

Cant. VI.

*Talus brings newes to Britomart,
of Artegals mishap,
She goes to seeke him, Dolon meetes,
who seekes her to entrap.*

[1]

Some men, I wote, will deeme in *Artegal*
Great weaknesse, and report of him much ill,
For yeelding so himselfe a wretched thrall,
To th'insolent commaund of womens will;
That all his former praise doth fowly spill.
But he the man, that say or doe so dare,
Be well aduiz'd, that he stand stedfast still:
For neuer yet was wight so well aware,
But he at first or last was trapt in womens snare.

[2]

Yet in the streightnesse of that captiue state,
This gentle knight himselfe so well behaued,
That notwithstanding all the subtill bait,
With which those Amazons his loue still craued,
To his owne loue his loialtie he saued:
Whose character in th'Adamantine mould
Of his true hart so firmly was engraued,
That no new lous impression euer could
Bereaue it thence: such blot his honour blemish should.

[3]

Yet his owne loue, the noble *Britomart*,
Scarse so conceiued in her iealous thought,
What time sad tydings of his balefull smart
In womans bondage, *Talus* to her brought;
Brought in vntimely houre, ere it was sought.
For after that the vtmost date, assynde
For his returne, she waited had for nought,
She gan to cast in her misdoubtfull mynde
A thousand feares, that loue-sicke fancies faine to fynde.

[4]

Sometime she feared, least some hard mishap
Had him misfalne in his aduenturous quest;

Sometime least his false foe did him entrap
In traytrous traine, or had vnwares opprest:
But most she did her troubled mynd molest,
And secretly afflict with iealous feare,
Least some new loue had him from her possest;
Yet loth she was, since she no ill did heare,
To thinke of him so ill: yet could she not forbear.

[5]

One while she blam'd her selfe; another whyle
She him condemn'd, as trustlesse and vntrew:
And then, her griefe with errour to beguyle,
She fayn'd to count the time againe anew,
As if before she had not counted trew.
For houres but dayes; for weekes, that passed were,
She told but moneths, to make them seeme more few:
Yet when she reckned them, still drawing neare,
Each hour did seeme a moneth, & euery moneth a yeare.

[6]

But when as yet she saw him not returne,
She thought to send some one to seeke him out;
But none she found so fit to serue that turne,
As her owne selfe, to ease her selfe of dout.
Now she deuiz'd amongst the warlike rout
Of errant Knights, to seeke her errant Knight;
And then againe resolu'd to hunt him out
Amongst loose Ladies, lapped in delight:
And then both Knights enuide, & Ladies eke did spight.

[7]

One day, when as she long had sought for ease
In euery place, and euery place thought best,
Yet found no place, that could her liking please,
She to a window came, that opened West,
Towards which coast her loue his way adress.
There looking forth, shee in her heart did find
Many vaine fancies, working her vnrest;
And sent her winged thoughts, more swift then wind,
To beare vnto her loue the message of her mind.

[8]

There as she looked long, at last she spide

One coming towards her with hasty speede:
Well weend she then, ere him she plaine descride,
That it was one sent from her loue indeede.
Who when he nigh approcht, shee mote arede
That it was *Talus*, *Artegall* his groome;
Whereat her heart was fild with hope and drede;
Ne would she stay, till he in place could come,
But ran to meete him forth, to know his tidings somme.

[9]

Euen in the dore him meeting, she begun;
And where is he thy Lord, and how far hence?
Declare at once; and hath he lost or wun?
The yron man, albe he wanted sence
And sorrowes feeling, yet with conscience
Of his ill newes, did inly chill and quake,
And stood still mute, as one in great suspence,
As if that by his silence he would make
Her rather reade his meaning, then him selfe it spake.

[10]

Till she againe thus sayd; *Talus* be bold,
And tell what euer it be, good or bad,
That from thy tongue thy hearts intent doth hold.
To whom he thus at length. The tidings sad,
That I would hide, will needs, I see, be rad.
My Lord, your loue, by hard mishap doth lie
In wretched bondage, woefully bestad.
Ay me (quoth she) what wicked destinie?
And is he vanquisht by his tyrant enemy?

