

233 ferenda sint, didicerimus. Quare, Caesar, ego quoque a te hoc peto, ut, si tibi videtur, disputes de hoc toto iocandi genere, quid sentias, ne qua forte dicendi pars, quoniam ita voluistis, in hoc tali coetu, atque in tam accurato sermone praeterita esse videatur. Ego exigis, non committam, ut, si defugerim, tibi causam aliquam dem recusandi, quanquam soleo saepe mirari eorum impudentiam, qui agunt in scena gestum, spectante Roscio; quis enim sese commovere potest, cuius ille vitia non videat? Sic ego nunc, Crasso audiente, primum loquar de facetiis, et docebo sus, ut aiunt, oratorem eum, quem cum Catulus nuper  
 234 audisset, 'foenum alios aiebat esse oportere.' Tum ille: Iocabatur, inquit, Catulus, praesertim cum ita dicat ipse, ut ambrosia alendus esse videatur. Verum te, Caesar, audiamus, ut ad Antonii reliqua redeamus. Et Antonius: Perpauca quidem mihi restant, inquit; sed tamen, defessus iam labore atque itinere disputationis meae, requiescam in Caesaris sermone quasi in aliquo peropportuno deversorio.

LVIII. Atqui, inquit Iulius, non nimis liberale hospitium meum dices: nam te in viam, simul ac  
 235 perpaulum gustaris, extrudam et eiciam. Ac, ne diutius vos demorer, de omni isto genere, quid sentiam, perbreuiter exponam. De risu quinque sunt,

<sup>a</sup> Caesar refers to his forthcoming talk as if it were his contribution to a feast.

<sup>b</sup> See Book I, lix.-lxi.

<sup>c</sup> Said to have tendered advice to the Goddess of Wisdom. Compare the English proverb as to a grandchild giving its ancestress hints on egg-sucking.

<sup>d</sup> As seeming but brute beasts in comparison with Crassus.

233 attain by native talent, study or practice. And so, Caesar, I too beg you, if you think proper, to discuss fully this type of jesting, and to state your views, lest haply one branch of oratory should be thought to have been passed over, with your approval, in such a company as this, and in a conversation so carefully elaborated." "Assuredly, Crassus," replied Caesar, "seeing that you are collecting a boon companion's 'shot,'<sup>a</sup> I will not run away and so give you any occasion for complaint, although I am generally amazed at the shamelessness of those who strut the stage under the very eye of Roscius<sup>b</sup>; for what man can so much as stir without that artist noticing his weak points? Just so I, with Crassus in my audience, am now going to discuss witticisms for the first time and, in emulation of the proverbial hog,<sup>c</sup> to instruct that orator of whom, after recently hearing him, Catulus declared that 'all  
 234 others ought to be fed on hay.'"<sup>d</sup> "Catulus was speaking in jest," returned Crassus, "and the more plainly so in that his own style seems to entitle him to heavenly sustenance. But let us hear you, Caesar, and come back afterwards to what Antonius has still in hand." "In fact I have very few things left to say," observed Antonius, "but in any case I am already worn-out by my long and toilsome debate, and shall repose, while Caesar is talking, as though in a most convenient roadside inn."

LVIII. "Well then," said Julius, "you will not call my hospitality unduly generous, for I shall thrust  
 235 you forth and cast you out upon the road, directly you have taken the tiniest taste of it. And now, to delay you no longer, I will very concisely state my views on that subject of yours in general. As

quae quaerantur : unum, quid sit ; alterum, unde sit ; tertium sitne oratoris, velle risum movere ; quartum, quatenus ; quintum, quae sint genera ridiculi.

Atque illud primum, quid sit ipse risus, quo pacto concitetur, ubi sit, quomodo existat, atque ita repente erumpat, ut eum cupientes tenere nequeamus, et quomodo simul latera, os, venas, vultum, oculos occupet, viderit Democritus : neque enim ad hunc sermonem hoc pertinet ; et, si pertineret, nescire me tamen id non puderet quod ne illi quidem seirent, qui pollicerentur.

236 Locus autem, et regio quasi ridiculi (nam id proxime quaeritur) turpitudine et deformitate quadam continetur : haec enim ridentur vel sola, vel maxime, quae notant et designant turpitudinem aliquam non turpiter.

