island.”

“Very well,” said the Monkey.

But no sooner had he jumped onto the bank of the river than—whisk! up he ran into the tree.

From the topmost branches he called down to the Crocodile in the water below:

“My heart is way up here! If you want it, come for it, come for it!”

II

THE Monkey soon moved away from that tree.

He wanted to get away from the Crocodile, so that he might live in peace.

But the Crocodile found him, far down the river, living in another tree.

In the middle of the river was an island covered with fruit-trees.

Half-way between the bank of the river and the island, a large rock rose out of the water. The Monkey could jump to the rock, and then to the island. The Crocodile watched the Monkey crossing from the bank of the river to the rock, and then to the island.

He thought to himself, "The Monkey will stay on the island all day, and I'll catch him on his way home at night."

The Monkey had a fine feast, while the Crocodile swam about, watching him all day.

Toward night the Crocodile crawled out of the water and lay on the rock, perfectly still.

When it grew dark among the trees, the Monkey started for home. He ran down to the river bank, and there he stopped.

## *THE MONKEY AND THE CROCODILE*

“What is the matter with the rock?” the Monkey thought to himself. “I never saw it so high before. The Crocodile is lying on it!”

But he went to the edge of the water and called: “Hello, Rock!”

No answer.

Then he called again: “Hello, Rock!”

Three times the Monkey called, and then he said: “Why is it, Friend Rock, that you do not answer me to-night?”

“Oh,” said the stupid Crocodile to himself, “the rock answers the Monkey at night. I’ll have to answer for the rock this time.”

So he answered: “Yes, Monkey! What is it?”

The Monkey laughed, and said: “Oh, it’s you, Crocodile, is it?”

“Yes,” said the Crocodile. “I am waiting here for you. I am going to eat you.”

“You have caught me in a trap this time,” said the Monkey. “There is no other way for me to go home. Open your mouth wide so I can jump right into it.”

Now the Monkey well knew that when Crocodiles open their mouths wide, they shut their eyes.

While the Crocodile lay on the rock with his mouth wide open and his eyes shut, the Monkey jumped.

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But not into his mouth! Oh, no! He landed on the top of the Crocodile's head, and then sprang quickly to the bank. Up he whisked into his tree.

When the Crocodile saw the trick the Monkey had played on him, he said: "Monkey, you have great cunning. You know no fear. I'll let you alone after this."

"Thank you, Crocodile, but I shall be on the watch for you just the same," said the Monkey.



THE MONKEY JUMPED

## HOW THE TURTLE SAVED HIS OWN LIFE

A KING once had a lake made in the courtyard for the young princes to play in. They swam about in it, and sailed their boats and rafts on it. One day the king told them he had asked the men to put some fishes into the lake.

Off the boys ran to see the fishes. Now, along with the fishes, there was a Turtle. The boys were delighted with the fishes, but they had never seen a Turtle, and they were afraid of it, thinking it was a demon. They ran back to their father, crying, "There is a demon on the bank of the lake."

The king ordered his men to catch the demon, and to bring it to the palace. When the Turtle was brought in, the boys cried and ran away.

The king was very fond of his sons, so he ordered the men who had brought the Turtle to kill it.

"How shall we kill it?" they asked.

"Pound it to powder," said some one. "Bake it in hot coals," said another.

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So one plan after another was spoken of. Then an old man who had always been afraid of the water said: "Throw the thing into the lake where it flows out over the rocks into the river. Then it will surely be killed."



"THROW THE THING INTO THE LAKE."

When the Turtle heard what the old man said, he thrust out his head and asked: "Friend, what have I done that you should do such a dreadful thing as that to me? The other plans were bad enough, but to throw me into the lake! Don't speak of such a cruel thing!"

When the king heard what the Turtle said, he told his men to take the Turtle at once and throw it into the lake.

The Turtle laughed to himself as he slid away down the river to his old home. "Good!" he said,

*HOW THE TURTLE SAVED HIS OWN LIFE*

“those people do not know how safe I am in the water!”