

Cant. II.

*Calidore sees young Tristram slay
A proud discourteous knight,
He makes him Squire, and of him learns
his state and present plight.*

[1]

WHat vertue is so fitting for a knight,
Or for a Ladie, whom a knight should loue,
As Curtesie, to beare themselues aright
To all of each degree, as doth behoue?
For whether they be placed high aboue,
Or low beneath, yet ought they well to know
Their good, that none them rightly may reprove
Of rudenesse, for not yeelding what they owe:
Great skill it is such duties timely to bestow.

[2]

Thereto great helpe dame Nature selfe doth lend:
For some so goodly gracious are by kind,
That euery action doth them much commend,
And in the eyes of men great liking find;
Which others, that haue greater skill in mind,
Though they enforce themselues, cannot attaine.
For euerie thing, to which one is inclin'd,
Doth best become, and greatest grace doth gaine:
Yet praise likewise deserue good thewes, enforst with paine.

[3]

That well in courteous Calidore appeares,
Whose euery act and deed, that he did say,
Was like enchantment, that through both the eyes,
And both the eares did steale the hart away.
He now againe is on his former way,
To follow his first quest, when as he spyde
A tall young man from thence not farre away,
Fighting on foot, as well he him descryde,
Against an armed knight, that did on horsebacke ryde.

[4]

And them beside a Ladie faire he saw,
Standing alone on foot, in foule array:

To whom himselfe he hastily did draw,
To weet the cause of so vncomely fray,
And to depart them, if so be he may.
But ere he came in place, that youth had kild
That armed knight, that low on ground he lay;
Which when he saw, his hart was inly child
With great amazement, & his thought with wonder fild.

[5]

Him stedfastly he markt, and saw to bee
A goodly youth of amiable grace,
Yet but a slender slip, that scarce did see
Yet seuentene yeares, but tall and faire of face
That sure he deem'd him borne of noble race.
All in a woodmans iacket he was clad
Of lincolne greene, belayd with siluer lace;
And on his head an hood with aglets sprad,
And by his side his hunters horne he hanging had.

[6]

Buskins he wore of costliest cordwayne,
Pinckt vpon gold, and paled part per part,
As then the guize was for each gentle swayne;
In his right hand he held a trembling dart,
Whose fellow he before had sent apart;
And in his left he held a sharpe borespeare,
With which he wont to launch the saluage hart
Of many a Lyon, and of many a Beare
That first vnto his hand in chase did happen neare.

[7]

Whom Calidore a while well hauing vewed,
At length bespake; what meanes this, gentle swaine?
Why hath thy hand too bold it selfe embrewed
In blood of knight, the which by thee is slaine,
By thee no knight; which armes impugne th plaine?
Certes (said he) loth were I to haue broken
The law of armes; yet breake it should againe,
Rather then let my selfe of wight be stroken,
So long as these two armes were able to be wroken.

[8]

For not I him as this his Ladie here

May witnesse well, did offer first to wrong,
Ne surely thus vnarm'd I likely were;
But he me first, through pride and puissance strong
Assayld, not knowing what to armes doth long.
Perdie great blame, (then said Sir Calidore)
For armed knight a wight vnarm'd to wrong.
But then aread, thou gentle chyld, wherefore
Betwixt you two began this strife and sterne vprore.

[9]

That shall I sooth (said he) to you declare.
I whose vnryper yeares are yet vnfit
For thing of weight, or worke of greater care,
Doe spend my dayes, and bend my carelesse wit
To saluage chace, where I thereon may hit
In all this forrest, and wyld wooddie raine:
Where, as this day I was enraunging it,
I chaunst to meete this knight, who there lyes slaine,
Together with this Ladie, passing on the plaine.

[10]

The knight, as ye did see, on horsebacke was,
And this his Ladie, (that him ill became,)
On her faire feet by his horse side did pas
Through thicke and thin, vnfit for any Dame.
Yet not content, more to increase his shame,
When so she lagged, as she needs mote so,
He with his speare, that was to him great blame,
Would thumpe her forward, and inforce to goe,
Weeping to him in vaine, and making piteous woe.

[11]

Which when I saw, as they me passed by,
Much was I moued in indignant mind,
And gan to blame him for such cruelty
Towards a Ladie, whom with vsage kind
He rather should haue taken vp behind.
Wherewith he wroth, and full of proud disdaine,
Tooke in foule scorne, that I such fault did find,
And me in lieu thereof reuil'd againe,
Threatning to chastize me, as doth t'a chyld pertaine.

[12]

Which I no lesse disdayning, backe returned
His scornfull taunts vnto his teeth againe,
That he streight way with haughtie choler burned,
And with his speare strooke me one stroke or twaine;
Which I enforst to beare though to my paine,
Cast to requite, and with a slender dart,
Fellow of this I beare, throwne not in vaine,
Strooke him, as seemeth, vnderneath the hart,
That through the wound his spirit shortly did depart.

