

Cant. XI.

*Britomart chaceth Ollyphant,
findes Scudamour distrest:
Assayes the house of Busyrane,
where Loues spoyles are exprest.*

[1]

O Hatefull hellish Snake, what furie furst
Brought thee from balefull house of *Proserpine*,
Where in her bosome she thee long had nurst,
And fostred vp with bitter milke of tine,
Fowle Gealositie, that turnest loue diuine
To ioylesse dread, and mak'st the louing hart
With hatefull thoughts to languish and to pine,
And feed it selfe with selfe-consuming smart?
Of all the passions in the mind thou vilest art.

[2]

O let him far be banished away,
And in his stead let Loue for euer dwell,
Sweet Loue, that doth his golding wings embay
In blessed Nectar, and pure Pleasures well,
Vntroubled of vile feare, or bitter fell.
And ye faire Ladies, that your kingdomes make
In th'harts of men, them gouerne wisely well,
And of faire *Britomart* ensample take,
That was as trew in loue, as Turtle to her make.

[3]

Who with Sir *Satyrane*, as earst ye red,
Forth ryding from *Malbecco's* hostlesse hous,
Far off aspyde a young man, the which fled
From an huge Geaunt, that with hideous
And hatefull outrage long him chaced thus;
It was that *Ollyphant*, the brother deare
Of that *Argante* vile and vitious,
From whom the *Squire of Dames* was reft whylere;
This all as bad as she, and worse, if worse ought were.

[4]

For as the sister did in feminine
And filthy lust exceede all woman kind,

So he surpassed his sex masculine,
In beastly vse that I did euer find;
Whom when as *Britomart* beheld behind
The fearefull boy so greedily pursew,
She was emmoued in her noble mind,
T'employ her puissaunce to his reskew,
And pricked fiercely forward, where she him did vew.

[5]

Ne was Sir *Satyrane* her far behinde,
But with like fiercenesse did ensew the chace:
Whom when the Gyaunt saw, he soone resinde
His former suit, and from them fled apace;
They after both, and boldly bad him bace,
And each did striue the other to out-goe,
But he them both outran a wondrous space,
For he was long, and swift as any Roe,
And now made better speed, t'escape his feared foe.

[6]

It was not *Satyrane*, whom he did feare,
But *Britomart* the flowre of chastity;
For he the powre of chast hands might not beare,
But alwayes did their dread encounter fly:
And now so fast his feet he did apply,
That he has gotten to a forrest neare,
Where he is shrowded in security.
The wood they enter, and search euery where,
They searched diuersely, so both diuided were.

[7]

Faire *Britomart* so long him followed,
That she at last came to a fountaine sheare,
By which there lay a knight all wallowed
Vpon the grassy ground, and by him neare
His haberieon, his helmet, and his speare;
A little off, his shield was rudely throwne,
On which the winged boy in colours cleare
Depeincted was, full easie to be knowne,
And he thereby, where euer it in field was showne.

[8]

His face vpon the ground did groueling ly,

As if he had bene slombring in the shade,
That the braue Mayd would not for courtesy,
Out of his quiet slomber him abrade,
Nor seeme too suddeinly him to inuade:
Still as she stood, she heard with grieuous throb
Him grone, as if his hart were peeces made,
And with most painefull pangs to sigh and sob,
That pittie did the Virgins hart of patience rob.

[9]

At last forth breaking into bitter plaintes
He said; ô soueraigne Lord that sit'st on hye,
And raignst in blis emongst thy blessed Saintes,
How suffrest thou such shamefull cruelty,
So long vnwreaked of thine enemy?
Or hast, thou Lord, of good mens cause no heed?
Or doth thy iustice sleepe, and silent ly?
What booteth then the good and righteous deed,
If goodnesse find no grace, nor righteousnesse no meed?

[10]

If good find grace, and righteousnesse reward,
Why then is *Amoret* in caytiue band,
Sith that more bounteous creature neuer far'd
On foot, vpon the face of liuing land?
Or if that heauenly iustice may withstand
The wrongfull outrage of vnrighteous men,
Why then is *Busirane* with wicked hand
Suffred, these seuen monethes day in secret den
My Lady and my loue so cruelly to pen?

[11]

My Lady and my loue is cruelly pend
In dolefull darkenesse from the vew of day,
Whilest deadly torments do her chast brest rend,
And the sharpe steele doth riue her hart in tway,
All for she *Scudamore* will not denay.
Yet thou vile man, vile *Scudamore* art sound,
Ne canst her ayde, ne canst her foe dismay;
Vnworthy wretch to tread vpon the ground,
For whom so faire a Lady feeles so sore a wound.

