



The Questions of King Milinda

T. W. Rhys Davids

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I HAVE first to notice a few points as to the history of the Milinda book which have either come to light since the former Introduction was written, or which I then omitted to notice. Mr. Bunyiu Nanjo in his Catalogue of Chinese Buddhist Books¹ mentions a Chinese book called Nâ-sien Pikhiu Kin (that is 'The Book of the Bhikshu Nâgasena' Sûtra)². I have been so fortunate as to receive detailed information about this book both from Dr. Serge d'Oldenbourg in St. Petersburg and from M. Sylvain Lévi in Paris. Professor Serge d'Oldenbourg forwarded to me, in the spring of 1892, a translation into English (which he himself had been kind enough to make) from a translation into Russian by Mr. Ivanovsky, of the Chinese Introduction, and of various episodes in the Chinese which seemed to differ from the Pâli. This very valuable aid to the interpretation of the Milinda, which the unselfish courtesy of these two Russian scholars intended thus to place at my disposal, was most unfortunately lost in the post; and I have only been able to gather from a personal interview with Professor d'Oldenbourg that the Introduction was a sort of Gâtaka story in which the Buddha appeared as a white elephant³. By a curious coincidence this regrettable loss has been since made good by the work of two French scholars. Mons. Sylvain Lévi forwarded to the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists, held in London in the autumn of 1892, a careful study on the subject by M. Edouard Specht, preceded by an introductory essay by himself.



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