

from Egypt, and to establish a new nation for themselves. The patricians, alarmed by the movement, came to terms, and appeased the commons by a grant of privileges which they had never enjoyed before. The hill upon which these conditions were ratified, was forever after called the sacred hill.

By the pacification, adopted on the sacred hill, it was agreed that five officers called tribunes, which number was subsequently increased to ten, should be chosen by the people, and that they should, in addition to other privileges, have the power of a *veto* over all the acts of the senate. This was a signal popular triumph, and the commons were thus gradually elevated to share with the patricians the honors and the emoluments of their common country. The conflict, however, between the plebeians and the patricians was continued for a long time.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRETORSHIP, DECEMVIRATE, AND CONSULATE.

FROM 493 B. C. TO 433 B. C.

STORY OF CORIOLANUS.—APPOINTMENT OF A DICTATOR.—ACHIEVEMENTS OF CINCINNATUS.—WAR WITH THE ÆQUIANS AND VOLSCIANI.—THE SOLDIERS REFUSE TO FIGHT.—INFAMOUS CONDUCT OF THE NOBLES.—APPIUS CLAUDIUS.—VIRGINIA CLAIMED AS A FUGITIVE SLAVE.—SLAIN BY HER FATHER.—INSURRECTION OF THE PEOPLE.—ITS SUCCESS.—CONSPIRACY OF THE YOUNG NOBLES.—KESO, SON OF CINCINNATUS.—CINCINNATUS CHOSEN CONSUL.—CHANGE IN HIS CHARACTER.—AVENTINE HILL TAKEN BY THE COMMONS.—IMPEACHMENT OF APPIUS CLAUDIUS.—THE POPULAR CAUSE TRIUMPHANT.—THE DECEMVIRI REJECTED AND EXPELLED.—INTRODUCTION OF THE CONSULATE.

THE dictator was appointed for six months only; but during that time his power was absolute. The revolt of the commons, and the compromise into which they entered with the patricians, seem to have restored affairs to their ancient order. We now begin slowly to emerge from the mists of fable into the clearer light of authentic history. The tribunes continued the guardians of popular rights, while the senate was ever vigilant to extend the prerogatives of the nobles. From this time we must date the *struggle* between the two orders, the plebeians contending for equality of rights, and the patricians for aristocratic privilege. One Spurius Cassius, who was now consul, or pretor, as the office was then called, formed an alliance with the Latin confederacy, which was confirmed by the most solemn rites.

The ancient annals here introduce a story which is characteristic of the times, though its historical verity is not sustained by subsequent research. It is said that there was a famine in Rome, caused by the revolt of the people, who, in

their attempt to abandon their country, had, of course, neglected the culture of their fields. The nobles, who had great wealth, purchased large quantities of corn from Sicily, and attempted to extort from the starving people, in exchange for bread, the political rights they had gained in their revolt. Caius Coriolanus, a haughty patrician, had proposed this plan to the senate. The people, exasperated, would have torn him in pieces, but he fled, and repairing to the Volscians, a powerful nation south of Rome, persuaded them that Rome, in a state of famine, could be easily subjugated. The Volscians raised an army and placed it under the joint command of Coriolanus and one of their own veteran warriors.

This army marched upon Rome, and mercilessly ravaging the country without its walls, encamped before the city. Coriolanus, thinking that his quarrel was with the commons only, hoped for the coöperation of the nobles. Several embassies from the city were sent in vain, imploring the clemency of the victorious army. At length, in the midst of general consternation, a noble lady, Valeria, who was praying in the temple, seemed inspired by a sudden thought from the gods. She immediately arose, collected a band of Roman matrons, and proceeded to the house of Virgilia, the wife of Coriolanus. In extreme dejection she was sitting with her children and with her husband's aged mother.

