

consuls obtained the right that the persons of the Ediles and other plebeian magistrates, be declared equally sacred with those of the tribunes.

An attempt was made about this time, 444 B.C., to throw open the consulship to the plebeians, but it proved unsuccessful. A compromise, however, was effected, whereby a board of consular or military tribunes, taken from either order, the patrician or the plebeian, should be annually appointed. Slowly, but surely, amidst internal dissensions and external wars, were the plebeians rising to an equality with the higher order. In 421 B.C., they were accorded the dignity of questorship, and thus they became eligible for the Senate. The questors were the paymasters of the state. Their duty was to receive the revenues, to make all the necessary payments for civil and military services, to register the laws passed by the Senate and to transact all matters of a like importance. Originally, there were but two; later on, the number was increased to four.

In 376 B.C., the tribunes of the people proposed three laws, known as the Licinian Rogations, which were intended to lessen the double grievance of poverty and political inequality, under which the plebeians were still groaning. One of these bills procured immediate relief for debtors, by deducting from the principal the interest already paid on borrowed money. But the most important of these Rogations was

that which demanded that in future two consuls should be annually elected, as formerly, but that one of the two *must* be a plebeian. These reforms were, of course, violently opposed by the patricians. Ten years after their introduction, the people triumphed and the Rogations became law. Consequently the plebs were now allowed to present themselves as candidates for the dictatorial, consular and censorian dignity. But for this partial loss of their privileges, the patricians found a compensation in two new offices being established in their favor: that of Praetor, for the administration of justice, and that of Patrician Edile, for the better superintendence of the public shows and buildings. But even these offices became, in the course of time, common to both classes. The *plebisaita*, or decisions agreed on at the comitia of the tribes, were made to be binding on all the citizens, whether they were sanctioned by the Senate or not. The patricians strove hard to evade this new law, but in 286 B.C., on the occasion of the last secession of the plebeians, it was re-enacted by the dictator, Q. Hortensius.

Such was the mighty and protracted struggle of the plebeians and patricians in Rome, a struggle which gradually undermined the state, became the occasion of many terrible conflicts, and eventually resulted in the complete overthrow of the Roman republic.

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