

## *Cant. IX.*

*The Squire of low degree releast  
Poeana takes to wife:  
Britomart fightes with many Knights  
Prince Arthur stints their strife.*

[1]

**H**ard is the doubt, and difficult to deeme,  
When all three kinds of loue together meet,  
And doe dispart the hart with powre extreme,  
Whether shall weigh the balance downe; to weet  
The deare affection vnto kindred sweet,  
Or raging fire of loue to woman kind,  
Or zeale of friends combynd with vertues meet.  
But of them all the band of vertues mind  
Me seemes the gentle hart, should most assured bind.

[2]

For naturall affection soone doth cesse,  
And quenched is with *Cupids* greater flame:  
But faithfull friendship doth them both suppress,  
And them with maystring discipline doth tame,  
Through thoughts aspyring to eternall fame.  
For as the soule doth rule the earthly masse,  
And all the seruice of the bodie frame,  
So loue of soule doth loue of bodie passe,  
No lesse then perfect gold surmounts the meanest brasse.

[3]

All which who list by tryall to assay,  
Shall in this storie find approued plaine;  
In which these Squires true friendship more did sway,  
Then either care of parents could refraine,  
Or loue of fairest Ladie could constraine.  
For though *Poeana* were as faire as morne,  
Yet did this Trustie squire with proud disdain  
For his friends sake her offred fauours scorne,  
And she her selfe her syre, of whom she was yborne.

[4]

Now after that Prince *Arthur* graunted had,  
To yeeld strong succour to that gentle swayne,

Who now long time had lyen in prison sad,  
He gan aduise how best he mote darrayne  
That enterprize, for greatest glories gayne.  
That headlesse tyrants tronke he reard from ground,  
And hauing ympt the head to it agayne,  
Vpon his vsuall beast it firmly bound,  
And made it so to ride, as it aliuie was found.

[5]

Then did he take that chaced Squire, and layd  
Before the ryder, as he captiue were,  
And made his Dwarfe, though with vnwilling ayd,  
To guide the beast, that did his maister beare,  
Till to his castle they approched neare.  
Whom when the watch, that kept continuall ward  
Saw comming home; all voide of doubtfull feare,  
He running downe, the gate to him vnbar'd;  
Whom straight the Prince ensuing, in together far'd.

[6]

There he did find in her delitious boure  
The faire *Poëana* playing on a Rote,  
Complayning of her cruell Paramoure,  
And singing all her sorrow to the note,  
As she had learned readily by rote.  
That with the sweetnesse of her rare delight,  
The Prince halfe rapt, began on her to dote:  
Till better him bethinking of the right,  
He her vnwares attacht, and captiue held by might.

[7]

Whence being forth produc'd, when she perceiued  
Her owne deare sire, she cald to him for aide.  
But when of him no aunswere she receiued,  
But saw him sencelesse by the Squire vpstaide,  
She weened well, that then she was betraide:  
Then gan she loudly cry, and weepe, and waile,  
And that same Squire of treason to vpbraide.  
But all in vaine, her plaints might not preuaile,  
Ne none there was to reskue her, ne none to baile.

[8]

Then tooke he that same Dwarfe, and him compeld

To open vnto him the prison dore,  
And forth to bring those thrals, which there he held.  
Thence forth were brought to him about a score  
Of Knights and Squires to him vnknowne afore:  
All which he did from bitter bondage free,  
And vnto former liberty restore.  
Amongst the rest, that Squire of low degree  
Came forth full weake and wan, not like him selfe to bee.

[9]

Whom soone as faire *Aemylia* beheld,  
And *Placidus*, they both vnto him ran,  
And him embracing fast betwixt them held,  
Striuing to comfort him all that they can,  
And kissing oft his visage pale and wan.  
That faire *Poeana* them beholding both,  
Gan both enuy, and bitterly to ban;  
Through iealous passion weeping inly wroth,  
To see the sight perforce, that both her eyes were loth.

[10]

But when a while they had together beene,  
And diuersly conferred of their case,  
She, though full oft she both of them had seene  
Asunder, yet not euer in one place,  
Began to doubt, when she them saw embrace,  
Which was the captiue Squire she lou'd so deare,  
Deceiued through great likenesse of their face,  
For they so like in person did appeare,  
That she vneath discerned, whether whether weare.

