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MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

4 A. Quorsum tandem aut cur ista quaeris?

M. Nihil sane, nisi ne nimis diligenter inquiras in ea, quae isto modo memoriae sint prodita.

A. Atqui multa quaeruntur in Mario fictane vera sint, et a non nullis, quod et in recenti memoria et in Arpinati homine versere, veritas a te postulatur.

M. Et mehercule ego me cupio non mendacem putari; sed tamen non nulli isti, Tite noster, faciunt imperite, qui in isto periculo non ut a poeta, sed ut a teste veritatem exigant; nec dubito quin idem et cum Egeria conlocutum Numanum et ab aquila Tarquinio apicem inpositum putent.

5 Q. Intellego te, frater, alias in historia leges observandas putare, alias in poemate.

M. Quippe, cum in illa omnia¹ ad veritatem, Quinte, referantur, in hoc ad delectationem pleraque; quamquam et apud Herodotum, patrem historiae, et apud Theopompum sunt innumerabiles fabulae.

H. A. Teneo quam optabam occasionem neque omittam.

M. Quam tandem, Tite?

A. Postulatur a te iam diu vel flagitatur potius historia. sic enim putant, te illam tractante effici

¹ omnia supplied by Vahlen; omitted in MSS.

¹ According to the tradition King Numa frequently met the goddess Egeria in a sacred grove (Livy I, 21).

² Before Tarquinius Priscus became king, it was said that an eagle whisked off his cap, circled about with loud cries, and then replaced it on his head, thus prophesying his future greatness (Livy I, 34).

LAWS. I. 1. 4-11. 5

A. What is your purpose or reason for asking such questions?

M. None at all, except to keep you from inquiring too critically into traditions which are handed down in that way.

A. Yet people ask, concerning many parts of the "Marius," whether they are fiction or fact; and certain persons, since you are dealing with recent events and a native of Arpinum, demand that you stick to the truth.

M. And I for my part have no desire to be thought to deal in falsehood; but all the same, my dear Titus, those "certain persons" whom you mention display their ignorance by demanding in such a matter the kind of truthfulness expected of a witness in court rather than of a poet. No doubt these same people believe that Numa talked with Egeria,¹ and that the cap was placed on Tarquinius' head by the eagle!²

Q. As I understand it, then, my dear brother, you believe that different principles are to be followed in history and in poetry.

M. Certainly, Quintus; for in history the standard by which everything is judged is the truth, while in poetry it is generally the pleasure one gives; however, in the works of Herodotus, the Father of History, and in those of Theopompus, one finds innumerable fabulous tales.

H. A. I now have an opportunity which I have been wanting, and I shall not let it pass.

M. What do you mean, Titus?

A. There has long been a desire, or rather a demand, that you should write a history. For people think that, if you entered that field, we might rival

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posse, ut in hoc etiam genere Graeciae nihil cedamus. atque ut audias, quid ego ipse sentiam, non solum mihi videris eorum studiis, qui litteris¹ delectantur, sed etiam patriae debere hoc munus, ut ea, quae salva per te est, per te eundem sit ornata. dest² enim historia litteris nostris, ut et ipse intellego et ex te persaepe audio. potes autem tu profecto satis facere in ea, quippe cum sit opus, ut tibi quidem videri solet, unum hoc oratorium maxime quam ob rem adgredere, quaesumus, et sume ad hanc rem tempus, quae est in nostris hominibus adhuc aut ignorata aut relicta. nam post annalis pontificum maximorum, quibus nihil potest esse ieunius, si aut ad Fabium aut ad eum, qui tibi semper in ore est, Catonem, aut ad Pisonem aut ad Fannium aut ad Vennonium venias, quamquam ex his alius alio plus habet virium, tamen quid tam exile quam isti omnes? Fanni autem aetati coniunctus Antipater paulo inflavit vehementius habuitque vires agrestis ille quidem atque horridas sinu nitore ac palaestra, sed tamen admonere reliquos potuit ut accuratius scriberent. ecce autem successores huic belli: Clodius, Asellio; nihil ad Coelium sed potius ad antiquorum languorem et inscitiam nam quid Macrum numerem? cuius loquacitas habet aliquid argutiarum, nec id tamen ex illa erudit

¹ qui litteris A¹ H; qui tuis litteris A² B.

