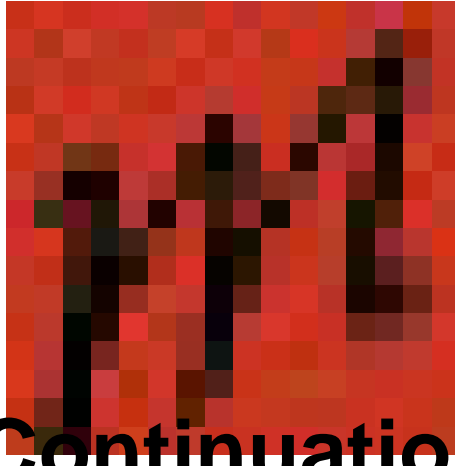


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# VIII.12 Continuation of the same subject

- The Spirit of Law - Book VIII. On the corruption of the principles of the three governments -

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## VIII.12 Continuation of the same subject

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In Rome, judges were selected from the order of the senators. The Gracchi transferred this prerogative to the knights. Drusus gave it to senators and knights, Sulla to senators alone, Cotta to senators, knights, and public treasurers ; Cæsar excluded the latter ; Anthony made decurions of senators, knights, and centurions.

When a republic is corrupt, none of the problems that arise can be remedied without getting rid of the corruption and recalling the principles ; any other correction is either futile or a new problem. While Rome preserved her principles, judgments could without abuse remain in the hands of the senators ; but when she was corrupted, to whatever body judgments were transferred - to the senators, to the knights, to the public treasurers, to two of these bodies, to all three together, to whatever other body it might be - things were still awry. The knights had no more virtue than the senators, the public treasurers no more than the knights, and the latter as little as the centurions.

When the people of Rome had obtained the right of participation in the patrician magistracies, it was natural to think that their flatterers would become the arbiters of the government. No, what happened was that the people, who were opening magistracies to plebeians, always elected patricians. Because they were virtuous, they were magnanimous ; because they were free, they disdained power. But when they had lost their principles, the more power they had, the less compromising they were, until finally, having become their own tyrant and their own slaves, they lost the strength of freedom to fall into the weakness of license.