

Cant. I.

*Artegall trayn'd in Iustice lore
Irenaes quest pursewed,
He doeth auenge on Sanglier
his Ladies bloud embrewed.*

[1]

THough vertue then were held in highest price,
In those old times, of which I doe intreat,
Yet then likewise the wicked seede of vice
Began to spring which shortly grew full great,
And with their boughes the gentle plants did beat.
But euermore some of the vertuous race
Rose vp, inspired with heroicke heat,
That cropt the branches of the sient base,
And with strong hand their fruitfull rancknes did deface.

[2]

Such first was *Bacchus*, that with furious might
All th'East before vntam'd did ouerronne,
And wrong repressed, and establisht right,
Which lawlesse men had formerly fordonne.
There Iustice first her princely rule begonne.
Next *Hercules* his like ensample shewed,
Who all the West with equall conquest wonne,
And monstrous tyrants with his club subdewed;
The club of Iustice dread, with kingly powre endewed.

[3]

And such was he, of whom I haue to tell,
The Champion of true Iustice *Artegall*.
Whom (as ye lately mote remember well)
An hard aduventure, which did then befall,
Into redoubted perill forth did call;
That was to succour a distressed Dame,
Whom a strong tyrant did vniustly thrall,
And from the heritage, which she did clame,
Did with strong hand withhold: *Grantorto* was his name.

[4]

Wherefore the Lady, which *Eirena* hight,
Did to the Faery Queene her way addresse,

To whom complayning her afflicted plight,
She her besought of gracious redresse.
That soueraine Queene, that mightie Emperesse,
Whose glorie is to aide all suppliants pore,
And of weake Princes to be Patronesse,
Chose *Artegall* to right her to restore;
For that to her he seem'd best skild in righteous lore.

[5]

For *Artegall* in iustice was vpbrought
Euen from the cradle of his infancie,
And all the depth of rightfull doome was taught
By faire *Astraea*, with great industrie,
Whilest here on earth she liued mortallie.
For till the world from his perfection fell
Into all filth and foule iniquitie,
Astraea here mongst earthly men did dwell,
And in the rules of iustice them instructed well.

[6]

Whiles through the world she walked in this sort,
Vpon a day she found this gentle childe,
Amongst his peres playing his childish sport:
Whom seeing fit, and with no crime defilde,
She did allure with gifts and speaches milde,
To wend with her. So thence him farre she brought
Into a caue from companie exilde,
In which she nounsled him, till yeares he raught,
And all the discipline of iustice there him taught.

[7]

There she him taught to weigh both right and wrong
In equall ballance with due recompence,
And equitie to measure out along,
According to the line of conscience,
When so it needs with rigour to dispence.
Of all the which, for want there of mankind,
She caused him to make experience
Vpon wyld beasts, which she in woods did find,
With wrongfull powre oppressing others of their kind.

[8]

Thus she him trayned, and thus she him taught,

In all the skill of deeming wrong and right,
Vntill the ripenesse of mans yeares he raught;
That euen wilde beasts did feare his awfull sight,
And men admyr'd his ouerruling might;
Ne any liu'd on ground, that durst withstand
His dreadfull heast, much lesse him match in fight,
Or bide the horror of his wreakfull hand,
When so he list in wrath lift vp his steely brand.

[9]

Which steely brand, to make him dreaded more,
She gaue vnto him, gotten by her slight
And earnest search, where it was kept in store
In *Ioues* eternall house, vnwist of wight,
Since he himselfe it vs'd in that great fight
Against the *Titans*, that whylome rebelled
Gainst highest heauen; *Chrysaor* it was hight;
Chrysaor that all other swords excelled,
Well prou'd in that same day, when *Ioue* those Gyants quelled.

[10]

For of most perfect metall it was made,
Tempred with Adamant amongst the same,
And garnisht all with gold vpon the blade
In goodly wise, whereof it tooke his name,
And was of no lesse vertue, then of fame.
For there no substance was so firme and hard,
But it would pierce or cleaue, where so it came;
Ne any armour could his dint out ward,
But wheresoeuer it did light, it throughly shard.

