Walafrid Strabo – Poem to Empress Judith

(ca. 834–835)

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Temporis infausta sub potestate dolendi

In an inpropitious time
under the dominion of suffering,

Dum fraudis commenta pias populumque patremque

when the falsehoods of deceit were
oppressing both the pious people

Opprimerent, sanctamque fidem delere pararent

and [their] father, and were at the point
of destroying the holy faith,

Proscriptam exiliis, odio, vi, carcer, ferro,

[which itself had been] outlawed
by exile, hatred, force, prison, and iron,

Tunc iacuere boni nebula meroris opaci,

then good men lay hidden
by a cloud of grief,

Solaque per gremium regni nutantis ineptos

and a singular treachery vehemently
spread the improper designs

Perfidia exeruit fervore tyrannis ausus.

of a faithless tyranny throughout the
heart of the kingdom.

Dum mihi sollicito et recti pro parte gementi

When enormous concerns flowed
quite frequently into that breast of mine,

Saepius ingentes fluxere in pectora curae,

[I] who was worried and lamenting
for the side of Good,
Nec requies praesaga mihi per somnia, donec no comfort came to me

Haud dubia virtute deus, prisci atra timoris with His virtue beyond any doubt,

Nubila decuientes, nitidum sperare serenum driving away the dismal clouds

Edocuit, tenebris dum nox includeret altis of old fear, informed [me] to expect

Pallida, quod terram et longum quod inane vocamus. a bright, clear sky,

When the pale night was enclosing

Nubila decuientes, nitidum sperare serenum that which we call the Earth

Haud dubia virtute deus, prisci atra timoris and the "great void."

Dum sopar internis animalia fessa medullis When sleep relieves beasts,

Solvit, et angores longi curasque diei, tired to their inner marrow,

Munere divino, moderamine temperat aequo, and, by a divine gift, may soften,

Visa libri series coram pulcherrima longi by an even moderation,

Ante meos vultus, metricis qui versibus omnem the anxieties and troubles

Rite superficiem gestabat in ordine plenam. of a long day,

Dumque avidus rerum cautus per singula lector the contents

Irem, animadverti seriem de casibus ipsam [I came] face to face with a most beautiful

Et regni et regis textu resonare pedestri. sight; before my gaze [were] the contents

Caesarius hic nomen quadam sub imagine versum, of a great book, which had

Proque sacro semper Ludowici Equitatus illic its entire surface filled

Nomine scriptus erat, neque me cognominis huius and poetic verses

Turbabat novitas, cum causa videlicet ipsa in the proper sequence.

And when I, the reader, eager and wary,

went through each of the verses,

I discerned that the very content

[speaking in prosaic wording, about]

events of the king and the kingdom.

Here, under a certain image,

the name of Caesar was changed,

and for that ever-sacred name of Louis

there was written Equitatus,

and the newness of that name

did not disturb me,

since that condition clearly

described the person,
Personam exprimeret, notis notissima gestis. and the division of dual deceit,

Namque legebatur geminae discessio fraudis, the ever-retrievable honor

Impietas, raptusque duplex, patientia victrix, sin, and two-fold rape,
victorious patience

Rectoris rerumque decus reparaibile semper. and the ever-retrievable honor

Cumque oculi, sensus, aures, atque intima cordis And when [my] eyes, senses, ears,
and the innermost chamber

Antra siti arderent relegendo sive legendo, of my buried heart burned
from reading and re-reading,

Frater ab aspectu librum, miracula cuius a monk, snatching [it] away, held far
from [my] view the book,

Praebuit, eripiens memori superaddidit ore: to whose wonders he added
for remembering even more by a speech:

‘Tristor ex oculis humor, quam tota decebat “Tears sadder than it was right for any
breast to bear fall from the eyes

Pectora, non longae passuri damna ruinae.’ of one who will not suffer the misfortunes
of a long overthrow.”

Evigilans, pariterque volens retinere quod hausi, Vigilant, and at the same time wishing
to remember that which I took in,

Vix versus in fine duos, et nomen adauctum in the end I remembered the two verses—
[they] scarcely having suffered

Mente recordabar, reliquorum oblivia passus. the oblivion of the rest—and

Nominis auspicio pacis spem protinus auxi: I further increased the hope of peace
by the omen of the name:

Veloces virtutis opes Equitatus ille That Equitatus foretells a quick means
of strength,

Portendebat, idemque sequens assertio firmat, and consequently the same statement
confirms,

Tristari nimium tolerantem pondera dura that oppressive burdens ought not sadden
the overly tolerant man,

Non debere, citos facturum in laeta recursus. [who] will make the rapid returns
to joy.
Haec ego cum videam factis impleta, quid ultra

Occulerem? placuit vobis offere probando,

Quae nobis longi nutribant gaudia voti.

Augustae pauper decies dat munera quina

Strabo petens veniam, signat quam calculus idem.

Although I saw these things fulfilled in deeds, what more might I have been concealing? It is pleasing that things which should be further examined, [and] which for me nourished the joys of a great desire, be given to you. Seeking the grace of her Highness, the poor Strabo gives ten times five gifts, which this same amount [of verse] signifies.