

# Coriolanus

Act III, sc. 1 (line 116)

## CORIOLANUS

O good but most unwise patricians! why,  
You grave but reckless senators, have you thus  
Given Hydra here to choose an officer,  
That with his peremptory 'shall,' being but  
The horn and noise o' the monster's, wants not spirit  
To say he'll turn your current in a ditch,  
And make your channel his? If he have power  
Then vail your ignorance; if none, awake  
Your dangerous lenity. If you are learn'd,  
Be not as common fools; if you are not,  
Let them have cushions by you. You are plebeians,  
If they be senators: and they are no less,  
When, both your voices blended, the great'st taste  
Most palates theirs. They choose their magistrate,  
And such a one as he, who puts his 'shall,'  
His popular 'shall' against a graver bench  
Than ever frown in Greece. By Jove himself!  
It makes the consuls base: and my soul aches  
To know, when two authorities are up,  
Neither supreme, how soon confusion

May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take

The one by the other.