

**AN ENGLISH PARAPHRASE  
OF HORACE'S  
ART OF POETRY**

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An English Paraphrase of Horace's Art of Poetry by Abby Osborne Russell

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ART OF POETRY**



IN PREPARATION.

THE QUOTATIONS OF HORACE.

*A COMPLETE LIST FROM ALL  
HIS WORK.*

BY

PROFESSOR S. MARCHISIO.

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AN  
ENGLISH PARAPHRASE  
OF  
HORACE'S ART OF POETRY

BY  
ABBY OSBORNE RUSSELL,

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY  
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## PREFACE.

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The keynote of the *Ars Poetica* is "*Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons.*" On this basis Horace founded the lessons in good writing that for many centuries have been a luminous guide to poets, dramatists, and all others who have sought to accomplish effects by the written word. I cannot better introduce Mrs. Russell's admirable book than by noting how fully she has learned this maxim, and how well she has applied it to the difficult task of popularizing the intricate literary philosophy of Horace.

This work is more than a mere translation of the *Ars Poetica*. It is more than a translation with notes, and more than a commentary. It is a paraphrase and critical study of Horace's masterpiece, entering closely into the thought of the original, and interpreting and illustrating, with rare felicity of phrase and subtlety of conception, every shade of its meaning.

Of translations and comments there has been no lack. But teachers and students alike will find that this paraphrase, while avoiding the repellant stiffness of literal translations and the ambiguity of metrical



versions, is a faithful guide to the thought of the renowned critic of Imperial Rome. The many beauties of Horace, his elevated thought, his delicate expressions, full of spirit and energy, are so competently illustrated by Mrs. Russell's sympathetic scholarship, that the student who wishes to learn the laws that underlie the *ART OF POETRY* cannot find a better hand-book.

I congratulate Mrs. Russell on having produced a work which is not only of permanent value and importance in classical study, but which illustrates the possible achievements of women in a field of writing and research hitherto chiefly monopolized by the masculine mind.

There is added to the paraphrase a list of quotations from the *Ars Poetica* which have passed into current use, with the literal and applied meaning of each. This list, of about eighty phrases, is a striking indication of the great influence the *Ars Poetica* has had upon the human mind, and it enhances the value of the present work.

SECONDO MARCHISIO, M. A.

# THE ART OF POETRY.

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## LESSON I.

### ARTISTIC UNITY.

(1-37).

In a poem, as in a painting, the first essential is unity of design and composition. To secure this it is necessary to have harmony and proportion among the different parts. Things, in their nature incongruous, should not be joined, because such a union would represent something unreal and impossible; and the object of art is to create images of beauty, not ridiculous monsters. Harmonious conceptions and ideas appeal to the sense of the beautiful, but absurd creations cannot be artistic.

You would, no doubt, laugh at a painting of some monstrous creature, which an artist had formed of parts of several animals. As, for instance, suppose that he had painted a human head joined by the neck of a horse to a body made up of members of other creatures, and over all had spread many-colored feathers; or had represented the sea-monster Scylla, described by Virgil, showing in the upper part of the figure a beautiful woman and below the tail of a hideous fish. You could not approve such a painting; you would ridicule the painter. So unnatural and absurd would be a poem of which the

different parts were so inconsistent and discordant that they seemed like the unreal disjointed fancies of a man ill of a fever. It would have no unity of design; beginning and end would not accord; as in the painting, the head and foot would not seem to belong to the same creation, and the whole would not produce on the mind an effect of beauty or reality.

To be sure, artists are always granted a certain poetic license. We must allow them to indulge their fancy and imagination, and to idealize the real things they see in the world, for, by so doing, they raise their work above the commonplace, and make it effective and artistic. But this license is not unlimited; it should not be extended to the joining of things naturally repugnant. Nature does not pair things savage in disposition with those that are gentle. Serpents do not mate with birds, nor lambs with tigers. So, if you make up your poem of ideas and parts that in the mind are as disassociated as these animals are by natural qualities, the whole work will not seem beautiful and true to realities, but incongruous and impossible.

Striking and beautiful descriptions of various scenes and phenomena in Nature are very pleasing in some kinds of poetry; but if they are not in their proper place and are not relevant to the main subject, they seem like purple patches sewed upon a sombre-colored garment. If the subject is grave and the introduction leads you to expect that lofty thoughts and matter of importance will follow, the poet should not, to achieve a striking effect, bring in