

CLAUDIAN

illic, ut perhibent, patriam de more reponit
congeriem vultumque dei veneratus erilem
iam flammae commendat onus, iam destinat aris
semina reliquiasque sui : mirata relucet 95
limina ; divino spirant altaria fumo,
et Pelusiacas productus ad usque paludes
Indus odor penetrat nares completque salubri
tempestate viros et nectare dulcior aura
ostia nigrantis Nili septena vaporat. 100

O felix heresque tui ! quo solvimur omnes,
hoc tibi suppeditat vires ; praebetur origo
per cinerem, moritur te non pereunte senectus.
vidisti quodcumque fuit ; te saecula teste 105
cuncta revolvuntur ; nosti quo tempore pontus
fuderit elatas scopulis stagnantibus undas,
quis Phaëthonteis erroribus arserit annus,
et clades te nulla rapit solusque superstes
edomita tellure manes : non stamina Parcae
in te dira legunt nec ius habuere nocendi. 110

XXVIII. (XLVII.)

Nilus.

Felix, qui Pharias proscindit vomere terras :
nubila non sperat tenebris condentia caelum
nec graviter flantes pluviali frigore Cauros
invocat aut arcum variata luce rubentem.

¹ Claudian again borrows from Herodotus (ii. 20-27).
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SHORTER POEMS XXVII, XXVIII

story tells, the Phoenix is wont to store his father's ashes and, adoring the image of the god, his master, to entrust his precious burden to the flames. He places on the altar that from which he is sprung and that which remains of himself. Bright shines the wondrous threshold ; the fragrant shrine is filled with the holy smoke of the altar and the odour of Indian incense, penetrating even as far as the Pelusiac marshes, fills the nostrils of men, flooding them with its kindly influence and with a scent sweeter than that of nectar perfumes the seven mouths of the dark Nile.

Happy bird, heir to thine own self ! Death which proves our undoing restores thy strength. Thine ashes give thee life and though thou perish not thine old age dies. Thou hast beheld all that has been, hast witnessed the passing of the ages. Thou knowest when it was that the waves of the sea rose and o'erflowed the rocks, what year it was that Phaëthon's error devoted to the flames. Yet did no destruction overwhelm thee ; sole survivor thou livest to see the earth subdued ; against thee the Fates gather not up their threads, powerless to do thee harm.

XXVIII (XLVII)

*The Nile.*¹

Blessèd is the man who cleaves the soil of Egypt with his plough ; he need not hope for clouds to shroud the heavens in darkness nor call upon the storm-winds that bring the chilling rain or the rainbow bright with its various colours.

CLAUDIAN

Aegyptus sine nube ferax imbresque serenos 5
 sola tenet ; secura poli, non indiga venti
 gaudet aquis, quas ipsa vehit, Niloque redundat :
 qui rapido tractu mediis elatus ab Austris,
 flammiferae patiens zonae cancrique calentis,
 fluctibus ignotis nostrum procurrit in orbem 10
 secreto de fonte cadens, qui semper inani
 quaerendus ratione latet, nec contigit ulli
 hoc vidisse caput : fertur sine teste creatus
 flumina profundens alieni conscia caeli.
 inde vago lapsu Libyam dispersus in omnem 15
 Aethiopum per mille ruit nigrantia regna
 et loca continuo solis damnata vapore
 inrorat populisque salus sitientibus errat
 per Meroën Blemyasque feros atramque Syenem.
 hunc bibit infrenis Garamas domitorque ferarum 20
 Gyrraeus, qui vasta colit sub rupibus antra,
 qui ramos ebeni, dentes qui vellit eburnos,
 et gens compositis crinem velata sagittis.

