

Cant. IX.

*His loues and lignage Arthur tells,
The knights knit friendly bands:
Sir Treuisan flies from Despayre,
Whom Redcrosse knight withstands.*

[1]

O Goodly golden chaine, wherewith yfere
The vertues linked are in louely wize:
And noble minds of yore allyed were,
In braue poursuit of cheualrous emprize,
That none did others safety despize,
Nor aide enuy to him, in need that stands,
But friendly each did others prayse deuize,
How to aduaunce with fauourable hands,
As this good Prince redeemd the *Redcrosse* knight from bands.

[2]

Who when their powres empaird through labour long,
With dew repast they had recured well,
And that weake captiue wight now wexed strong,
Them list no lenger there at leasure dwell,
But forward fare, as their aduentures fell,
But ere they parted, *Vna* faire besought
That straunger knight his name and nation tell;
Least so great good, as he for her had wrought,
Should die vnknown, & buried be in thanklesse thought.

[3]

Faire virgin (said the Prince) ye me require
A thing without the compas of my wit:
For, both the lignage and the certain Sire,
From which I sprong, from me are hidden yit.
For all so soone as life did me admit
Into this world, and shewed heauens light,
From mothers pap I taken was vnfit:
And straight deliuer'd to a Faery knight,
To be vpbrought in gentle thewes and martiall might.

[4]

Vnto old *Timon* he me brought byliue,
Old *Timon*, who in youthly yeares hath beene

In warlike feates th'expertest man aliue,
And is the wisest now on earth I weene;
His dwelling is lowe in a valley greene,
Vnder the foote of *Rauran* mossy hore,
From whence the riuier *Dee* as siluer cleene
His tumbling billowes rolls with gentle rore:
There all my dayes he traind me vp in vertuous lore.

[5]

Thither the great Magician *Merlin* came,
As was his vse, oftentimes to visit me:
For he had charge my discipline to frame,
And Tutours nouriture to ouersee.
Him oft and oft I askt in priuitie,
Of what loines and what lignage I did spring:
Whose aunswere bade me still assured be,
That I was sonne and heire vnto a king,
As time in her iust terme the truth to light should bring.

[6]

Well worthy impe, said then the Lady gent,
And Pupill fit for such a Tutours hand.
But what aduenture, or what high intent
Hath brought you hither into Faery land,
Aread Prince *Arthur*, crowne of Martiall band?
Full hard it is (quoth he) to read aright
The course of heavenly cause, or vnderstand
The secret meaning or th'eternall might,
That rules mens wayes, and rules the thoughts of liuing wight.

[7]

For whither he through fatall deepe foresight
Me hither sent, for cause to me vnghest,
Or that fresh bleeding wound, which day and night
Whilome doth rankle in my riuen brest,
With forced fury following his behest,
Me hither brought by waies yet neuer found,
You to haue helpt I hold my selfe yet blest.
Ah curteous knight (quoth she) what secret wound
Could euer find, to grieue the gentlest hart on ground?

[8]

Deare Dame (quoth he) you sleeping sparkes awake,

Which troubled once, into huge flames will grow,
Ne euer will their feruent fury slake,
Till liuing moysture into smoke do flow,
And wasted life doe lye in ashes low.
Yet sithence silence lesseneth not my fire
(But told it flames, and hidden it does glow)
I will reuele, what ye so much desire:
Ah Loue, lay downe thy bowe, the whiles I may respire.

[9]

It was in freshest flowre of youthly yeares,
When courage first does creepe in manly chest,
Then first the coale of kindly heat appears
To kindle loue in euery liuing brest;
But me had warnd old *Timons* wise behest,
Those creeping flames by reason to subdew,
Before their rage grewe to so great vnrest,
As miserable louers vse to rew,
Which still wex old in woe, whiles woe still wexeth new.

[10]

That idle name of loue, and louers life,
As losse of time, and vertues enemy
I euer scornd, and ioyd to stirre vp strife,
In midst of their mournfull Tragedy,
Ay wont to laugh, when them I heard to cry,
And blow the fire, which them to ashes Brent:
Their God himselfe, grieu'd at my libertie;
Shot many a dart at me with fiers intent,
But I them warded all with wary gouernment.

