

Cant. II.

*The Redcrosse knight to Britomart
describeth Artegall:*

*The wondrous myrrhour, by which she
in loue wth him did fall.*

[1]

Here haue I cause, in men iust blame to find,
That in their proper prayse too partiall bee,
And not indifferent to woman kind,
To whom no share in armes and cheualrie
They do impart, ne maken memorie
Of their braue gestes and prowese martiall;
Scarse do they spare to one or two or three,
Rowme in their writs; yet the same writing small
Does all their deeds deface, and dims their glories all,

[2]

But by record of antique times I find,
That women wont in warres to beare most sway,
And to all great exploits them selues inclind:
Of which they still the girlond bore away,
Till enuious Men fearing their rules decay,
Gan coyne streight lawes to curb their liberty;
Yet sith they warlike armes haue layd away:
They haue exceld in artes and pollicy
That now we foolish men that prayse gin eke t'eny.

[3]

Of warlike puissaunce in ages spent,
Be thou faire *Britomart*, whose prayse I write
But of all wisdom be thou precedent,
O soueraigne Queene, whose prayse I would endite,
Endite I would as dewtie doth excite;
But ah my rimes too rude and rugged arre,
When in so high an object they do lite,
And striuing, fit to make, I feare do marre:
Thy selfe thy prayses tell, and make them knowen farre.

[4]

She traouelling with *Guyon* by the way,
Of sundry things faire purpose gan to find,

T'abridg their iourney long, and lingring day;
Mongst which it fell into that Faeries mind,
To aske this Briton Mayd, what vncouth wind,
Made her dissemble her disguised kind:
Faire Lady she him seemd, like Lady drest,
But fairest knight aliue, when armed was her brest.

[5]

Thereat she sighing softly, had no powre
To speake a while, ne ready answere make,
But with hart-thrilling throbs and bitter stowre,
As if she had a feuer fit, did quake,
And eury daintie limbe with horroure shake;
And euer and anone the rosy red,
Flasht through her face, as it had beene a flake
Of lightning, through bright heauen fulmined;
At last the passion past she thus him answered.

[6]

Faire Sir, I let you weete, that from the howre
I taken was from nourses tender pap,
I haue beene trained vp in warlike stowre,
To tossen speare and shield, and to affrap
The warlike ryder to his most mishap;
Sithence I loathed haue my life to lead,
As Ladies wont, in pleasures wanton lap,
To finger the fine needle and nyce thread;
Me leuer were with point of foemans speare be dead.

[7]

All my delight on deedes of armes is set,
To hunt out perils and aduentures hard,
By sea, by land, where so they may be met,
Onely for honour and for high regard,
Without respect of richesse or reward.
For such intent into these parts I came,
Withouten compasse, or withouten card,
Far fro my natue soyle, that is by name
The greater *Britaine*, here to seeke for prayse and fame.

[8]

Fame blazed hath, that here in Faery lond
Do many famous Knightes and Ladies wonne,

And many straunge aduentures to be fond,
Of which great worth and worship may be wonne;
Which I to proue, this voyage haue begonne.
But mote I weet of you, right curteous knight,
Tydings of one, that hath vnto me donne
Late foule dishonour and reprochfull spight,
The which I seeke to wreake, and *Arthegall* he hight.

[9]

The word gone out, she backe againe would call,
As her repenting so to haue missayd,
But that he it vp-taking ere the fall,
Her shortly answered; Faire martiall Mayd
Certes ye misauised beene, t'vpbrayd
A gentle knight with so vnknightly blame:
For weet ye well of all, that euer playd
At tilt or tourney, or like warlike game,
The noble *Arthegall* hath euer borne the name.

[10]

For thy great wonder were it, if such shame
Should euer enter in his bounteous thought,
Or euer do, that mote deseruen blame:
The noble courage neuer weeneth ought,
That may vnworthy of it selfe be thought.
Therefore, faire Damzell, be ye well aware,
Least that too farre ye haue your sorrow sought:
You and your countrey both I wish welfare,
And honour both; for each of other worthy are.