[12]

There an huge heape of singulfes did oppresse
His strugling soule, and swelling throbs empeach
His foltring toung with pangs of drerinesse,
Choking the remnant of his plaintife speach,
As if his dayes were come to their last reach.
Which when she heard, and saw the ghastly fit,
Threatning into his life to make a breach,
Both with great ruth and terrour she was smit,
Fearing least from her cage the wearie soule would flit.

[13]

Tho stooping downe she him amoued light;
Who therewith somewhat starting, vp gan looke,
And seeing him behind a straunger knight,
Whereas no liuing creature he mistooke,
With great indignaunce he that sight forsooke,
And downe againe himselfe disdainefully
Abiecting th'earth with his faire forehead strooke:
Which the bold Virgin seeing, gan apply
Fit medicine to his griefe, and spake thus courtesly.

[14]

Ah gentle knight, whose deepe cenceiued griefe
Well seemes t'exceede the powre of patience,
Yet if that heauenly grace some good reliefe
You send, submit you to high prouidence,
And euer in your noble hart prepense,
That all the sorrow in the world is lesse,
Then vertues might, and values confidence,
For who nill bide the burden of distresse,
Must not here thinke to liue: for life is wretchednesse.

[15]

Therefore, faire Sir, do comfort to you take,
And freely read, what wicked felon so
Hath outrag'd you, and thrald your gentle make.
Perhaps this hand may helpe to ease your woe,
And wreake your sorrow on your cruell foe,
And least it faire endeuour will apply.
Those feeling wordes so neare the quicke did goe,
That vp his head he reared easily,
And leaning on his elbow, these few wordes let fly.

[16]

What boots it plaine, that cannot be redrest,
And sow vaine sorrow in a frui[t]lesse eare,
Sith powre of hand, nor skill of learned brest,
Ne worldly price cannot redeeme my deare,
Out of her thraldome and continuall feare?
For he the tyraunt, which her hath in ward
By strong enchauntments and blacke Magicke leare,
Hath in a dungeon deepe her close embard,
And many dreadfull feends hath pointed to her gard.

[17]

There he tormenteth her most terribly,
And day and night afflicts with mortall paine,
Because to yield him loue she doth deny,
Once to me yold, not to be yold againe:
But yet by torture he would her constraine
Loue to conceiue in her disdainfull brest,
Till so she do, she must in doole remaine,
Ne may by liuing meanes be thence relest:
What boots it then to plaine, that cannot be redrest?

[18]

With this sad hersall of his heauy stresse,
The warlike Damzell was empassiond sore,
And said; Sir knight, your cause is nothing lesse,
Then is your sorrow, certes if not more;
For nothing so much pittie doth implore,
As gentle Ladies helplesse misery.
But yet, if please ye listen to my lore,
I will with prooffe of last extremity,
Deliuier her fro thence, or with her for you dy.

[19]

Ah gentlest knight aliue, (said *Scudamore*)
What huge heroicke magnanimity
Dwels in thy bounteous brest? what couldst thou more,
If she were thine, and thou as now am I?
O spare thy happy dayes, and them apply
To better boot, but let me dye, that ought;
More is more losse: one is enough to dy.
Life is not lost, (said she) for which is bought
Endlesse renown, that more then death is to be sought.

[20]

Thus she at length perswaded him to rise,
And with her wend, to see what new successe
Mote him befall vpon new enterprise;
His armes, which he had vowed to disprofesse,
She gathered vp and did about him dresse,
And his for wandred steed vnto him got:
So forth they both yfere make their progresse,
And march not past the mountenaunce of a shot,
Till they arriu'd, whereas their purpose they did plot.

[21]

There they dismounting, drew their weapons bold
And stoutly came vnto the Castle gate;
Whereas no gate they found, them to withhold,
Nor ward to wait at morne and euening late,
But in the Porch, that did them sore amate,
A flaming fire, ymixt with smouldry smoke,
And stinking Sulphure, that with griesly hate
And dreadfull horroure did all entraunce choke,
Enforced them their forward footing to reuoke.

[22]

Greatly thereat was *Britomart* dismayd,
Ne in that stownd wist, how her selfe to beare;
For daunger vaine it were, to haue assayd
That cruell element, which all things feare,
Ne none can suffer to approchen neare:
And turning backe to *Scudamour*, thus sayd;
What monstrous enmity prouoke we heare,
Foolhardy as th'Earthes children, the which made
Battell against the Gods? so we a God inuade.