[11]

But all in vaine: no fort can be so strong,
Ne fleshly brest can armed be so sound,
But will at last be wonne with battrie long,
Or vnwares at disauantage found;
Nothing is sure, that growes on earthly ground:
And who most trustes in arme of fleshly might,
And boasts, in beauties chaine not to be bound,
Doth soonest fall in disauentrous fight,
And yeeldes his caytiue neck to victours most despight.

[12]

Ensample make of him your haplesse ioy,
And of my selfe now mated, as ye see;
Whose prouder vaunt, that proud avenging boy
Did soone pluck downe, and curbd my libertie.
For on a day prickt forth with iollitie
Of looser life, and heat of hardiment,
Raunging the forest wide on courser free,
The fields, the floods, the heauens with one consent
Did seeme to laugh on me, and fauour mine intent.

[13]

For-wearied with my sports, I did alight
From loftie steed, and downe to sleepe me layd;
The verdant gras my couch did goodly dight,
And pillow was my helmet faire displayd:
Whiles euey sence the humour sweet embayd,
And slombring soft my hart did steale away,
Me seemed, by my side a royall Mayd
Her daintie limbs full softly downe did lay:
So faire a creature yet saw neuer sunny day.

[14]

Most goodly glee and louely blandishment
She to me made, and bad me loue her deare,
For dearely sure her loue was to me bent,
As when iust time expired should appeare.
But whether dreames delude, or true it were,
Was neuer hart so rauisht with delight,
Ne liuing man like words did euer heare,
As she to me deliuered all that night;
And at her parting said, She Queene of Faeries hight.

[15]

When I awoke, and found her place deuoyd,
And nought but pressed gras, where she had lyen,
I sorrowed all so much, as earst I ioyd,
And washed all her place with watry eyen.
From that day forth I lou'd that face diuine;
From that day forth I cast in carefull mind,
To seeke her out with labour, and long tyne,
And neuer vow to rest, till her I find,
Nine monethes I seeke in vaine yet ni'll that vow vnbind.

[16]

Thus as he spake, his visage wexed pale,
And chaunge of hew great passion did bewray;
Yet still he stroue to cloke his inward bale,
And hide the smoke, that did his fire display,
Till gentle *Vna* thus to him gan say;
O happy Queene of Faeries, that hast found
Mongst many, one that with his prowesse may
Defend thine honour, and thy foes confound:
True Loues are often sown, but seldom grow on ground.

[17]

Thine, O then, said the gentle *Redcrosse* knight,
Next to that Ladies loue, shalbe the place,
O fairest virgin, full of heauenly light,
Whose wondrous faith, exceeding earthly race,
Was firmest fixt in mine extremest case.
And you, my Lord, the Patrone of my life,
Of that great Queene may well gaine worthy grace:
For onely worthy you, through prowes priefe
Yf liuing man mote worthy be, to be her liefé.

[18]

So diuersly discoursing of their loues,
The golden Sunne his glistring head gan shew,
And sad remembraunce now the Prince amoues,
With fresh desire his voyage to pursew:
Als *Vna* earnd her traueill to renew.
Then those two knights, fast friendship for to bynd,
And loue establish each to other trew,
Gaué goodly gifts, the signes of gratefull mynd,
And eke the pledges firme, right hands together ioynd.

[19]

Prince *Arthur* gaué a boxe of Diamond sure,
Embowd with gold and gorgeous ornament,
Wherein were closd few drops of liquor pure,
Of wondrous worth, and vertue excellent,
That any wound could heale incontinent:
Which to requite, the *Redcrosse* knight him gaué
A booke, wherein his Saueours testament
Was writ with golden letters rich and braue;
A worke of wondrous grace, and able soules to saue.

[20]

Thus beene they parted, *Arthur* on his way
To seeke his loue, and th'other for to fight
With *Vnaes* foe, that all her realme did pray.
But she now weighing the decayed plight,
And shrunken synewes of her chosen knight,
Would not a while her forward course pursew,
Ne bring him forth in face of dreadfull fight,
Till he recouer'd had his former hew:
For him to be yet weake and wearie well she knew.

[21]

So as they traueild, lo they gan espy
An armed knight towards them gallop fast,
That seemed from some feared foe to fly,
Or other griesly thing, that him agast.
Still as he fled, his eye was backward cast,
As if his feare still followed him behind;
Als flew his steed, as he his bands had brast,
And with his winged heeles did tread the wind,
As he had beene a fole of *Pegasus* his kind.

