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CLAUDIAN

I

Translated by

MAURICE PLATNAUER

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WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

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INTRODUCTION

CLAUDIUS CLAUDIANUS may be called the last poet of classical Rome. He was born about the year 370 A.D. and died within a decade of the sack of the city by Alaric in 410. The thirty to forty odd years which comprised his life were some of the most momentous in the history of Rome. Valentinian and Valens were emperors respectively of the West and the East when he was born, and while the former was engaged in constant warfare with the northern tribes of Alamanni, Quadi and Sarmatians, whose advances the skill of his general, Theodosius, had managed to check, the latter was being reserved for unsuccessful battle with an enemy still more deadly.

It is about the year 370 that we begin to hear of the Huns. The first people to fall a victim to their eastward aggression were the Alans, next came the Ostrogoths, whose king, Hermanric, was driven to suicide; and by 375 the Visigoths were threatened with a similar fate. Hemmed in by the advancing flood of Huns and the stationary power of Rome this people, after a vain attempt to ally itself with the latter, was forced into arms against her. An indecisive battle with the generals of Valens (377) was followed by a crushing Roman defeat in the succeeding year (August 9, 378) at Adrianople, where

Valens himself, but recently returned from his Persian war, lost his life.

Gratian and his half-brother, Valentinian II., who had become Augusti upon the death of their father, Valentinian I., in 375, would have had little power of themselves to withstand the victorious Goths and Rome might well have fallen thirty years before she did, had it not been for the force of character and the military skill of that same Theodosius whose successes against the Alamanni have already been mentioned. Theodosius was summoned from his retirement in Spain and made Augustus (January 19, 379). During the next three years he succeeded, with the help of the Frankish generals, Bauto and Arbogast, in gradually driving the Goths northward, and so relieved the barbarian pressure on the Eastern Empire and its capital. In 381 Athanaric, the Gothic king, sued in person for peace at Constantinople and there did homage to the emperor. In the following year the Visigoths became allies of Rome and, for a time at least, the danger was averted.

Meanwhile the West was faring not much better. Gratian, after an uneasy reign, was murdered in 383 by the British pretender, Magnus Maximus. From 383 to 387 Maximus was joint ruler of the West with Valentinian II., whom he had left in command of Italy rather from motives of policy than of clemency; but in the latter year he threw off the mask and, crossing the Alps, descended upon his colleague whose court was at Milan. Valentinian fled to Thessalonica and there threw himself on the mercy of Theodosius. Once more that general was to save the situation.

Maximus was defeated by him at Aquileia and put to death, while Arbogast recovered Gaul by means of an almost bloodless campaign (388).

The next scene in the drama is the murder at Vienne on May 15, 392, of the feeble Valentinian at the instigation of Arbogast. Arbogast's triumph was, however, short-lived. Not daring himself, a Frank, to assume the purple he invested therewith his secretary, the Roman Eugenius, intending to govern the West with Eugenius as a mere figure-head. Once more, and now for the last time, Theodosius saved the cause of legitimacy by defeating Eugenius at the battle of the Frigidus[1] in September 394. Eugenius was executed but Arbogast made good his escape, only to fall a few weeks later by his own hand.

Theodosius himself died on January 17, 395, leaving his two sons, Arcadius and Honorius, emperors of the East and West respectively. Arcadius was but a tool in the hands of his praetorian prefect, Rufinus, whose character is drawn with such venomous ferocity in Claudian's two poems. Almost equally powerful and scarcely less corrupt seems to have been that other victim of Claudian's splenetic verses, the eunuch chamberlain Eutropius, who became consul in the year 399. Both these men suffered a violent end: Eutropius, in spite of the pleadings of S. John Chrysostom, was put to death by Gainas, the commander of the Gothic troops in the East; Rufinus was torn to pieces in the presence of Arcadius himself by his Eastern troops.[2] The instigator of

[1] *Cf.* vii. 99 *et sqq.*

[2] v. 348 *et sqq.* S. Jerome (*Ep.* lx.) refers to his death and tells how his head was carried on a pike to Constantinople.

this just murder was Claudian's hero, Stilicho the Vandal.

