

Cant. V.

*The saluage serues Matilda well
till she Prince Arthure fynd,
Who her together with his Squyre
with th'Hermit leaues behynd.*

[1]

O What an easie thing is to descry
The gentle bloud, how euer it bewrapt
In sad misfortunes foule deformity,
And wretched sorrowes, which haue often hapt?
For howsoeuer it may grow mis-shapt,
Like this wyld man, being vndisciplynd,
That to all vertue it may seeme vnapt,
Yet will it shew some sparkes of gentle mynd,
And at the last breake forth in his owne proper kynd.

[2]

That plainely may in this wyld man be red,
Who though he were still in this desert wood,
Mongst saluage beasts, both rudely borne and bred,
Ne euer saw faire guize, ne learned good,
Yet shewd some token of his gentle blood,
By gentle vsage of that wretched Dame.
For certes he was borne of noble blood,
How euer by hard hap he hether came;
As ye may know, when time shall be to tell the same.

[3]

Who when as now long time he lacked had
The good Sir *Calepine*, that farre was strayd,
Did wexe exceeding sorrowfull and sad,
As he of some misfortune were afrayd:
And leauing there this Ladie all dismayd,
Went forth streightway into the forrest wyde,
To seeke, if he perchance a sleepe were layd,
Or what so else were vnto him betyde:
He sought him farre & neare, yet him no where he spyde.

[4]

Tho backe returning to that sorie Dame,
He shewed semblant of exceeding mone,

By speaking signes, as he them best could frame;
Now wringing both his wretched hands in one,
Now beating his hard head vpon a stone,
That ruth it was to see him so lament.
By which she well perceiuing, what was done,
Gan teare her hayre, and all her garments rent,
And beat her breast, and piteously her selfe torment.

[5]

Vpon the ground her selfe she fiercely threw,
Regardlesse of her wounds, yet bleeding rife,
That with their bloud did all the flore imbrew,
As if her breast new launcht with murdrous knife,
Would streight dislodge the wretched wearie life.
There she long groueling, and deepe groning lay,
As if her vitall powers were at strife
With stronger death, and feared their decay,
Such were this Ladies pangs and dolorous assay.

[6]

Whom when the Saluage saw so sore distrest,
He reared her vp from the bloudie ground,
And sought by all the meanes, that he could best
Her to recure out of that stony swound,
And staunch the bleeding of her dreary wound.
Yet nould she be recomforted for nought,
Ne cease her sorrow and impatient stound,
But day and night did vexe her carefull thought,
And euer more and more her owne affliction wrought.

[7]

At length, when as no hope of his retourne
She saw now left, she cast to leaue the place,
And wend abrode, though feeble and forlorne,
To seeke some comfort in that sorie case.
His steede now strong through rest so long a space,
Well as she could, she got, and did bedight,
And being thereon mounted, forth did pace,
Withouten guide, her to conduct aright,
Or gard her to defend from bold oppressors might.

[8]

Whom when her Host saw readie to depart,

He would not suffer her alone to fare,
But gan himselfe addresse to take her part.
Those warlike armes, which *Calepine* whyleare
Had left behind, he gan eftsoones prepare,
And put them all about himselfe vnfit,
His shield, his helmet, and his curats bare.
But without sword vpon his thigh to sit:
Sir *Calepine* himselfe away had hidden it.

[9]

So forth they traueled an vneuen payre,
That mote to all men seeme an vncouth sight;
A saluage man matcht with a Ladie fayre,
That rather seem'd the conquest of his might,
Gotten by spoyle, then purchaced aright.
But he did her attend most carefully,
And faithfully did serue both day and night,
Withouten thought of shame or villeny,
Ne euer shewed signe of foule disloyalty.

[10]

Vpon a day as on their way they went,
It chaunst some furniture about her steed
To be disordred by some accident:
Which to redresse, she did th'assistance need
Of this her groome, which he by signes did reede,
And streight his combrous armes aside did lay
Vpon the ground, withouten doubt or dreed,
And in his homely wize began to assay
T'amend what was amisse, and put in right aray.

[11]

Bout which whilest he was busied thus hard,
Lo where a knight together with his squire,
All arm'd to point came ryding thetherward,
Which seemed by their portance and attire,
To be two errant knights, that did inquire
After aduentures, where they mote them get.
Those were to weet (if that ye it require)
Prince *Arthur* and young *Timias*, which met
By straunge occasion, that here needs forth be set.

[12]

After that *Timias* had againe recured
The fauour of *Belphebe*, (as ye heard)
And of her grace did stand againe assured,
To happie blisse he was full high vprear'd,
Nether of enuy, nor of chaunge afeard,
Though many foes did him maligne therefore,
And with vniust detraction him did beard;
Yet he himselfe so well and wisely bore,
That in her soueraine lyking he dwelt euermore.

[13]

But of them all, which did his ruine seeke
Three mightie enemies did him most despight,
Three mightie ones, and cruell minded eeke,
That him not onely sought by open might
To ouerthrow, but to supplant by slight.
The first of them by name was cald *Despetto*,
Exceeding all the rest in powre and hight;
The second not so strong but wise, *Decetto*;
The third nor strong nor wise, but spightfullest *Defetto*.

[14]

Ofimes their sundry powres they did employ,
And seuerall deceipts, but all in vaine:
For neither they by force could him destroy,
Ne yet entrap in treasons subtill traine.
Therefore conspiring all together plaine,
They did their counsels now in one compound;
Where singled forces faile, conioynd may gaine.
The *Blatant Beast* the fittest meanes they found,
To worke his vtter shame, and throughly him confound.