"We have come to you," said Valeria, "of our own accord. Neither the senate nor the people have sent us; but God, in whose temple we were worshiping, has inspired us with the thought to come to you, that you may join us, women with women, without the aid of men, to win for our country a great deliverance, and for ourselves a name glorious above all women, even above those Sabine wives of old, who stopped the battle between their husbands and their fathers. Come, then, with us to the camp of Coriolanus, and let us plead with him for mercy."

Without hesitancy, Virgilia and Volumnia, the mother of

Coriolanus, joined the matrons in this patriotic embassy. Emerging from one of the gates of the city, in sad and solemn procession, they directed their steps toward the Volscian camp. The Volscian soldiers looked silently on with pity and veneration. Coriolanus was found in his tent, surrounded by his generals. His mother, Volumnia, who was at the head of the train, advanced hesitatingly to meet him. Coriolanus, astonished at the sight of his mother, leaped from his chair and ran to embrace her. She with her hand repelled him, saying:

"Ere thou kiss me, let me know whether I am speaking to an enemy or to my son; whether I stand in thy camp as thy prisoner or as thy mother."

Coriolanus was silent, knowing not what answer to make. Volumnia, after a moment's pause, continued:

"Must it, then, be that had I never borne a son, Rome never would have seen the camp of an enemy? that had I remained childless I should have died a free woman in a free city? But I am too old to endure much longer either thy shame or my misery. Look, however, to thy wife and thy children. If thou persistest in thy course, they are doomed to an untimely death, or to a long life of bondage."

His wife Virgilius then approached, her eyes swollen with tears, and leading her children by the hand. She threw herself upon her husband's neck, sobbing passionately, while all the Roman matrons wept and wailed. Coriolanus was unmanned and conquered.

"Oh, mother," said he, "what hast thou done to me. Thine is the victory, a happy victory for thee and for Rome, but shame and ruin to thy son."

He then sent back the matrons to Rome, while he returned with the Volscians to their own territory, where he remained in exile until his death.

It was about this time, during the pretorship of Spurius Cassius, that the agrarian law was enacted, which has engross-

ed so much of the attention of subsequent ages. This law, which divided the public lands among the people, was bitterly opposed by the nobles, and, in revenge, they accused Cassius of attempting to make himself king. He was consequently condemned to death, being first scourged and then beheaded. His house was destroyed, and the ground on which it stood was cursed.

The patricians, untiring in their endeavors to keep the plebeians in subjection, succeeded in electing their own partisans as pretors, and in preventing the execution of the agrarian law. In the prosecution of this conflict the commons refused to serve as soldiers, as the British commons, under similar circumstances, have often refused to furnish money for the wars which the aristocracy, to subserve their own purposes, were waging. The power of the tribunes, however, was only of force within the walls of the city, and the pretors, by nameless outrages, compelled the farming population to enlist in the army. At length they gained the important concession that the patricians should choose one pretor, and the plebeians the other. The conflict between the plebeians and patricians had become so strong that at length, in an eventful battle, the plebeians refused to fight, and submitted to an ignominious defeat, rather than gain a victory which would only redound to the increased influence of their aristocratic foes. For a period of seven years the nobles filled their place in the pretorship with some member of the Fabian family, one of the most opulent and haughty of the *ancienne noblesse* of Rome; for even then Rome had her ancient nobility. These haughty scions of patrician houses, rolling in wealth, and strong in social rank, affected to look with contempt upon the pretor chosen by the people, and instead of recognizing him as an equal, treated him as an inferior officer, who occupied but the place of an assistant.

The refusal, under the circumstances, of the people to fight, and the disgraceful defeat which ensued, opened the eyes of

the nobles, and Quintus Fabius, who was their pretor, in conjunction with Caius Julius the pretor of the people, made such strenuous endeavors to regain the popular favor, that he measurably succeeded in effacing that animosity which threatened even the stability of the state. In a war which soon ensued, some new territory was grasped. To please the people, one of the Fabii, then pretor, proposed that it should be divided in equal portions among the plebeians.

