

Philippus. Tum quaesitor properans: 'Modo bre-
viter.' Hic ille: 'Non accusabis; perpusillum
rogabo.' Ridicule. Sed sedebat iudex L. Aurifex,
brevior ipse, quam testis etiam: omnis est risus in
iudicem conversus: visum est totum scurrile ridi-
culum. Ergo haec quae cadere possunt in quos nolis,
quamvis sint bella, sunt tamen ipso genere scurrilia.
246 Ut iste, qui se vult dicacem, et mehercule est, Appius,
sed nonnunquam in hoc vitium scurrile delabitur.
'Cenabo,' inquit, 'apud te,' huic lusco, familiari
meo, C. Sextio; 'uni enim locum esse video.' Est
hoc scurrile, et quod sine causa laccessivit; et tamen
id dixit quod in omnis luscus conveniret; ea, quia
meditata putantur esse, minus ridentur. Illud
egregium Sextii, et ex tempore: 'Manus lava,'
inquit, 'et cena.'

247 Temporis igitur ratio, et ipsius dicacitatis mode-
ratio et temperantia et raritas dictorum distinguet
oratore a scurra, et quod nos cum causa dicimus,
non ut ridiculi videamur, sed ut proficiamus aliquid,
illi totum diem et sine causa. Quid enim est Vargula
assecutus, cum eum candidatus A. Sempronius cum
Marco suo fratre complexus esset: 'Puer, abige
muscas?' Risum quaesivit, qui est, mea sententia,
vel tenuissimus ingenii fructus. Tempus igitur di-

^a Apparently a reflection upon the self-invited guest's
probity. Compare the English legal maxim: 'He that
cometh to Equity must come with clean hands.'

^b *Musca* was a cognomen of the gens Sempronia, and is
also Latin for various winged insects. Vargula seems to
have intended a subtle comparison between humming and
biting insects and chattering and irritating canvassers.

The president of the Court, who was in a hurry,
answered, 'Only if you are short.' 'You will not
complain,' returned Philippus, 'for I shall be just
as short as that man is.' Quite comical; but there
as short as that man is. Quite comical; but there
on the tribunal sat Lucius Aurifex, and he was even
finier than the witness: all the laughter was directed
against Lucius, and the joke seemed merely buf-
foonish. And so those shafts which may light upon
unintended victims, however feately they may be
winged, are none the less essentially those of a
winged, For instance, that Appius, who tries to be
246 buffoon. For instance, that Appius, who tries to be
witty, and egad! succeeds, though occasionally slip-
ping into this failing of buffoonery, said to my one-
eyed friend here, Gaius Sextius, 'I will sup with
you, for I see you have room for another one.' This
is the joke of a buffoon, for he attacked unprovoked,
and even so only said what would apply to every
one-eyed individual. Jokes of that sort, as they
seem to be thought out in advance, win but little
laughter. The retort of Sextius was brilliant and
spontaneous: 'Wash your hands,' says he, 'before
supper.'^a

247 "Regard then to occasions, control and restraint of
our actual raillery, and economy in bon-mots, will
distinguish an orator from a buffoon, as also will the
fact that we people speak with good reason, not just
to be thought funny, but to gain some benefit, while
those others are jesting from morning to night, and
without any reason at all. Thus, when Aulus Sem-
pronius was on canvassing bent, along with Marcus
his brother, and embraced Vargula, what good did
it do Vargula to shout 'Boy, drive away these
buzzers?'^b His object was to get a laugh—to my
mind the very poorest return for cleverness. The

cendi prudentia et gravitate moderabimur: quarum utinam artem aliquam haberemus! sed domina natura est.

248 LXI. Nunc exponamus genera ipsa summam, quae risum maxime moveant. Haec igitur sit prima partitio, quod facete dicatur, id alias in re habere alias in verbo facetias: maxime autem homines delectari, si quando risus coniuncte re verboque moveatur. Sed hoc mementote, quoscumque locos attingam, unde ridicula ducantur, ex eisdem locis fere etiam graves sententias posse duci. Tantum interest, quod gravitas honestis in rebus severe, iocus in turpiculis et quasi deformibus ponitur, velut eisdem verbis et laudare frugi servum possumus, et, si est nequam, iocari. Ridiculum est illud Neronianum vetus in furaci servo, 'Solum esse, cui domi nihil sit nec obsignatum, nec oclusum': quod idem in bono 249 servo dici solet, sed hoc eisdem etiam verbis. Ex eisdem autem locis nascuntur omnia. Nam quod Sp. Carvilio graviter claudicanti ex vulnere ob rempublicam accepto, et ob eam causam verecundanti in publicum prodire, mater dixit, 'Quin prodis, mi Spuri? quotienscumque gradum facies, totiens tibi tuarum virtutum veniet in mentem': praeclarum et grave est. Quod Calvino Glaucia claudicanti, 'Ubi est vetus illud: num claudicat? at hic clodicat,' hoc ridiculum est; et utrumque ex eo, quod in

^a *Clodicare*, plebeian and rustic form of *claudicare*, au being vulgarly pronounced *o*.

right occasion therefore for speaking out we shall fix by our own wisdom and discretion: would that we had some theory of the use of these qualities! though intuition is the sovereign directress.

248 LXI. "Now let us summarize the essential natures of the chief sources of laughter. Let our first distinction, then, be this, that a witty saying has its point sometimes in facts, sometimes in words, though people are most particularly amused whenever laughter is excited by the union of the two. But remember this, that whatever subjects I may touch upon, as being sources of laughing-matters, may equally well, as a rule, be sources of serious thoughts. The only difference is that seriousness is bestowed austere and upon things of good repute, jesting upon what is a trifle unseemly, or, so to speak, uncouth; for example, we can, in identical terms, praise a careful servant, and make fun of one who is good-for-nothing. There is humour in that old remark of Nero's about a thievish servant, 'that he was the only member of the household against whom nothing was sealed up or locked away,' a description frequently applied to a trusty servant also, and that 249 too word for word. In fact all kinds of remarks are derived from identical sources. For his mother's words to Spurius Carvilius, who was sadly lame from a wound received on national service, and for that reason shy of walking abroad, 'No no, my Spurius, go out! and let every step you take remind you of your gallantry,' are noble and dignified. But what Glaucia said to Calvinus, who was limping, 'Where is that old saying—Can he be hobbling? Nay, but he is wobbling,'^a is merely absurd. Yet both observations were derived from what the con-

Classification of verbal witticisms.