Stilicho, who had been one of Theodosius' generals, had been put in command of the troops sent to oppose Alaric, the Visigoth, when the latter had broken away from his allegiance to Rome and was spreading devastation throughout Thrace, Macedonia and Thessaly. He was successful in his campaign, but, upon his marching south into Greece, in order to rid that country also of its Gothic invaders, he was forbidden by Rufinus to advance any farther. There can be little doubt that the murder of Rufinus was Stilicho's answer.

In spite of a subsequent victory over Alaric near Elis in the year 397, Stilicho's success can have been but a partial one, for we find the Visigoth general occupying the post of Master of the Soldiery in Illyricum, the withholding of which office had been the main cause of his defection. Possibly, too, the revolt of Gildo in Africa had something to do with the unsatisfactory termination of the Visigothic war. It is interesting to observe the dependence of Italy on African corn, a dependence of which in the first century of the Christian era Vespasian, and right at the end of the second the pretender Pescennius Niger, threatened to make use. If we can credit the details of Claudian's poem on the war (No. xv.), Rome was very shortly reduced to a state of semi-starvation by Gildo's holding up of the corn fleet, and, but for Stilicho's prompt action in sending Gildo's own brother, Mascezel, to put down the rebellion, the situation might have become even more critical. The poet, it may be remarked, was in an awkward position with regard to the war for,

though the real credit of victory was clearly due to Mascezel (*cf.* xv. 380 *et sqq.*), he nevertheless wished to attribute it to his hero Stilicho, and, as Stilicho had Mascezel executed [1] later in that same year (Gildo had been defeated at Tabraca July 31, 398), he prudently did not write, or perhaps suppressed, Book II.

Stilicho, who had married Serena, niece and adoptive daughter of Theodosius, still further secured his position by giving his daughter, Maria, in marriage to the young Emperor Honorius in the year 398. This "father-in-law and son-in-law of an emperor," as Claudian is never wearied of calling him, did the country of his adoption a signal service by the defeat at Pollentia on Easter Day (April 6), 402, of Alaric, who, for reasons of which we really know nothing, had again proved unfaithful to Rome and had invaded and laid waste Italy in the winter of 401–402.

The battle of Pollentia was the last important event in Claudian's lifetime. He seems to have died in 404, four years before the murder of Stilicho by the jealous Honorius and six before the sack of Rome by Alaric—a disaster which Stilicho [2] alone, perhaps, might have averted.

So much for the historical background of the life of the poet. Of the details of his career we are not well informed. Something, indeed, we can gather from the pages of the poet himself, though it is not much, but besides this we have to guide us only Hesychius of Miletus' short

[1] Or at least connived at his death ; see Zosimus v. 11. 5.

[2] For an adverse (and probably unfair) view of Stilicho see Jerome, *Ep.* cxxiii. § 17.

article in Suidas' lexicon, a brief mention in the Chronicle of 395, and (a curious survival) the inscription[1] under the statue which, as he himself tells us,[2] emperor and senate had made in his honour and set up in the Forum of Trajan. We are ignorant even of the date of his birth and can only conjecture that it was about the year 370. Of the place of his birth we are equally uninformed by contemporary and credible testimony, but there can be little doubt that he came from Egypt,[3] probably from Alexandria itself. We have, for what it is worth, the word of

[1] *C.I.L.* vi. 1710 (=Dessau 2949). Now in the Naples Museum.

[Cl.] Claudiani v.c. | [Cla]udio Claudiano v.c., tri|[bu]no et notario, inter ceteras | [de]centes artes prae[g]loriosissimo | [po]etarum, licet ad memoriam sem|piternam carmina ab eodem | scripta sufficiant, adtamen | testimonii gratia ob iudicii sui | [f]idem, dd. nn. Arcadius et Honorius | [fe-] licissimi et doctissimi | imperatores senatu petente | statuam in foro divi Traiani | erigi collocarique iusserunt.