"It is just," said he, "that those should have the land, by whose sweat and blood it has been gained."

The nobles were exasperated that Fabius should thus abandon their cause, and reviled him as an apostate and a turn-coat. But the more the patricians abused, the more the plebeians applauded. The conflict became so bitter that the whole family of Fabii, three hundred and six in number, with plebeian followers amounting to four thousand, emigrated from Rome and settled on the river Crimera, a small stream emptying into the Tiber but a few miles from Rome. Two years had hardly elapsed, after this emigration, ere the Etruscans, a powerful neighboring nation, fell upon the infant settlement by surprise and mercilessly massacred them all. The victorious Etruscans, ravaging the adjacent country, advanced to the walls of Rome and laid siege to the city. After many bloody but indecisive conflicts, a truce was entered into which continued for forty years. The struggle between the people and the nobles was still ever living; though with varying success, with ebbs and floods, the popular cause was steadily gaining strength.

According to Italian story, in the year 458 before Christ, Rome was in such peril from the allied assaults of two nations, the Æquians and the Sabines, that the senate resolved to invoke the power of a dictator. Rome was indeed menaced with ruin. One of the pretors, Lucius Minucius, in command of the Roman army, had been lured into a narrow defile, where the mountains rose around him to inaccessible heights, upon every side except through the narrow entrance. This passage

the enemy had effectually blockaded, and the destruction of the army seemed sure. Should the army be destroyed Rome would be left at the mercy of the conqueror. The senate met in consternation to deliberate upon this danger.

"There is but one man," it was said, "who can deliver us. That man is Lucius Quintius Cincinnatus; and him we must invest with dictatorial power."

A deputation was immediately sent to inform Cincinnatus who was an impoverished patrician, of his appointment. He was found occupying a little cottage upon the other side of the Tiber, cultivating, with his wife Racilia, a small plot of ground.

"We bring thee," said they, "a message of great importance from the senate. Put on thy cloak that thou mayest receive it with becoming dignity."

Attended by his wife he went into his cottage, and changed his apparel, and then presented himself again before the deputies.

"Hail to thee, Lucius Quintius Cincinnatus," said the deputies. "The senate hath appointed thee master of the people, and calls thee to the city. The pretor and the army, in the country of the Æquians, are in great danger."

Cincinnatus without hesitancy accepted the perilous office, and tenderly bade adieu to his wife saying, "I fear, my Racilia, that this year our little fields must remain unsown."

A boat was in readiness to convey him across the Tiber. The senate, with an immense concourse of the populace of Rome, awaited him on the opposite bank. Cincinnatus immediately ordered every man in Rome capable of bearing arms to be enlisted. A poor man, from the ranks of the foot soldiers, Lucius Tarquinius, who had displayed much energy and bravery, was appointed chief general under the dictator. With such energy were these measures pressed forward, that before sunset the whole army was assembled in the field of Mars. Every soldier took with him food for five days; and twelve

stakes. The evening twilight had hardly disappeared ere this force, so suddenly collected, commenced its march. Before midnight they reached the outposts of the enemy. Immediately disincumbering themselves of their baggage they cautiously surrounded the hostile camp, and each soldier commenced digging a ditch and planting his stakes. This work was commenced with shouts which penetrated the camp of the beleaguered Romans, filling their hearts with joy. They recognized the voices of their friends, and exclaimed:

"Rescue is at hand, for that is the shout of the Romans."

Immediately sallying from their intrenchments, they made so fierce an assault that the Æquians were not able to interrupt the works which Cincinnatus was so effectively throwing up. Through the whole night the fight and the labor lasted, and with the morning's dawn the Æquians saw, to their great consternation, that they were surrounded. A successful defense was impossible, and they asked for mercy. Cincinnatus demanded the Æquian chief and his two leading generals to be delivered to him in chains; and the whole of the rest of the hostile army, abandoning their cloaks, their arms, and all their baggage, were compelled to pass under the yoke, which consisted of two spears set upright and a third lashed across, and were thus sent home in nakedness, confusion, and shame.

