

And Picus, long to Clusium
 Vassal in peace and war,
 Who led to fight his Umbrian powers
 From that gray crag where, girt with towers,
 The fortress of Nequinum lowers
 O'er the pale waves of Nar.

Stout Lartius hurled down Aunus
 Into the stream beneath:
 Herminius struck at Seius,
 And clove him to the teeth:
 At Picus brave Horatius
 Darted one fiery thrust;
 And the proud Umbrian's gilded arms
 Clashed in the bloody dust.

Then Ocnus of Falerii
 Rushed on the Roman Three;
 And Lausulus of Urgo,
 The rover of the sea;
 And Aruns of Volsinium,
 Who slew the great wild boar,
 The great wild boar that had his den
 Amidst the reeds of Cosa's fen,
 And wasted fields, and slaughtered men,
 Along Albinia's shore.

Herminius smote down Aruns:
 Lartius laid Ocnus low:
 Right to the heart of Lausulus
 Horatius sent a blow.

"Lie there," he cried, "fell pirate!
 No more, aghast and pale,
 From Ostia's walls the crowd shall mark
 The track of thy destroying bark.
 No more Campania's hinds shall fly
 To woods and caverns when they spy
 Thy thrice accursed sail."

But now no scound of laughter
 Was heard among the foes.
 A wild and wrathful clamour
 From all the vanguard rose.
 Six spears' lengths from the entrance
 Halted that deep array,
 And for a space no man came forth
 To win the narrow way.

But hark! the cry is Astur:
 And lo! the ranks divide;
 And the great Lord of Luna
 Comes with his stately stride.
 Upon his ample shoulders
 Clangs loud the four-fold shield.
 And in his hand he shakes the brand
 Which none but he can wield.

He smiled on those bold Romans
 A smile serene and high;
 He eyed the flinching Tuscans,
 And scorn was in his eye.

Quoth he, "The she-wolf's litter
Stand savagely at bay:
But will ye dare to follow,
If Astur clears the way?"

Then, whirling up his broadsword
With both hands to the height,
He rushed against Horatius,
And smote with all his might.
With shield and blade Horatius
Right deftly turned the blow.
The blow, though turned, came yet too nigh;
It missed his helm, but gashed his thigh:
The Tuscans raised a joyful cry
To see the red blood flow.

He reeled, and on Herminius
He leaned one breathing-space;
Then, like a wild cat mad with wounds,
Sprang right at Astur's face.
Through teeth, and skull, and helmet,
So fierce a thrust he sped,
The good sword stood a hand-breadth out
Behind the Tuscan's head.

And the great Lord of Luna
Fell at that deadly stroke,
As falls on Mount Alvernus
A thunder-smitten oak.

Far o'er the crashing forest
The giant arms lie spread:
And the pale augurs, muttering low,
Gaze on the blasted head.

On Astur's throat Horatius
Right firmly pressed his heel,
And thrice and four times tugged amain
Ere he wrenched out the steel.
"And see," he cried, "the welcome
Fair guests, that waits you here!
What noble Lucomo comes next,
To taste our Roman cheer?"

But at this haughty challenge
A sullen murmur ran,
Mingled of wrath, and shame, and dread,
Along that glittering van.
There lacked not men of prowess,
Nor men of lordly race;
For all Etruria's noblest
Were round the fatal place.

But all Etruria's noblest
Felt their hearts sink to see
On the earth the bloody corpses,
In the path the dauntless Three;
And, from the ghastly entrance
Where those bold Romans stood,
All shrank, like boys who unaware,

Ranging the woods to start a hare,
Come to the mouth of the dark lair
Where, growling low, a fierce old bear
Lies amidst bones and blood.

Was none who would be foremost
To lead such dire attack;
But those behind cried "Forward!"
And those before cried "Back!"
And backward now and forward
Wavers the deep array:
And on the tossing sea of steel,
To and fro the standards reel;
And the victorious trumpet's peal
Dies fitfully away.

Yet one man for one moment
Strode out before the crowd;
Well known was he to all the Three,
As they gave him greeting loud.
"Now welcome, welcome Sextus!
Now welcome to thy home!
Why dost thou stay, and turn away?
Here lies the road to Rome."

Thrice looked he at the city;
Thrice looked he at the dead;
And thrice came on in fury,
And thrice turned back in dread:

And, white with fear and hatred,
Scowled at the narrow way
Where, wallowing in a pool of blood,
The bravest Tuscans lay.

But meanwhile axe and lever
Have manfully been plied,
And now the bridge hangs tottering
Above the boiling tide.
"Come back, come back, Horatius!"
Loud cried the Fathers all.
"Back, Lartius! back, Herminius!
Back, ere the ruin fall!"

Back darted Spurius Lartius;
Herminius darted back:
And, as they passed, beneath their feet
They felt the timbers crack.
But when they turned their faces,
And on the farther shore
Saw brave Horatius stand alone,
They would have crossed once more;

But with a crash like thunder
Fell every loosened beam,
And, like a dam, the mighty wreck
Lay right athwart the stream;
And a long shout of triumph
Rose from the walls of Rome,
As to the highest turret-tops
Was splashed the yellow foam.

