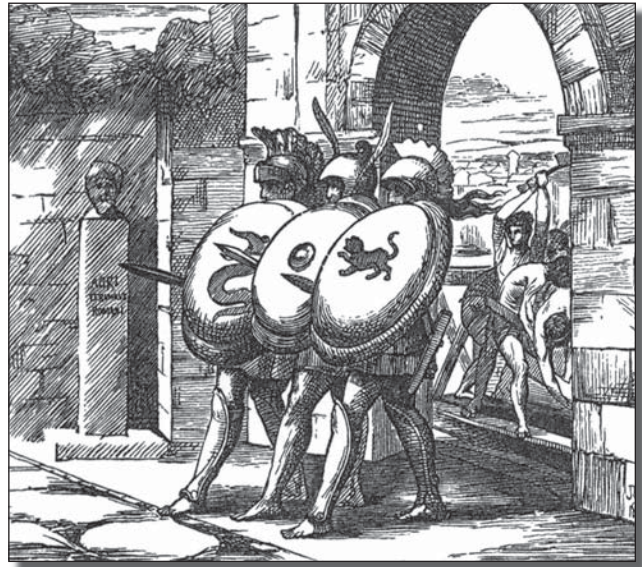


HORATIUS

FOR a time, Rome was ruled by Publius Valerius. He was a good man. He caused laws to be passed for the benefit of the people and was therefore called Publicola, which means the people's friend. He had to fight Tarquin frequently. The banished king was constantly trying to capture Rome and get back his throne. Tarquin received help from various nations and fought very hard, but was never successful in his efforts. At one time he was aided by Lars Porsena, king of Clusium, which was a city of Etruria. Lars gathered a large army and set out to attack Rome.

But Porsena could not enter the city without crossing the Tiber, and there was only one bridge. This was called the Sublician Bridge. It was so called from the Latin word *sublicæ*, which means wooden pilings. When the Romans saw the great army of Etruscans in the distance, they were much alarmed. They were not prepared to fight so powerful a force. The consul thought for a while, and then he resolved to cut down the bridge as the only means of saving Rome. So a number of men were at once set to work with axes and hammers.

It was hard work, for the bridge was very strongly built. Before the beams supporting it were all cut away, the army of Porsena was seen approaching the river. What was to be done? It would take a few minutes



Horatius, Lartius and Herminius.

more to finish the work, and if the farther end of the bridge could be held against the Etruscans for those few minutes, all would be well for Rome. But how was it to be held, and who would hold it? Suddenly from the ranks of the Roman soldiers, the brave Horatius Cocles stepped out and cried to the consul, "Give me two good men to help me, and I will hold the bridge and stop the enemy from coming over."

Immediately two brave men, Spurius Lartius and Titus Herminius, ran to his side. Then the three hurried over to the other end of the bridge and stood ready to keep off the enemy.

When the army of Etruscans saw the three men standing to keep them back, a



Horatius

shout of laughter went up among them. Three men to keep back thousands! How ridiculous! There the three brave Romans stood, however, at the entrance of the bridge with determined faces and fearless eyes.

Very quickly three Etruscans—stout, able fighters—came forth from the army to give battle to the three Romans. After a sharp combat, the Etruscans were killed. Three more came out and continued the fight, but they too were beaten by Horatius and his companions.

But now the bridge began to shake and crack. Horatius felt that it was about to fall, and he cried for Spurius and Titus to run back to the other side. While they did so, Horatius stood alone and defied the whole Etruscan army, which was rushing upon him. A whole army against one

man! Although javelins were hurled at him, he skillfully warded them off with his shield.

Just as the Etruscans reached him, the last beam was cut away, and the bridge fell with a tremendous crash. As it was falling, Horatius plunged into the Tiber and, praying to the gods for help, swam to the other side in safety. The Romans received him with shouts of joy, and even the Etruscans could not help raising a cheer in admiration of his bravery.

The three Romans were well rewarded. A fine statue of Horatius was built in one of the squares of the city. On the base of the statue was placed a brass tablet with an account of the heroic deed engraved on it. The Senate also gave Horatius as much land as he could plow around in a day.



Horatius in the Tiber

