

Cant. II.

*The guilefull great Enchaunter parts
The Redcrosse Knight from Truth:
Into whose stead faire falshood steps,
And workes him wofull ruth.*

[1]

BY this the Northerne wagoner had set
His seuenfold teme behind the stedfast starre,
That was in Ocean waues yet neuer wet,
But firme is fixt, and sendeth light from farre
To all, that in the wide deepe wandring arre:
And chearefull Chaunticlere with his note shrill
Had warned once, that *Phoebus* fiery carre
In hast was climbing vp the Easterne hill,
Full enuious that night so long his roome did fill.

[2]

When those accursed messengers of hell,
That feigning dreame, and that faire-forged Spright
Came to their wicked maister, and gan tell
Their bootelesse paines, and ill succeeding night:
Who all in rage to see his skilfull might
Deluded so, gan threaten hellish paine
And sad *Proserpines* wrath, them to affright.
But when he saw his threatning was but vaine,
He cast about, and searcht his balefull bookes againe.

[3]

Eftsoones he tooke that miscreated faire,
And that false other Spright, on whom he spred
A seeming body of the subtile aire,
Like a young Squire, in loues and lusty-hed
His wanton dayes that euer loosely led,
Without regard of armes and dreaded fight:
Those two he tooke; and in a secret bed,
Couered with darknesse and misdeeming night,
Them both together laid, to ioy in vaine delight.

[4]

Forthwith he runnes with feigned faithfull hast
Vnto his guest, who after troublous sights

And dreames, gan now to take more sound repast,
Whom suddenly he wakes with fearefull frights,
As one aghast with feends or damned sprights,
And to him calls, Rise rise vnhappy Swaine,
That here wex old in sleepe, whiles wicked wights
Haue knit themselues in *Venus* shamefull chaine;
Come, see where your false Lady doth her honour staine.

[5]

All in amaze he suddenly vp start
With sword in hand, and with the old man went;
Who soone him brought into a secret part,
Where that false couple were full closely ment
In wanton lust and lewd embracement:
Which when he saw, he burnt with gealous fire,
The eye of reason was with rage yblent,
And would haue slaine them in his furious ire;
But hardly was restrained of that aged sire.

[6]

Returning to his bed in torment great,
And bitter anguish of his guiltie sight,
He could not rest, but did his stout heart eat,
And wast his inward gall with deepe despight,
Yrkesome of life, and too long lingring night.
At last faire *Hesperus* in highest skie
Had spent his lampe, & brought forth dawning light,
Then vp he rose, and clad him hastily;
The Dwarfè him brought his steed: so both away do fly.

[7]

Now when the rosy-fingred Morning faire,
Weary of aged *Tithons* saffron bed,
Had spred her purple robe through deawy aire,
And the high hills *Titan* discovered,
The royall virgin shooke off drowsy-hed,
And rising forth out of her baser bowre,
Lookt for her knight, who far away was fled,
And for her Dwarfè, that wont to wait each houre;
Then gan she waile & weepe, to see that woefull stowre.

[8]

And after him she rode with so much speede

As her slow beast could make; but all in vaine:
For him so far had borne his light-foot steed,
Pricked with wrath and fierie fierce disdain,
That him to follow was but fruitlesse paine;
Yet she her weary limbes would neuer rest,
But euery hill and dale, each wood and plaine
Did search, sore griued in her gentle brest,
He so vngently left her, whom she louest best.

[9]

But subtile *Archimago*, when his guests
He saw diuided into double parts,
And *Vna* wandring in woods and forrests,
Th'end of his drift, he praised his diuelish arts,
That had such might ouer true meaning harts;
Yet rests not so, but other meanes doth make,
How he may worke vnto her further smarts:
For her he hated as the hissing snake,
And in her many troubles did most pleasure take.

[10]

He then devisde himselfe how to disguise;
For by his mightie science he could take
As many formes and shapes in seeming wise,
As euer *Proteus* to himselfe could make:
Sometime a fowle, sometime a fish in lake,
Now like a foxe, now like a dragon fell,
That of himselfe he oft for feare would quake,
And oft would flie away. O who can tell
The hidden power of herbes, ans might of Magick spell?

[11]

But now seemde best, the person to put on
Of that good knight, his late beguiled guest:
In mighty armes he was yclad anon,
And silver shield, vpon his coward brest
A bloody crosse, and on his crauen crest
A bunch of haire discoloured diuersly:
Full iolly knight he seemde, and well address,
And when he sate vpon his courser free,
Saint George himself ye would haue deemed him to be.