[11]

Not by that Tyrant, his intended foe;
But by a Tyrannesse (he then replide,)
That him captiued hath in haplesse woe.
Cease thou bad newes-man, badly doest thou hide
Thy maisters shame, in harlots bondage tide.
The rest my selfe too readily can spell.
With that in rage she turn'd from him aside,
Forcing in vaine the rest to her to tell,
And to her chamber went like solitary cell.

[12]

There she began to make her monefull plaint
Against her Knight, for being so vntrew;
And him to touch with falshoods fowle attaint,
That all his other honour ouerthrew.
Oft did she blame her selfe, and often rew,
For yeelding to a straungers loue so light,
Whose life and manners straunge she neuer knew;
And euermore she did him sharpely twight
For breach of faith to her, which he had firmly plight.

[13]

And then she in her wrathfull will did cast,
How to reuenge that blot of honour blent;
To fight with him, and goodly die her last:
And then againe she did her selfe torment,
Inflicting on her selfe his punishment.
A while she walkt, and chauf; a while she threw
Her selfe vppon her bed, and did lament:
Yet did she not lament with loude alew,
As women wont, but with deepe sighes, and singulfs few.

[14]

Like as a wayward childe, whose sounder sleepe
Is broken with some fearefull dreames affright,
With froward will doth set him selfe to weepe;
Ne can be stild for all his nurses might,
But kicks, and squals, and shriekes for fell despight:
Now scratching her, and her loose locks misusing;
Now seeking darkenesse, and now seeking light;
Then crauing sucke, and then the sucke refusing.
Such was this Ladies fit, in her loues fond accusing.

[15]

But when she had with such vnquiet fits
Her selfe there close afflicted long in vaine,
Yet found no easement in her troubled wits,
She vnto *Talus* forth return'd againe,
By change of place seeking to ease her paine;
And gan enquire of him, with mylder mood,
The certaine cause of *Artegals* detaine;
And what he did, and in what state he stood,
And whether he did woo, or whether he were woo'd.

[16]

Ah wellaway (sayd then the yron man,)
That he is not the while in state to woo;
But lies in wretched thraldome, weake and wan,
Not by strong hand compelled thereunto,
But his owne doome, that none can now vndoo.
Sayd I not then (quoth shee) erwhile aright,
That this is things compacte betwixt you two,
Me to deceiue of faith vnto me plight,
Since that he was not forst, nor ouercome in fight?

[17]

With that he gan at large to her dilate
The whole discourse of his captiuanee sad,
In sort as ye haue heard the same of late.
All which when she with hard enduraunce had
Here to the end, she was right sore bestad,
With sodaine stounds of wrath and grieffe attone:
Ne would abide, till she had aunswere made,
But streight her selfe did dight, and armor don;
And mounting to her steede, bad *Talus* guide her on.

[18]

So forth she rode vppon her ready way,
To seeke her Knight, as *Talus* her did guide:
Sadly she rode, and neuer word did say,
Nor good nor bad, ne euer lookt aside,
But still right downe, and in her thought did hide
The felnesse of her heart, right fully bent
To fierce auengement of that womans pride,
Which had her Lord in her base prison pent,
And so great honour with so fowle reproch had blent.

[19]

So as she thus melancholicke did ride,
Chawing the cud of grieffe and inward paine,
She chaunst to meete toward th'euen-tide
A Knight, that softly paced on the plaine,
As if him selfe to solace he were faine.
Well shot in yeares he seem'd, and rather bent
To peace, then needlesse trouble to constraîne.
As well by view of that his vestiment,
As by his modest semblant, that no euill ment.

[20]

He comming neare, gan gently her salute.
With curteous words, in the most comely wize;
Who though desirous rather to rest mute,
Then termes to entertaine of common guize,
Yet rather then she kindnesse would despize,
She would her selfe displease, so him requite.
Then gan the other further to deuize
Of things abrode, as next to hand did light,
And many things demaund, to which she answer'd light.