[11]

The royall Mayd woxe inly wondrous glad,
To heare her Loue so highly magnifide,
And ioyd that euer she affixed had,
Her hart on knight so goodly glorifide,
How euer finely she it faind to hide:
The louing mother, that nine monethes did beare,
In the deare closet of her painefull side,
Her tender babe, it seeing safe appeare,
Doth not so much reioyce, as she reioyced there.

[12]

But to occasion him to further talke,
To feed her humour with his pleasing stile,
Her list in strifull termes with him to balke,
Aud thus replide, How euer, Sir, ye file
Your curteous tongue, his prayeses to compile,
It ill beseemes a knight of gentle sort,
Such as ye haue him boasted, to beguile
A simple mayd, and worke so haynous tort,
In shame of knighthood, as I largely can report.

[13]

Let be therefore my vengeaunce to dissuade,
And read, where I that faytour false may find.
Ah, but if reason faire might you perswade,
To slake your wrath, and mollifie your mind,
(Said he) perhaps ye should it better find:
For hardy thing it is, to weene by might,
That man to hard conditions to bind,
Or euer hope to match in equall fight,
Whose prowesse paragon saw neuer liuing wight.

[14]

Ne soothlich is it easie for to read,
Where now on earth, or how he may be found;
For he ne wonneth in one certaine stead,
But restlesse walketh all the world around,
Ay doing things, that to his same redound,
Defending Ladies cause, and Orphans right,
Where so he heares, that any doth confound
Them comfortlesse, through tyranny or might;
So is his soueraine honour raisde to heavens hight.

[15]

His feeling words her feeble sence much pleased,
And softly sunck into her molten hart;
Hart that is inly hurt, is greatly eased
With hope of thing, that may allegge his smart;
For pleasing words are like to Magick art,
That doth the charmed Snake in slomber lay:
Such secret ease felt gentle *Britomart*,
Yet list the same efforce with faind ganesay;
So dischord off in Musick makes the sweeter lay.

[16]

And said, Sir knight, these idle termes forbear,
And sith it is vneath to find his haunt,
Tell me some markes, by which he may appeare,
If chaunce I him encounter parauaunt;
For perdie one shall other slay, or daunt:
What shape, what shield, what armes, what steed, what sted,
And what so else his person most may vaunt?
All which the *Redcrosse* knight to point ared,
And him in euery part before her fashioned.

[17]

Yet him in euery part before she knew,
How euer list her now her knowledge faine,
Sith him whilome in *Britaine* she did vew,
To her reuealed in a mirrhour plaine,
Whereof did grow her first engrafted paine;
Whose root and stalke so bitter yet did tast,
That but the fruit more sweetnesse did containe,
Her wretched dayes in dolour she mote wast,
And yield the pray of loue to lothsome death at last.

[18]

By strange occasion she did him behold,
And much more strangely gan to loue his sight,
As it in bookes hath written bene of old.
In *Deheubarth* that now South-wales is hight,
What time king *Ryence* raign'd, and dealed right,
The great Magitian *Merlin* had deuiz'd,
By his deepe science, and hell-dreaded might,
A looking glasse, right wondrously aguiz'd,
Whose vertues through the wyde world soone were solemniz'd.

[19]

It vertue had, to shew in perfect sight,
What euer thing was in the world contaynd,
Betwixt the lowest earth and heauens hight,
So that it to the looker appertaynd;
What euer foe had wrought, or frend had faynd,
Therein discouered was, ne ought mote pas,
Ne ought in secret from the same remaynd;
For thy it round and hollow shaped was,
Like to the world it selfe, and seem'd a world of glas.

[20]

Who wonders not, that reades so wonderous worke?
But who does wonder, that has red the Towre,
Wherein th'Aegyptian *Phao* long did lurke
From all mens vew, that none might her discourse,
Yet she might all men vew out of her bowre?
Great *Ptolomae* it for his lemans sake
Ybuilded all of glasse, by Magicke powre,
And also it impregnable did make;
Yet when his loue was false, he with a peaze it brake.

[21]

Such was the glassie globe that *Merlin* made,
And gaue vnto king *Ryence* for his gard,
That neuer foes his kingdome might inuade,
But he it knew at home before he hard
Tydings thereof, and so them still debar'd.
It was a famous Present for a Prince,
And worthy worke of infinite reward,
That treasons could bewray, and foes conuince;
Happie this Realme, had it remained euer since.

