

**THE BOOK OF NOODLES:  
STORIES OF  
SIMPLETONS; OR,  
FOOLS AND THEIR FOLLIES**

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The book of noodles: stories of simpletons; or, Fools and their follies by W. A. Clouston

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**W. A. CLOUSTON**

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**The Book-Lover's Library.**

Edited by

**Henry B. Wheatley, F.S.A.**

THE  
BOOK OF NOODLES:

*STORIES OF SIMPLETONS; OR,  
FOOLS AND THEIR FOLLIES.*

BY

W. A. CLOUSTON,

*Author of "Popular Tales and Fictions: their Migrations and  
Transformations."*

"Excellent! Why, this is the best fooling when all  
is done."—*Twelfth Night*.

POPULAR EDITION.

LONDON

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1903.

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TO MY DEAR FRIEND

DAVID ROSS, LL.D., M.A., B.Sc.,

PRINCIPAL OF THE  
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND TRAINING COLLEGE,  
GLASGOW,

THIS COLLECTION OF FACETÆ

IS DEDICATED.





## P R E F A C E.

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**L**IKE popular tales in general, the original sources of stories of simpletons are for the most part not traceable. The old Greek jests of this class had doubtless been floating about among different peoples long before they were reduced to writing. The only tales and apologues of noodles or stupid folk to which an approximate date can be assigned are those found in the early Buddhist books, especially in the "Jātakas," or Birth-stories, which are said to have been related to his disciples by Gautama, the illustrious founder of Buddhism, as incidents which occurred to himself and others in former births, and were afterwards put into a literary form by his followers. Many

*of the "Jātakas" relate to silly men and women, and also to stupid animals, the latter being, of course, men re-born as beasts, birds, or reptiles. But it is not to be supposed that all are of Buddhist invention; some had doubtless been current for ages among the Hindūs before Gautama promulgated his mild doctrines. Scholars are, however, agreed that these fictions date at latest from a century prior to the Christian era.*

*Of European noodle-stories, as of other folk-tales, it may be said that, while they are numerous, yet the elements of which they are composed are comparatively very few. The versions domiciled in different countries exhibit little originality, farther than occasional modifications in accordance with local manners and customs. Thus for the stupid Brāhman of Indian stories the blundering, silly son is often substituted in European variants; for the brose in Norse and Highland tales we find polenta or macaroni in Italian and Sicilian versions. The identity of*

*incidents in the noodle-stories of Europe with those in what are for us their oldest forms, the Buddhist and Indian books, is very remarkable, particularly so in the case of Norse popular fictions, which, there is every reason to believe, were largely introduced through the Mongolians; and the similarity of Italian and West Highland stories to those of Iceland and Norway would seem to indicate the influence of the Norsemen in the Western Islands of Scotland and in the south of Europe.*

*It were utterly futile to attempt to trace the literary history of most of the noodle-stories which appear to have been current throughout European countries for many generations, since they have practically none. Soon after the invention of printing collections of *facetiae* were rapidly multiplied, the compilers taking their material from oral as well as written sources, amongst others, from mediæval collections of "*exempla*" designed for the use of preachers and the writings*