

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.

Duo enim sunt genera facetiarum, quorum alterum
 240 re tractatur, alterum dicto. Re, si quando quid, tan-
 quam aliqua fabella narratur; ut olim tu, Crasse, in
 Memmium, 'comedisse eum lacertum Largi,' cum
 esset cum eo Tarracinae de amicula rixatus: salsa,
 at tamen a te ipso ficta tota narratio. Addidisti clau-
 sulam, tota Tarracina tum omnibus in parietibus
 inscriptas fuisse litteras, LLL, MM; cum quaereres
 id quid esset, senem tibi quendam oppidanum dixisse
 'Lacerat Lacertum Largi Mordax Memmius.'
 241 Perspicitis, hoc genus quam sit facetum, quam ele-
 gans, quam oratorium, sive habeas vere, quod narrare
 possis, quod tamen est mendaciunculis aspergen-
 dum, sive fingas. Est autem haec huius generis
 virtus, ut ita facta demonstres, ut mores eius, de quo
 narres, ut sermo, ut vultus omnes exprimantur, ut eis
 242 qui audiunt, tum geri illa fierique videantur. In re
 est item ridiculum, quod ex quadam depravata imita-
 tione sumi solet; ut idem Crassus: 'Per tuam
 nobilitatem, per vestram familiam.' Quid aliud fuit,
 in quo contio rideret, nisi illa vultus et vocis imi-
 tatio? 'Per tuas statuas' vero cum dixit, et extento
 bracchio paululum etiam de gestu addidit, vehemen-
 tius risimus. Ex hoc genere est illa Rosciana imitatio
 senis: 'Tibi ego, Antipho, has sero,' inquit. Senium

^a Gaius Memmius, a turbulent tribune of 111 B.C., against whose ferocious character this jest of Crassus seems to be levelled.

^b This merriment may have been excited by an attack of Crassus upon Domitius Ahenobarbus, who was possibly disliked for his excessive family pride.

"For there are two types of wit, one employed upon
 240 facts, the other upon words. Upon facts, whenever
 any tale is told, some anecdote for instance, just as
 you, Crassus, alleged one day, in a speech against
 Memmius,^a that Memmius 'had made a mouthful
 of Largus's arm,' when brawling with him at Tarracina
 over a lady-love; it was a spicy story, but every
 word of your own fabrication. You wound up by
 relating that the letters M.M.L.L.L. were inscribed
 on every wall in Tarracina, and that some ancient in-
 habitant answered, when you asked what they meant,
 241 'Mordacious Memmius lacerates Largus's limb.' You
 see plainly how graceful, choice and well befitting an
 orator is a jest of this sort, whether you have some
 truth you can relate,—which for all that may be
 sprinkled with fibs,—or whether you are only fabri-
 cating. Now the beauty of such jesting is, that you
 state your incidents in such a way, that the character,
 the manner of speaking and all the facial expressions
 of the hero of your tale, are so presented that those
 incidents seem to your audience to take place and
 to be transacted concurrently with your description
 242 of them. Another sort of jest depending on facts,
 is that which is generally derived from what may be
 called vulgarized mimicry, as when on another occa-
 sion, Crassus was adjuring an adversary in the words,
 'By your rank, by your lineage!' What else had the
 assembly to laugh at in this than that mimicry of
 facial expression and intonation? But when he went
 on to say, 'By your statuary,' and lent a touch of
 action to the word by stretching out his arm, we
 laughed quite consumedly.^b To this class belongs
 Roscius's famous representation of an old man, when
 he quavers out, 'For you, son Antipho, I'm planting

Wit of
 matter and
 wit of form;
 the former
 comprising
 anecdote
 and cari-
 cature.

est, cum audio. Atqui ita est totum hoc ipso genere ridiculum, ut cautissime tractandum sit. Mimorum est enim ethologorum, si nimia est imitatio, sicut obscenitas. Orator surripiat oportet imitationem ut is qui audiet, cogitet plura, quam videat; praestet idem ingenuitatem et ruborem suum, verborum turpitudine et rerum obscenitate vitanda.

243 LX. Ergo haec duo genera sunt eius ridiculi, quod in re positum est; quae sunt propria perpetuarum facetiarum, in quibus describuntur hominum mores, et ita effinguntur, ut aut re narrata aliqua, quales sint, intellegantur, aut, imitatione brevi iniecta, in aliquo insigni ad irridendum vitio reperiantur.

244 In dicto autem ridiculum est id, quod verbi, aut sententiae quodam acumine movetur. Sed ut in illo superiore genere vel narrationis, vel imitationis, vitanda est mimorum ethologorum similitudo, sic in hoc scurrilis oratori dicacitas magnopere fugienda est. Qui igitur distinguemus a Crasso, a Catulo, a ceteris familiarem vestrum, Granium, aut Vargulam, amicum meum? Non mehercule in mentem mihi quidem venit: sunt enim dicaces; Granio quidem nemo dicacior. Hoc, opinor, primum, ne, quotienscumque

245 potuerit dictum dici, necesse habeamus dicere. Pussillus testis processit. 'Licet,' inquit, 'rogare?'

* From a lost play.

these.'^a I think I am listening to testy Eld personified. However this particular kind of laughing-matter is all such as to need extreme circumspection in the handling of it. For if the caricature is too extravagant, it becomes the work of buffoons in pantomime, as also does grossness. It behoves the orator to borrow merely a suspicion of mimicry, so that his hearer may imagine more than meets his eye; he must also testify to his own well-bred modesty, by avoiding all unseemly language and offensive gestures.

243 LX. "These then are the two kinds of the jesting that is founded on facts; and they are appropriate to continuous irony, wherein the characters of individuals are sketched and so portrayed, that either through the relation of some anecdote their real natures are understood, or, by the infusion of a trifle of mimicry, they are found out in some fault sufficiently marked to be laughed at.

244 "As regards words, however, the laughter is awakened by something pointed in a phrase or reflection. But just as, with the former kind, both in narrative and in mimicry, all likeness to buffoons in pantomime is to be avoided, so in this latter case the orator must scrupulously shun all buffoonish raillery. How then shall we distinguish from Crassus, from Catulus, and from the others, your familiar acquaintance Granius, or my own friend Vargula? Upon my word, I have never considered this matter, for all of them are witty, none indeed more so than Granius. The first point to make, I think, is that we should not feel bound to utter a witticism every time an occasion offers. A very small witness once came forward. 'May I examine him?' said Philippus.

The latter, wit of form, to be used sparingly.