

Loeb Translation

Claudian: Panegyric on the Third Consulship of the Emperor Honorius (A.D. 396)

Preface (VI)

Eagles may not rear their young without the sun's permission and the goodwill of heaven. So soon as the chicks have shattered their shells and issued forth, after that the warmth of their mother's body has cracked the opening egg, the father bird makes haste to carry the unfledged nestlings aloft and bids them gaze at the sun's fires with unblinking eye. He takes counsel of those bright beams and under light's schooling makes trial of the strength and temper of his sons. The angry father strikes with pitiless talons the degenerate who turns away his glance, but he whose eye can bear the searching flame, who with bolder sight can outstare the noonday sun, is brought up a king of birds, heir to the thunderbolt, destined to carry Jove's three-forked weapon. So mighty Rome fears not to send me, oft tested e'er now in the Muses' caverns, to face the emperor, her god. Now have I won an emperor's ear, the entrance to an emperor's palace and the emperor himself as judge of my lyre's song.

Panegyric(VII)

Let the consular fasces of Romulus open a third year, and for the third time let the warlike procession accompany thy curule litter. More festal in array be the coming year, and let purple, folded in Gabine¹ guise, be proudly enriched with gems of Hydaspes; let the cloak of peace succeed the arms of war; let the lictor guard the consul's tent and the Latin axes return to the standards.² And do thou, Honorius, who with thy brother, lord of the East, governest with equal care a world that was once thy sire's, go thy way with favourable omens and order the sun's new course, thyself heaven's hope and desire, palace-nurtured even from life's threshold, to whom the camp, gleaming with drawn swords, gave schooling among the laurels of victory. Thy towering fortune has never known the condition of a private citizen; when thou wast born thou wast born a king. Power which was thine by birth received thee, a precious pledge, amid the purple; soldiers bearing victorious standards inaugurated thy birth and set thy cradle in the midst of arms. When thou wast born fierce Germany trembled along the Rhine's full course, Caucasus shook his forests in fear, and the people of Meroë, confessing thy divinity, laid aside their quivers and drew the useless arrows from their hair. As a child thou didst crawl among shields, fresh-won spoils of monarchs were thy playthings, and thou wert ever the first to embrace thy stern father on his return from rude battles, when that, reeking with the blood of northern savages, he came home victorious from his conquest over the tribes of the Danube. Then wouldst thou demand thy share of the spoils, a Scythian bow or a belt won from the Geloni, a Dacian spear or Suabian bridle. Often would he smile on thee and uplift thee, eager for the honour, on his shining shield, and clasp thee to his still panting bosom. Thou fearedst not his coat of mail nor the dread gleam of his helmet but stretchedst out thy hands to grasp its lofty plumes. Then in his joy thy father cried: "King of starry Olympus, may this my son return in like manner from the lands of conquered foes, rich with the spoils of Hyrcania or proud with the slaughter of the Assyrians; his sword thus red with blood, his countenance thus roughened by the constant blasts and stained with the welcome dust of heroic combat, may he bring back to his happy father the arms of his conquered foes."

Soon when thou couldst stand upright and walk with firm step thy sire forbade thee enervating sloth, luxurious ease, time-wasting slumbers. He strengthened thy young limbs with hard toils and rude was the training wherewith he exercised thy tender powers. Thou wert taught to bear winter's cruel cold, to shrink not before storm and tempest, to face the heat of summer, to swim across loud-roaring torrents, to climb mountains, to run o'er the plain, to leap ravines and hollows, to spend sleepless nights of watching under arms, to drink melted snow from thy casque, to shoot the arrow from the bow or hurl the acorn-missiles with a Balearic sling. And the more to inflame thy heart with love of battle he would recount to thee the deeds of thy grandsire, object of dread to Libya's sun-scorched shores and Thule whither no ship can sail. He conquered the fleet Moors and the well-named¹ Picts; his roaming sword pursued the flying Scot; his adventurous oars broke the surface of

the northern seas. Crowned with the spoils of triumphs won beneath the northern and the southern sky he trod the wave-swept strand of either Ocean. Thus did he spur thy courage, thus sow the seeds of fame; these were the examples he gave. Not more avidly did Achilles himself drink in the Centaur's precepts when he learnt of him how to wield the spear or play the lyre or discern healing plants.