[13]

Much did Sir Calidore admyre his speach
Tempred so well, but more admyr'd the stroke
That through the mayles had made so strong a breach
Into his hart, and had so sternely wroke
His wrath on him, that first occasion broke.
Yet rested not, but further gan inquire
Of that same Ladie, whether what he spoke,
Were soothly so, and that th'vnrighteous ire
Of her owne knight, had giuen him his owne due hire.

[14]

Of all which, when as she could nought deny,
But cleard that stripling of th'imputed blame,
Sayd then Sir Calidore; neither will I
Him charge with guilt, but rather doe quite clame:
For what he spake, for you he spake it, Dame;
And what he did, he did him selfe to saue:
Against both which that knight wrought knightlesse shame.
For knights and all men this by nature haue,
Towards all womenkind them kindly to behaue.

[15]

But sith that he is gone irreuocable,
Please it you Ladie, to vs to aread,
What cause could make him so dishonourable,
To driue you so on foot vnfit to tread,
And lackey by him, gainst all womanhead?
Certes Sir knight (sayd she) full loth I were
To rayse a lyuing blame against the dead:
But since it me concernes, my selfe to clere,
I will the truth discouer, as it chaunst whylere.

[16]

This day, as he and I together roade
Vpon our way, to which we weren bent,
We chaunst to come foreby a couert glade
Within a wood, whereas a Ladie gent
Sate with a knight in ioyous iolliment,
Of their franke loues, free from all gealous spyes:
Faire was the Ladie sure, that mote content
An hart, not carried with too curious eyes,
And vnto him did shew all louely courtesyes.

[17]

Whom when my knight did see so louely faire,
He inly gan her louer to enuy,
And wish, that he part of his spoyle might share.
Whereto when as my presence he did spy
To be a let, he bad me by and by
For to alight: but when as I was loth,
My loues owne part to leaue so suddenly,
He with strong hand down from his steed me throw'th,
And with presumptuous powre against that knight streight go'th.

[18]

Vnarm'd all was the knight, as then more meete
For Ladies seruice, and for loues delight,
Then fearing any foeman there to meete:
Whereof he taking oddes, streight bids him dight
Himselfe to yeeld his loue, or else to fight.
Whereat the other starting vp dismayd,
Yet boldly answer'd, as he rightly might;
To leaue his loue he should be ill apayd,
In which he had good right gaynst all, that it gainesayd.

[19]

Yet since he was not presently in plight
Her to defend, or his to iustifie,
He him requested, as he was a knight,
To lend him day his better right to trie,
Or stay till he his armes, which were thereby,
Might lightly fetch. But he was fierce and whot,
Ne time would giue, nor any termes aby,
But at him flew, and with his speare him smot;
From which to thinke to saue himselfe, it booted not.

[20]

Meane while his Ladie, which this outrage saw,
Whilest they together for the quarrey stroue,
Into the couert did her selfe withdraw,
And closely hid her selfe within the groue.
My knight hers soone, as seemes, to daunger droue
And left sore wounded: but when her he mist,
He woxe halfē mad, and in that rage gan roue
And range through all the wood, where so he wist
She hidden was, and sought her so long, as him list.

[21]

But when as her he by no meanes could find,
After long search and chauff, he turned backe
Vnto the place, where me he left behind:
There gan he me to curse and ban, for lacke
Of that faire bootie, and with bitter wracke
To wreake on me the guilt of his owne wrong.
Of all which I yet glad to beare the packe,
Stroue to appease him, and perswaded long:
But still his passion grew more violent and strong.

[22]

Then as it were t'auenge his wrath on mee,
When forward we should fare, he flat refused
To take me vp (as this young man did see)
Vpon his steed, for no iust cause accused,
But forst to trot on foot, and foule misused,
Pouching me with the butt end of his speare,
In vaine complayning, to be so abused.
For he regarded neither playnt nor teare,
But more enforst my paine, the more my plaints to heare.

[23]

So passed we, till this young man vs met,
And being moou'd with pittie of my plight,
Spake, as was meet, for ease of my regret:
Whereof befell, what now is in your sight.
Now sure (then said Sir Calidore) and right
Me seemes, that him befell by his owne fault:
Who euer thinkes through confidence of might,
Or through support of count'nance proud and hault
To wrong the weaker, oft falles in his owne assault.

[24]

Then turning backe vnto that gentle boy,
Which had himselfe so stoutly well acquit;
Seeing his face so louely sterne and coy,
And hearing th'answeres of his pregnant wit,
He praysd it much, and much admyred it;
That sure he weend him borne of noble blood,
With whom those graces did so goodly fit:
And when he long had him beholding stood,
He burst into these words, as to him seemed good.