Nec vero similes causas crescentibus undis
 aut tempus meruit. 25 glacie non ille soluta
 nec circumfuso scopulis exuberat imbre.
 nam cum tristis hiems alias produxerit undas,
 tunc Nilum retinent ripae ; cum languida cessant
 flumina, tunc Nilus mutato iure tumescit.
 quippe quod ex omni fluvio spoliaverit aestas, 30
 hoc Nilo natura refert, totumque per orbem
 collectae partes unum revocantur in amnem ;

SHORTER POEMS XXVIII

Fertile is Egypt without clouds ; here alone is sunshine and yet rain. She regards not the sky, needs not the wind ; enough for her the water she herself contains, Nile's overflow. This swiftly-flowing river rises in the mountainous country of the south where it suffers the heats of the torrid zone and of the scorching Crab and issues forth from regions unknown into our world. Whence it comes none knows, for vain has ever been the search after its springing nor has any ever seen that source. 'Tis said that, fashioned without witness, it pours forth waters that have known a clime other than ours. Thence with errant stream it stretches through all Libya, and through Ethiopia's thousand dusky kingdoms where it waters lands condemned to the sun's unceasing fires, saviour of thirsting peoples, and threads its course across Meroë and black Syene and through the country of the wild Blemyae. The unconquered Garamantes and the Gyrraei who can tame wild animals drink of its waters, as do those tribes who dwell in huge rocky caverns, gathering the wood of ebony-trees and robbing the elephant of his tusks of ivory, and the folk who wear arrows in their hair.

Neither the cause nor yet the season of its overflow is the same as that of other rivers. Its waters rise neither because of melted snows nor by reason of rains flooding its rocky marge ; for when dull winter giveth increase to other rivers Nile keeps within his banks ; when other rivers flow with diminished stream, Nile, under other laws, rises. For of a truth whatever toll summer has exacted from all rivers Nature repays to the Nile, and waters gathered together from the whole world meet thus

CLAUDIAN

quoque die Titana canis flagrantior armat
et rapit umores madidos venasque calore
compescit radiisque potentibus aestuat axis, 35
Nilo bruma venit, contraria tempora mundo :
defectis solitum referens cultoribus aequor
effluit Aegaeo stagnantior, acrior alto
Ionio seseque patentibus explicat arvis :
fluctuat omnis ager ; remis sonuere novalis ; 40
saepius, aestivo iaceat cum forte sopore,
cernit cum stabulis armenta natantia pastor.

XXIX. (XLVIII.)

Magnes.

Quisquis sollicita mundum ratione secutus
semina rimatur rerum, quo luna laborat
defectu, quae causa iubet pallescere solem,
unde rubescentes ferali crine cometae,
unde fluant venti, trepidae quis viscera terrae 5
concutiat motus, quis fulgura ducat hiatus,
unde tonent nubes, quo lumine floreat arcus,
hoc mihi quaerenti, si quid deprendere veri
mens valet, expediat.

Lapis est cognomine magnes
decolor obscurus vilis. non ille repexam 10
caesariem regum, non candida virginis ornat
colla nec insigni splendet per cingula morsu ;
sed nova si nigri videas miracula saxi,
tunc pulchros superat cultus et quidquid Eois
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SHORTER POEMS XXVIII, XXIX

in one river. Then when the Dog-star increases the heat of the sun and sucks up all moisture, drying up earth's veins and filling heaven with its scorching rays, winter comes upon the Nile, though elsewhere all is summer. Then, bringing back to the fainting husbandmen its accustomed waters, it o'erflows ampler than the Aegean, fiercer than the deep Ionian, and spreads itself over the low-lying country. All the fields are aswim; plough-land sounds to the beat of the oar, and full often the shepherd, o'ercome with summer's heat, wakes to see flocks and fold carried away by the flood.

XXIX (XLVIII)

The Magnet.

Whosoever with anxious thought examines the universe and searches out the origin of things—the reason of the sun's and moon's eclipse, the causes of comets' red and baneful fires, the source of the winds, the motion that makes the earth to quake, the force that splits the heavens in twain, the noise of the thunder, the brilliance of the rainbow, let this man (if man's mind has any power to conceive the truth) explain to me something I would fain understand.

There is a stone called the loadstone; black, dull, and common. It does not adorn the braided hair of kings nor the snowy necks of girls, nor yet shine in the jewelled buckles of warriors' belts. But consider the marvellous properties of this dull-looking stone and you will see that it is of more worth than lovely gems and any pearl sought of