Meanwhile the world forgot its loyalty: the thunder of civil war sounded afresh and discord shook the tottering earth. O ye guilty gods! O shame everlasting!—a barbarian² exile had possessed himself of the cities of Italy and had entrusted the government of Rome to some low-born dependent. But Theodosius was already afoot, rallying to his standard the distant nations of the East, the dwellers on the banks of flooding Euphrates, clear Halys, and rich Orontes. The Arabs left their spicy groves, the Medes the waters of the Caspian Sea, the Armenians the river Phasis, the Parthians the Niphates.

What lust of battle then filled thy heart, what longing to accompany thy father! What would not thine eager spirit have given to hear the beloved clarion's note and to revel in the bloody storm of battle, trampling upon the slaughtered bodies of thy foes! Like a young lion in a cave, accustomed to look for nourishment to the teats of its tawny mother, who, so soon as he finds talons beginning to grow from out his paws and a mane sprout from his neck and teeth arm his jaws, will have none of this inglorious food but burns to leave his cavern home and accompany his Gaetulian sire, to bring death upon the herds and steep him in the gore of some tall steer. But Theodosius said thee nay, and put the reins of government into thy hands, crowning thy head with the sacred diadem it wore so meetly. And so did thy virtue show in earliest years, so did thy soul out-range thy youth that all complained that to thee empire was granted late.

Swiftly beneath thy auspices was victory achieved. Both fought for us—thou with thy happy influence, thy father with his strong right arm. Thanks to thee the Alps lay open to our armies, nor did it avail the careful foe to cling to fortified posts. Their ramparts, and the trust they put therein, fell; the rocks were torn away and their hiding-places exposed. Thanks to thine influence the wind of the frozen North overwhelmed the enemy's line with his mountain storms, hurled back their weapons upon the throwers and with the violence of his tempest drove back their spears. Verily God is with thee, when at thy behest Aeolus frees the armed tempests from his cave, when the very elements fight for thee and the allied winds come at the call of thy trumpets. The Alpine snows grew red with slaughter, the cold Frigidus, its waters turned to blood, ran hot and steaming, and would have been choked with the heaps of corpses had not their own fast-flowing gore helped on its course.

Meanwhile Arbogast, the cause of this wicked war, had pierced his side deep not with a single blade: two swords¹ reeked with his blood, and his own hand, learning justice at last, had turned its savage fury against himself. Thus was liberty restored; but though Nature demanded the return to heaven of divine Theodosius whose work was now accomplished, though the sky threw open the golden palaces of its starry vault and Atlas staggered knowing the burden he was to bear, yet did the emperor forbear to entrust him to expectant Olympus until he could in thy presence hand over to thee a world at peace. Straightway didst thou, Honorius, leave the coasts of Thrace, and, braving the dangers of the journey, pass without a tremor through the hordes of barbarians. Thou leavest the rocks of Rhodope to which Orpheus' lyre gave life; thou quittest the heights of Oeta, scene of Hercules' ill-omened funeral pyre; next thou climbest Pelion, famed for the marriage of Peleus and Thetis. Fair Enipeus and lofty Dodona look upon thee in amaze, and the oaks of Chaonia, finding tongues once more, utter oracles in thine honour. Thou skirtest the extreme coasts of Illyria and, passing over Dalmatia's fields, dost cross in turn the nine sources of Trojan Timavus.² The high-walled cities of Italy rejoice in the blessings of thy presence. Eridanus bows his head and worships, bidding his waves flow gently to the sea; and Phaëthon's leafy sisters, that ever weep their brother's death, check the flow of their dewy amber.

How many youths, how many matrons set modesty aside in eagerness to behold thee! Austere grey-beards struggle with boys for places whence to see thee in the tender embraces of thy sire, borne through the midst of Rome on a triumphal chariot decked but with the shade of a simple laurel

branch. Who did not then think that he beheld the morning-star together with the rosy sun, or the Thunderer shine in concert with Bacchus? On every side stretches the host of plumed warriors, each hymning thy praises in his own tongue; the brightness of bronze dazzles the eye and the martial glint of a forest of unsheathed swords redoubles the light of day. Some are decked with bows, others bristle with far-flung javelins or pikes for fighting at close quarters. These raise standards adorned with flying eagles, or with embroidered dragons or writhing serpents, that in their thousands seem to be roused to angry life by the breath of the wind which, as it blows them this way and that, causes them to rustle with a sound like the hiss of a living snake.