[12]

But he, the knight, whose semblaunt he did beare,
The true *Saint George*, was wandred far away,
Still flying from his thoughts and gealous feare;
Will was his guide, and grieffe led him astray.
At last him chaunst to meet vpon the way
A faithlesse Sarazin, all arm'd to point,
In whose great shield was writ with letters gay
Sans foy: full large of limbe and euery ioint
He was, and cared not for God or man a point.

[13]

He had a faire companion of his way,
A goodly Lady, clad in scarlot red,
Purfled with gold and pearle of rich assay,
And like a *Persian* mitre on her hed
She wore, with crownes and owches garnished,
The which her lauish louers to her gaue;
Her wanton palfrey all was ouerspred
With tinsell trappings, woven like a waue,
Whose bridle rung with golden bells and bosses braue.

[14]

With faire disport and courting dalliaunce
She intertaine her louer all the way:
But when she saw the knight his speare aduaunce,
She soone left off her mirth and wanton play,
And bad her knight addresse him to the fray:
His foe was nigh at hand. He prickt with pride
And hope to winne his Ladies heart that day,
Forth spurred fast: adowne his coursers side
The red bloud trickling staid the way, as he did ride.

[15]

The knight of the *Redcrosse* when him he spide,
Spurring so hote with rage dispiteous,
Gan fairely couch his speare, and towards ride:
Soone meete they both, both fell and furious,
That daunted with their forces hideous,
Their steeds doe stagger, and amazed stand,
And eke themselues too rudely rigorous,
Astonied with the stroke of their owne hand,
Doe backe rebut, and each to other yeeldeth land.

[16]

As when two rams stird with ambitious pride,
Fight for the rule of the rich fleeced flocke,
Their horned fronts so fierce on either side
Do meete, that with the terrour of the shocke
Astonied both, stand sencelesse as a blocke,
Forgetfull of the hanging victory:
So stooode these twaine, vnmoued as a rocke,
Both staring fierce, and holding idely,
The broken reliques of their former cruelty.

[17]

The *Sarazin* sore daunted with the buffe
Snatcheth his sword, and fiercely to him flies;
Who well it wards, and quyteth cuff with cuff:
Each others equall puissaunce enuies,
And through their iron sides with cruelties
Does seeke to perce: repining courage yields
No foote to foe. The flashing fier flies
As from a forge out of their burning shields,
And streames of purple blood new dies the verdant fields.

[18]

Curse on that Crosse (quoth then the *Sarazin*)
That keepes thy body from the bitter fit;
Dead long ygoe I wote thou haddest bin,
Had not that charme from thee forwarned it:
But yet I warne thee now assured sitt,
And hide thy head. There-with vpon his crest
With rigour so outrageous he smitt,
That a large share it hewd out of the rest,
And glauncing downe his shield, from blame him fairely blest.

[19]

Who thereat wondrous wroth, the sleeping spark
Of natiue vertue gan eftsoones reuiue,
And at his haughtie helmet making mark,
So hugely stroke, that it the steele did riue,
And cleft his head. He, tumbling downe aliue,
With bloody mouth his mother earth did kis,
Greeting his graue: his grudging ghost did striue
With the fraile flesh; at last it flitted is,
Whither the soules do fly of men, that liue amis.

[20]

The Lady when she saw her champion fall,
Like the old ruines of a broken towre,
Staid not to waile his woefull funerall,
But from him fled away with all her powre;
Who after her as hastily gan scowre,
Bidding the Dwarfe with him to bring away
The *Sarazins* shield, signe of the conqueroure.
Her soone he ouertooke, and bad to stay,
For present cause was none of dread her to dismay.

[21]

She turning backe with ruefull countenance,
Cride, Mercy mercy Sir vouchsafe to show
On silly Dame, subiect to hard mischaunce,
And to your mighty will. Her humblesse low
In so ritche weedes and seeming glorious show,
Did much emmoue his stout heroicke heart,
And said; Deare dame, your suddein ouerthrowe
Much rueth me; but now put feare apart,
And tell, both who ye be, and who that tooke your part.

[22]

Melting in teares, then gan she thus lament;
The wretched woman, whom vnhappy howre
Hath now made thrall to your commandement,
Before that angry heauens lift to lowre,
And fortune false betraide me to your powre,
Was, (O what now auaieth that I was!)
Borne the sole daughter of an Emperour,
He that the wide West vnder his rule has,
And high hath set his throne, where *Tiberis* doth pas.