² dest Valden; at est A; a te B; adest H; adest is the common reading.

LAWS I. II. 5-7

Greece in this branch of literature also. And to give you my own opinion, it seems to me that you owe this duty not merely to the desires of those who take pleasure in literature, but also to your country, in order that the land which you have saved you may also glorify. For our national literature is deficient in history, as I realize myself and as I frequently hear you say. But you can certainly fill this gap satisfactorily, since, as you at least have always believed,¹ this branch of literature is closer than any other to oratory. Therefore take up the task, we beg of you, and find the time for a duty which has hitherto been either overlooked or neglected by our countrymen. For after the annals of the chief pontiffs, which are records of the driest possible character, when we come to Fabius, or to Cato (whose name is always on your lips), or to Piso, Fannius, or Vennonius, although one of these may display more vigour than another, yet what could be more lifeless than the whole group? Fannius' contemporary, Antipater, to be sure, blew a somewhat more forceful strain, and showed some power, though of a rough and rustic character, lacking in polish and the skill that comes from training; nevertheless he might have served as a warning to his successors that they should take greater pains with their writing. But lo and behold, his successors were those fine specimens, Clodius and Asellio! These two are not to be compared with Coelius, but rather with the feebleness and clumsiness of our earlier historians. And why should I even mention Macer? His long-winded style shows indeed some little acumen (though borrowed not

¹ See Cicero, *De Oratore* II, 62.

36 Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis, qua voce alia, nisi oratoris, immortalitati commendatur? Nam si qua est ars alia, quae verborum aut faciendorum aut legendorum scientiam profiteatur; aut si quisquam dicitur nisi orator formare orationem eamque variare et distinguere quasi quibusdam verborum sententiarumque insignibus; aut si via ulla, nisi ab hac una arte, traditur, aut argumentorum, aut sententiarum, aut denique descriptionis atque ordinis, fateamur aut hoc, quod haec ars profiteatur, alienum esse aut cum aliqua alia arte esse commune. Sed si in hac una est ea ratio atque doctrina, non, si quibusdam artium bene locuti sunt, eo minus id est huius unius proprium; sed, ut orator de eis rebus, quae ceterarum artium sunt, si modo eas cognovit (ut heri Crassus dicebat), optime potest dicere, sic ceterarum artium homines ornatus illa sua dicunt, sic quid ab hac arte didicerunt. Neque enim si de rusticis rebus agricola quispiam, aut etiam, id quod multo magis, si de morbis, aut de pingendo pictor aliquis disertè dixerit aut scripserit, idcirco illius artis putanda est eloquentia: in qua quia vis magna est.

* *Insignia* are the 'purple patches' of Horace, *A.P.* 15-16
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36 "And as History, which bears witness to the passing of the ages, sheds light upon reality, gives life to recollection and guidance to human existence, and brings tidings of ancient days, whose voice, but the orator's, can entrust her to immortality? For if there be any other art, which pretends to skill in the coinage and choice of language, or if it be claimed for anyone but the orator that he gives shape and variety to a speech, and marks it out with high lights of thought and phrase, or if any method be taught, except by this single art, for producing proofs or reflections, or even in the distribution and arrangement of subject-matter, then let us admit that the skill professed by this art of ours either belongs really to some other art, or is shared in common with some other. Whereas, if all reasoning and all teaching really belong to this one art alone, then, even though professors of other arts have expressed themselves with success, it does not therefore follow that such instruction is not the monopoly of this single art; but (as Crassus was saying yesterday) just as the orator is best qualified to discuss the subjects pertaining to the other arts, assuming always that he has acquainted himself with them, so the masters of the other arts expound their own topics with the better grace, if they have learned something from the art with which we are dealing. For even though some farmer may have written or spoken with address upon country matters or perhaps a medical man upon pathology, as many have done, or a painter upon painting, it does not therefore follow that eloquence belongs to the particular art, the truth being that in the art of speaking, by reason of the vast energy inherent in human intelli-

dicendis, quasi in arte tradere? Nihil sane, inquit Catulus, necesse est.