Εἰν ἑνὶ Βιργιλίοιο νόον | καὶ Μοῦσαν Ὁμήρου |
Κλαυδιανὸν Ῥώμη καὶ | βασιλῆς ἔθεσαν.

v.c.=vir clarissimus, *i.e.* (roughly) The Rt. Hon. dd. nn. =domini nostri. The inscription may be translated:—To Claudius Claudianus v.c., son of Claudius Claudianus v.c., tribune and notary (*i.e.* Permanent Secretary), master of the ennobling arts but above all a poet and most famous of poets, though his own poems are enough to ensure his immortality, yet, in thankful memory of his discretion and loyalty, their serene and learned majesties, the Emperors Arcadius and Honorius have, at the instance of the senate, bidden this statue to be raised and set up in the Forum of the Emperor Trajan of blessed memory.

Rome and her kings—to one who has combined
A Homer's music with a Vergil's mind.

[2] xxv. 7.

[3] John Lydus (*De magistr.* i. 47) writes οὗτος ὁ Παφλαγών, but this, as Birt has shown, is merely an abusive appellation.

Suidas and the lines of Sidonius Apollinaris,[1] which clearly refer to Claudian and which give Canopus as the place of his birth. (Canopus is almost certainly to be taken as synonymous with Egypt.) But besides these two statements we have only to look at his interest in things Egyptian, *e.g.* his poems on the Nile, the Phoenix, etc., at such passages as his account of the rites at Memphis,[2] at such phrases as "nostro cognite Nilo,"[3] to see that the poet is an Egyptian himself. It is probable that, whether or not he spent all his early life in Egypt, Claudian did not visit Rome until 394. We know from his own statement[4] that his first essays in literature were all of them written in Greek and that it was not until the year 395 that he started to write Latin. It is not unlikely, therefore, that his change of country and of literary language were more or less contemporaneous, and it is highly probable that he was in Rome before January 3, 395, on which day his friends the Anicii (Probinus and Olybrius) entered upon their consulship. Speaking, moreover, of Stilicho's consulship in 400 Claudian mentions a five years' *absence*.[5] Not long after January 3, 395, Claudian seems to have betaken himself to the court at Milan, and it is from there that he sends letters to Probinus and Olybrius.[6] Here the poet seems to have stayed for five years, and here he seems to

[1] Sid. Ap. *Carm.* ix. 274.
[2] viii. 570 *et sqq.*
[3] Carm. min. corp. xix. 3: *cf.* also Carm. min. corp. xxii. 20.
[4] Carm. min. corp. xli. 13.
[5] xxiii. 23.
[6] Carm. min. corp. xl. and xli.; see ref. to Via Flaminia in xl. 8.

have won for himself a position of some importance. As we see from the inscription quoted above, he became *vir clarissimus, tribunus et notarius*, and, as he does not continue further along the road of honours (does not, for instance, become a *vir spectabilis*) we must suppose that he served in some capacity on Stilicho's private staff. No doubt he became a sort of poet laureate.

It is probable that the "De raptu" was written during the first two years of his sojourn at the court of Milan. The poem is dedicated, or addressed, to Florentinus,[1] who was *praefectus urbi* from August 395 to the end of 397 when he fell into disgrace with Stilicho. It is to this circumstance that we are to attribute the unfinished state of Claudian's poem.

The Emperor Honorius became consul for the third time on January 3, 396, and on this occasion Claudian read his Panegyric in the emperor's presence.[2]

Some five weeks before this event another of greater importance had occurred in the East. This was the murder of Rufinus, the praetorian prefect, amid the circumstances that have been related above. The date of the composition of Claudian's two poems "In Rufinum" is certainly to be placed within the years 395–397, and the mention of a "tenuem moram"[3] makes it probable that Book II. was written considerably later than Book I.; the references, moreover, in the Preface to Book II. to a victory of Stilicho clearly point to that general's defeat of the Goths near Elis in 397.

To the year 398 belong the Panegyric on the

[1] Praef. ii. 50.

[2] vi. 17. [3] iv. 15.

fourth consulship of Honorius and the poems celebrating the marriage of the emperor to Stilicho's daughter, Maria. We have already seen that the Gildo episode and Claudian's poem on that subject are to be attributed to this same year.

