

struggles between these two orders—the Patricians and Plebeians. The *Patricians* alone were at first admissible to the great governing body called the *Senate*, and they kept in their hands all the high offices of state, the higher degrees of the priesthood, and the ownership of the public lands. The two orders were not allowed to intermarry, and the Plebeians, though they were free and personally independent (with the important exception of compulsory service in war), had no political weight. This was the early state of things in the Roman civil world, and the Plebeians, as might be expected, soon began to strive after a share in the rights exclusively belonging to the Patricians.

14. In Roman civil history we find three different legislative assemblies, all called *Comitia* (co-mish'i-a: meaning "comings-together") —the *Comitia Curiata*, *Comitia Centuriata*, and *Comitia Tributa*. Of these the *Comitia Curiata* was the earliest, and was a solely patrician assembly, which elected the king, made the laws, and decided in all cases affecting the life of a citizen. The powers of this assembly were soon transferred to the *Comitia Centuriata*, and it became a mere form long before the end of the republic.

15. The *Comitia Centuriata* was the second in order of time, and came into existence under the monarchy. In this assembly the patricians and plebeians voted together, according to a distribution of power based upon wealth, ascertained by a *census*, or register of citizens and their property. The institution was a means of admitting a democratic element, while a decided aristocratic preponderance was secured. The *Comitia Centuriata* was for a time the sovereign assembly of the nation, and received the power of electing the king, and then (under the republic) the higher state officials, of repealing and enacting laws, and of deciding in cases of appeal from a judicial sentence. As time went on these powers remained, with the right of declaring war and making peace, and with the exercise of the highest judicial functions, as in accusations of treason, and in all appeals from Roman citizens on criminal matters. The influence of the *Comitia Centuriata* in the state was, however, gradually superseded by that of the third, the great popular assembly, the *Comitia Tributa*.

16. The *Comitia Tributa*—originally based upon a division of the whole people into *local* tribes—in time became a solely plebeian assembly, voting according to tribes, not man by man. In the course of time the powers of this body became very great, so that it could check all legislation initiated by the senate in the aristocratic *Comitia Centuriata*, and stop the whole machinery of the constitution.

17. The most famous part of the Roman constitution—the body which has given its name as a generic term to similar powerful assemblies—was the *Senate*, or *Council of Elders*. Founded in the monarchical times, it consisted at first of 300, and then of 600 members, and became the great executive body of the Roman Republic. The members of the Senate were those citizens alone who had held at least