49 XII. Quid? si quod saepe summis viris accidit mandata sint exponenda, aut in senatu ab imperatore, aut ad imperatorem, aut ad regem, aut ad populum aliquem a senatu, num quia genere orationis in eiusmodi causis accuratius est utendum, ideo pars etiam haec causarum numeranda videtur aut propriis praeceptis instruenda? Minime vero, inquit Catulus: non enim deerit homini diserto in eiusmodi rebus facultas, ex ceteris rebus et causis comparata.

50 Ergo item, inquit, illa, quae saepe diserte agenda sunt, et quae ego paulo ante cum eloquentiam laudarem dixi oratoris esse, neque habent suum locum ullum in divisione partium, neque certum praeceptorum genus, et agenda sunt non minus diserte, quam quae in lite dicuntur, obinurgatio, exhortatio, consolatio: quorum nihil est, quod non summa dicendi ornamenta desideret; sed ex artificibus istae praecepta non quaerunt. Plane, inquit Catulus, assentior.

51 Age vero, inquit Antonius, qualis oratoris, quanti hominis in dicendo, putas esse, historiam scribere? Si, ut Graeci scripserunt, summi, inquit Catulus; si, ut nostri, nihil opus est oratore;

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sphere of the art?" Catulus answered, "There is no need whatever to do so."

49 XII. "And what if (as often happens to the most exalted personages) messages have to be communicated from a general at a meeting of the Senate, or conveyed from the Senate to a general or to any prince or nation? Because, on occasions of this sort, a style of diction more elaborate than the ordinary has to be employed, does it therefore seem to follow that this type of speaking should be accounted a distinct department of oratorical activity, or should be fitted out with its own peculiar rules?" "Why of course not," returned Catulus, "since the ability acquired by a ready speaker, from the treatment of his other subjects and topics, will not fail him in situations of that description."

50 "And so," continued Antonius, "those matters which often demand fluent expression, and which just now, in my praise of eloquence, I asserted to be within the part of the orator, have no special place in the formal classification of the branches of rhetoric, nor any particular code of rules, and yet they must be handled quite as skilfully as arguments at the bar: I am speaking of rebuke, encouragement, and the giving of comfort, each of which topics calls for the finest graces of diction, while such subjects ask no directions from theory." "I am in complete agreement with you," said Catulus.

51 "Now further," proceeded Antonius, "what class of orator, and how great a master of language is qualified, in your opinion, to write history?" "If he is to write as the Greeks have written," answered Catulus, "a man of supreme ability is required: if the standard is to be that of our own fellow-country-

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est, non esse mendacem. Atqui, ne nostros con-
 temnas, inquit Antonius, Gracci quoque sic initio
 52 scriptitarunt, ut noster Cato, ut Pictor, ut Piso. Erat
 enim historia nihil aliud nisi annalium confectio, cuius
 rei, memoriaeque publicae retinendae causa, ab
 initio rerum Romanarum usque ad P. Mucium ponti-
 ficem maximum, res omnes singulorum annorum
 mandabat litteris pontifex maximus, referebatque in
 album, et proponebat tabulam domi, potestas ut
 esset populo cognoscendi, hique etiam nunc Annales
 53 Maximi nominantur. Hanc similitudinem scribendi
 multi secuti sunt, qui sine ullis ornamentis monu-
 menta solum temporum, hominum, locorum ge-
 tarumque rerum reliquerunt. Itaque qualis apud
 Gracos Pherecydes, Hellanicus, Acusilas fuit, alii-
 permulti, talis noster Cato, et Pictor, et Piso, qui
 neque tenent, quibus rebus ornatur oratio—monu-
 menta enim huc ista sunt importata,—et, dum intellegant
 quid dicant, unam dicendi laudem putant
 54 brevitatem. Paulum se erexit, et addidit histori-
 am maiorem sonum vocis vir optimus, Crassi familiae
 Antipater: ceteri non exornatores rerum,
 tantummodo narratores fuerunt.