[11]

And eke the Prince, when as he them auized,  
Their like resemblaunce much admired there,  
And mazd how nature had so well disguised  
Her worke, and counterfet her selfe so nere,  
As if that by one patterne seene somewhere,  
She had them made a paragone to be,  
Or whether it through skill, or errour were.  
Thus gazing long, at them much wondred he,  
So did the other knights and Squires, which him did see.

[12]

Then gan they ransacke that same Castle strong,  
In which he found great store of hoorded threasure,  
The which that tyrant gathered had by wrong  
And tortious powre, without respect or measure.  
Vpon all which the Briton Prince made seasure,  
And afterwards continu'd there a while,  
To rest him selfe, and solace in soft pleasure  
Those weaker Ladies after weary toile;  
To whom he did diuide part of his purchast spoile.

[13]

And for more ioy, that captiue Lady faire  
The faire *Poëana* he enlarged free;  
And by the rest did set in sumptuous chaire,  
To feastand frolicke; nathemore would she  
Shew gladsome countenance nor pleasaunt glee:  
But griued was for losse both of her sire,  
And eke of Lordship, with both land and fee:  
But most she touched was with griefe entire,  
For losse of her new loue, the hope of her desire.

[14]

But her the Prince through his well wonted grace,  
To better termes of myldnesse did entreat,  
From that fowle rudenesse, which did her deface;  
And that same bitter corsiuë, which did eat  
Her tender heart, and made refraine from meat,  
He with good thewes and speaches well applyde,  
Did mollifie, and calme her raging heat.  
For though she were most faire, and goodly dyde,  
Yet she it all did mar with cruelty and pride.

[15]

And for to shut vp all in friendly loue,  
Sith loue was first the ground of all her griefe,  
That trusty Squire he wisely well did moue  
Not to despise that dame, which lou'd him liefè,  
Till he had made of her some better priefè,  
But to accept her to his wedded wife.  
Thereto he offred for to make him chiefe  
Of all her land and lordship during life:  
He yekled, and her tooke; so stinted all their strife.

[16]

From that day forth in peace and ioyous blis,  
They liu'd together long without debate,  
Ne priuate iarre, ne spite of enemis  
Could shake the safe assuraunce of their state.  
And she whom Nature did so faire create,  
That she mote match the fairest of her daies,  
Yet with lewd loues and lust intemperate  
Had it defaste; thenceforth reformd her waies,  
That all men much admyrde her change, and spake her praise.

[17]

Thus when the Prince had perfectly compylde  
These paires of friends in peace and setled rest,  
Him selfe, whose minde did trauell as with chylde,  
Of his old loue, conceau'd in secret brest,  
Resolved to pursue his former guest;  
And taking leaue of all, with him did beare  
Faire *Amoret*, whom Fortune by bequest  
Had left in his protection whileare,  
Exchanged out of one into an other feare.

[18]

Feare of her safety did her not constraine,  
For well she wist now in a mighty hond,  
Her person late in perill, did remaine,  
Who able was all daungers to withstond.  
But now in feare of shame she more did stond,  
Seeing her selfe all soly succourlesse,  
Left in the victors powre, like vassall bond;  
Whose will her weakenesse could no way repress.  
In case his burning lust should breake into excesse.

[19]

But cause of feare sure had she none at all  
Of him, who goodly learned had of yore  
The course of loose affection to forstall,  
And lawlesse lust to rule with reasons lore;  
That all the while he by his side her bore,  
She was as safe as in a Sanctuary;  
Thus many miles they two together wore,  
To seeke their loues dispersed diuersly,  
Yet neither shewed to other their hearts priuity.

[20]

At length they came, whereas a troupe of Knights  
They saw together skirmishing, as seemed:  
Sixe they were all, all full offell despight,  
But foure of them the battell best beseemed,  
That which of them was best, mote not be deemed.  
Those foure were they, from whom false *Florimell*  
By *Braggadochio* lately was redeemed.  
To weet, sterne *Druon*, and lewd *Claribell*,  
Loue-lauish *Blandamour*, and lustfull *Paridell*.

