

A Ciceronian Witticism Referencing Epicurus

Post by "Cassius" of May 18, 2024 at 10:57 AM

This reference from Cicero's "On Divination" seems fairly funny, and it might not even be demeaning to Epicurus, as Cicero can often be. But I bet there is more to the reference of "corn rising on the market" than is immediately obvious to me, so I thought I would post and maybe over time we can consult the Latin and track down a more precise meaning. As it is, this translation reference to corn (I think by Yonge) seems a little broad, so probably there's some or references to Epicurus and for himself, or someone else

224

ON DIVINATION.

contagion of earth very like blood, and some moisture may have fallen on the statues from without, resembling perspiration, as we see sometimes in plaster during the prevalence of a south wind; and in time of war such phenomena appear more numerous and more important than usual, as men are then in a state of alarm, while they are not noticed in peace. Besides, in such periods of fear and peril, such stories are more easily believed, and invented with more impunity.

We are, however, so silly and inconsiderate, that if mice, which are always at that work, happen to gnaw anything, we immediately regard it as a prodigy. So because, a little before the Marsian war, the mice gnawed the shields at Lanuvium, the soothsayers declared it to be a most important prodigy; as if it could make any difference whether mice, who day and night are gnawing something, had gnawed bucklers or sieves. For if we are to be guided by such things, I ought to tremble for the safety of the commonwealth, because the mice lately gnawed Plato's Republic in my library; and if they had eaten the book of Epicurus on Pleasure, I ought to have expected that corn would rise in the market.