[22]

One day it fortun'd, faire *Britomart*
Into her fathers closet to repayre;
For nothing he from her reseru'd apart,
Being his onely daughter and his hayre:
Where when she had espyed that mirrhour fayre,
Her selfe a while therein she vewd in vaine;
Tho her auizing of the vertues rare,
Which thereof spoken were, she gan againe
Her to bethinke of, that mote to her selfe pertaine.

[23]

But as it falleth, in the gentlest harts
Imperious Loue hath highest set his throne,
And tyrannizeth in the bitter smarts
Of them, that to him buxome are and prone:
So thought this Mayd (as maydens vse to done)
Whom fortune for her husband would allot,
Not that she lusted after any one;
For she was pure from blame of sinfull blot,
Yet wist her life at last must lincke in that same knot.

[24]

Eftsoones there was presented to her eye
A comely knight, all arm'd in complet wize,
Through whose bright ventayle lifted vp on hye
His manly face, that did his foes agrize,
And friends to termes of gentle truce entize,
Lookt foorth, as *Phæbus* face out of the east,
Betwixt two shadie mountaines doth arize;
Portly his person was, and much increast
Through his Heroicke grace, and honorable gest.

[25]

His crest was couered with a couchant Hound,
And all his armour seem'd of antique mould,
But woundrous massie and assured sound,
And round about yfretted all with gold,
In which there written was with cyphers old,
Achilles armes, which Arthegall did win.
And on his shield enueloped seuenfold
He bore a crowned litle Ermilin,
That deckt the azure field with her faire pouldred skin.

[26]

The Damzell well did vew his personage,
And like well, ne further fastned not,
But went her way; ne her vnguilty age
Did weene, vnwares, that her vnlucky lot
Lay hidden in the bottome of the pot;
Of hurt vnwist most daunger doth redound:
But the false Archer, which that arrow shot
So slyly, that she did not feele the wound,
Did smyle full smoothly at her weetlesse wofull stound.

[27]

Thenceforth the feather in her loftie crest,
Ruffed of loue, gan lowly to auaile,
And her proud portance, and her princely gest,
With which she earst triumphed, now did quaile:
Sad, solenne, sowre, and full of fancies fraile
She woxe; yet wist she neither how, nor why,
She wist not, silly Mayd, what she did aile,
Yet wist, she was not well at ease perdy,
Yet thought it was not loue, but some melancholy.

[28]

So soone as Night had with her pallid hew
Defast the beautie of the shining sky,
And reft from men the worlds desired vew,
She with her Nourse adowne to sleepe did lye;
But sleepe full farre away from her did fly:
In stead thereof fad sighes, and sorrowes deepe
Kept watch and ward about her warily,
That nought she did but wayle, and often steepe
Her daintie couch with teares, which closely she did weepe.

[29]

And if that any drop of slombring rest
Did chauce to still into her wearie spright,
When feeble nature felt her selfe opprest,
Streight way with dreames, and with fantasticke sight
Of dreadfull things the same was put to flight,
That oft out of her bed she did astart,
As one with vew of ghastly feends affright:
Tho gan she to renew her former smart,
And thinke of that faire visage, written in her hart.

[30]

One night, when she was tost with such vnrest,
Her aged Nurse, whose name was *Glauce* hight,
Feeling her leape out of her loathed nest,
Betwixt her feeble armes her quickly keight,
And downe againe in her warme bed her dight;
Ah my deare daughter, ah my dearest dread,
What vncouth fit (said she) what euill plight
Hath thee opprest, and with sad drearyhead
Chauged thy liuely cheare, and liuing made thee dead?

[31]

For not of nought these suddaine ghastly feares
All night afflict thy naturall repose,
And all the day, when as thine equall peares
Their fit disports with faire delight doe chose,
Thou in dull corners doest thy selfe inclose,
Ne tastest Princes pleasures, ne doest spred
Abroad thy fresh youthes fairest flowre, but lose
Both leafe and fruit, both too vntimely shed,
As one in wilfull bale for euer buried.