[21]

*Druons* delight was all in single life,  
And vnto Ladies loue would lend no leasure:  
The more was *Claribell* enraged rise  
With feruent flames, and loued out of measure:  
So eke lou'd *Blandamour*, but yet at pleasure  
Would change his liking, and new Lemans proue:  
But *Paridell* of loue did make no threasure,  
But lusted after all, that him did moue.  
So diuersly these foure disposed were to loue.

[22]

But those two other which beside them stoode,  
Were *Britomart*, and gentle *Scudamour*,  
Who all the while beheld their wrathfull moode,  
And wondred at their impacable stoure,  
Whose like they neuer saw till that same houre:  
So dreadfull strokes each did at other driue,  
And laid on load with all their might and powre,  
As if that euery dint the ghost would riue  
Out of their wretched corses, and their liues depriue.

[23]

As when *Dan AEolus* in great displeasure,  
For losse of his deare loue by *Neptune* hent,  
Sends forth the winds out of his hidden threasure,  
Vpon the sea to wreake his fell intent;  
They breaking forth with rude vnruliment,  
From all foure parts of heauen doe rage full sore,  
And tosse the deepes, and teare the firmament,  
And all the world confound with wide vprore,  
As if in stead thereof they *Chaos* would restore.

[24]

Cause of their discord, and so fell debate,  
Was for the loue of that same snowy maid,  
Whome they had lost in Turneyment of late,  
And seeking long, to weet which way she straid  
Met here together, where through lewd vpbraide  
Of *Ate* and *Duessa* they fell out,  
And each one taking part in others aide,  
This cruell conflict raised thereabout,  
Whose dangerous successe depended yet in dout.

[25]

For sometimes *Paridell* and *Blandamour*  
The better had, and bet the others backe,  
Eftsoones the others did the field recoure,  
And on their foes did worke full cruell wracke:  
Yet neither would their fiendlike fury slacke,  
But euermore their malice did augment;  
Till that vneath they forced were for lacke  
Of breath, their raging rigour to relent,  
And rest themselues for to recouer spirits spent.

[26]

Their gan they change their sides, and new parts take;  
For *Paridell* did take to *Druons* side,  
For old despight, which now forth newly brake  
Gainst *Blandamour*, whom alwaies he enuide:  
And *Blandamour* to *Claribell* relide.  
So all afresh gan former fight renew.  
As when two Barkes, this caried with the tide,  
That with the wind, contrary courses sew,  
If wind and tide doe change, their courses change anew.

[27]

Thenceforth they much more furiously gan fare,  
As if but then the battell had begonne,  
Ne helmets bright, ne hawberks strong did spare,  
That through the cliffs the vermeil bloud out sponne,  
And all adowne their riuen sides did ronne.  
Such mortall malice, wonder was to see  
In friends profest, and so great outrage donne:  
But sooth is said, and tride in each degree,  
Faint friends when they fall out, most cruell fomen bee.

[28]

Thus they long while continued in fight,  
Till *Scudamour*, and that same Briton maide,  
By fortune in that place did chance to light:  
Whom soone as they with wrathfull eie bewraide,  
They gan remember of the fowle vpbraide,  
The which that Britonesse had to them donne,  
In that late Turney for the snowy maide;  
Where she had them both shamefully fordonne,  
And eke the famous prize of beauty from them wonne.

[29]

Eftsoones all burning with a fresh desire  
Of fell reuenge, in their malicious mood  
They from them selues gan turne their furious ire,  
And cruell blades yet steeming with whot blood,  
Against those two let driue, as they were wood:  
Who wondring much at that so sodaine fit,  
Yet nought dismayd, them stoutly well withstood;  
Ne yeelded foote, ne once abacke did flit,  
But being doubly smitten likewise doubly smit.

[30]

The warlike Dame was on her part assaid,  
Of *Claribell* and *Blandamour* attone;  
And *Paridell* and *Druon* fiercely laid  
At *Scudamour*, both his professed fone.  
Foure charged two, and two surcharged one;  
Yet did those two them selues so brauely beare,  
That the other litle gained by the lone,  
But with their owne repayed duely weare,  
And vsury withall: such gaine was gotten deare.

[31]

Full oftentimes did *Britomart* assay  
To speake to them, and some emparlance moue;  
But they for nought their cruell hands would stay,  
Ne lend an eare to ought, that might behoue,  
As when an eager mastiffe once doth proue  
The tast of blood of some engored beast,  
No words may rate, nor rigour him remoue  
From greedy hold of that his blouddy feast:  
So litle did they hearken to her sweet beheast.