[23]

Daunger without discretion to attempt,
Inglorious and beastlike is: therefore Sir knight,
Aread what course of you is safest dempt,
And how we with our foe may come to fight.
This (quoth he) the dolorous despight,
Which earst to you I playnd: for neither may
This fire be quencht by any wit or might,
Ne yet by any meanes remou'd away,
So mighty be th'enchautments, which the same do stay.

[24]

What is there else, but cease these fruitlesse paines,
And leaue me to my former languishing;
Faire *Amoret* must dwell in wicked chaines,
And *Scudamore* here dye with sorrowing.
Perdy not so; (said she) for shamefull thing
It were t'abandon noble cheuisaunce,
For shew of perill, without venturing:
Rather let try extremities of chaunce,
Then enterprised prayse for dread to disauaunce.

[25]

Therewith resolu'd to proue her vtmost might,
Her ample shield she threw before her face,
And her swords point directing forward right,
Assayld the flame, the which eftsoones gaue place,
And did it selfe diuide with equall space,
That through she passed; as a thunder bolt
Perceth the yielding ayre, and doth displace
The soring clouds into sad showres ymolt;
So to her yold the flames, and did their force reuolt.

[26]

Whom whenas *Scudamour* saw past the fire,
Safe and vntoucht, he likewise gan assay,
With greedy will, and enuious desire,
And bad the stubborne flames to yield him way:
But cruell *Mulciber* would not obay
His threatfull pride, but did the more augment
His mighty rage, and imperious sway
Him forst (maulgre) his fiercenesse relent,
And backe retire, all scorcht and pitifully brent.

[27]

With huge impatience he inly swelt,
More for great sorrow that he could not pas,
Then for the burning torment, which he felt,
That with fell woodnesse he effierced was,
And wilfully him throwing on the gras,
Did beat and bounce his head and brest full sore;
The whiles the *Championesse* now entred has
The vtmost rowme, and past the formest dore,
The vtmost rowme, abounding with all precious store.

[28]

For round about, the wals yclothed were
With goodly arras of great maiesty,
Wouen with gold and silke so close and nere,
That the rich metall lurked priuily,
As faining to be hid from enuious eye;
Yet here, and there, and euery where vnwares
It shewd it selfe, and shone vnwillingly;
Like a discolour'd Snake, whose hidden snares
Through the greene gras his long bright burnisht backe declares.

[29]

And in those Tapets weren fashioned
Many faire pourtraicts, and many a faire feate,
And all of loue, and all of lusty-hed,
As seemed by their semblaunt did entreat;
And eke all *Cupids* warres they did repeate,
And cruell battels, which he whilome fought
Gainst all the Gods, to make his empire great;
Besides the huge massacres, which he wrought
On mighty kings and kesars, into thraldome brought.

[30]

Therein was writ, how often thundring *Ioue*
Had felt the point of his hart-percing dart,
And leauing heauens kingdome, here did roue
In straunge disguise, to slake his scalding smart;
Now like a Ram, faire *Helle* to peruart,
Now like a Bull, *Europa* to withdraw:
Ah, how the fearefull Ladies tender hart
Did liuely seeme to tremble, when she saw
The huge seas vnder her t'obay her seruaunts law.

[31]

Soone after that into a golden showre
Him selfe he chaung'd faire *Danaë* to vew,
And through the rooffe of her strong brasen towre
Did raine into her lap an hony dew,
The whiles her foolish garde, that little knew
Of such deceit, kept th'yron dore fast bard,
And watcht, that none should enter nor issew;
Vaine was the watch, and bootlesse all the ward,
Whenas the God to golden hew him selfe transfard.

[32]

Then was he turnd into a snowy Swan,
To win faire *Leda* to his louely trade:
O wondrous skill, and sweet wit of the man,
That her in daffadillies sleeping made,
From scorching heat her daintie limbes to shade:
Whiles the proud Bird ruffing his fethers wyde,
And brushing his faire brest, did her inuade;
She slept, yet twixt her eyelids closely spyde,
How towards her he rusht, and smiled at his pryde.

[33]

Then shewd it, how the *Thebane Semelee*
Deceiu'd of gealous Iuno, did require
To see him in his soueraigne maiestee,
Armd with his thunderbolts and lightning fire,
Whence dearely she with death bought her desire
But faire *Alcmena* better match did make,
Ioying his loue in likenesse more entire;
Three nights in one, they say, that for her sake
He then did put, her pleasures lenger to partake.