[22]

Nigh as he drew, they might perceiue his head
To be vnarmd, and curld vncombed heares
Vpstaring stiffe, dismayd with vncouth dread;
Nor drop of bloud in all his face appeares,
Nor life in limbe: and to increase his feares,
In foule reproch of knighthoods faire degree,
About his neck an hempen rope he weares,
That with his glistring armes does ill agree;
But he of rope or armes has now no memoree.

[23]

The *Redcrosse* knight toward him crossed fast,
To weet what mister wight was so dismayd:
There him he finds all sencelesse and aghast,
That of him selfe he seemd to be afrayd;
Whom hardly he from flying forward stayd,
Till he these wordes to him deliuer might;
Sir knight, aread who hath ye thus arayd,
And eke from whom make ye this hasty flight:
For neuer knight I saw in such misseeming plight.

[24]

He answerd nought at all; but adding new
Feare to his first amazement, staring wide
With stony eyes, and hartlesse hollow hew,
Astonisht stood, as one that had aspide
Infernall furies, with their chaines vntide.
Him yet againe, and yet againe bespake
The gentle knight; who nought to him replide,
But trembling euery ioynt did inly quake,
And foltring tongue at last these words seemd forth to shake.

[25]

For Gods deare loue, Sir knight, do me not stay;
For loe he comes, he comes fast after mee.
Eft looking backe would faine haue runne away;
But he him forst to stay, and tellen free
The secret cause of his perplexitie:
Yet nathemore by his bold hartie speach,
Could his bloud-frosen hart emboldned bee,
But through his boldnesse rather feare did reach,
Yet forst, at last he made through silence suddein breach.

[26]

And am I now in safetie sure (quoth he)
From him, that would haue forced me to dye?
And is the point of death now turnd fro mee,
That I may tell this haplesse history?
Feare nought: (quoth he) no danger now is nye?
Then shall I you recount a ruefull cace,
(Said he) the which with this vnlucky eye
I late beheld, and had not greater grace
Me reft from it, had bene partaker of the place.

[27]

I lately chaunst (Would I had neuer chaunst)
With a faire knight to keopen companee,
Sir *Terwin* hight, that well himselfe aduaunst
In all affaires, and was both bold and free,
But not so happie as mote happie bee:
He lou'd, as was his lot, a Ladie gent,
That him againe lou'd in the least degree:
For she was proud, and of too high intent,
And ioyd to see her louer languish and lament.

[28]

From whom returning sad and comfortlesse,
As on the way together we did fare,
We met that villen (God from him me blesse)
That cursed wight, from whom I scapt whyleare,
A man of hell, that cald himselfe *Despaire*:
Who first vs greets, and after faire areedes
Of tydings strange, and of aduentures rare:
So creeping close, as Snake in hidden weedes,
Inquireth of our states, and of our knightly deedes.

[29]

Which when he knew, and felt our feeble harts
Embost with bale, and bitter byting grieffe,
Which loue had launched with his deadly darts,
With wounding words and termes of foule reprimand,
He pluckt from vs all hope of due relieffe,
That earst vs held in loue of lingring life;
Then hopelesse hartlesse, gan the cunning thiefe
Perswade vs die, to stint all further strife:
To me he lent this rope, to him a rustie knife.

[30]

With which sad instrument of hastie death,
That wofull louer, loathing lenger light,
A wide way made to let forth liuing breath.
But I more fearefull, or more luckie wight,
Dismayd with that deformed dismall sight,
Fled fast away, halfe dead with dying feare:
Ne yet assur'd of life by you, Sir knight,
Whose like infirmitie like chaunce may beare:
But God you neuer let his charmed speeches heare.

[31]

How may a man (said he) with idle speach
Be wonne, to spoyle the Castle of his health?
I wote (quoth he) whom triall late did teach,
That like would not for all this worldes wealth:
His subtill tongue, like dropping honny, mealt'h
Into the hart, and searcheth euery vaine,
That ere one be aware, by secret stealth
His powre is reft, and weaknesse doth remaine.
O neuer Sir desire to try his guilefull traine.

[32]

Certes (said he) hence shall I neuer rest,
Till I that treachours art haue heard and tride;
And you Sir knight, whose name mote I request,
Of grace doe me vnto his cabin guide.
I that hight *Treuisan* (quoth he) will ride
Against my liking backe, to doe you grace:
But not for gold nor glee will I abide
By you, when ye arriue in that same place;
For leuer had I die, then see his deadly face.

