

broken down. Until 300 B. C. the number of Pontifices was five, including their president, the Pontifex Maximus; but in that year the number was increased to nine, four of whom were to be plebeians. However, it was not until 254 B. C., forty-six years later, that a plebeian, Tib. Coruncanius attained to the dignity of Pontifex Maximus. Sulla increased the number to fifteen.

To the Roman every unusual occurrence had some special significance, and revealed the will of heaven concerning men. Thus there naturally became a demand for a class of men who understood the will of the gods and could interpret these special manifestations. It is thought that the Romans learned augury from the Etruscans and imported their first priests from that nation, which early became a tributary to Rome. However, an augur was supposed to be specially gifted with the power of divination from birth, and also needed to pass through a certain course of training in the college that further fitted him for the performance of his sacred duties. At first they were four in number and were elected from among the patricians by the Comitia Curiata, but as the augurs themselves had a right to veto an election that was obnoxious to them, the power to fill vacancies naturally fell to the college itself. In 307 B. C., a law was passed extending the privileges of this office, to the plebeians; and immediately the number was increased to nine, where it remained until the time of Sulla who added six more. The modes of divination employed by the augurs were five, called the *augurium, ex calto, ex avibus, ex tripudiis, ex quadrupedibus, ex diris*. The first referred to the interpretation of celestial phenomena, such as thunder and lightning, which were held in great reverence. The second related to the noise and flight of birds. The birds which were considered messengers of the gods were the eagle, vulture, crow, raven, owl and hen. Of these the first two revealed the divine will by their flight, while the others talked to men through the intonations of their voice. The auguries *ex tripudiis* were taken from the sacred chickens, the gods revealing their will through the appetite of those poor fowls.

The auguries *ex quadrupedibus* were revealed by four-footed animals. If, for instance, a dog, a wolf, or a hare ran across the path of a Roman and startled him by any unusual emotions, he mentioned it to the augur; and the augur was supposed to explain it fully, and declare the will of the gods concerning him, and advise him what to do. These conjurers certainly deserve our admiration in one respect; that they were able to study their patrons and their art sufficiently to give consistent answers and not contradict themselves in successive consultations, and hold the respect of the citizens as they seem to have done for many years.

At Rome the auspices were taken on the summit of the capitoline hill, where a place was solemnly set apart, upon which the augur stood. He marked off the portion of the heavens in which his observations were to be made with a wand, and divided it into right and left sections; and the omens appeared propitious or unpropitious according as they appeared in one of these divisions. This place in which he stood and the corresponding portion of the heavens was called a *templum*, hence came *contemplari* and our English word *contem-*

plate. How important the political influence of the augurs must have been, may be seen from the fact that hardly anything could take place without their sanction. They consulted the will of the gods in national affairs at the request of the magistrates, and revealed it when directed to do so by the senate. The election of every important ruler, consul, praetor, dictator, every civil officer, every religious functionary, was invalid if the auspices were unfavorable. No general could lawfully engage in battle, no public land could be allotted, no marriage or adoption, certainly among the patricians, was valid unless the auspices were first taken; and the Comitia Centuriata could be dissolved at a moment's notice, if a member of the college of augurs put in his veto.

There were several other minor priest-hoods, the more important of which were the *flamines*, priests, of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus, and the vestal virgins, priestesses of Vesta, the goddess of the hearth, whose sacred fire must be kept burning perpetually. All of these were selected by the college of pontiffs.