[34]

Twise was he seene in soaring Eagles shape,
And with wide wings to beat the buxome ayre,
Once, when he with *Asterie* did scape,
Againe, when as the *Troiane* boy so faire
He snatcht from *Ida* hill, and with him bare:
Wondrous delight it was, there to behould,
How the rude Shepherds after him did stare,
Trembling through feare, least down he fallen should
And often to him calling, to take surer hould.

[35]

In *Satyres* shape *Antiopa* he snatcht:
And like a fire, when he *Aegin'* assayd:
A shepheard, when *Mnemosyne* he catcht:
And like a Serpent to the *Thracian* mayd.
Whiles thus on earth great *Ioue* these pageaunts playd,
The winged boy did thrust into his throne,
And scoffing, thus vnto his mother sayd,
Lo now the heauens obey to me alone,
And take me for their *Ioue*, whiles *Ioue* to earth is gone.

[36]

And thou, faire *Phoebus*, in thy colours bright
Wast there enwouen, and the sad distresse,
In which that boy thee plinged, for despight,
That thou bewray'dst his mothers wantonnesse,
When she with *Mars* was meynt in ioyfulnesse:
For thy he thrild thee with a leaden dart,
To loue faire *Daphne*, which thee loued lesse:
Lesse she thee lou'd, then was thy iust desart,
Yet was thy loue her death, & her death was thy smart.

[37]

So louedst thou the lusty *Hyacinct*,
So louedst thou the faire *Coronis* deare:
Yet both are of thy haplesse hand extinct,
Yet both in flowres do liue, and loue thee beare,
The one a Pounce, the other a sweet breare:
For grieve whereof, ye mote haue liuely seene
The God himselfe rending his golden heare,
And breaking quite his gyrlond euer greene,
With other signes of sorrow and impatient teene.

[38]

Both, for those two, and for his owne deare sonne,
The sonne of *Climene* he did repent,
Who bold to guide the charet of the Sunne,
Himselfe in thousand peeces fondly rent,
And all the world with flashing fier brent,
So like, that all the walles did seeme to flame.
Yet cruell *Cupid*, not herewith content,
Forst him eftsoones to follow other game,
And loue a Shepherds daughter for his dearest Dame.

[39]

He loued *Isse* for his dearest Dame,
And for her sake her cattell fed a while,
And for her sake a cowheard vile became,
The seruant of *Admetus* cowheard vile,
Whiles that from heauen he suffered exile.
Long were to tell each other louely fit,
Now like a Lyon, hunting after spoile,
Now like a Hag, now like a faulcon flit:
All which in that faire arras was most liuely writ.

[40]

Next vnto him was *Neptune* pictured,
In his diuine resemblance wondrous lyke:
His face was rugged, and his hoarie hed
Dropped with brackish deaw; his three-forkt Pyke
He stearnly shooke, and therewith fierce did stryke
The raging billowes, that on euery syde
They trembling stood, and made a long broad dyke,
That his swift charet might haue passage wyde,
Which foure great *Hippodames* did draw in temewise tyde.

[41]

His sea-horses did seeme to snort amayne,
And from their nosethrilles blow the brynie streame,
That made the sparckling waues to smoke agayne,
And flame with gold, but the white fomy creame,
Did shine with siluer, and shoot forth his beame.
The God himselfe did pensiuie seeme and sad,
And hong adowne his head, as he did dreame:
For priuy loue his brest empierced had,
Ne ought but deare *Bisaltis* ay could make him glad.

[42]

He loued eke *Iphimedia* deare,
And *Aeolus* faire daughter *Arne* hight.
For whom he turnd him selfe into a Steare,
And fed on fodder, to beguile her sight.
Also to win *Deucalions* daughter bright,
Her turnd him selfe into a Dolphin fayre;
And like a winged horse he tooke his flight,
To snaly-locke *Medusa* to repayre,
On whom he got faire *Pegasus*, that flitteth in the ayre.

[43]

Next *Saturne* was, (but who would euer weene,
That sullein *Saturne* euer weend to loue?
Yet loue is sullein, and *Saturnlike* seene,
As he did for *Erigone* it proue.)
That to a *Centaure* did him selfe transmoue.
So proou'd it eke that gracious God of wine,
When for to compasse *Philliras* hard loue,
He turnd himselfe into a fruitfull vine,
And into her faire bosome made his grapes decline.