When they reached the palace the emperor bade all depart and thus unbidden addressed his son-in-law: "Victorious Stilicho, of whose courage in war, of whose loyalty in peace I have made proof—what warlike feat have I performed without thine aid? What triumph have I won that thou helpedst me not in the winning? Together we caused Thracian Hebrus to run red with Getic blood, together overthrew the squadrons of the Sarmatae, together rested our weary limbs on the snows of Mount Rhiphaeus and scarred the frozen Danube with our chariot's wheel—come, therefore, since heaven's halls claim me, do thou take up my task; be thou sole guardian of my children, let thy hand protect my two sons. I adjure thee by that marriage that makes thee kin with me, by the night that saw its consummation, by the torch which at thy wedding-feast the queen carried in her own hand when she led thy bride-elect from out the imperial palace, take on thee a father's spirit, guard the years of their childhood. Was not their sire thy master and thy wife's father? Now, now I shall mount untroubled to the stars for thou wilt watch over them. Even should Typhoeus rend away the rocks and leap forth, should Tityus free his captive limbs, should Enceladus, hurling Etna from him, roar in rage—each and all will fall before Stilicho's attack."

He spake no more but still in human form clove a furrow of light through the clouds; he passes to Luna's globe, leaves Mercury's threshold and hastens to the gentle airs of Venus. Hence he traverses Phoebus' path, Mars' baleful fires and Jupiter's quiet quarters, and stands upon the very crown of the sky, cold Saturn's frozen zone. Heaven's fabric opens, unbidden the shining doors swing back. Boötes prepares a place in the vault of the northern sky, sword-girt Orion unbars the portals of the south; they offer welcome to the new star, uncertain each in turn to what region he will betake himself, what constellation he will grace with his presence, or in what quarter he will elect to shine alone. O glory of heaven as once thou wert of earth, the ocean that laves the shores of the land of thy birth receives thee wearied with thy nightly course, Spain bathes thee in thy natal waves. Happy father, when first thou risest above the horizon thou lookest upon Arcadius, when thou dippest to thy setting the sight of Honorius delays thy westering fires. Through whichever hemisphere thou takest thy wandering journey, thou passest over the domains of sons who with tranquil mind and ripe control rule over allied peoples, who once again fashion the ages from a nobler ore. Avarice is left to weep in Stygian chains, mad Ambition and his gold banished afar. Wealth does not hold sway; sense-corrupting gifts are of no avail; virtue alone can purchase power. Brothers twain, with the heart of one, brothers to whose rule fate has entrusted sea and land, if there is aught that has escaped your grandsire's conquering hand, aught your father has left unsubdued, even now Vulcan prepares the arms for their subjection and Cyclops labours on the Sicilian anvil. Brontes carves countless figures on the shield, Steropes hastes to bend the lofty peak of the flashing helmet, Pyragmon knits the coat of mail, smoky Lipare roars throughout its fire-belching caves. 'Tis for you that Neptune pastures in the sea-weed meadows of the Ionian main green sea-horses who can fly o'er the surface of the blue waters with so light a step that their hoofs are unflecked with foam, and course o'er fields of corn so delicately that the ears do not bend beneath their weight. E'en now I see the sack of Babylon and the Parthian driven to flight that is not feigned, Bactria subjected to the Law, the fearful pallor of the Ganges' servile banks, the humbled Persian throwing off his gem-encrusted robes. Mount to Tanais' source, explore the frozen North, traverse sun-scorched Libya, o'ercome the fires of Titan and surprise Nile's hidden spring; pass the Pillars of Hercules, the bourne, too, whence Bacchus returned; whatever heaven enfolds shall own your dominion. To you the Red Sea shall give precious shells, India her ivory, Panchaia perfumes, and China silk.