[32]

The time, that mortall men their weary cares
Do lay away, and all wilde beastes do rest,
And euery riuer eke his course forbears
Then doth this wicked euill thee infest,
And riue with thousand throbs thy thrilled brest;
Like an huge *Aetn'* of deepe engulfed grieffe,
Sorrow is heaped in thy hollow chest,
Whence forth it breakes in sighes and anguish rife,
As smoke and sulphure mingled with confused strife.

[33]

Aye me, how much I feare, least loue it bee;
But if that loue it be, as sure I read
By knowen signes and passions, which I see,
Be it worthy of thy race and royall sead,
Then I auow by this most sacred head
Of my deare foster child, to ease thy grieffe,
And win thy will: Therefore away doe dread;
For death nor daunger from thy dew reliefe
Shall me debarre, tell me therefore my liefest liefe.

[34]

So hauing said, her twixt her armes twaine
She straightly straynd, and colled tenderly,
And euery trembling ioynt, and euery vaine
She softly felt, and rubbed busily,
To doe the frosen cold away to fly;
And her faire deawy eies with kisses deare
She oft did bath, and oft againe did dry;
And euer her importund, not to feare
To let the secret of her hart to her appeare.

[35]

The Damzell pauzd, and then thus fearefully;
Ah Nurse, what needeth thee to eke my paine?
Is not enough, that I alone doe dye,
But it must doubled be with death of twaine?
For nought for me but death there doth remaine.
O daughter deare (said she) despaire no whit;
For neuer sore, but might a salue obtaine:
That blinded God, which hath ye blindly smit,
Another arrow hath your louers hart to hit.

[36]

But mine is not (quoth she) like others wound;
For which no reason can find remedy.
Was neuer such, but mote the like be found,
(Said she) and though no reason may apply
Salue to your sore, yet loue can higher stye,
Then reasons reach, and oft hath wonders donne.
But neither God of loue, nor God of sky
Can doe (said she) that, which cannot be donne.
Things oft impossible (quoth she) seeme, ere begonne.

[37]

These idle words (said she) doe nought asswage
My stubborne smart, but more annoyance breed,
For no no vsuall fire, no vsuall rage
It is, ô Nurse, which on my life doth feed,
And suckes the bloud, which from my hart doth bleed.
But since thy faithfull zeale lets me not hyde
My crime, (if crime it be) I will it reed.
Nor Prince, nor pere it is, whose loue hath gryde
My feeble brest of late, and launched this wound wyde.

[38]

Nor man it is, nor other liuing wight;
For then some hope I might vnto me draw,
But th'only shade and semblant of a knight,
Whose shape or person yet I neuer saw,
Hath me subiected to loues cruell law:
The same one day, as me misfortune led,
I in my fathers wondrous mirrhour saw,
And pleased with that seeming goodly-hed,
Vnwares the hidden hooke with baite I swallowed.

[39]

Sithens it hath infixd faster hold
Within my bleeding bowels, and so sore
Now ranckleth in this same fraile fleshly mould,
That all mine entrailes flow with poysnous gore,
And th'vlcèr groweth daily more and more;
Ne can my running sore find remedie,
Other then my hard fortune to deplore,
And languish as the leafe falne from the tree,
Till death make one end of my dayes and miserie.

[40]

Daughter (said she) what need ye be dismayd,
Or why make ye such Monster of your mind?
Of much more vncouth thing I was affrayd;
Of filthy lust, contrarie vnto kind:
But this affection nothing straunge I find;
For who with reason can you aye reprove,
To loue the semblant pleasing most your mind,
And yield your heart, whence ye cannot remoue?
No guilt in you, but in the tyranny of loue.

[41]

Not so th'*Arabian Myrrhe* did set her mind;
Not so did *Biblis* spend her pining hart,
But lou'd their natie flesh against all kind,
And to their purpose vsed wicked art:
Yet playd *Pasiphaë* a more mostrous part,
That lou'd a Bull, and learnd a beast to bee;
Such shamefull lusts who loaths not, which depart
From course of nature and of modestie?
Sweet loue such lewdnes bands from his faire companie.