[23]

He in the first flowre of my freshest age,
Betrothed me vnto the onely haire
Of a most mighty king, most rich and sage;
Was neuer Prince so faithfull and so faire;
Was neuer Prince so meeke and debonaire:
But ere my hoped day of spousall shone,
My dearest Lord fell from high honours staire,
Into the hands of his accursed fone,
And cruelly was slaine, that shall I euer mone.

[24]

His blessed body spoild of liuely breath,
Was afterward, I know not how, conuaid
And fro me hid: of whose most innocent death
When tidings came to me vnhappy maid,
O how great sorrow my sad soule assaid.
Then forth I went his woefull corse to find,
And many yeares throughout the world I straid,
A virgin widow, whose deep wounded mind
With loue, long time did languish as the stricken hind.

[25]

At last it chaunced this proud *Sarazin*,
To meete me wandring, who perforce me led
With him away, but yet could neuer win
The Fort, that Ladies hold in soueraigne dread.
There lies he now with foule dishonour dead,
Who whiles he liu'de, was called proud *Sans foy*,
The eldest of three brethren, all three bred
Of one bad sire, whose youngest is *Sans ioy*,
And twixt them both was borne the bloody bold *Sans loy*.

[26]

In this sad plight, friendlesse, vnfortunate,
Now miserable I *Fidessa* dwell,
Crauing of you in pittie of my state,
To do none ill, if please ye not do well.
He in great passion all this while did dwell,
More busying his quicke eyes, her face to view,
Then his dull eares, to heare what she did tell;
And sayd, faire Lady heart of flint would rew
The vnderdeserued woes and sorrowes, which ye shew.

[27]

Henceforth in safe assuraunce may ye rest,
Hauing both found a new friend you to aid,
And lost an old foe, that did you molest:
Better new friend then an old foe is said.
With change of cheare, the seeming simple maid
Let fall her eyen, as shamefast to the earth,
And yielding soft, in that she nought gain-said,
So forth they rode, he feining seemely merth,
And she coy lookes: so dainty they say maketh derth.

[28]

Long time they thus together traueiled,
Till weary of their way, they came at last,
Where grew two goodly trees, that faire did spred
Their armes abroad, with gray mosse ouercast,
And their greene leaues trembling with euery blast,
Made a calme shadow far in compasse round:
The fearefull Shepheard often there aghast
Vnder them neuer sat, ne wont there sound
His mery oaten pipe, but shund th'vn lucky ground.

[29]

But this good knight, soone as he them gan spie,
For the coole shadow thither hastily got:
For, golden *Phoebus* now that mounted hie,
From fiery wheeles of his faire chariot
Hurled his beame so scorching cruell hot,
That liuing creature mote it not abide;
And his new Lady it endured not.
There they alight, in hope themselues to hide
From the fierce heat, and rest their weary limbs a tide.

[30]

Faire seemely pleasaunce each to other makes;
With goodly purposes there as they sit:
And in his falsed fancy he her takes
To be the fairest wight, that liued yit;
Which to expresse, he bends his gentle wit,
And thinking of those braunches greene to frame
A girlond for her dainty forehead fit,
He pluckt a bough; out of whose rift there came
Small drops of gory bloud, that trickled downe the same.

[31]

Therewith a piteous yelling voyce was heard,
Crying, O spare with guilty hands to teare
My tender sides in this rough rynd embard:
But fly, ah fly far hence away, for feare
Least to you hap, that happened to me heare,
And to this wretched Lady, my deare loue,
O too deare loue, loue bought with death too deare.
Astond he stood, and vp his haire did houe,
And with that suddein horror could no member moue.

[32]

At last whenas the dreadfull passion
Was ouerpast, and manhood well awake:
Yet musing at the strange occasion,
And doubting much his sence, he thus bespake;
What voyce of damned Ghost from *Limbo* lake,
Or guilefull spright wandring in empty aire,
Both which fraile men doe oftentimes mistake,
Sends to my doubtfull eares these speaches rare,
And ruefull plaints, me bidding guiltlesse bloud to spare?

[33]

Then groning deepe, Nor damned Ghost, (quoth he,)
Nor guilefull sprite to thee these wordes doth speake;
But once a man, *Fradubio*, now a tree,
Wretched man, wretched tree; whose nature weake,
A cruell witch her cursed will to wreake,
Hath thus transformd, and plast in open plaines,
Where *Boreas* doth blowe full bitter bleake,
And scorching Sunne does dry my secret vaines:
For, though a tree I seeme, yet cold and heat me paines.

