

**THE ART OF POETRY
OF HORACE, WITH TR.
IN PROSE AND VERSE**

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The Art of poetry of Horace, with tr. in prose and verse by Daniel Bagot

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DANIEL BAGOT

**THE ART OF POETRY
OF HORACE, WITH TR.
IN PROSE AND VERSE**

THE
ART OF POETRY
OF
HORACE

WITH
TRANSLATIONS IN PROSE AND VERSE

BY THE
VERY REV. DANIEL BAGOT, B.D.

DEAN OF DROMORE, VICAR-GENERAL OF HUNRY AND BORNIE, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE
LORD-LIEUTENANT OF IRELAND

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCLXIII

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THE

ART OF POETRY

ARS POETICA.

HUMANO capiti cervicem pictor equinam
Jungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas
Undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne ;
Spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici ? 5
Credite, Pisones, isti tabulæ fore librum
Persimilem, cujus, velut ægri somnia, vanis
Fingentur species ; ut nec pes nec caput uni
Reddatur formæ. Pictoribus atque poetis

If a painter should take a fancy to join a horse's neck to a human head, and to spread the plumage of variously coloured birds over limbs collected from animals of every country, so that a comely woman above should disgustingly terminate in a horrible-looking fish ; if admitted to see the sight, could you, my friends, refrain from laughter ? Believe me, Pisos, that a book would be very similar to a painting like that, of which the constituent ideas shall be formed so fanciful and absurd, like a sick man's dreams, as that neither foot nor head, neither end nor beginning, can be reduced to an agreement with one uniform and consistent model. To painters and to poets, *you will say*, there

THE ART OF POETRY.

If some mad painter, by his fancy led,
Should join a horse's neck and human head,
And upon limbs from various beasts should bring
Plumage from birds of every coloured wing,
So that a handsome female face should grow
Down to a fish of hideous form below,
Could you, this picture if allowed to see,
Gaze on the sight from boisterous laughter free?
Yet, trust me, Pisos, such a sketch as this
Supplies the emblem of a book that is 10
Filled with absurd fantastic thoughts that seem
Like the vain spectres of a sick man's dream,
So that the critic cannot judge nor scan
A work like this as one consistent plan.

Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas. 10
 Scimus, et hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim ;
 Sed non ut placidis coeant immitia ; non ut
 Serpentes avibus gementur, tigribus agni.
 Inceptis gravibus plerumque, et magna professis,
 Purpureus, late qui splendeat, unus et alter 15
 Assuitur pannus ; cum lucus et ara Dianæ,
 Et properantis aquæ per amœnos ambitus agros,
 Aut flumen Rhenum, aut pluvius describitur arcus.
 Sed nunc non erat his locus. Et fortasse cupressum
 Scis simulare ; quid hoc si fractis enatat exspes 20
 Navibus, ære dato qui pingitur ? amphora cœpit
 Institui ; currente rota, cur urceus exit ?

has always been conceded an equal privilege of adventuring anything bold and daring. We are aware of this, and we both seek for this indulgence for ourselves *when we write*, and grant it to others in their turn *when we act as critics*, but not to the extent that what are savage should coalesce with what are mild, not to the extent that serpents should be coupled with birds, or lambs with tigers.

It generally happens that to lofty and pompous commencements, and such as make great and ostentatious professions, one or two pieces of purple patchwork, *as it were*, that may give a diffusive brilliancy to the style, are stitched on : as when the grove and altar of Diana, and meandering streams of water swiftly flowing through a delightful country, or the river Rhine, or the rainbow, are described. But in this case there is no room for these *meretricious embellishments*. Perhaps, too, you can sketch a cypress. Of what use is this skill of yours, if he who is being painted by you for payment, is swimming hopeless from a shipwreck ? You begin to form a large vase ; as the wheel revolves, why does a small pitcher come forth ?

You'll say that painters, and that poets too,
Have power ten thousand daring things to do ;
We freely grant it, and the right we claim,
Prepared for others to concede the same,
But not to join what's fierce with what is mild,
That savage beasts with tame be reconciled. 20

To grand exordiums, and which promise much,
There's often tacked some dazzling patchwork, such
As when Diana's grove and altar shine
In glowing terms in some ambitious line : [flow,
Now winding streams through pleasing landscapes
Now the broad Rhine, now heaven's sun-coloured bow.
But all such tinsels here are out of place,
They mar the poem, and its style deface.
And you may know a cypress how to paint,
While he who hires your skill is weak and faint, 30
Struggling to leave the wreck and reach the shore,
He wants a votive tablet and no more.
A vase is planned, the artist's wheel you turn,
Lo ! out there comes a poor and paltry urn.

Denique sit quidvis simplex duntaxat et unum.
 Maxima pars vatum, pater et juvenes patre digni,
 Decipimur specie recti : brevis esse laboro, 25
 Obscurus fio ; sectantem leuis nervi
 Deficiunt animique ; professus grandia turget ;
 Serpit humi tutus nimium timidusque procellæ ;
 Qui variare cupit rem prodigialiter unam,
 Delphinum silvis appingit, fluctibus aprum. 30
 In vitium ducit culpæ fuga, si caret arte.

In short, write what you will, let it only be characterised by a simplicity and unity of design throughout.

Most of us poets—I address you the father, and you young men worthy of having such a father—are deceived by the estimate which we form for ourselves of what constitutes the correctness and beauty of poetic composition. For example, I endeavour to be concise and sententious, I become obscure and unintelligible. Nerve and spirit fail him who aims at a soft and easy style. He who aspires to the sublime and majestic, becomes turgid and bombastical. He who is too cautious and apprehensive of a storm, creeps along the ground ; or, in other words, he who is sensitively and over scrupulously afraid of a too soaring and lofty style, degenerates into what is low and grovelling. He who is anxious to diversify and impart variety to a simple subject, by ingrafting upon it marvellous and exciting incidents, paints a dolphin in the woods, or a boar amongst the waves. The very attempt to avoid a fault leads to a vicious error, if there be a deficiency of judicious and well-disciplined tact.