[11]

Now when the world with sinne gan to abound,
Astraea loathing lenger here to space
Mongst wicked men, in whom no truth she found,
Return'd to heauen, whence she deriu'd her race;
Where she hath now an euerlasting place,
Mongst those twelue signes, which nightly we doe see
The heuens bright-shining baudricke to enchace;
And is the *Virgin*, sixt in her degree,
And next her selfe her righteous ballance hanging bee.

[12]

But when she parted hence, she left her groome
An yron man, which did on her attend
Always, to execute her stedfast doome,
And willed him with *Artegall* to wend,
And doe what euer thing he did intend.
His name was *Talus*, made of yron mould,
Immoueable, resistlesse, without end.
Who in his hand an yron flae did hould,
With which he thresht out falshood, and did truth vn|fould.

[13]

He now went with him in this new inquest,
Him for to aide, if aide he chaunst to neede,
Against that cruell Tyrant, which opprest
The faire *Irena* with his foule misdeede,
And kept the crowne in which she should succeed.
And now together on their way they bin,
When as they saw a Squire in squallid weed,
Lamenting sore his sorowfull sad tyne,
With many bitter teares shed from his blubbred eyne.

[14]

To whom as they approched, they espide
A sorie sight, as euer seene with eye;
An headlesse Ladie lying him beside,
In her owne blood all wallow'd wofully,
That her gay clothes did in discolour die.
Much was he moued at that ruefull sight;
And flam'd with zeale of vengeance inwardly,
He askt, who had that Dame so fouly dight;
Or whether his owne hand, or whether other wight?

[15]

Ah woe is me, and well away (quoth hee)
Bursting forth teares, like springs out of a banke,
That euer I this dismall day did see:
Full farre was I from thinking such a pranke;
Yet litle losse it were, and mickle thanke,
If I should graunt that I haue doen the same,
That I mote drinke the cup, whereof she dranke:
But that I should die guiltie of the blame,
The which another did, who now is fled with shame.

[16]

Who was it then (sayd *Artegall*) that wrought?
And why, doe it declare vnto me trew.
A knight (said he) if knight he may be thought,
That did his hand in Ladies bloud embrew,
And for no cause, but as I shall you shew.
This day as I in solace sate hereby
With a fayre loue, whose losse I now do rew,
There came this knight, hauing in companie
This lucklesse Ladie, which now here doth headlesse lie.

[17]

He, whether mine seem'd fayrer in his eye,
Or that he wexed weary of his owne,
Would change with me; but I did it denye;
So did the Ladies both, as may be knowne,
But he, whose spirit was with pride vpblowne,
Would not so rest contented with his right,
But hauing from his courser her downe throwne,
Fro me rest mine away by lawlesse might,
And on his steed her set, to beare her out of sight.

[18]

Which when his Ladie saw, she follow'd fast,
And on him catching hold, gan loud to crie
Not so to leaue her, nor away to cast,
But rather of his hand besought to die.
With that his sword he drew all wrathfully,
And at one stroke crompt off her head with scorne,
In that same place, whereas it now doth lie.
So he my loue away with him hath borne,
And left me here, both his & mine owne loue to morne.

[19]

Aread (sayd he) which way then did he make?
And by what markes may he be knowne againe?
To hope (quoth he) him soone to ouertake,
That hence so long departed, is but vaine:
But yet he pricked ouer yonder plaine,
And as I marked, bore vpon his shield,
By which it's easie him to know againe,
A broken sword within a bloodie field;
Expressing well his nature, which the same did wield.

[20]

No sooner sayd, but streight he after sent
His yron page, who him pursew'd so light,
As that it seem'd about the ground he went:
For he was swift as swallow in her flight,
And strong as Lyon in his Lordly might.
It was not long, before he ouertooke
Sir *Sanglier*; (so cleped was that Knight)
Whom at the first he ghesse'd by his looke,
And by the other markes, which of his shield he tooke.