The consuls for the year 399 were both, in different ways, considered worthy of the poet's pen. Perhaps the most savage of all his poems was directed against Eutropius, the eunuch chamberlain, whose claim to the consulship the West never recognized,[1] while a Panegyric on Flavius Manlius Theodorus made amends for an abusive epigram which the usually more politic Claudian had previously levelled at him.[2]

At the end of 399, or possibly at the beginning of 400, Claudian returned to Rome [3] where, probably in February,[4] he recited his poem on the consulship of Stilicho; and we have no reason for supposing that the poet left the capital from this time on until his departure for his ill-starred journey four years later. In the year 402,[5] as has already been mentioned, Stilicho defeated Alaric at Pollentia, and Claudian recited his poem on the Gothic war sometime during the summer of the same year. The scene of the recitation seems to have been the Bibliotheca Templi Apollinis.[6] It was in this year, too, that the poet reached the summit of his great-

[1] *Cf.* xxii. 291 *et sqq.*
[2] Carm. min. xxi.
[3] xxiii. 23.
[4] So Birt, *Praef.* p. xlii. note 1.
[5] It should perhaps be mentioned that this date is disputed: see Crees, *Claudian as an Historical Authority*, pp. 175 *et sqq.*
[6] xxv. 4 "Pythia . . . domus."

ness in the dedication of the statue which, as we have seen, was accorded to him by the wishes of the emperor and at the demand of the senate.

The last of Claudian's datable public poems is that on the sixth consulship of Honorius. It was composed probably towards the end of 403 and recited in Rome on (or after) the occasion of the emperor's triumphant entry into the city. The emperor had just returned after inflicting a defeat on the Goths at Verona in the summer of 403. It is reasonable to suppose that this triumphant entry (to which the poem refers in some detail, ll. 331-639) took place on the day on which the emperor assumed the consular office, viz. January 3, 404.

In the year 404 Claudian seems to have married some protégée of Serena's. Of the two poems addressed to her the "Laus Serenae" is clearly the earlier, and we may take the other, the "Epistola ad Serenam," to be the last poem Claudian ever wrote. It is a poem which seems to have been written on his honeymoon, during the course of which he died.[1]

It is not easy to arrive at any just estimate of Claudian as a writer, partly because of an inevitable tendency to confuse relative with absolute standards, and partly (and it is saying much the same thing in other words) because it is so hard to separate Claudian the poet from Claudian the manipulator of the Latin language. If we compare his latinity with that of his contemporaries (with the possible exception of Rutilius) or with that of such a poet as Sidonius Apollinaris, who came not much more

[1] This suggestion is Vollmer's: see his article on Claudian in Pauly-Wissowa, III. ii. p. 2655.

than half a century after him, it is hard to withhold our admiration from a writer who could, at least as far as his language is concerned, challenge comparison with poets such as Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus, and Statius—poets who flourished about three centuries before him.[1] I doubt whether, subject matter set aside, Claudian might not deceive the very elect into thinking him a contemporary of Statius, with whose *Silvae* his own shorter poems have much in common.

Even as a poet Claudian is not always despicable, His descriptions are often clever, *e.g.* the Aponus, and many passages in the "De raptu."[2] His treatment of somewhat commonplace and often threadbare themes is not seldom successful—for example, the poem on the Phoenix and a four-line description of the horses of the dawn in the Panegyric on Honorius' fourth consulship[3]—and he has a happy knack of phrase-making which often relieves a tedious page:

> ille vel aerata Danaën in turre latentem
> eliceret[4]

he says of the pander Eutropius.

But perhaps Claudian's forte is invective. The panegyrics (with the doubtful exception of that on

[1] Still more striking is the comparison of Claudian's latinity with that of his contemporary, the authoress of the frankly colloquial *Peregrinatio ad loca sancta* (see Grandgent, *Vulgar Latin*, p. 5: Wölfflin, "Über die Latinität der P. ad l. sancta," in *Archiv für lat. Lexikographie*, iv. 259).

[2] It is not impossible that this poem is a translation or at least an adaptation of a Greek (Alexandrine) original. So Förster, *Der Raub und die Rückkehr der Persephone*, Stuttgart, 1874.

[3] viii. 561-4 (dawns seem to suit him: *cf.* i. 1-6).

[4] xviii. 82, 83.

Manlius, which is certainly brighter than the others) are uniformly dull, but the poems on Rufinus and Eutropius are, though doubtless in the worst of taste, at least in parts amusing.