[25]

Faire gentle swayne, and yet as stout as fayre,
That in these woods amongst the Nymphs dost wonne,
Which daily may to thy sweete lookes repayre,
As they are wont vnto Latonaes sonne,
After his chace on woodie Cynthus donne:
Well may I certes such an one thee read,
As by thy worth thou worthily hast wonne,
Or surely borne of some Heroicke sead,
That in thy face appeares and gracious goodly head.

[26]

But should it not displease thee it to tell;
(Vnlesse thou in these woods thy selfe conceale,
For loue amongst the woodie Gods to dwell;)
I would thy selfe require thee to reueale,
For deare affection and vnfayned zeale,
Which to thy noble personage I beare,
And wish thee grow in worship and great weale.
For since the day that armes I first did reare,
I neuer saw in any greater hope appeare.

[27]

To whom then thus the noble youth; may be
Sir knight, that by discovering my estate,
Harne may arise vnweeting vnto me;
Nathelesse, sith ye so courteous seemed late,
To you I will not feare it to relate.
Then wote ye that I am a Briton borne,
Sonne of a King, how euer thorough fate
Or fortune I my cuntry haue forlorne,
And lost the crowne, which should my head by right adorne.

[28]

And Tristram is my name, the onely heire
Of good king Meliograss which did rayne
In Cornewale, till that he through liues despeire
Vntimely dyde, before I did attaine
Ripe yeares of reason, my right to maintaine.
After whose death, his brother seeing mee
An infant, weake a kingdome to sustaine,
Vpon him tooke the roiall high degree,
And sent me, where him list, instructed for to bee.

[29]

The widow Queene my mother, which then hight
Faire Emiline, conceiuing then great feare
Of my fraile safetie, resting in the might
Of him, that did the kingly Scepter beare,
Whose gealous dread induring not a peare,
Is wont to cut off all, that doubt may breed,
Thought best away me to remoue somewhere
Into some forrein land, where as no need
Of dreaded daunger might his doubtfull humor feed.

[30]

So taking counsell of a wise man red,
She was by him aduiz'd, to send me quight
Out of the countrie, wherein I was bred,
The which the fertile Lionesse is hight,
Into the land of Faerie, where no wight
Should weet of me, nor worke me any wrong
To whose wise read she hearkning, sent me streight
Into this land, where I haue wond thus long,
Since I was ten yeares old, now growen to stature strong.

[31]

All which my daies I haue not lewdly spent,
Nor spilt the blossome of my tender yeares
In ydlesse, but as was conuenient,
Haue trayned bene with many noble feres
In gentle thewes, and such like seemely leres.
Mongst which my most delight hath alwaies been,
To hunt the saluage chace amongst my peres,
Of all that raungeth in the forrest greene;
Of which none is to me vnknowne, that eu'r was seene.

[32]

Ne is there hauke, which mantleth her on pearch,
Whether high tousing, or accoasting low,
But I the measure of her flight doe search,
And all her pray, and all her diet know.
Such be our ioyes, which in these forrests grow:
Onely the vse of armes, which most I ioy,
And fitteth most for noble swayne to know,
I haue not tasted yet, yet past a boy,
And being now high time these strong ioynts to imploy.

[33]

Therefore, good Sir, sith now occasion fit
Doth fall, whose like hereafter seldome may,
Let me this craue, vnworthy though of it,
That ye will make me Squire without delay,
That from henceforth in batteilous array
I may beare armes, and learne to vse them right;
The rather since that fortune hath this day
Giuen to me the spoile of this dead knight,
These goodly gilden armes, which I haue won in fight.

[34]

All which when well Sir Calidore had heard,
Him much more now, then earst he gan admire,
For the rare hope which in his yeares appear'd,
And thus replide; faire chyld, the high desire
To loue of armes, which in you doth aspire,
I may not certes without blame denie;
But rather wish, that some more noble hire,
(Though none more noble then is cheualrie,)
I had, you to reward with greater dignitie.

[35]

There him he causd to kneele, and made to sweare
Faith to his knight, and truth to Ladies all,
And neuer to be recreant, for feare
Of perill, or of ought that might befall:
So he him dubbed, and his Squire did call.
Full glad and ioyous then young Tristram grew,
Like as a flowre, whose silken leaues small,
Long shut vp in the bud from heauens vew,
At length breakes forth, and brode displayes his smyling hew.

[36]

Thus when they long had treated to and fro,
And Calidore betooke him to depart,
Chyld Tristram prayd, that he with him might goe
On his aduventure, vowing not to start,
But wayt on him in euery place and part.
Whereat Sir Calidore did much delight,
And greatly ioy'd at his so noble hart,
In hope he sure would proue a doughtie knight:
Yet for the time this answeere he to him behight.

