

III 31 ... Through long discussion it had become stale, the tribunes now threw it over and approached the patricians in a less aggressive spirit. They urged that an end should be put to their disputes, and if they objected to the measures adopted by the plebeians, they should consent to the appointment of a body of legislators, chosen in equal numbers from plebeians and patricians, to enact what would be useful to both orders and secure equal liberty for each. The patricians thought the proposal worth consideration; they said, however, that no one should legislate unless he were a patrician, since they were agreed as to the laws and only differed as to who should enact them. Commissioners were sent to Athens with instructions to make a copy of the famous laws of Solon, and to investigate the institutions, customs, and laws of other Greek States. Their names were Spurius Postumius Albus, A. Manlius, P. Sulpicius Camerinus.

III 32 ... The decemvirs were Appius Claudius, T. Genucius, P. Sestius, L. Veturius, C. Julius, A. Manlius, P. Sulpicius, P. Curiatius, T. Romilius, and Sp. Postumius. As Claudius and Genucius were the consuls designate, they received the honour in place of the honour of which they were deprived. Sestius, one of the consuls the year before, was honoured because he had, against his colleague, brought that subject before the senate. Next to them were placed the three commissioners who had gone to Athens, as a reward for their undertaking so distant an embassy, and also because it was thought that those who were familiar with the laws of foreign States would be useful in the compilation of new ones.

III 34. ... Whilst highest and lowest alike were enjoying their prompt and impartial administration of justice, as though delivered by an oracle, they were at the same time devoting their attention to the framing of the laws. These eagerly looked for laws were at length inscribed on ten tables which were exhibited in an Assembly specially convened for the purpose. After a prayer that their work might bring welfare and happiness to the State, to them and to their children, the decemvirs bade them go and read the laws which were exhibited. "As far as the wisdom and foresight of ten men admitted, they had established equal laws for all, for highest and lowest alike; there was, however, more weight in the intelligence and advice of many men. They should turn over each separate item in their minds, discuss them in conversations with each other, and bring forward for public debate what appeared to them superfluous or defective in each enactment. The future laws for Rome should be such as would appear to have been no less unanimously proposed by the people themselves than ratified by them on the proposal of others." When it appeared that they had been sufficiently amended in accordance with the expression of public opinion on each head, the Laws of the Ten Tables were passed by the Assembly of Centuries. Even in the mass of legislation today, where laws are piled one upon another in a confused heap, they still form the source of all public and private jurisprudence. After their ratification, he remark was generally made that two tables were still wanting; ...

[a new college of decemvires is elected for the following year with Appius Claudius as the only repeated member]

III 37. ... The greater part of the year had now elapsed; two tables had been added to the ten of the previous year; if these additional laws were passed by the "Comitia Centuriata" there was no reason why the decemvirate should be any longer considered necessary. Men were wondering how soon notice would be given of the election of consuls; the sole anxiety of the plebeians was as to the method by which they could re-establish that bulwark of their liberties, the power of the tribunes, which was now suspended. Meantime nothing was said about any elections. At first the decemvirs had bid for popularity by appearing before the plebs, surrounded by ex-tribunes, but now they were accompanied by an escort of young patricians, who crowded round the tribunals, maltreated the plebeians and plundered their property, and being the stronger, succeeded in getting whatever they had taken a fancy to. They did not stop short of personal violence, some were scourged, others beheaded, and that this brutality might not be gratuitous, the punishment of the owner was followed by a grant of his effects. Corrupted by such bribes, the young nobility not only declined to oppose the lawlessness of the decemvirs, but they openly showed that they preferred their own freedom from all restraints to the general liberty.