

them. About this time, also, the people obtained the right of having two Ediles appointed from their order, whose duty it was to take charge of the markets, provisions, public buildings and shows.

The next subject of debate that arose between the two classes was the equal partition of land among the citizens, a proposition known by the name of the Agrarian Law. Much of the lately conquered lands had not been thus divided, and their occupation or purchase had been tampered with by some few wealthy and powerful individuals. This course of action did not please the plebeians, and they clamoured loudly for their equal share. They soon found a champion of their rights in Spurius Cassius, one of the consuls. He, in concert with the tribunes, proposed a redistribution of the lands, so as to give the plebeians their due share. This proposal was, of course, very agreeable to the people; but, as it struck at the wealth and power of the patricians, the latter stubbornly opposed it. However, the consul, more than anyone else, contributed to the ruin of his cause; for, on his proposing that the Latini and Hernici, allies of Rome, should enjoy the same privileges as the Romans and share with them in the new division of the lands, he was convicted as being guilty of treason and condemned to death. Thus perished the first projector of the famous Agrarian Law. The measures taken failed in their intended effect, and the project remained to be a lasting source of dissension between the two classes. On the part of the lower classes, it became a subject of reiterated demands; nor could the Senate succeed in diverting them from their purpose, otherwise than in occupying them almost constantly in foreign wars.

Very soon after this, the plebeians were accorded many new concessions. The first was the passing of the famous Publilian Law, which referred the election of the tribunes to the *comitia tributa*, the general assembly of all the tribes in one body. The two tribunes, Volero and Lætorius, having stationed the people in arms on the Tarpeian Hill, the Senate had no choice but to yield a reluctant consent. By the same law, the number of tribunes was increased from two to five. Before long, their tribune, Sp. Scilius, gained a great victory for the

plebeians, by obtaining the enactment of a law which made it a capital offence to interrupt a tribune, when engaged in the act of addressing the assembly. But the patricians soon had their revenge. War being declared against the Æqui and Volsci, the plebeians had to serve under the haughty Appius Claudius, a patrician. He treated the plebeians with the utmost rigour of discipline, and upon their refusing to fight, he redoubled his severity and freely used the rods and axes of the lictors.

Before this time, 452 B.C., the Romans had no written laws. In 462 B.C., one of the tribunes, Terentilius Arsa, proposed that a commission be appointed to draw up a code of laws, which might put a check to the arbitrary power of the patrician magistrates. This motion, naturally enough, gave rise to violent debates. For ten years angry disputes and bloody contentions occurred between the two orders. At last, the resistance of the patricians was overcome and three deputies were sent to Greece to study and collect from the laws there in vogue whatever they might deem best and most beneficial to the Roman people. Upon the return of these deputies, ten commissioners were appointed Decemviri, to draw up a regular code of laws. They were given one year to effect this. The result of their labors was that a body of laws, called the Laws of the Twelve Tables, was published in a clear and concise form, and received the sanction of both the Senate and the people. The Decemviri, during the first term of their office, fully answered the expectations of the public, and it was decided that the members should be chosen from the two classes. The first Decemviri performed their duties so sedulously, justly and satisfactorily that now no assemblies of the people were held and the Senate was rarely convened. But it so happened that the new Decemviri, not satisfied with the length of their term of office, retained the sovereign power, even after this term had elapsed: and hence Rome again beheld all the excesses of despotism and tyranny that had marked the reign of Tarquin the Proud. Soon afterwards, the Decemvirate was ignominiously expelled from the city, and forced to relinquish its power. New tribunes were elected for the plebeians and Valerius and Horatius were raised to the consulship. These