There were the *Fetiales* also, a college of priests, twenty in number, elected for life from the most noble families, who had to perform the sacred rites accompanying declarations of war and treaties of peace or alliance. Usually four *Fetiales* accompanied by a speaker called a *pater patratus* were sent by the senate to foreign nations to demand satisfaction for injuries received. They were clad in priestly robes and in front of them were carried holy herbs (*sagmina*), which the consul or praetor delivered to them in the Capitol, after having touched with them the forehead of the *pater patratus*. Thus equipped they entered the territory of the foreign nation; and to the first inhabitant they met the herald repeated the following: "Hear me, Jupiter! Hear me, god of boundaries! And thou sacred oracle of right, hear, I am the messenger of the Roman people; I come in all justice and my words deserve all trust." "If it is against right and my conscience that I demand these persons and these things to be delivered up to me, the messenger of the Roman people, may Jupiter never permit me to return into my country." The same proclamation was made to those they met at the gates of the principal city, and finally in the Forum before the magistrates. If no satisfaction was given within thirty-three days they declared: "Hearken Jupiter, and thou Janus Quirinus, and all ye gods of heaven, earth and the lower regions, I take you to witness that this nation is unjust and violates right. How shall we avenge outraged right? Our old men will decide," and departed. The result was reported to the senate, and within a few days the *pater patratus* returned to the frontier bearing a javelin with a burnt end stained with blood, and cast it into the enemy's territory. This was the declaration of hostilities and threatened fire and blood, burning and slaughter. In later times when the Roman territory had been widely extended, this last ceremony was performed in Rome itself. A small portion of ground near the temple of Bellona (war) was set aside for the purpose and called the *Terra hostilis*, the enemies' country. At least two of the *Fetiales*, the *pater patratus* and the herald who bore the herbs, had to be present at the formation of treaties of alliance.

Thus we see how closely both the national and international laws of Rome were linked with its religion. The latter was the foundation of the former.

Rome really had no constitution until the election of the Decemvirs and the grating of the twelve tables, 450 B. C. Before that time the regulation of customs—the laws—were practically in the hands of the priests. The gods, or rather their representatives, turned the wheels of state; and woe be to that citizen or official who sought to clog them. Cicero says, "Our ancestors were never wiser or better inspired by the gods than when they settled that the same persons should preside over religion and the government of the republic. By this means magistrates and pontiffs unite to save the state." The results of this system were excellent and salutary as long as *virtus et pietas* (virtue and piety) went hand in hand and were the chief characteristics of the men and women of Rome; but when oriental customs and the spoils of conquest began to sap the life and morals of the city, the priests became Pharisees, and the social and political structure began to totter and lead an ignominious existence. Beautiful temples were built to the various gods and goddesses, the most celebrated of which was probably that of Jupiter, Capitolinus, on the capitoline hill. To the Roman of early times, the gods did not have a tendency to take upon themselves human forms as did the gods of Greece. The Roman gods were manifestations of physical phenomena whose power he felt and feared; but as civilization advanced and Greek influence became more and more felt, the Italian gods assumed more definite forms, and imitated their Grecian brothers and sisters; while many new deities were constantly imported from Greece, until Rome was filled with the temples and worship of, according to Varro, 30,000 gods. A general returning from a successful campaign, a proconsul returning laden with the riches of a province, or an ambitious citizen desiring to win favor and perpetuate his name, would dedicate a temple to some deity; and after the list of Italian divinities was exhausted, Grecian mythology was drawn upon to provide the occupant of the shrine. Mars was the patron god of Rome and represented manly strength. The *Salii* were a college of priests connected with the worship of this deity. Tradition says that Numa, the second king of Rome, received a peculiarly shaped shield, the *ancile*, from heaven; and had the artist Mamurius make eleven others just like it. The *Salii*, twelve in number, were then instituted to care for these shields. In the month of March, a month especially devoted to Mars, the feast of the god was celebrated. Clad in the *toga picta* (toga with an ornamental border) and in full armor with the *toga praetexta* (toga with purple border) worn above and tied in a Gabinian knot, and carrying a sword and a lance and the celebrated *ancile*, these priests walked through the streets in solemn procession, dancing a war dance before every sanctuary, and beating their shields with their lances to the measure of an old song, the words of which had in a later period become incomprehensible to the priests themselves. These songs celebrated Janus, Jupiter, Juno, Minerva and Mars, the names of departed citizens being added to these as a mark of the greatest distinction. During the most of the month