



Progress bar for book and chapter

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Editions/Translations Author Group

View text chunked by:  
book : chapter

Table of Contents:  
Livy from the Founding of the City: Book I  
Summary of book I  
Book II  
chapter 1-65  
Summary of book II

5. The question of the royal property, which they had before voted to return, was laid before the Fathers for fresh consideration. This time anger won the day. [2] They refused to return it, and refused to confiscate it to the state, but gave it up to the plebeians to plunder, that having had their fingers in the spoils of the princes they might for ever relinquish hope of making their peace with them. The land of the Tarquini, lying between the City and the Tiber, was consecrated to Mars and became the Campus Martius. [3] It happened, they say, that there was then standing upon it a crop of spelt, ripe for the harvest. Since this produce of the land might not, for religious reasons, be consumed, the grain was cut, straw and all,<sup>1</sup> by a large body of men, who were set to work upon it simultaneously, and was carried in baskets and thrown into the Tiber, then flowing with a feeble current, as is usually the case in midsummer. [4] So the heaps [p. 233]of grain, caught in the shallow water, settled down<sup>2</sup> in the mud, and out of these and the accumulation of other chance materials such as a river brings down, there was gradually formed an island. Later, I suppose, embankments were added, and work was done, to raise the surface so high above the water and make it strong enough to sustain even temples and porticoes. [5] When the chattels of the princes had been pillaged, sentence was pronounced and punishment inflicted upon the traitors — a punishment the more conspicuous because the office of consul imposed upon a father the duty of exacting the penalty from his sons, and he who ought to have been spared even the sight of their suffering was the very man whom Fortune appointed to enforce it. [6] Bound to the stake stood youths of the highest birth. But the rest were ignored as if they had been of the rabble: the consul's sons drew all eyes upon themselves. [7] Men pitied them for their punishment not more than for the crime by which they had deserved that punishment. To think that those young men, in that year of all others, when their country was liberated and her liberator their own father, and when the consulship had begun with the Junian family, could have brought themselves to betray all —the senate, the plebs, and all the gods and men of Rome —to one who had formerly been a tyrannical king and was then an enemy exile! [8] The consuls advanced to their tribunal and dispatched the lictors to execute the sentence. The culprits were stripped, scourged with rods, and beheaded, while through it all men gazed at the expression on the father's face, where they might clearly read a father's anguish, as he administered the nation's retribution. [9] When the [p. 235]guilty had suffered, that the example might be in<sup>3</sup> both respects a notable deterrent from crime, the informer was rewarded with money from the treasury, emancipation, and citizenship. [10] He is said to have been the first to be freed by the *vindicta*.<sup>4</sup> Some think that even the word *vindicta* was derived from his name, which they suppose to have been Vindicus. From his time onwards it was customary to regard those who had been freed by this form as admitted to citizenship.

1 Ordinarily the Roman farmer cut the stalk close to the ear, but this time it was cut near the ground, that the crop might be completely destroyed.

2 B.C. 509

3 B.C. 509

4 A staff with which the slave was touched in the ceremony of manumission. The etymology suggested in the next sentence is wrong; *Vindicus*, like *vindicta*, is derived from *vindex*.

Livy. Books I and II With An English Translation. Cambridge. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd. 1919.

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References (94 total) hide  
Commentary references to this page (26):  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 31–32, commentary, 31.10  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 31–32, commentary, 31.8  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 31–32, commentary, 32.33  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 31–32, commentary, 32.5  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 33–34, commentary, 34.22  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 33–34, commentary, 34.53  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 35–38, commentary, 35.10  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 35–38, commentary, 36.26  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 35–38, commentary, 37.30  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 35–38, commentary, 37.36  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 35–38, commentary, 37.54  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 41–42, commentary, 41.14  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 41–42, commentary, 41.9  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 41–42, commentary, 42.19  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 41–42, commentary, 42.33  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 43–44, commentary, 43.11  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 43–44, commentary, 43.4  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 43–44, commentary, 43.4  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 43–44, commentary, 43.5  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 43–44, commentary, 44.15  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 43–44, commentary, 44.44  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, books 43–44, commentary, 44.9  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, book 45, commentary, 45.12  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, book 45, commentary, 45.31  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, book 45, commentary, 45.44  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita libri, erklärt von M. Weissenborn, book 45, commentary, 45.7  
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Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita, Index, Proditores  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita, Index, Tarquiniorem  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita, Index, Tibertina  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita, Index, Ager  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita, Index, Vindicus  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita, Index, L. Iun. Brutus  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita, Index, Campi  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita, Index, Consulatus  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita, Index, Far  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita, Index, Indici  
Titus Livius (Livy), Ab urbe condita, Index, Insula  
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Plutarch, Publicola, Plut. Publ. 8  
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Lewis & Short, bōnum  
Lewis & Short, caedo  
Lewis & Short, cālor  
Lewis & Short, cālor  
Lewis & Short, campus  
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Lewis & Short, con-spīcio  
Lewis & Short, con-tingo  
Lewis & Short, cum  
Lewis & Short, dē-līgo  
Lewis & Short, dē-sēco  
Lewis & Short, ē-mīnēo  
Lewis & Short, exactor  
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Lewis & Short, haesito  
Lewis & Short, immitto  
Lewis & Short, in-dūco  
Lewis & Short, inter  
Lewis & Short, inter  
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Lewis & Short, magnus  
Lewis & Short, mātūrus  
Lewis & Short, messis  
Lewis & Short, nōbillis  
Lewis & Short, pātrius  
Lewis & Short, quod  
Lewis & Short, rē-cīpio  
Lewis & Short, rēd-igo  
Lewis & Short, rēligiōsus  
Lewis & Short, sēcūris  
Lewis & Short, sēcēs  
Lewis & Short, strāmentum  
Lewis & Short, supplicium  
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