[21]

For little lust had she to talke of ought,
Or ought to heare, that mote delightfull bee;
Her minde was whole possessed of one thought,
That gaued none other place. Which when as hee
By outward signes, (as well he might) did see,
He list no lenger to vse lothfull speach,
But her besought to take it well in gree,
Sith shady dampes had dimd the heauens reach,
To lodge with him that night, vnles good cause empeach

[22]

The Championesse, now seeing night at dore,
Was glad to yeeld vnto his good request:
And with him went without gaine-saying more.
Not farre away, but little wide by West,
His dwelling was, to which he him addrest;
Where soone arriuing they receiued were
In seemely wise, as them beseemed best:
For he their host them goodly well did cheare,
And talk't of pleasant things, the night away to weare.

[23]

Thus passing th'euening well, till time of rest,
Then *Britomart* vnto a bowre was brought;
Where groomes awayted her to haue vndrest.
But she ne would vndressed be for ought,
Ne doffe her armes, though he her much besought.
For she had vow'd, she sayd, not to forgo
Those warlike weedes, till she reuenge had wrought
Of a late wrong vppon a mortall foe;
Which she would sure performe, betide her wele or wo.

[24]

Which when their Host perceiu'd, right discontent
In minde he grew, for feare least by that art
He should his purpose misse, which close he ment:
Yet taking leaue of her, he did depart.
There all that night remained *Britomart*,
Restlesse, recomfortlesse, with heart deepe griued,
Not suffering the least twinckling sleepe to start
Into her eye, which th'heart mote haue relieued,
But if the least appear'd, her eyes she streight reprieued.

[25]

Ye guilty eyes (sayd she) the which with guyle
My heart at first betrayd, will ye betray
My life now to, for which a little whyle
Ye will not watch? false watches, wellaway,
I wote when ye did watch both night and day
Vnto your losse: and now needes will ye sleepe?
Now ye haue made my heart to wake alway,
Now will ye sleepe? ah wake, and rather weepe,
To thinke of your nights want, that should yee waking keepe.

[26]

Thus did she watch, and weare the weary night
In wayfull plaints, that none was to appease;
Now walking soft, now sitting still vpriight,
As sundry chaunge her seemed best to ease.
Ne lesse did *Talus* suffer sleepe to seaze
His eye-lids sad, but watcht continually,
Lying without her dore in great disease;
Like to a Spaniell wayting carefully
Least any should betray his Lady treacherously.

[27]

What time the natiue Belman of the night,
The bird, that warned *Peter* of his fall,
First rings his siluer Bell t'each sleepy wight,
That should their mindes vp to deuotion call,
She heard a wondrous noise below the hall.
All sodainely the bed, where she should lie,
By a false trap was let adowne to fall
Into a lower roome, and by and by
The lost was raysd againe, that no man could it spie.

[28]

With sight whereof she was dismayd right sore,
Perceiuing well the treason, which was ment:
Yet stirred not at all for doubt of more,
But kept her place with courage confident,
Wayting what would ensue of that euent.
It was not long, before she heard the sound
of armed men, comming with close intent
Towards her chamber; at which dreadfull stound
She quickly caught her sword, & shield about her bound.

[29]

With that there came vnto her chamber dore
Two Knights, all arm'd ready for to fight,
And after them full many other more,
A raskall rout, with weapons rudely dight.
Whom soone as *Talus* spide by glims of night,
He started vp, there where on ground he lay,
And in his hand his thresher ready keight.
They seeing that, let driue at him streight way,
And round about him preace in riotous aray.

[30]

But soone as he began to lay about
With his rude yron flaile, they gan to flie,
Both armed Knights, and eke vnarmed rout:
Yet *Talus* after them apace did plie,
Where euer in the darke he could them spie;
That here and there like scattred sheepe they lay.
Then backe returning, where his Dame did lie,
He to her told the story of that fray,
And all that treason there intended did bewray.