[37]

Glad would I surely be, thou courteous Squire,
To haue thy presence in my present quest,
That mote thy kindled courage set on fire,
And flame forth honour in thy noble brest:
But I am bound by vow, which I profest
To my dread Soueraine, when I it assayd,
That in atchieuement of her high behest,
I should no creature ioyne vnto mine ayde,
For thy I may not graunt, that ye so greatly prayde.

[38]

But since this Ladie is all desolate,
And needeth safegard now vpon her way,
Ye may doe well in this her needfull state
To succour her, from daunger of dismay;
That thankfull guerdon may to you repay.
The noble ympe of such new seruice fayne,
It gladly did accept, as he did say.
So taking courteous leaue, they parted twayne,
And Calidore forth passed to his former payne.

[39]

But Tristram then despoyling that dead knight
Of all those goodly implements of prayse,
Long fed his greedie eyes with the faire sight
Of the bright mettall, shyning like Sunne rayes;
Handling and turning them a thousand wayes.
And after hauing them vpon him dight,
He tooke that Ladie, and her vp did rayse
Vpon the steed of her owne late dead knight,
So with her marched forth, as she did him behight.

[40]

There to their fortune leaue we them awhile,
And turne we backe to good Sir Calidore;
Who ere he thence had traueild many a mile,
Came to the place, whereas ye heard afore
This knight, whom Tristram slew, had wounded sore
Another knight in his despiteous pryde;
There he that knight found lying on the flore,
With many wounds full perilous and wyde,
That all his garments, and the grasse in vermeill dyde.

[41]

And there beside him sate vpon the ground
His wofull Ladie, piteously complayning
With loud laments that most vnluckie stound,
And her sad selfe with carefull hand constrayning
To wype his wounds, and ease their bitter payning.
Which sorie sight when Calidore did vew
With heaueie eyne, from teares vneath refrayning,
His mightie hart their mournefull case can rew,
And for their better comfort to them nigher drew.

[42]

Then speaking to the Ladie, thus he sayd:
Ye dolefull Dame, let not your grieffe empeach
To tell, what cruell hand hath thus arayd
This knight vnarm'd, with so vnknightly breach
Of armes, that if I yet him nigh may reach,
I may auenge him of so foule despight.
The Ladie hearing his so courteous speach,
Gan reare her eyes as to the chearefull light,
And from her sory hart few heaueie words forth sight.

[43]

In which she shew'd, how that discourteous knight
(Whom Tristram slew) them in that shadow found,
Ioying together in vnblam'd delight,
And him vnarm'd, as now he lay on ground,
Charg'd with his speare and mortally did wound,
Withouten cause, but onely her to reauue
From him, to whom she was for euer bound:
Yet when she fled into that couert greaue,
He her not finding, both them thus nigh dead did leaue.

[44]

When Calidore this ruefull storie had
Well vnderstood, he gan of her demand,
What manner wight he was, and how yclad,
Which had this outrage wrought with wicked hand.
She then, like as she best could vnderstand,
Him thus describ'd, to be of stature large,
Clad all in gilden armes, with azure band
Quartred athwart, and bearing in his targe
A Ladie on rough waues, row'd in a sommer barge.

[45]

Then gan Sir Calidore to ghesse streight way
By many signes, which she described had,
That this was he, whom Tristram earst did slay,
And to her said; Dame be no longer sad:
For he, that hath your Knight so ill bestad,
Is now him selfe in much more wretched plight;
These eyes him saw vpon the cold earth sprad,
The meede of his desert for that despight,
Which to your selfe he wrought, & to your loued knight.

[46]

Therefore faire Lady lay aside this grieffe,
Which ye haue gathered to your gentle hart,
For that displeasure; and thinke what reliefe
Were best deuse for this your louers smart,
And how ye may him hence, and to what part
Conuay to be recur'd. She thankt him deare,
Both for that newes he did to her impart,
And for the courteous care, which he did beare
Both to her loue; and to her selfe in that sad dreare.

[47]

Yet could she not deuse by any wit,
How thence she might conuay him to some place.
For him to trouble she it thought vnfit,
That was a straunger to her wretched case;
And him to beare, she thought it thing too base.
Which when as he perceiu'd, he thus bespake;
Faire Lady let it not you seeme disgrace,
To beare this burden on your dainty backe;
My selfe will beare a part, coportion of your packe.

[48]

So off he did his shield, and downward layd
Vpon the ground, like to an hollow beare;
And powring balme, which he had long puruayd,
Into his wounds, him vp thereon did reare,
And twixt them both with parted paines did beare,
Twixt life and death, not knowing what was done.
Thence they him carried to a Castle neare,
In which a worthy auncient Knight did wonne:
Where what ensu'd, shall in next Canto be begonne.

[Original content ©2016 by Dirk Jol.]