[34]

Say on *Fradubio* then, or man, or tree,
Quoth then the knight, by whose mischieuous arts
Art thou misshaped thus, as now I see?
He oft finds med'cine, who his grieffe imparts;
But double griefs afflict concealing harts,
As raging flames who striueth to suppressse.
The author then (said he) of all my smarts,
Is one *Duessa* a false sorceresse,
That many errant knights hath brought to wretchednesse.

[35]

In prime of youthly yeares, when corage hot
The fire of loue and ioy of cheualree
First kindled in my brest; it was my lot
To loue this gentle Lady, whom ye see,
Now not a Lady, but a seeming tree;
With whom as once I rode accompanyde,
Me chaunced of a knight encountred bee,
That had a like faire Lady by his syde,
Like a faire Lady, but did fowle *Duessa* hyde.

[36]

Whose forged beauty he did take in hand,
All other Dames to haue exceeded farre;
I in defence of mine did likewise stand,
Mine, that did then shine as the Morning starre:
So both to battell fierce arraunged arre,
In which his harder fortune was to fall
Vnder my speare: such is the dye of warre:
His Lady left as a prise martiall,
Did yield her comely person, to be at my call.

[37]

So doubly lov'd of Ladies vnlike faire,
Th'one seeming such, the other such indeede,
One day in doubt I cast for to compare,
Whether in beauties glorie did exceede;
A Rosy girlond was the victors meede:
Both seemde to win, and both seemde won to bee,
So hard the discord was to be agreede.
Fraelissa was as faire, as faire mote bee,
And euer false *Duessa* seemde as faire as shee.

[38]

The wicked witch now seeing all this while
The doubtfull ballaunce equally to sway,
What not by right, she cast to win by guile,
And by her hellish science raisd streight way
A foggy mist, that ouercast the day,
And a dull blast, that breathing on her face,
Dimmed her former beauties shining ray,
And with foule vgly forme did her disgrace:
Then was she faire alone, when none was faire in place.

[39]

Then cride she out, fye, fye, deformed wight,
Whose borrowed beautie now appeareth plaine
To haue before bewitched all mens sight;
O leaue her soone, or let her soone be slaine.
Her loathly visage viewing with disdain,
Eftsoones I thought her such, as she me told,
And would haue kild her; but, with faigned paine,
The false witch did my wrathfull hand with-hold;
So left her, where she now is turnd to treen mould.

[40]

Then forth I took *Duessa* for my Dame,
And in the witch vnweening ioyd long time,
Ne euer wist, but that she was the same,
Till on a day (that day is euery Prime,
When witches wont do penance for their crime)
I chaunst to see her in her proper hew,
Bathing her selfe in origane and thyme:
A filthy foule old woman I did vew,
That euer to haue toucht her, I did deadly rew.

[41]

Her neather partes misshapen, monstrous,
Were hidd in water, that I could not see,
But they did seeme more foule and hideous,
Then womans shape man would beleue to bee.
Then forth from her most beastly companie
I gan refraine, in minde to slip away,
Soone as appeared safe oportunitie:
For danger great, if not assur'd decay,
I saw before mine eyes, if I were knowne to stray.

[42]

The diuelish hag by chaunges of my cheare
Perceiu'd my thought, and drownd in sleepe night,
With wicked hearbes and ointments did besmeare
My bodie all, through charmes and magicke might;
That all my senses were bereaued quight:
Then brought she me into this desert waste,
And by my wretched louers side me pight,
Where now enclosed in wooden wals full faste,
Banisht from liuing wights, our wearie dayes we waste.

[43]

But how long time, sayd then the Elfin knight,
Are you in this misformed house to dwell?
We may not change (quoth he) this euil plight,
Till we be bathed in a liuing well;
That is the terme prescribed by the spell.
O how, said he, mote I that well out find,
That may restore you to your wonted well?
Time and suffised fates to former kynd
Shall vs restore, none else from hence may vs vnbynde.

[44]

The false *Duessa*, now *Fidessa* hight,
Heard how in vaine *Fradubio* did lament,
And knew well all was true. But the good knight
Full of sad feare and ghastry dreriment,
When all this speech the liuing tree had spent,
The bleeding bough did thrust into the ground,
That from the bloud he might be innocent,
And with fresh clay did close the wooden wound:
Then turning to his Lady, dead with feare her found.

[45]

Her seeming dead he found with feigned feare,
As all vnweeting of that well she knew,
And paynd himselfe with busie care to reare
Her out of carelesse swowne. Her eyelids blew
And dimmed sight, with pale and deadly hew,
At last she vp gan lift: with trembling cheare
Her vp he tooke, too simple and too trew,
And oft her kist. At length, all passed feare,
He set her on her steede, and forward forth did beare.

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