[44]

Long were to tell the amorous assayes,
And gentle pangues, with which he maked meeke
The mighty *Mars*, to learne his wanton playes:
How oft for *Venus*, and how often eek
For many other Nymphes he sore did shreek,
With womanish teares, and with vnwarlike smarts,
Priuily moystening his horrid cheek.
There was he painted full of burning darts,
And many wide woundes launched through his inner parts,

[45]

Ne did he spare (so cruell was the Elfe)
His owne deare mother, (ah why should he so?
Ne did he spare sometime to pricke himselfe,
That he might tast the sweet consuming woe,
Which he had wrought to many others moe.
But to declare the mournfull Tragedyes,
And spoiles, wherewith he all the ground did strow,
More eath to number, with how many eyes
High heauen beholds sad louers nightly theeueryes.

[46]

Kings Queenes, Lords Ladies, Knights & Damzels gent
Were heap'd together with the vulgar sort,
And mingled with the raskall rablement,
Without respect of person or of port,
To shew Dan *Cupids* powre and great effort:
And round about a border was entrayld,
Of broken bowes and arrowes shiuered short,
And a long bloody riuier through them rayld,
So liuely and so like, that liuing sence it fayld.

[47]

And at the vpper end of that faire rowme,
There was an Altar built of pretious stone,
Of passing valew, and of great renowne,
On which there stood an Image all alone,
Of massy gold, which with his owne light shone;
And wings it had with sundry colours dight,
More sundry colours, then the proud *Pauone*
Beares in his boasted fan, or *Iris* bright,
When her discolourd bow she spreads through heauen bright,

[48]

Blindfold he was, and in his cruell fist
A mortall bow and arrowes keene did hold,
With which he shot at randon, when him list,
Some headed with sad lead, some with pure gold;
(Ah man beware, how thou those darts behold)
A wounded Dragon vnder him did ly,
Whose hideous tayle his left foot did enfold,
And with a shaft was shot through either eye,
That no man forth might draw, ne no man remedye.

[49]

And vnderneath his feet was written thus,
Vnto the Victor of the Gods this bee:
And all the people in that ample hous
Did to that image bow their humble knee,
And oft committed fowle Idolatree.
That wondrous sight faire Britomart amazed,
Ne seeing could her wonder satisfie,
But euermore and more vpon it gazed,
The whiles the passing brightnes her fraile senses dazed.

[50]

Tho as she backward cast her busie eye,
To search each secret of that goodly sted
Ouer the dore thus written she did spye
Be bold: she oft and oft it ouer-red,
Yet could not find what sence it figured:
But what so were therein or writ or ment,
She was no whit thereby discouraged
From prosecuting of her first intent,
But forward with bold steps into the next roome went.

[51]

Much fairer, then the former, was that roome,
And richlier by many partes arayd:
For not with arras made in painefull loome,
But with pure gold it all was ouerlayd,
Wrought with wilde Antickes, which their follies playd,
In the rich metall, as they liuing were:
A thousand monstrous formes therein were made,
Such as false loue doth oft vpon him weare?
For loue in thousand monstrous formes doth oft appeare.

[52]

And all about, the glistring walles were hong
With warlike spoiles, and with victorious prayes,
Of mighty Conquerours and Captaines strong,
Which were whilome captiued in their dayes
To cruell loue, and wrought their owne decayes:
Their swerds & speres were broke, & hauberques rent;
And their proud girlonds of tryumphant bayes
Troden in dust with fury insolent,
To shew the victors might and mercilesse intent.

[53]

The warlike Mayde beholding earnestly
The goodly ordinance of this rich place,
Did greatly wonder ne could satisfie
Her greedy eyes with gazing a long space,
But more she meruaild that no footings trace,
Nor wight appear'd, but wastefull emptinesse,
And solemne silence ouer all that place:
Straunge thing it seem'd, that none was to possesse
So rich purueyance, ne them keepe with carefulnesse.

[54]

And as she lookt about, she did behold,
How ouer that same dore was likewise writ,
Be bold, be bold, and euery where *Be bold*,
That much she muz'd, yet could not construe it
By any ridling skill, or commune wit.
At last she spyde at that roomes vpper end,
Another yron dore, on which was writ,
Be not too bold; whereto though she did bend
Her earnest mind, yet wist not what it might intend.

[55]

Thus she there waited vntill euentyde,
Yet liuing creature none she saw appeare:
And now sad shadowes gan the world to hyde,
From mortall vew, and wrap in darkenesse dreare;
Yet nould she d'off her weary armes, for feare
Of secret daunger, ne let sleepe oppresse
Her heauy eyes with natures burdein deare,
But drew her selfe aside in sickernesse,
And her welpointed weapons did about her dresse.

[Original content ©2018 by Dirk Jol.]