XIII. Est, inquit Catulus, ut dicis. Sed iste
 Coelius neque distinxit historiam varietate locorum
 neque verborum collocatione et tractu orationis

men, no orator at all is needed; it is enough that
 the man should not be a liar." "But nevertheless,"
 rejoined Antonius, "(and I say this, that you may
 not think lightly of our own folk) the Greeks them-
 selves also used to write, in the beginning, just like
 52 our Cato, Pictor and Piso. For history began as a
 mere compilation of annals, on which account, and
 in order to preserve the general traditions, from the
 earliest period of the City down to the pontificate of
 Publius Mucius, each High Priest used to commit to
 writing all the events of his year of office, and record
 them on a white surface, and post up the tablet at his
 house, that all men might have liberty to acquaint
 themselves therewith, and to this day those records
 53 are known as the Pontifical Chronicles. A similar
 style of writing has been adopted by many who, with-
 out any rhetorical ornament, have left behind them
 bare records of dates, personalities, places and events.
 In this sense Pherecydes, Hellanicus, Acusilas, and
 very many others among the Greeks, correspond to
 our own Cato, Pictor and Piso, who do not understand
 the adornment of composition—since it is only of
 late that decoration of that sort has been brought
 into this country—and, so long as their narrative is
 understood, regard conciseness as the historian's
 54 single merit. Antipater, an admirable man and a
 close friend of Crassus, raised his crest a little higher,
 and imparted to history a richer tone: the rest did
 not embellish their facts, but were chroniclers and
 nothing more."

XIII. "It is as you say," rejoined Catulus. "But
 even your friend Coelius did not set off his narrative
 with any diversity of reflections, or give finish to his
 famous work by his marshalling of words and a

cendum aucupans, horum libros et nonnullos alios,
 sed delectationis causa, cum est otium, legere soleo.
 60 Quid ergo? Est, fatebor, aliquid tamen: ut, cum in
 sole ambuleni, etiamsi aliam ob causam ambuleni,
 fieri natura tamen, ut colorer: sic, cum istos libros
 ad Misenum (nam Romae vix licet) studiosius le-
 gerim, sentio illorum tactu orationem meam quasi
 colorari. Sed ne latius hoc vobis patere videatur,
 61 haec duntaxat in Graecis intellego, quae ipsi, qui
 scripserunt, voluerunt vulgo intellegi. In philosophos
 vestros si quando incidi, deceptus indicibus librorum
 quod sunt fere inscripti de rebus notis et illustribus
 de virtute, de iustitia, de honestate, de voluptate,
 verbum prorsus nullum intellego: ita sunt angustis et
 concisis disputationibus illigati. Poetas omnino, quae
 alia quadam lingua locutos, non conor attingere: cum
 his me (ut dixi) oblecto, qui res gestas, aut qui orationes
 scripserunt suas, aut qui ita loquuntur, ut
 videantur voluisse nobis, qui non sumus eruditissimi,
 esse familiares. Sed illic redeo.

