

XV

And droves of mules and asses
 Laden with skins of wine, 115
 And endless flocks of goats and sheep,
 And endless herds of kine,
 And endless trains of wagons
 That creaked beneath the weight
 Of corn-sacks and of household goods, 120
 Choked every roaring gate.

XVI

Now, from the rock Tarpeian,²³
 Could the wan burghers spy
 The line of blazing villages
 Red in the midnight sky. 125
 The Fathers²⁴ of the City,
 They sat all night and day,
 For every hour some horseman came
 With tidings of dismay.

XVII

To eastward and to westward 130
 Have spread the Tuscan bands ;
 Nor house nor fence nor dovecote
 In Crustumerium²⁵ stands.
 Verbenna down to Ostia²⁶
 Hath wasted all the plain ; 135
 Astur hath stormed Janiculum,²⁷
 And the stout guards are slain.

²³ Tarpeian. The Tarpeian Rock was a cliff on one side of the Capitoline Hill in Rome. Tarpeia, from whom the cliff took its name, was the daughter of Tarpeius, the governor of the citadel on this hill. She betrayed the fortress to the Sabines, but as they entered they threw their shields upon her and she was crushed to death.

²⁴ Fathers of the City. The senators.

²⁵ Crust. -ium. A Latin city a few miles from Rome.

²⁶ Ostia. A city at the mouth of the Tiber, fifteen miles from Rome.

²⁷ Janiculum. A hill on the right bank of the Tiber.