[33]

Ere long they come, where that same wicked wight
His dwelling has, lowe in an hollow caue,
Farre vnderneath a craggie cliff ypyght,
Darke, dolefull, drearie, like a greedie graue,
That still for carrion carcasses doth craue:
On top whereof aye dwelt the ghastly Owle,
Shrieking his balefull note, which euer draue
Farre from that haunt all other chearfull fowle;
And all about it wandring ghostes did waile and howle.

[34]

And all about old stockes and stubs of trees,
Whereon nor fruit, nor leafe was euer seene,
Did hang vpon the ragged rockie knees;
On which had many wretches hanged beene,
Whose carcasses were scattered on the greene,
And throwne about the cliffs. Arriued there,
That bare-head knight for dread and dolefull teene,
Would faine haue fled, ne durst approchen neare,
But th'other forst him stay, and comforted in feare.

[35]

That darkesome caue they enter, where they find
That cursed man, low sitting on the ground,
Musing full sadly in his sullein mind;
His griesie lockes, long growen, and vnbound,
Disordred hong about his shoulders round,
And hid his face; through which his hollow eyne
Look deadly dull, and stared as astound;
His raw-bone cheekes through penurie and pine,
Where shronke into his iawes, as he did neuer dine.

[36]

His garment nought but many ragged clouts,
With thornes together pind and patched was,
The which his naked sides he wrapt abouts;
And him beside there lay vpon the gras
A drearie corse, whose life away did pas,
All wallowd in his owne yet luke-warme blood,
That from his wound yet welled fresh alas;
In which a rustie knife fast fixed stood,
And made an open passage for the gushing flood.

[37]

Which piteous spectacle, approuing trew
The wofull tale that *Treuisan* had told,
When as the gentle *Redcrosse* knight did vew,
With firie zeale he burnt in courage bold,
Him to auenge, before his blood were cold,
And to the villein said, Thou damned wight,
The author of this fact, we here behold,
What iustice can but iudge against thee right,
With thine owne blood to price his blood, here shed in sight.

[38]

What franticke fit (quoth he) hath thus distraught
Thee, foolish man, so rash a doome to giue?
What iustice euer other iudgement taught,
But he should die, who merites not to liue?
None else to death this man despayring driue,
But his owne guiltie mind deseruing death.
Is then vniust to each his due to giue?
Or let him die, that loatheth liniug breath?
Or let him die at ease, that liueth here vneath?

[39]

Who trauels by the wearie wandring way,
To come vnto his wished home in haste,
And meetes a flood, that doth his passage stay,
Is not great grace to helpe him ouer past,
Or free his feet, that in the myre sticke fast?
Most enuious man, that grieues at neighbours good,
And fond, that ioyest in the woe thou hast,
Why wilt not let him passe, that long hath stood
Vpon the banke, yet wilt thy selfe not passe the flood?

[40]

He there does now enjoy eternall rest
And happie ease, which thou doest want and craue,
And further from it daily wanderest:
What if some litle paine the passage haue,
That makes fraile flesh to feare the bitter waue?
Is not short paine well borne, that brings long ease,
And layes the soule to sleepe in quiet graue?
Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please.

[41]

The knight much wondred at his suddeine wit,
And said, The terme of life is limited,
Ne may a man prolong, nor shorten it;
The souldier may not moue from watchfull sted,
Nor leaue his stand, vntill his Captaine bed.
Who life did limit by almightie doome,
(Quoth he) knowes best the termes established;
And he, that points the Centonell his roome,
Doth license him depart at sound of morning droome.

[42]

Is not his deed, what euer thing is donne,
In heauen and earth? did not he all create
To die againe? all ends that was begonne.
Their times in his eternall booke of fate
Are written sure, and haue their certaine date.
Who then can striue with strong necessitie,
That holds the world in his still chaunging state,
Or shunne the death ordaynd by destinie?
When houre of death is come, let none aske whence, nor why.

[43]

The lenger life, I wote the greater sin,
The greater sin, the greater punishment:
All those great battels, which thou boasts to win,
Through strife, and bloud-shed, and auengement,
Now praysd, hereafter deare thou shalt repent:
For life must life, and bloud must bloud repay.
Is not enough thy euill life forespent?
For he, that once hath missed the right way,
The further he doth goe, the further he doth stray.

