

HORATIUS.

A LAY MADE ABOUT THE YEAR OF THE CITY CCCLX.

According to legend, Tarquinius Superbus, or Tarquin the Proud, the last of the early kings of Rome, was driven out of the city, partly on account of his own tyranny, and partly because of the misdeeds of his son Sextus Tarquin. The immediate cause of the expulsion of the Tarquins was "the deed of shame," committed by Sextus against Lucretia, the wife of one of the Roman governors. After two unsuccessful attempts to regain the throne, Tarquinius Superbus sought the aid of the Etruscans and Latins, and under the leadership of Lars Porsena, the head of the Etruscan League, the combined forces marched upon Rome. It was then that the incident recorded in the story of *Horatius* is supposed to have taken place. After the defence of the bridge by Horatius, Lars Porsena laid siege to the city and at last reduced it to submission. He did not, however, insist upon the reinstatement of the Tarquins. A fourth and last attempt was made by Tarquin the Proud to regain the throne, by the aid of his Latin allies, under Mamilius of Tusculum. The story of this expedition forms the subject of *The Battle of Lake Regillus*.

I

LARS¹ PORSENA of Clusium²

By the Nine Gods³ he swore
That the great house of Tarquin
Should suffer wrong no more.
By the Nine Gods he swore it,
And named a trysting day,⁴
And bade his messengers ride forth,
East and west and south and north,
To summon his array.

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II

East and west and south and north
The messengers ride fast,
And tower and town and cottage
Have heard the trumpet's blast.
Shame on the false Etruscan
Who lingers in his home,
When Forsena of Clusium
Is on the march to Rome.

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¹ Lars. Lord or Chieftain. ² Clusium. The modern Chiusi.

³ Nine Gods. The chief Gods of the Etruscans were nine in number.

⁴ trysting day. A day appointed for meeting.