Cincinnatus now returned to Rome in triumph, accompanied by his own troops and by the army he had so nobly rescued. The exultation in the metropolis was boundless. The conqueror rode in a chariot, with the chiefs of the Æquians led in chains before him. At the door of every house in the streets of Rome tables were spread with abundant refreshments for the soldiers. This astounding victory, according to the Roman legends, was the work of but a day. Cincinnatus, with his army, marched out one evening and returned the next. The conqueror now laid aside his dictatorial power and returned to his farm, refusing all that wealth which the senate was zealous to lavish upon him. The time

of this event is placed in the Roman legends about 460 years before Christ.

War soon again ensued against the Æquians and Volscians united. The pretor, Appius Claudius, a haughty aristocrat, hated by the people, led the Roman army. The discontented soldiers refused to fight, and retreated before the enemy, throwing away their arms and running away, in an affected panic, even at the first onset. Appius, flaming with indignation, succeeded in rallying the fugitives as soon as they were out of reach of the enemy, and heaped upon them contemptuous reproaches. Not satisfied with this, his exasperation was so intense that, by the aid of some foreign mercenaries, he first seized and executed every captain of one hundred men who had fled; then every standard-bearer who had lost his colors was put to death; and then he decimated the whole host, executing every tenth man. Even this rigor would hardly have been condemned, so scrupulous were the Romans upon points of military discipline, had not Appius been regarded as the inveterate foe of popular rights, and the unrelenting advocate of aristocratic privilege. The tribunes, accordingly, whose privilege it was to impeach, brought him to trial, as the enemy of the people. His doom is not known. Tradition is contradictory. Whether he killed himself in prison to avoid the execution of his sentence, or whether he escaped, and, after years of exile, returned to take a part in public affairs, can not now be ascertained.

For many years Rome appears to have been in a very deplorable state. The surrounding nations defeated her armies, and repeatedly plundered all the region outside of the walls of the city. A terrible pestilence again and again swept the land. The woes of the whole country for a time were such that there was a cessation of the hostility between the patricians and plebeians. But as better times dawned upon the country the old conflict was revived, and the commons seemed disposed to demand a radical reform in the con-

stitution of the state, by which they should enjoy, in all respects, equal rights with the patricians. They demanded, through the tribunes, that ten commissioners should be chosen, five by the commons and five by the patricians, and that by them a constitution should be drawn up, conferring equal political rights upon all orders of the Roman people.

The nobles, as ever, were unrelenting in their opposition to any encroachments upon their prerogatives. The young nobles of Rome, like their predecessors, the young nobles of Athens, were fond of congregating in clubs. Conscious aristocracy gives self-confidence, and self-confidence gives strength. These young nobles were skilled in martial exercises, bold and domineering. By acting in a body they repeatedly broke up the meetings of the commons, and drove them from the forum. The son of Cincinnatus was one of the leaders in these aristocratic riots. He was prosecuted by the tribunes. Kæso, as this young man was called, was proved to be of grossly riotous character, and even to have caused death in one of his frays. The indignation of the people was so strongly roused against him that, apprehensive of condemnation, he forfeited his bail, which was very heavy, and fled before his trial came on.

The young nobles from rioters became conspirators. They courted the commons, speaking politely to them, paying them those delicate attentions with which the rich and noble can so easily win the regards of the poor and humble. Kæso, in exile, held constant communication with them, and gathered around him a band of adventurers from all quarters. With this force it was the intention of the conspirators that Kæso should surprise Rome at night; the young nobles in the city were to be prepared to rise and join the assailants; the tribunes and the most obnoxious of the commons were to be massacred, and thus the old ascendancy of the patricians was to be restored.

Though the conspiracy was suspected, and the tribunes