

To earth they sprang, their swords they drew
And lifted high their shields, and flew
To win the narrow pass.

But the scorn and laughter of the Etruscans were soon changed to wrath and curses, for their chiefs were quickly laid low in the dust at the feet of the "dauntless three."

But now no sound of laughter
Was heard among the foes.
A wild and wrathful clamour
From all the vanguard rose.
Six spears' length from the entrance
Halted that mighty mass,
And for a space no man came forth
To win the narrow pass.

But hark! the cry is "Astur!"
And lo! the ranks divide,
And the great lord of Luna
Comes with his stately stride.
Upon his ample shoulders
Clangs loud the fourfold shield,
And in his hand he shakes the brand
Which none but he can wield.

The proud Astur advances with a smile of contempt for the three Romans, and turns a look of scorn upon the flinching Tuscans.

Then, whirling up his broadsword
With both hands to the height,
He rushed against Horatius,
And smote with all his might.
With shield and blade Horatius
Right deftly turned the blow.
The blow, though turned, came yet too nigh;
It missed his helm, but gashed his thigh:
The Tuscans raised a joyful cry
To see the red blood flow.