And, like a horse unbroken
 When first he feels the rein,
 The furious river struggled hard,
 And tossed his tawny mane,
 And burst the curb, and bounded,
 Rejoicing to be free,
 And whirling down, in fierce career
 Battlement, and plank, and pier,
 Rushed headlong to the sea.

Alone stood brave Horatius,
 But constant still in mind;
 Thrice thirty thousand foes before,
 And the broad flood behind.
 "Down with him!" cried false Sextus,
 With a smile on his pale face.
 "Now yield thee," cried Lars Porsena,
 "Now yield thee to our grace."

Round turned he, as not deigning
 Those craven ranks to see;
 Naught spake he to Lars Porsena,
 To Sextus naught spake he:
 But he saw on Palatinus
 The white porch of his home;
 And he spake to the noble river
 That rolls by the towers of Rome.

"Oh, Tiber! Father Tiber!
 To whom the Romans pray,
 A Roman's life, a Roman's arms,
 Take thou in charge this day!"

So he spake, and speaking sheathed
 The good sword by his side,
 And with his harness on his back,
 Plunged headlong in the tide.

No sound of joy or sorrow
 Was heard from either bank;
 But friends and foes in dumb surprise,
 With parted lips and straining eyes,
 Stood gazing where he sank;
 And when above the surges
 They saw his crest appear,
 All Rome sent forth a rapturous cry,
 And even the ranks of Tuscany
 Could scarce forbear to cheer.

But fiercely ran the current,
 Swollen high by months of rain:
 And fast his blood was flowing;
 And he was sore in pain,
 And heavy with his armour,
 And spent with changing blows:
 And oft they thought him sinking,
 But still again he rose.

Never, I ween, did swimmer,
 In such an evil case,
 Struggle through such a raging flood
 Safe to the landing-place:
 But his limbs were borne up bravely
 By the brave heart within,
 And our good Father Tiber
 Bare bravely up his chin.

“Curse on him!” quoth false Sextus:
 “Will not the villain drown?
 But for this stay, ere close of day
 We should have sacked the town!”
 “Heaven help him!” quoth Lars Porsena,
 “And bring him safe to shore:
 For such a gallant feat of arms
 Was never seen before.”

And now he feels the bottom;
 Now on dry earth he stands;
 Now round him throng the Fathers
 To press his gory hands;
 And now, with shouts and clapping,
 And noise of weeping loud,
 He enters through the River-Gate
 Borne by the joyous crowd.

They gave him of the corn-land
 That was of public right
 As much as two strong oxen
 Could plough from morn till night;
 And they made a molten image,
 And set it up on high,
 And there it stands unto this day
 To witness if I lie.

It stands in the Comitium,
 Plain for all folk to see;
 Horatius in his harness,
 Halting upon one knee:

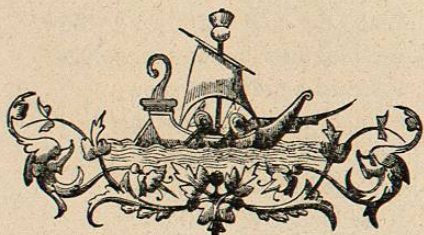
And underneath is written,
 In letters all of gold,
 How valiantly he kept the bridge
 In the brave days of old.

And still his name sounds stirring
 Unto the men of Rome,
 As the trumpet-blast that cries to them
 To charge the Volscian home;
 And wives still pray to Juno
 For boys with hearts as bold
 As his who kept the bridge so well
 In the brave days of old.

And in the nights of winter,
 When the cold north winds blow,
 And the long howling of the wolves
 Is heard amidst the snow;
 When round the lonely cottage
 Roars loud the tempest's din;
 And the good logs of Algidus
 Roar louder yet within;

When the oldest cask is opened,
 And the largest lamp is lit;
 When the chestnuts glow in the embers,
 And the kid turns on the spit;
 When young and old in circle
 Around the firebrands close;
 When the girls are weaving baskets,
 And the lads are shaping bows;

When the goodman mends his armour,
 And trims his helmet's plume;
 When the goodwife's shuttle merrily
 Goes flashing through the loom;
 With weeping and with laughter
 Still is the story told,
 How well Horatius kept the bridge
 In the brave days of old.



—*THE CHANGED CROSS.*—

BY HON. MRS. CHARLES HOBART.



T was a time of sadness, and my heart,
 Although it knew and loved the better part,
 Felt wearied with the conflict and the strife,
 And all the needful discipline of life.

And while I thought on these, as given to me—
 My trial tests of faith and love to be—
 It seemed as if I never could be sure
 That faithful to the end I should endure.

And thus, no longer trusting to His might
 Who says, "We walk by faith, and not by sight,"
 Doubting, and almost yielding to despair,
 The thought arose—My cross I cannot bear:

Far heavier its weight must surely be
 Than those of others which I daily see.
 Oh! if I might another burden choose,
 Methinks I should not fear my crown to lose.