[42]

But thine my Deare (welfare thy heart my deare)
Though strange beginning had, yet fixed is
On one, that worthy may perhaps appeare;
And certes seemes bestowed not amis:
Ioy thereof haue thou and eternall blis.
With that vpleaning on her elbow weake,
Her alablasted brest she soft did kis,
Which all that while she felt to pant and quake,
As it an Earth-quake were; at last she thus bespake.

[43]

Beldame, your words doe worke me litle ease;
For though my loue be not so lewdly bent,
As those ye blame, yet may it nought appease
My raging smart, ne ought my flame relent,
But rather doth my helpelesse grieffe augment.
For they, how euer shamefull and vnkind,
Yet did possesse their horrible intent:
Short end of sorrowes they thereby did find;
So was their fortune good, though wicked were their mind.

[44]

But wicked fortune mine, though mind be good,
Can haue no end, nor hope of my desire,
But feed on shadowes, whiles I die for food,
And like a shadow wexe, whiles with entire
Affection, I doe languish and expire.
I fonder, then *Cephisus* foolish child,
Who hauing vewed in a fountaine shere
His face, was with the loue thereof beguild;
I fonder loue a shade, the bodie farre exild.

[45]

Nought like (quoth she) for that same wretched boy
Was of himselfe the idle Paramoure;
Both loue and louer, without hope of ioy,
For which he faded to a watry flowre.
But better fortune thine, and better howre,
Which lou'st the shadow of a warlike knight;
No shadow, but a bodie hath in powre:
That bodie, wheresoeuer that it light,
May learned be by cyphers, or by Magicke might.

[46]

But if thou may with reason yet repress
The growing euill, ere it strength haue got,
And thee abandond wholly doe possesse,
Against it strongly striue, and yield thee not,
Till thou in open field adowne be smot.
But if the passion mayster thy fraile might,
So that needs loue or death must be thy lot,
Then I auow to thee, by wrong or right
To compasse thy desire, and find that loued knight.

[47]

Her chearefull words much cheard the feeble spright
Of the sicke virgin, that her downe she layd
In her warme bed to sleepe, if that she might;
And the old-woman carefully displayd
The clothes about her round with busie ayd;
So that at last a little creeping sleepe
Surprisd her sense: She therewith well apayd,
The drunken lampe downe in the oyle did steepe,
And set her by to watch, and set her by to weepe.

[48]

Earely the morrow next, before that day
His ioyous face did to the world reueale,
They both vprose and tooke their readie way
Vnto the Church, their prayers to appeale,
With great deuotion, and with litle zeale:
For the faire Damzell from the holy herse
Her loue-sicke hart to other thoughts did steale;
And that old Dame said many an idle verse,
Out of her daughters hart fond fancies to reuerse.

[49]

Returned home, the royall Infant fell
Into her former fit; for why, no powre
Nor guidance of her selfe in her did dwell.
But th'aged Nurse her calling to her bowre,
Had gathered Rew, and Sauine, and the flowre
Of *Camphara*, and Calamint, and Dill,
All which she in a earthen Pot did poure,
And to the brim with Colt wood did it fill,
And many drops of milke and bloud through it did spill.

[50]

Then taking thrise three haire from off her head,
Them trebly breaded in a threefold lace,
And round about the pots mouth, bound the thread,
And after hauing whispered a space
Certaine sad words, with hollow voice and bace,
She to the virgin said, thrise said she it;
Come daughter come, come; spit vpon my face,
Spit thrise vpon me, thrise vpon me spit;
Th'vneuen number for this businesse is most fit.

[51]

That sayd, her round about she from her turnd,
She turned her contrarie to the Sunne,
Thrise she her turnd contrary, and returnd,
All contrary, for she the right did shunne,
And euer what she did, was streight vndonne.
So thought she to vndoe her daughters loue:
But loue, that is in gentle brest begonne,
No idle charmes so lightly may remoue,
That well can witness, who by triall it does proue.

[52]

Ne ought it mote the noble Mayd auayle,
Ne slake the furie of her cruell flame,
But that she still did waste, and still did wayle,
That through long laugour, and hart-burning brame
She shortly like a pyned ghost became,
Which long hath waited by the Stygian strond.
That when old *Glauce* saw, for feare least blame
Of her miscarriage should in her be fond,
She wist not how t'amend, nor how it to withstond.

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