[32]

Whom when the Briton Prince a farre beheld  
With ods of so vnequall match opprest,  
His mighty heart with indignation sweld,  
And inward grudge fild his heroicke brest:  
Eftsoones him selfe he to their aide address,  
And thrusting fierce into the thickest preace,  
Diuded them, how euer loth to rest,  
And would them faine from battell to surceasse,  
With gentle words perswading them to friendly peace.

[33]

But they so farre from peace or patience were,  
That all at once at him gan fiercely flie,  
And lay on load, as they him downe would beare;  
Like to a storme, which houers vnder skie  
Long here and there, and round about doth stie,  
At length breakes downe in raine, and haile, and sleet,  
First from one coast, till nought thereof be drie;  
And then another, till that likewise fleet;  
And so from side to side till all the world it weet.

[34]

But now their forces greatly were decayd,  
The Prince yet being fresh vntoucht afore;  
Who them with speaches milde gan first disswade  
From such foule outrage, and them long forbore:  
Till seeing them through suffrance hartned more,  
Him selfe he bent their furies to abate,  
And layd at them so sharpely and so sore,  
That shortly them compelled to retrate,  
And being brought in daunger, to relent too late.

[35]

But now his courage being throughly fired,  
He ment to make them know their follies prise,  
Had not those two him instantly desired  
T'asswage his wrath, and pardon their mesprise.  
At whose request he gan him selfe aduise  
To stay his hand, and of a truce to treat  
In milder tearmes, as list them to devise:  
Mongst which the cause of their so cruell heat  
He did them aske, who all that passed gan repeat.

[36]

And told at large how that same errant Knight,  
To weet faire *Britomart*, them late had foyled  
In open turney, and by wrongfull fight  
Both of their publicke praise had them despoyled,  
And also of their priuate loues beguyled,  
Of two full hard to read the harder theft.  
But she that wrongfull challenge soone assoyled,  
And shew'd that she had not that Lady reft,  
(As they supposd) but her had to her liking left.

[37]

To whom the Prince thus goodly well replied;  
Certes sir Knight, ye seemen much to blame,  
To rip vp wrong, that battell once hath tried;  
Wherein the honor both of Armes ye shame,  
And eke the loue of Ladies foule defame;  
To whom the world this franchise euer yeilded,  
That of their loues choise they might freedom clame,  
And in that right should by all knights be shielded:  
Gainst which me seemes this war ye wrongfully haue wielded.

[38]

And yet (quoth she) a greater wrong remaines:  
For I thereby my former loue haue lost,  
Whom seeking euer since with endlesse paines,  
Hath me much sorrow and much trauell cost;  
Aye me to see that gentle maide so tost.  
But *Scudamour* then sighing deepe, thus saide,  
Certes her losse ought me to sorrow most,  
Whose right she is, where euer she be straide,  
Through many perils wonne, and many fortunes waide.

[39]

For from the first that I her loue profest,  
Vnto this houre, this present lucklesse howre,  
I neuer ioyed happinesse nor rest,  
But thus turmoild from one to other stowre,  
I wast my life, and doe my daies deuowre  
In wretched anguishe and incessant woe,  
Passing the measure of my feeble powre,  
That liuing thus, a wretch I and louing so,  
I neither can my loue, ne yet my life forgo.

[40]

Then good sir *Claribell* him thus bespake,  
Now were it not sir *Scudamour* to you,  
Dislikefull paine, so sad a taske to take,  
Mote we entreat you, sith this gentle crew  
Is now so well accorded all anew;  
That as we ride together on our way,  
Ye will recount to vs in order dew  
All that aduerture, which ye did assay  
For that faire Ladies loue: past perils well apay.

[41]

So gan the rest him likewise to require,  
But *Britomart* did him importune hard,  
To take on him that paine: whose great desire  
He glad to satisfie, him selfe prepar'd  
To tell through what misfortune he had far'd,  
In that atchieuement, as to him befell.  
And all those daungers vnto them declar'd,  
Which sith they cannot in this Canto well  
Comprised be, I will them in another tell.

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