[21]

He bad him stay, and backe with him retire;
Who full of scorne to be commaunded so,
The Lady to alight did eft require,
Whilest he reformed that vnciuill fo:
And streight at him with all his force did go.
Who mou'd no more therewith, then when a rocke
Is lightly stricken with some stones throw;
But to him leaping, lent him such a knocke,
That on the ground he layd him like a sencelesse blocke.

[22]

But ere he could him selfe recure againe,
Him in his iron paw he seized had;
That when he wak't out of his warelesse paine,
He found him selfe vnwist, so ill bestad,
That lim he could not wag. Thence he him lad,
Bound like a beast appointed to the stall:
The sight whereof the Lady sore adrad,
And fain'd to fly for feare of being thrall;
But he her quickly stayd, and forst to wend withall.

[23]

When to the place they came, where *Artegall*
By that same carefull Squire did then abide,
He gently gan him to demaund of all,
That did betwixt him and that Squire betide.
Who with sterne countenance and indignat pride
Did aunswer, that of all he guiltlesse stood,
And his accuser thereuppon defide:
For neither he did shed that Ladies blood,
Nor tooke away his loue, but his owne proper good.

[24]

Well did the Squire perceiue him selfe too weake,
To aunswere his defiaunce in the field,
And rather chose his challenge off to breake,
Then to approue his right with speare and shield.
And rather guilty chose him selfe to yield.
But *Artegall* by signes perceiuing plaine,
That he it was not, which that Lady kild,
But that strange Knight, the fairer loue to gaine,
Did cast about by sleight the truth thereout to straine.

[25]

And sayd, now sure this doubtfull causes right
Can hardly but by Sacrament be tride,
Or else by ordele, or by bloody fight;
That ill perhaps mote fall to either side.
But if ye please, that I your cause decide,
Perhaps I may all further quarrell end,
So ye will sweare my iudgement to abide.
Thereto they both did franckly condescend,
And to his doome with listfull eares did both attend.

[26]

Sith then (sayd he) ye both the dead deny,
And both the liuing Lady claime your right,
Let both the dead and liuing equally
Deuided be betwixt you here in sight,
And each of either take his share aright.
But looke who does dissent from this my read,
He for a twelue moneths day shall in despight
Beare for his penaunce that same Ladies head;
To witnesse to the world, that she by him is dead.

[27]

Well pleased with that doome was *Sangliere*,
And offred streight the Lady to be slaine.
But that same Squire, to whom she was more dere,
When as he saw she should be cut in twaine,
Did yield, she rather should with him remaine
Aliue, then to him selfe be shared dead;
And rather then his loue should suffer paine,
He chose with shame to beare that Ladies head.
True loue despiseth shame, when life is cald in dread.

[28]

Whom when so willing *Artegall* perceaued;
Not so thou Squire, (he sayd) but thine I deeme
The liuing Lady, which from thee he reaued:
For worthy thou of her doest rightly seeme.
And you, Sir Knight, that loue so light esteeme,
As that ye would for little leaue the same,
Take here your owne, that doth you best beseeme,
And with it beare the burden of defame;
Your owne dead Ladies head, to tell abrode your shame.

[29]

But *Sangliere* disdained much his doome,
And sternly gan repine at his beheast;
Ne would for ought obay, as did become,
To beare that Ladies head before his breast.
Vntill that *Talus* had his pride represt,
And forced him, maulgre, it vp to reare.
Who when he saw it bootlesse to resist,
He tooke it vp, and thence with him did beare,
As rated Spaniell takes his burden vp for feare.

[30]

Much did that Squire Sir *Artegall* adore,
For his great iustice, held in high regard;
And as his Squire him offred euermore
To serue, for want of other meete reward,
And wend with him on his adueuture hard.
But he thereto would by no meanes consent;
But leauing him forth on his iourney far'd:
Ne wight with him but onely *Talus* went.
They two enough t'encounter an whole Regiment.

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