

**THE RAPE OF PROSERPINE: A  
POEM IN THREE BOOKS.  
INCOMPLETE. TO WHICH ARE  
ADDED, THE PHOENIX: AN IDYLL  
AND THE NILE: A FRAGMENT**

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The rape of Proserpine: a poem in three books. Incomplete. To which are added, the Phoenix: an idyll and the Nile: a fragment by Claudius Claudianus & Henry E. J. Howard

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**CLAUDIUS CLAUDIANUS & HENRY E. J. HOWARD**

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*From the Translator* —

THE RAPE OF PROSERPINE :

A Poem

IN THREE BOOKS.

INCOMPLETE.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

THE PHŒNIX :

An Idyll.

AND

THE NILE :

A Fragment.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN

OF

CLAUDIUS CLAUDIANUS,

BY

HENRY E. J. HOWARD, D. D.

DEAN OF LICHFIELD.

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1854.

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## P R E F A C E.

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DURING the attacks of gout, a disorder to which I am subject, being incapacitated for pursuits of a more serious and strictly professional character, I have lately sought for occupation and entertainment, in composing the translations which follow, and print them in the hope, that they may be found not altogether unworthy of the perusal of those into whose hands they may come. My recurrence to Claudian for this purpose—as I have in my younger days translated several of his historical poems—may perhaps be accounted for by a passage in my relative Lord Carlisle's "Lecture on the Writings of Gray," where he says, "I believe there to be something instinctive, which leads every one of us, not to what in our unimpassioned judgment we think the best and greatest of its kind, but to what we are sensible is most specially attractive and congenial to ourselves." A translator indeed need wish for nothing better, than to be, mesmerically speaking, "*en rapport*" with his original; into whose spirit, in such a case, he could not fail to enter. A simpler reason however for liking Claudian, is that he is a good and pleasing poet, and deserves to be liked: and I am encouraged in my

preference by a *dictum*, which I find in "Notes Theological and Political, by the late S. T. Coleridge," to the effect that—"Claudian throughout would bear translation better than any of the ancients."

There are three versions of the "Raptus," with which I am acquainted, those of Digges, Hawkins, and Strutt—and, with a ready acknowledgment of many good points occurring in them all, I have felt that something remained to be done for Claudian, and offer the present contribution towards an object which doubtless is still far from being attained. The first, that of Digges, published in 1617, is a curious, and, I believe, a scarce book. There are many terse and nervous lines in it, but it sins grievously in the way of amplification, the author spinning occasionally two or three couplets out of one word of his original. I give the opening sentence of his Preface, as a specimen of his quaint style.

"Gentle reader, I present to thy view the three first Books of Claudian *dē Raptu Proserpinæ* in an English version: a work how pleasing it may prove I know not; since of my author Scaliger saith, he was *materiâ ignobiliore oppressus*—but—*addidit de ingenio quantum defuit materiæ*—which wit the translator's harshness of style may (haply) have diminished."

I have not thought it necessary to append any notes to a Poem so purely mythological. They would have been only a transcript of the pages of

Lempriere, or Smith—to the latter of which Dictionaries I would also refer the reader for a sufficient account of Claudian and his works, coupled however with what I will venture to call a very undue depreciation of his poetical powers. He is, of course, not to be ranked among the Augustan poets, but he stands, I think, high among those of the second order; and I should be inclined to place him between Lucan and Statius, as less vigorous than the former, less tumid and grandiloquent than the latter. The *Raptus*, undisfigured by the spirit of courtly adulation, which was his besetting sin, is perhaps as fair a specimen of his real genius as can be given. There are faults in its construction; such as the omission of the communication which Jupiter ought to make to Pluto, respecting the abduction of Proserpine—the principal event of the poem: and the unartistic way in which that event is related twice over; first, as matter of direct narrative, and then again in the colloquy between Electra and Ceres—which might induce the supposition that it had never received the finishing touches from its author, and that its conclusion had never been written. I should be glad however to find this latter conjecture disproved by the labours of some future Mai, and the fourth book, containing the wanderings of Ceres, and her ultimate discovery of her daughter, rescued from the concealment of a palimpsest, to give the desired completion to so admirable a poem.



I take this opportunity of thanking my friends, the Rev. H. Moore, of Eccleshall, and the Rev. H. Bull, of Lathbury ; to whose taste and kindness I am indebted for many valuable remarks, and corrections of the present version, of which I have freely availed myself.

Donington Rectory,  
October 28, 1854.

RAPE OF PROSERPINE.

