

THE SIXTE
BOOKE OF THE
FAERIE QVEENE.

Contayning
THE LEGEND OF S. CALIDORE
OR
OF COVRTESIE.

[1]

THe waies, through which my weary steps I guyde,
In this delightfull land of Faery,
Are so exceeding spacious and wyde,
And sprinkled with such sweet variety,
Of all that pleasant is to eare or eye,
That I nigh rauisht with rare thoughts delight,
My tedious trauell doe forget thereby;
And when I gin to feele decay of might,
till strength to me supplies, & chears my dulled spright.

[2]

Such secret comfort, and such heauenly pleasures,
Ye sacred imps, that on *Parnasso* dwell,
And there the keeping haue of learnings treasures,
Which doe all worldly riches farre excell,
Into the mindes of mortall men doe well,
And goodly fury into them infuse;
Guyde ye my footing, and conduct me well
In these strange waies, where neuer foote did vse,
Ne none can find, but who was taught them by the Muse.

[3]

Reuele to me the sacred nursery
Of vertue, which with you doth there remaine,
Where it in siluer bowre does hidden ly
From view of men, and wicked worlds disdain.
Since it at first was by the Gods with paine
Planted in earth, being deriu'd at furst
From heauenly seedes of bounty soueraine,
And by them long with carefull labour nurst,
Till it to ripenesse grew, and forth to honour burst.

[4]

Amongst them all growes not a fayrer flowre,
Then is the bloosme of comely courtesie,
Which though it on a lowly stalke doe bowre,
Yet brancheth forth in braue nobilitie,
And spreads it selfe through all ciuilitie:
Of which though present age doe plenteous seeme,
Yet being matcht with plaine Antiquitie,
Ye will them all but fayned showes esteeme,
Which carry colours faire, that feeble eies misdeeme.

[5]

But in the triall of true curtesie,
Its now so farre from that, which then it was,
That it indeed is nought but forgerie,
Fashion'd to please the eies of them, that pas,
Which see not perfect things but in a glas:
Yet is that glasse so gay, that it can blynd
The wisest sight, to thinke gold that is bras.
But vertues seat is deepe within the mynd,
And not in outward shows, but inward thoughts defynd.

[6]

But where shall I in all Antiquity
So faire a patterne finde, where may be seene
The goodly praise of Princely curtesie,
As in your selfe, O soueraine Lady Queene,
In whose pure minde, as in a mirrour sheene,
It showes, and with her brightnesse doth inflame
The eyes of all, which thereon fixed beene;
But meriteth indeede an higher name:
Yet so from low to high vplifted is your name.

[7]

Then pardon me, most dreaded Soueraine,
That from your selfe I doe this vertue bring,
And to your selfe doe it returne againe:
So from the Ocean all riuers spring,
And tribute backe repay as to their King.
Right so from you all goodly vertues well
Into the rest, which round about you ring,
Faire Lords and Ladies, which about you dwell,

And doe adorne your Court, where courtesies excell.

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