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7. Yet despite the indecisive character of the battle, so great a panic came over Tarquinius and the Etruscans that they gave up the enterprise for lost, and that same night both armies, the Veientine and the Tarquiniensian, marched off every man to his own home. [2] To the story of this fight common report adds a prodigy: that in the silence of the following night a loud voice was heard coming out of the Arsian forest, which was believed to be the voice of Silvanus, and that this was what he said: “The Tuscans have lost one more man in the battle-line; the Romans are conquerors in the war.” [3] At all events the Romans left the field like victors, and the Etruscans like an army that has been defeated. [4] For when it grew light and not a single enemy was to be seen, Publius Valerius the consul gathered up the spoils and returned in triumph to Rome. His colleague’s funeral he celebrated with all the pomp then possible; but a far greater honour to the dead man was the general grief, which was particularly conspicuous inasmuch as the matrons mourned a year for him, as for a father, because [p. 241]he had been so spirited an avenger of outraged¹ modesty.

[5] Soon after this the surviving consul, so fickle are the affections of the mob, became unpopular; not only did the people dislike him, but they actually suspected him and made cruel charges against him. [6] It was noised about that he was aspiring to the power of a king, since he had not caused a colleague to be elected in the place of Brutus, and was building a house on the highest part of the Velia, an elevated position of natural strength, men said, which he was converting into an impregnable citadel. [7] The frequency of these remarks and the general acceptance they met with, shamefully unjust as they were, distressed the consul. He summoned the people to a council, and with lowered fasces² mounted the speaker's platform. [8] It was a welcome spectacle to the multitude when they beheld the emblems of authority there abased before them, in acknowledgment that the people's majesty and power were superior to the consul's. Then, bidding them attend, the consul extolled the good fortune of his colleague, who, after his country had thrown off the yoke, had held the highest office in her gift, and, fighting for the state, at the height of a reputation as yet untarnished by envy, had met his death. He had himself outlived his glory, and survived to face accusations and ill-will. [9] From being the saviour of his country he had sunk to the level of the Aquilii and Vitellii. “Will there never be worth and merit, then,” he exclaimed, “so established in your minds that suspicion cannot wrong it? [10] Could I possibly have feared that I, well known as the bitterest enemy of kings, should myself incur the charge of [p. 243]seeking kingly power? Could I have believed that,³ though I dwelt in the very Citadel and on the Capitol itself, I could be feared by my fellow-citizens? Can so trivial a cause ruin my reputation with you? Does your confidence rest on so slight a foundation that it makes more difference where I am than who I am? [11] There shall be no menace in the house of Publius Valerius to your liberties, Quirites; your Velia shall be safe. I will not only bring my house down on to level ground, but will even place it under a hill, that you may live above me, the citizen whom you suspect. Let those build on the Velia who can better be trusted with men's liberty than can Publius Valerius!” [12] Immediately the materials were all brought down below the Velia, and the house was erected where the temple of Vica Pota is now, at the bottom of the slope.

1 B.C. 509

2 Bundles of rods which symbolized the magistrate's authority to scourge, as the axes (*secures*) did his right to put to death.

3 B.C. 509

Livy. Books I and II With An English Translation. Cambridge. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd. 1919.

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