Est autem, ut ad illud tertium veniam, est plane oratoris movere risum ; vel quod ipsa hilaritas benevolentiam conciliat ei, per quem excitata est ; vel quod admirantur omnes acumen uno saepe in verbo positum maxime respondentis, nonnunquam etiam lacescentis ; vel quod frangit adversarium, quod impedit, quod elevat, quod deterret, quod refutat : vel quod ipsum oratorem politum esse hominem significat, quod eruditum, quod urbanum, maximeque quod tristitiam ac severitatem mitigat et relaxat,

<sup>a</sup> An eminent Greek physicist of the 5th century B.C. : known as 'the laughing philosopher.'

regards laughter there are five matters for consideration : first, its nature ; second, its source ; third, whether willingness to produce it becomes an orator ; fourth, the limits of his licence ; fifth, the classification of things laughable.

" Now the first of these topics, the essential nature <sup>(1) its nature ;</sup> of laughter, the way it is occasioned, where it is seated, and how it comes into being, and bursts out so unexpectedly that, strive as we may, we cannot restrain it, and how at the same instant it takes possession of the lungs, voice, pulse, countenance and eyes,—all this I leave to Democritus <sup>a</sup> : for it does not concern the present conversation, and, even if it did, I should still not be ashamed to show ignorance of something which even its professed expositors do not understand.

236 " Then the field or province, so to speak, of the laughable (this being our next problem), is restricted <sup>(2) its province ;</sup> to that which may be described as unseemly or ugly ; for the chief, if not the only, objects of laughter are those sayings which remark upon and point out something unseemly in no unseemly manner.

" And again, to come to our third topic, it clearly <sup>(3) its rhetorical appropriateness ;</sup> becomes an orator to raise laughter, and this on various grounds ; for instance, merriment naturally wins goodwill for its author ; and everyone admires acuteness, which is often concentrated in a single word, uttered generally in repelling, though sometimes in delivering an attack ; and it shatters or obstructs or makes light of an opponent, or alarms or repulses him ; and it shows the orator himself to be a man of finish, accomplishment and taste ; and, best of all, it relieves dullness and tones down austerity, and, by a jest or a laugh, often dispels dis-

odiosasque res saepe, quas argumentis dilui non facile est, ioco risuque dissolvit.

237 Quatenus autem sint ridicula tractanda oratori, perquam diligenter videndum est, id quod in quarto loco quaerendi posueramus. Nam nec insignis improbitas, et scelere iuncta, nec rursus miseria insignis agitata ridetur: facinorosos enim maiore quadam vi quam ridiculi vulnerari volunt; miseros illudi nolunt nisi se forte iactant. Parcendum est autem maxime caritati hominum, ne temere in eos dicas qui diliguntur.

238 LIX. Haec igitur adhibenda est primum in iocando moderatio. Itaque ea facillime luduntur, quae neque odio magno, neque misericordia maxima digna sunt. Quam ob rem materies omnis ridiculorum est in istis vitiis quae sunt in vita hominum neque carorum neque calamitosorum, neque eorum qui ob facinus ad supplicium rapiendi videntur; eaque belle agitata ridentur. Est etiam deformitatis et corporis vitiorum satis bella materies ad iocandum; sed quaerimus idem, quod in ceteris rebus maxime quaerendum est, quatenus. In quo non modo illud praecipitur, ne quid insulse, sed etiam, si quid perridicule possis, vitandum est oratori utrumque, ne aut scurrilis iocus sit, aut mimicus. Quae cuiusmodi sint, facilius iam intellegemus, cum ad ipsa ridiculorum genera venerimus.

tasteful suggestions not easily weakened by reasonings.

237 But the limits within which things laughable are to be handled by the orator, that fourth question we put to ourselves, is one calling for most careful consideration. For neither outstanding wickedness, such as involves crime, nor, on the other hand, outstanding wretchedness is assailed by ridicule, for the public would have the villainous hurt by a weapon rather more formidable than ridicule; while they dislike mockery of the wretched, except perhaps if these bear themselves arrogantly. And you must be especially tender of popular esteem, so that you do not inconsiderately speak ill of the well-beloved.

238 LIX. "Such then is the restraint that, above all else, must be practised in jesting. Thus the things most easily ridiculed are those which call for neither strong disgust nor the deepest sympathy. This is why all laughing-matters are found among those blemishes noticeable in the conduct of people who are neither objects of general esteem nor yet full of misery, and not apparently merely fit to be hurried off to execution for their crimes; and these blemishes, if deftly handled, raise laughter. In ugliness too and in physical blemishes there is good enough matter for jesting, but here as elsewhere the limits of licence are the main question. As to this, not only is there a rule excluding remarks made in bad taste, but also, even though you could say something with highly comical effect, an orator must avoid each of two dangers: he must not let his jesting become buffoonery or mere mimicking. We shall more readily understand examples of each kind when we come to the actual classification of things laughable.