

**THE ORLANDO  
FURIOSO**

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The Orlando furioso by Lodovico Ariosto

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**LODOVICO ARIOSTO**

**THE ORLANDO  
FURIOSO**



THE  
**ORLANDO FURIOSO**

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

FROM THE ITALIAN OF

**LUDOVICO ARIOSTO**  
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WITH NOTES

BY

**WILLIAM STEWART ROSE**

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VOL. I.

**LONDON**  
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TO  
SIR WALTER SCOTT,  
OF ABBOTSFORD, BART.

*Who persuaded me to resume the present work, which had been  
thrown aside, on the ground that such labour was its own reward.*

Scott, for whom Fame a gorgeous garland weaves,  
Who what was scattered to the wasting wind,  
As grain too coarse to gather or to bind,  
Bad'st me collect and gird in goodly sheaves ;

If this poor seed hath formed its stalk and leaves,  
Transplanted from a softer clime, and pined,  
For lack of southern suns, in soil unkind,  
Where Ceres or Italian Flora grieves ;

And if some fruit, however dwindled, fill  
The doubtful ear, though scant the crop and bare,  
(Ah ! how unlike the growth of Tuscan hill,  
Where the glad harvest springs behind the share\*)  
Praise be to thee ! who taught me that to till  
Was sweet, however paid the peasant's care.

*WILLIAM STEWART ROSE.*

\* A second wheat harvest follows closely upon the first in some parts of Tuscany.

## INTRODUCTION.

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It will, probably, be expected that a new translation of the *Furioso* should be prefaced by some account of the versions which have preceded it; and I the more readily undertake this little task, as in the execution of it my reasons will be found for the enterprize upon which I have myself adventured.

The first version of Ariosto's great poem was made by Sir John Harrington, the godson of Queen Elizabeth, who translated it into the same stanza as that of the original. The main defect of this work is its infidelity, and I cannot better illustrate this than by observing, that he has compressed a canto of nearly two hundred stanzas into ninety. A more unpardonable defect is, that he always omits what is best worth preserving; and, as an Italian friend



once observed to me, it is the poetry of Ariosto which he sacrifices. Another defect of this translator is that of exaggerating the extravagances of his author, and often spreading a ray of humour into a broad glare of buffoonery.

The history of his work may explain these faults, and more especially the last; as we are told he began his labours with the story of Giocondo, without the intention of pursuing them further; when his royal mistress imposed upon him the entire version of the *Furioso* as a sort of covering for the indecent episode which he had chosen to give as a specimen of the Italian.

If, however, Harrington cannot pretend to much merit as a translator, he has some claims to consideration as a writer, and his work has fallen into more obscurity than the antiquated language in which he writes, will serve to explain. His idioms, his grammar, and his construction (though things with difficulty kept free from foreign modes of speech in a translation) are exclusively English. His narrative is light and lively, and, in perusing it, the

reader always feels as if he is swimming with the stream.

The gleam of Italian sunshine, during which he wrote, though it produced beneficial effects upon our literature, was of short duration.

“ At one stride came the dark \*.”

The study of Italian letters was dropped at once, and I believe that no traces of literary intercourse between Italy and England are to be found during the succeeding age.

In the reign of George II. however, we have a proof of renewed intercourse in the publication of a new translation of the *Furioso*, dedicated to that monarch, as Harrington's version had been to Queen Elizabeth. This work was produced by William Huggins, Esq. of Headly Park, near Farnham, in Surrey. He was, I am told, reckoned in his day a very learned man, was passionately devoted to music, said to be a great proficient in it, and to have been

\* Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*.

the person who figures in Hogarth's picture, as the Enraged Musician.

But, whatever other accomplishments he may have possessed, he had certainly no feeling of poetry; and seems to have taken it up as Vernon did rebellion; "because it lay in his way." At least I know no better reason for his translation of Ariosto than his having made a journey to Italy.

The title-page of his book (in two vols. quarto) bears the date of 1757, and was printed for Rivington in Paternoster-row, and John Cook, a bookseller of Farnham, whose shop I remember frequenting in the days of my boyhood. It is printed with the English and Italian confronted, executed in the same stanza as Harrington's version, and translated line for line. Though there are to be found in it some very strange mistakes of Ariosto's meaning, it is, generally speaking, faithful, and as such, has, *primâ facie*, strong claims upon attention. But a species of fidelity is hardly to be coveted, which, at the best, does not accomplish the only end which should be proposed by it. For the translator often