

P. S. Leaving Literature.

HORATIUS.

LESSON LI.

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Thomas Babington Macaulay was born in the village of Rothley, Leicestershire, October 25th, 1800, and died in Kensington, London, December 28th, 1859. He was the son of Zachary Macaulay, a West Indian merchant, and a noted philanthropist. His university career at Trinity College, Cambridge, was a brilliant one. He gained the Chancellor's medal in 1819 for a poem on "Pompeii," the same prize in 1820 for a poem on "Evening." After graduation he was chosen a fellow of his college. The legal profession was his choice, and he took a very active and important part in politics; was a clever debater and a powerful public speaker. Entering parliament in 1830, he took a foremost part in the great reform debates of that time. In 1834 he went to India as a member of the Supreme Council, of which he was the legal adviser. His special work in this case was the preparation of a new Indian code, which was intended to increase the civil rights of the Indian population. This, however, met with so much opposition from the English in India that it proved a failure. Returning to England in 1838, he was again elected to parliament from Edinburgh, and held that seat for many years. In 1857 he was created a peer of England, with the title Baron Macaulay of Rothley.

In addition to his duties of state he gave much attention to literature. As a writer of English prose he is unsurpassed, if not unequalled, by any of the writers of this century. Besides many fine essays on numerous topics, his "History of England" has gained for him a world-wide reputation as an author. As a poet he is of less note, though his ability in that field also is proven by his "Lays of Ancient Rome," from which "Horatius" is taken.

EXPLANATORY.

The year of the city cccx.—that is 360 years after the foundation of the city of Rome, which, according to tradition, was 753 B.C. The legend regarding Horatius has two different versions in different Roman writers. One version makes Horatius defend the bridge alone and perish in the river. Macaulay gives in English verse the story, as told by Livy, the Roman historian. The story came down to later-day Romans in the form of a ballad poem, which is supposed to have been about the year 360, or 120 years after the war which it celebrates, and just before the taking of Rome by the Gauls. "The author," says Macaulay, "seems to have been an honest citizen, proud of the military glory of his country, sick of the disputes of factions, and much given to repining after good old times that had never really existed." Historical researches show that this as well as many other ancient Roman legends have little or no basis in fact. The truth regarding Porsena is rather that he subjugated Rome and compelled its people to do homage to him. Still

the lack of historical basis does not mar the poetical effect, for the poem is valuable as a good reproduction of the style and spirit of the old legendary ballads.

Page 247. *Lars.*—This is a title equivalent to our "lord" or "prince."

Clusium.—A city of what was then called Etruria (If possible consult a map of ancient Italy and locate the places mentioned in this poem.)

Nine Gods.—The Etruscans—the inhabitants of Etruria—recognized nine chief deities.

Tarquain.—This was Tarquinius the Proud, the last of the ancient kings of Rome. He had been expelled from the throne, and had appealed to Porsena for help to regain it.

Trysting day.—A day of meeting.

East and west.—Notice that the words and phrases of these lines suggest the hurry and bustle of the thing described, the repetition of words and clauses, and the connectives *and* and *from* gives this stirring effect.

Page 248.—*Where scowls the far-famed hold.*—Observe the personal metaphor in "scowls," "hold," = stronghold or fortress.

Fringing the southern sky.—Sardinia is not, of course, directly south, rather south-west. Show the force of "fringing."

Massilia's triremes—fair-haired slaves.—"Massilia" is the ancient name of Marseilles, a city on the south coast of France, in those days a great commercial centre. A trireme is a vessel having three banks of oars (*tria*, three; *remus*, an oar). The fair-haired slaves were natives of western Europe, whom Roman writers describe as fair-haired.

Tall are the oaks.—Compare this with "the oaks are tall." Which is preferable? Give reasons for your answer.

Mere.—A poetic word for lake, derived from *mare*, the sea.

The must feet.—The girls were engaged in pressing the juice from the grapes by treading upon them in the vat. New wine is called *must*.

Traced from the right.—Instead of writing from left to right, as we do, some ancient languages were written from the right to left, e.g., Hebrew and Phœnician.

Verses.—This reminds us that all writing in very ancient times was in the form of verse.

Seers of yore.—By consulting the wise sayings and prophecies of the sages of former days the "thirty chosen prophets" professed to have superior wisdom, and were the advisers of the king in matters of war and in other important affairs of state.

Page 249. *Nurscia.*—The Etruscan goddess of fortune.

Sutrium.—A small town in the southern part of Etruria. Not far from Rome. This was the appointed place of meeting.

Tusculan Mamilius.—Tarquin's son-in-law, who lived at Tusculum, a town in Latium, south and east of Rome.

Yellow Tiber.—The water of the Tiber has a yellowish tinge, the result of the yellow clay through which it passes. Trace this river's course.