

## NOTES ON ONTARIO HIGH SCHOOL READERS.

BY THE EDITOR.

**The Defence of the Bridge.**

This is an extract from Macaulay's *Horatius*, one of his *Lays of Ancient Rome*. The selection begins at the twenty-sixth stanza, and omits six stanzas at the end. There are several other omissions.

The *Lays* show Macaulay's skill in narrative poetry. They have the essential characteristics of a ballad, which, says Professor Henry Morley, is "bound only to be bright and lively, with ease in its rhythm, action in every line, and through the whole plan a stirring incident told clearly from one point of view."

John Stuart Mill, comparing the ballads of Scott and Macaulay with the old ballads, says "Scott and Macaulay (do everything) by *repetition* and *accumulation of particulars*." "Where in modern ballad verse," writes E. C. Stedman, "will you find more ringing stanzas, or more impetuous movement and action?"

These criticisms suggest lines of study.

The historic basis of *Horatius* is as follows:

Tarquinius Superbus, the seventh and last king of Rome, was expelled about 510 B. C., for his oppressions and cruelty, and Rome became a Republic. It was governed by a Senate or Council of Elders, and two magistrates, called Consuls, who were elected yearly. According to Roman legends, Lars Porsena, king of the Etruscan town of Clusium (the modern Chiusi), put himself at the head of an army to restore Tarquin to his throne, and was repulsed by Horatius and his comrades. History, however, tells us that Porsena really conquered Rome, and that it is doubtful whether or no his expedition had anything to do with Tarquin, who was never restored.

Macaulay says in his introduction to the poem, "the following ballad is supposed to have been made about a hundred and twenty years after the war which it celebrates, and just before the taking of Rome by the Gauls. The author\* seems to have been an honest citizen, proud of the mil-

itary glory of his country, sick of the disputes of factions, and much given to pining after good old times which had never existed."

The first twenty-five stanzas tell of the gathering of the Etruscan army, the alarm of the Romans, the flocking of the country people into the city for safety, and the decision of the Council to break down the bridge over the Tiber.

The three defenders of the bridge represented the three tribes of Roman patricians, the Luceres, the Ramnes, and the Tities, represented respectively by Horatius, Spurius Lartius and Herminius.

"Straight" (line 21) should be *strait* = narrow. See line 130.

"Then lands were fairly portioned  
Then spoils were fairly sold."

The public lands, acquired by conquest were held almost entirely by patricians, instead of being divided impartially. The spoils won in battle were supposed to be distributed among the citizens, but there were quarrels about unfairness in this matter also.

"And the Tribunes beard the high  
And the Fathers grind the low."

The two magistrates chosen from the commons, or plebeians, to represent them were called tribunes. The fathers were the Elders of the patricians (see Myers' Ancient History, or any history of Rome).

"As we wax hot in faction  
In battle we wax cold."

Does party spirit weaken national strength in our own time?

*Tuscan.* Etruscan. *Ilva*, now Elba, where there were iron mines, worked by slaves.

*Nar.* A tributary of the Tiber, whose waters are very white, owing to the presence of sulphur.

*Hinds.* Peasants. *The she-wolf's litter.* Romulus and Remus, the twin brothers, were in their infancy cast out by their uncle and exposed for death, but were preserved by a she-wolf who nourished them with her cubs. Romulus is the legendary founder and first king of Rome.

*Augurs.* At Rome the Augurs were a community of priests who foretold events by observing the flight of birds and other events in nature. They were always consulted before any important undertaking.

*Lucumo.* A title given to Etruscan nobles.

*Sextus.* The second son of Tarquinius Superbus.

\*By "the author," Macaulay means the speaker in the poem.