[44]

Then do no further goe, no further stray,
But here lie downe, and to thy rest betake,
Th'ill to preuent, that life ensewen may.
For what hath life, that may it loued make,
And giues not rather cause it to forsake?
Feare, sicknesse, age, losse, labour, sorrow, strife,
Paine, hunger, cold, that makes the hart to quake;
And euer fickle fortune rageth rife,
All which, and thousands mo do make a loathsome life.

[45]

Thou wretched man, of death hast greatest need,
If in true ballance thou wilt weigh thy state:
For neuer knight, that dared warlike deede,
More lucklesse disaentures did amate:
Witnesse the dongeon deepe, wherein of late
Thy life shut vp, for death so oft did call;
And though good lucke prolonged hath thy date,
Yet death then would the like mishaps forestall,
Into the which heereafter thou maiest happen fall.

[46]

Why then doest thou, ô man of sin, desire
To draw thy dayes forth to their last degree?
Is not the measure of thy sinfull hire
High heaped vp with huge iniquitie,
Against the day of wrath, to burden thee?
Is not enough, that to this Ladie milde
Thou falsed hast thy faith with periurie,
And sold thy selfe to serue *Duessa* vilde,
With whom in all abuse thou hast thy selfe defilde?

[47]

Is not he iust, that all this doth behold
From highest heauen, and beares an equall eye?
Shall he thy sins vp in his knowledge fold,
And guiltie be of thine impietie?
Is not his Law, Let euery sinner die:
Die shall all flesh? what then must needs be donne,
Is it not better to doe willinglie,
Then linger, till the glasse be all out runne?
Death is the end of woes: die soone, O faeries some.

[48]

The knight was much enmoued with his speach,
That as a sword's point through his hart did perse,
And in his conscience made a secret breach,
Well knowing true all, that he did reherse,
And to his fresh remembrance did reuerse
The vgly vew of his deformed crimes,
That all his manly powres it did disperse,
As he were charmed with inchaunted rimes,
That oftentimes he quakt, and fainted oftentimes.

[49]

In which amazement, when the Miscreant
Perceiued him to wauer weake and fraile,
Whiles trembling horror did his conscience dant,
And hellish anguish did his soule assaile,
To driue him to despaire, and quite to quaile,
He shew'd him painted in a table plaine,
The damned ghosts, that doe in torments waile,
And thousand feends that doe them endlesse paine
With fire and brimstone, which for euer shall remaine.

[50]

The sight whereof so throughly him dismaid,
That nought but death before his eyes he saw,
And euer burning wrath before him laid,
By righteous sentence of th'Almighties law:
Then gan the villein him to ouercrow,
And brought vnto him swords, ropes, poison, fire,
And all that might him to perdition draw;
And bade him choose, what death he would desire:
For death was due to him, that had prouokt Gods ire.

[51]

But when as none of them he saw him take,
He to him raught a dagger sharpe and keene,
And gaue it him in hand: his hand did quake,
And tremble like a leafe of Aspin greene,
And troubled bloud through his pale face was seene
To come, and goe with tydings from the hart,
As it a running messenger had beene.
At last resolu'd to worke his finall smart,
He lifted vp his hand, that backe againe did start.

[52]

Which when as *Vna* saw, through euery vaine
The crudled cold ran to her well of life,
As in a swowne: but soone reliu'd againe,
Out of his hand she snatcht the cursed knife,
And threw it to the ground, enraged rife,
And to him said, Fie, fie, faint harted knight,
What meanest thou by this reprochfull strife?
Is this the battell, which thou vaunt'st to fight
With that fire-mouthed Dragon, horrible and bright?

[53]

Come, come away, fraile, seely, fleshly wight,
Ne let vaine words bewitch thy manly hart,
Ne diuelish thoughts dismay thy constant spright.
In heauenly mercies hast thou not a part?
Why shouldst thou then despeire, that chosen art?
Where iustice growes, there growes eke greater grace,
The which doth quench the brond of hellish smart,
And that accurst hand-writing doth deface,
Arise, Sir knight, arise, and leaue this cursed place.

[54]

So vp he rose, and thence amounted streight.
Which when the carle beheld, and saw his guest
Would safe depart, for all his subtile sleight,
He chose an halter from among the rest,
And with it hung himselfe, vnbid vnblest.
But death he could not worke himselfe thereby;
For thousand times he so himselfe had drest,
Yet nathelesse it could not doe him die,
Till he should die his last, that is eternally.

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