

**THE JESTS OF
HIEROCLES
AND PHILAGRIUS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649467709

The Jestes of Hierocles and Philagrius by Charles Clinch Bubb

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CHARLES CLINCH BUBB

**THE JESTS OF
HIEROCLES
AND PHILAGRIUS**

THE WITTOL SERIES

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THE JESTS OF
HIEROCLES AND
PHILAGRIUS

NEWLY TRANSLATED FROM THE
GREEK

BY
CHARLES CLINCH BUBB



CLEVELAND
THE ROWFANT CLUB
MCMXX

~~24.18.5~~

~~Gk 49.18.5~~

Gk 50.15

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AUGUST 4, 1941

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
JESTS OF HIEROCLES AND PHILAGRIUS	15
<i>The Pedants</i>	17
<i>From the Philogelos</i>	47
<i>The Men of Abdera</i>	50
<i>The Men of Sidonia</i>	56
<i>The Witty Fellows</i>	60
<i>The Men of Cuma</i>	64
<i>The Discontented People</i>	73
<i>The Awkward Ones</i>	77
<i>The Timid Ones</i>	77
<i>The Misers</i>	84
<i>The Starvelings</i>	85
<i>About Drunkards</i>	88
<i>About Those with Bad Breath</i>	90
<i>Woman Haters</i>	96
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	98
APPENDIX	103

4

10

12

14

16

18

20

22

24

26

28

30

Foreword

WHEN Homer sings of the unquenchable laughter in which the gods indulged at their banquet upon Mount Olympus, one is naturally curious to learn the cause of their merriment. It comes with a sense of disappointment to find that it was the uncouth antics of the lamed and deformed Hephaestus that pleased the deities at their meal. It is said that Homer's gods and goddesses reflect the ideas and customs of his time, and if so, this is, then, an early instance of the employment of what was destined later to be the court fool.

It would be interesting to trace the development of the idea which finds the sight of physical deformity humorous; it evidently belongs to the childhood of the race, judging from those who see in children the

JESTS OF HIEROCLES

expression of the various stages through which mankind has passed in its growth in civilization. The child, before it begins to reflect, can see something amusing in a hunch-back or cross-eyed person, whereas in later years pity and compassion take the place of the unconscious cruelty caused by laughter at physical defects. A nation's state of civilization and morals may be inferred to a certain extent by what it considers humorous. It is no wonder, therefore, that a people who revelled in the bloody exhibitions of the amphitheatre could find the sight of physical mutilation or painful suffering sufficiently amusing to preserve such anecdotes in their collections of *facetiae*. To the modern mind there is nothing to laugh at in the section of this work dealing with the unfortunate people of Abdera or the eunuchs, or the ruptured.

Next to the deformed person as a means of exciting laughter, may be placed the wittol, the natural fool who blunders