62 XV. Videtisne, quantum munus sit oratoris in-
 toria? Haud scio, an flumine orationis et varietate
 maximum. Neque tamen eam reperio usquam
 paratim instructam rhetorum praecceptis: sita enim
 enim ante oculos. Nam quis nescit, primam

pleasure, that I make a habit, when I have time, of
 reading the works of these authors and a few more.
 60 To what purpose then? Well, I will own to some
 benefit: just as, when walking in the sunshine,
 though perhaps taking the stroll for a different
 reason, the natural result is that I get sunburnt,
 even so, after perusing those books rather closely
 at Misenum (having little chance in Rome), I find
 that under their influence my discourse takes on
 what I may call a new complexion. However,—not
 to let you think this claim too extravagant— I under-
 stand no more of Greek literature than its authors
 themselves intended to be understood by the multi-
 61 tude. Whenever I light upon your philosophers,
 cheated by the titles of their books, which commonly
 bear headings descriptive of well-known and obvious
 subjects, such as virtue, justice, integrity or pleasure,
 I do not comprehend a single word, so inextricably
 are they entangled in closely reasoned and con-
 densed dialectic. Your poets, speaking as they do
 an altogether different tongue, I do not attempt to
 handle at all: I divert myself (as I said) in the
 company of those who have written the story of
 events, or speeches delivered by themselves, or
 whose style suggests their wish to be accessible to
 us men of no very profound learning. But I return
 to my argument.

62 XV. "Do you see how great a responsibility the
 orator has in historical writing? I rather think that
 for fluency and diversity of diction it comes first. Yet
 nowhere do I find this art supplied with any in-
 dependent directions from the rhetoricians; indeed
 its rules lie open to the view. For who does not
 know history's first law to be that an author must

The systems
 of rhetoric
 contain no
 rules of
 style for
 history.

historiae legem, ne quid falsi dicere audeat? Deinde ne quid veri non audeat? Ne qua suspicio gratiae sit in scribendo? Ne qua simultatis? Haec scilicet fundamenta nota sunt omnibus: ipsa autem exaedificatio posita est in rebus et verbis. Rerum rationem tempore desiderat, regionum descriptionem; vult etiam, quoniam in rebus magnis memoriae dignis consilia primum, deinde acta, postea eventus expectentur, et de consiliis significari quibus scriptor probet, et in rebus gestis declarari, non solum quid actum aut dictum sit, sed etiam quomodo; et cum de eventu dicatur, ut causae explicentur omnes, vel casus, vel sapientiae, vel temeritatis, hominumque

63 Verborum autem ratio et genus orationis fusum atque tractum, et cum lenitate quadam aequabili profuerit sine hac iudiciali asperitate, et sine sententiarum forensium aculeis persequendum est. Harum tantarumque rerum videtisne ulla esse praecepta quae in artibus rhetorum reperiantur?

In eodem silentio multa alia oratorum officia iacent, cohortationes, consolationes, praecepta, et monita: quae tractanda sunt omnia disertissimè, sed locum suum in his artibus, quae traditae sunt, 65 habent nullum. Atque in hoc genere illa quoque

not dare to tell anything but the truth? And its second that he must make bold to tell the whole truth? That there must be no suggestion of partiality anywhere in his writings? Nor of malice? This groundwork of course is familiar to every one; the completed structure however rests upon the story and the diction. The nature of the subject needs chronological arrangement and geographical representation: and since, in reading of important affairs worth recording, the plans of campaign, the executive actions and the results are successively looked for, it calls also, as regards such plans, for some intimation of what the writer approves, and, in the narrative of achievement, not only for a statement of what was done or said, but also of the manner of doing or saying it; and, in the estimate of consequences, for an exposition of all contributory causes, whether originating in accident, discretion or foolhardiness; and, as for the individual actors, besides an account of their exploits, it demands particulars of the lives and characters of such as are outstanding in renown and dignity. Then again the kind of language and type of style to be followed are the easy and the flowing, which run their course with unvarying current and a certain placidity, avoiding alike the rough speech we use in Court and the advocate's stinging epigrams. Upon all these numerous and important points, do you observe that any directions are to be found in the rhetoricians' systems?

In a like silence have languished many other duties of the orator, those of encouraging, comforting, teaching and warning, all worthy of most eloquent treatment, yet having no place of their own in those systems hitherto propounded. In this region also

not for handling abstract topics.