Claudian's faults are easy to find. He mistook memory for inspiration and so is often wordy and tedious, as for instance in his three poems on Stilicho's consulship.[1] Worse than this he is frequently obscure and involved—witness his seven poems on the drop of water contained within the rock crystal.[2] The besetting sin, too, of almost all post-Virgilian Roman poets, I mean a "conceited" frigidity, is one into which he is particularly liable to fall. Examples are almost too numerous to cite but the following are typical: "nusquam totiensque sepultus"[3] of the body of Rufinus, torn limb from limb by the infuriated soldiery; "caudamque in puppe retorquens Ad proram iacet usque leo"[4] of one of the animals brought from Africa for the games at Stilicho's triumph; "saevusque Damastor, Ad depellendos iaculum cum quaereret hostes, Germani rigidum misit pro rupe cadaver"[5] of the giant Pallas turned to stone by the Gorgon's head on Minerva's shield. Consider, too, the remarkable

[1] Honourable exception should be made of xxi. 291 *et sqq.* —one of the best and most sincere things Claudian ever wrote.

[2] It is worth observing that not infrequently Claudian is making "tentamina," or writing alternative lines: *e.g.* Carm. min. corp. vii. 1 and 2, and almost certainly the four lines of id. vi. v. is quite likely "a trial" for some such passage as xv. 523.

[3] v. 453.

[4] xxiv. 357-8.

[5] Carm. min. corp. liii. 101-3.

statement that Stilicho, in swimming the Addua, showed greater bravery than Horatius Cocles because, while the latter swam away from Lars Porsenna, the former "dabat . . . Geticis pectora bellis." [1]

Two of the poems are interesting as touching upon Christianity (Carm. min. corp. xxxii. "De salvatore," and l. "In Iacobum"). The second of these two poems can scarcely be held to be serious, and although the first is unobjectionable it cannot be said to stamp its author as a sincere Christian. Orosius [2] and S. Augustine [3] both declare him to have been a heathen, but it is probable that, like his master Stilicho, Claudian rendered the new and orthodox religion at least lip-service.

It seems likely that after the death of Claudian (404) and that of his hero, Stilicho, the political poems (with the exception of the Panegyric on Probinus and Olybrius,[4] which did not concern Stilicho) were collected and published separately. The "Carmina minora" may have been published about the same time. The subsequent conflation of these two portions came to be known as "Claudianus maior," the "De raptu" being "Claudianus minor."

The MSS. of Claudian's poems fall into two main classes :

(1) Those which Birt refers to as the *Codices*

[1] xxviii. 490.
[2] vii. 35 "Paganus pervicacissimus."
[3] *Civ. dei*, v. 26 "a Christi numine alienus."
[4] This poem does not seem to have been associated with the others till the 12th century.

maiores and which contain the bulk of the poems but seldom the "De raptu."

(2) Those which Birt calls the *Codices minores* and which contain (generally exclusively) the "De raptu."

Class (1) may be again divided into (*a*) MSS. proper; (*b*) excerpts. I give Birt's abbreviations.

(*a*) The most important are:

R = Cod. Veronensis 163. 9th century.
Contains only the "Carmina minora."

G = Cod. Sangallensis S n. 429. 9th century.
Contains only the (Latin) "Gigantomachia."

G (*sic*) = Cod. Reginensis 123. 11th century.
Contains only "De Nilo."

V = Cod. Vaticanus 2809. 12th century.

P = Cod. Parisinus lat. 18,552. 12th or 13th century.
Contains all the "Carmina maiora" except (as usual) the "De raptu" and "Pan. Prob. et Olyb." No "minora."

C = Cod. Bruxellensis 5380-4. (?) 12th-13th century.

Π = Cod. Parisinus lat. 8082. 13th century.
This is Heinsius' "Regius." The MS. once belonged to Petrarch and still bears his name.

B = Cod. Neapolitanus Borbonicus 1111 E 47. 13th century.

A = Cod. Ambrosianus S 66. 15th century.
Contains all the "maiora" except the "De raptu" and "Pan. Prob. et Olyb."

J = Cod. Cantabrigiensis coll. Trinitatis 0.3.22. 13th century.