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TALES

OF OLDEN TIMES,

BY

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PREFACE.

There are many historical tales, often related to children, which are unfitted for them by the terrifying or revolting incidents recorded. In the following pages it has been a main object carefully to exclude narratives of that description.

These tales will probably be found within the comprehension of any child from seven to ten years old ; and as they are not intended to serve any purpose of direct instruction, it has been thought well occasionally to draw upon the imagination for some of the details. All important points, however, are faithful to the authority of history or tradition.

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THE PURSE OF GOLD.

A COUNCIL meeting of great men was held one day in the City of Florence, a town which belongs to the King of Italy now, though in former times the citizens managed all their own affairs and took care of themselves. The men of Florence had been at war with those of another city, from whom they had won a great castle among other things; and now they had come together to decide what they should do with their new possession. Some said "keep it," and others "pull it down," and every one gave good reason for what he thought best. At last they made up their minds to pull it down, thinking it would be very troublesome to hold; for they would have been obliged always to keep soldiers there, and it was a long way from the city, and if it were ever taken from them, it might be used to do them harm, as it had been

before. When this was agreed to, they all broke up and went home.

There had been one man among them whose name was Aldobrandino, and though he was poor and did not live in a splendid house like some of the others, they thought very highly of his wisdom, and often followed his advice.

The day after that meeting, a strange man came to Aldobrandino's house, and asked to speak with him. He had wrapped himself in a great cloak and pulled his hat over his eyes, as people used to do when they did not want to be known. Aldobrandino did not know him even when he threw his mantle and hat off, and rather wondered what he wanted. The stranger said that he came from Pisa, which was the name of the city against which the Florentines had been fighting.

"And what can any Pisan want with me?" asked the Florentine more surprised than ever.

"I come only" answered the man, "to offer you advice which, if you follow it, will profit both you and your State, and do injury to no one. There is some doubt among you as to what should be done with the castle of Mutrone, which the chances of war have given you."

"If there were" said Aldobrandino, "would it be wise for us to take advice from a Pisan as to what we should do?"

"Yes, if the advice were good, and of that you may judge. I only bring you counsel which will be for the advantage of your city."