[31]

Wherewith though wondrous wroth, and inly burning,
To be auenged for so fowle a deede,
Yet being forst to abide the daies returning,
She there remain'd, but with right wary heede,
Least any more such practise should proceede.
Now mote ye know (that which to *Britomart*
Vnknownen was) whence all this did proceede,
And for what cause so great mischieuous smart
Was ment to her, that neuer euill ment in hart.

[32]

The goodman of this house was *Dolon* hight,
A man of subtile wit and wicked minde,
That whilome in his youth had bene a Knight,
And armes had borne, but little good could finde,
And much lesse honour by that warlike kinde
Of life: for he was nothing valorous,
But with slie shiftes and wiles did vnderminde
All noble Knights, which were aduenturous,
And many brought to shame by treason treacherous.

[33]

He had three sonnes, all three like fathers sonnes,
Like treacherous, like full of fraud and guile,
Of all that on this earthly compasse wonnes:
The eldest of the which was slaine erewhile
By *Artegall*, through his owne guilty wile;
His name was *Guizor*, whose vntimely fate
For to auenge, full many treasons vile
His father *Dolon* had deuiz'd of late
With these his wicked sons, and shewd his cankred hate.

[34]

For sure he weend, that this his present guest
Was *Artegall*, by many tokens plaine;
But chiefly by that yron page he ghest,
Which still was wont with *Artegall* remaine;
And therefore ment him surely to haue slaine.
But by Gods grace, and her good heedinesse,
She was preserued from their traytrous traine.
Thus she all night wore out in watchfulnesse,
Ne suffred slothfull sleepe her eyelids to oppresse.

[35]

The morrow next, so soone as dawning houre
Discouered had the light to liuing eye,
She forth yssew'd out of her loathed bowre,
With full intent t'auenge that villany,
On that vilde man, and all his family
And comming down to seeke them, where they wond,
Nor sire, nor sonnes, nor any could she spie:
Each rowme she sought, but them all empty fond;
They all were fled for feare, but whether, nether kond.

[36]

She saw it vaine to make there lenger stay,
But tooke her steede, and thereon mounting light,
Gan her addresse vnto her former way.
She had not rid the mountenance of a flight,
But that she saw there present in her sight,
Those two false brethren, on that perillous Bridge,
On which *Pollente* with *Artegall* did fight.
Streight was the passage like a ploughed ridge,
That if two met, the one mote needes fall ouer the ledge.

[37]

There they did thinke them selues on her to wreake:
Who as she nigh vnto them drew, the one
These vile reproches gan vnto her speake;
Thou recreant false traytor, that with lone
Of armes hast knighthood stolne, yet Knight art none,
No more shall now the darkenesse of the night
Defend thee from the vengeance of thy fone,
But with thy bloud thou shalt appease the spright
Of Guizor, by thee slaine, and murdred by thy slight.

[38]

Strange were the words in *Britomartis* eare;
Yet stayd she not for them, but forward fared,
Till to the perillous Bridge she came, and there
Talus desir'd, that he might haue prepared
The way to her, and those two losels scared.
But she thereat was wroth, that for despight
The glauncing sparkles through her beuer glared,
And from her eies did flash out fiery light,
Like coles, that through a siluer Censer sparkle bright.

[39]

She stayd not to aduise which way to take;
But putting spurres vnto her fiery beast,
Thorough the midst of them she way did make.
The one of them, which most her wrath increast,
Vppon her speare she bore before her breast,
Till to the Bridges further end she past,
Where falling downe, his challenge he releast:
The other ouer side the Bridge she cast
Into the riuier, where he drunke his deadly last.

[40]

As when the flashing Leuin haps to light
Vppon two stubborne oakes, which stand so neare,
That way betwixt them none appears in sight;
The Engin fiercely flying forth, doth teare
Th'one from the earth, & through the aire doth beare;
The other it withforce doth ouerthrow,
Vppon one side, and from his rootes doth reare.
So did the Championesse those two there strow,
And to their sire their carcasses left to bestow.

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