[15]

Vpon a day as they the time did waite,
When he did raunge the wood for saluage game,
They sent that *Blatant Beast* to be a baite,
To draw him from his deare beloued dame,
Vnwares into the daunger of defame.
For well they wist, that Squire to be so bold,
That no one beast in forrest wylde or tame,
Met him in chase, but he it challenge would,
And plucke the pray ofimes out of their greedy hould.

[16]

The hardy boy, as they deuised had,
Seeing the vgly Monster passing by,
Vpon him set, of perill nought adrad,
Ne skilfull of the vncouth ieopardy;
And charged him so fierce and furiously,
That his great force vnable to endure,
He forced was to turne from him and fly:
Yet ere he fled, he with his tooth impure
Him heedlesse bit, the whiles he was thereof secure.

[17]

Securely he did after him pursew,
Thinking by speed to ouertake his flight;
Who through thicke woods and brakes & briers him drew,
To weary him the more, and waste his spight,
So that he now has almost spent his spright.
Till that at length vnto a woody glade
He came, whose couert stopt his further sight,
There his three foes shrowded in guilefull shade,
Out of their ambush broke, and gan him to inuade.

[18]

Sharpely they all attonce did him assaile,
Burning with inward rancour and despight,
And heaped strokes did round about him haile
With so huge force, that seemed nothing might
Beare off their blowes, from percing thorough quite.
Yet he them all so warily did ward,
That none of them in his soft flesh did bite,
And all the while his backe for best safegard,
He lent against a tree, that backward onset bard.

[19]

Like a wylde Bull, that being at a bay,
Is bayted of a mastiffe, and a hound,
And a curre-dog; that doe him sharpe assay
On euery side, and beat about him round;
But most that curre barking with bitter sownd,
And creeping still behinde, doth him incomber,
That in his chauffe he digs the trampled ground,
And threats his horns, and bellowes like the thonder,
So did that Squire his foes disperse, and driue asonder.

[20]

Him well behoued so; for his three foes
Sought to encompassse him on euery side,
And dangerously did round about enclose.
But most of all *Defetto* him annoyde,
Creeping behinde him still to haue destroyde:
So did *Decetto* eke him circumuent,
But stout *Despetto* in his greater pryde,
Did front him face to face against him bent,
Yet he them all withstood, and often made relent.

[21]

Till that at length nigh tyrd with former chace,
And weary now with carefull keeping ward,
He gan to shrinke, and somewhat to giue place,
Full like ere long to haue escaped hard;
When as vnwares he in the forrest heard
A trampling steede, that with his neighing fast
Did warne his rider be vppon his gard;
With noise whereof the Squire now nigh aghast,
Reuiued was, and sad dispaire away did cast.

[22]

Eftsoones he spide a Knight approaching nye,
Who seeing one in so great daunger set
Mongst many foes, him selfe did faster hye;
To reskue him, and his weake part abet,
For pittty so to see him ouerset.
Whom soone as his three enemies did vew,
They fled, and fast into the wood did get:
Him booted not to thinke them to pursew,
The couert was so thicke, that did no passage shew.

[23]

Then turning to that swaine, him well he knew
To be his *Timias*, his owne true Squire,
Whereof exceeding glad, he to him drew,
And him embracing twixt his armes entire,
Him thus bespake; My liefte, my lifes desire,
Why haue ye me alone thus long yleft?
Tell me what worlds despight, or heauens yre
Hath you thus long away from me bereft?
Where haue ye all this while bin wandring, where bene weft?

[24]

With that he sighed deepe for inward tyme:
To whom the Squire nought aunswered againe,
But shedding few soft teares from tender eyne,
His deare affect with silence did restraine,
And shut vp all his plaint in priuy paine.
There they awhile some gracious speaches spent,
As to them seemed fit time to entertaine.
After all which vp to their steedes they went,
And forth together rode a comely couplement.

[25]

So now they be arriued both in sight
Of this wyld man, whom they full busie found
About the sad *Serena* things to dight,
With those braue armours lying on the ground,
That seem'd the spoile of some right well renownd.
Which when that Squire beheld, he to them stept,
Thinking to take them from that hylding hound:
But he it seeing, lightly to him lept,
And sternely with strong hand it from his handling kept.

[26]

Gnashing his grinded teeth with griesly looke,
And sparkling fire out of his furious eyne,
Him with his fist vnwares on th'head he strooke,
That made him downe vnto the earth encline;
Whence soone vpstarting much he gan repine,
And laying hand vpon his wrathfull blade,
Thought therewithall forthwith him to haue slaine,
Who it perceiuing, hand vpon him layd,
And greedily him griping, his auengement stayd.

[27]

With that aloude the faire *Serena* cryde
Vnto the Knight, them to dispart in twaine:
Who to them stepping did them soone diuide,
And did from further violence restraine,
Albe the wyld-man hardly would refraine.
Then gan the Prince, of her for to demand,
What and from whence she was, and by what traine
She fell into that saluage villaines hand,
And whether free with him she now were, or in band.

[28]

To whom she thus; I am, as now ye see,
The wretchedst Dame, that liue this day on ground,
Who both in minde, the which most grieueth me,
And body haue receiu'd a mortall wound,
That hath me driuen to this drery stound.
I was erewhile, the loue of *Calepine*,
Who whether he aliue be to be found,
Or by some deadly chaunce be done to pine,
Since I him lately lost, vneath is to define.

[29]

In saluage forrest I him lost of late,
Where I had surely long ere this bene dead,
Or else remained in most wretched state,
Had not this wyld man in that wofull stead
Kept, and deliuered me from deadly dread.
In such a saluage wight, of brutish kynd,
Amongst wilde beastes in desert forrests bred,
It is most straunge and wonderfull to fynd
So milde humanity, and perfect gentle mynd.

[30]

Let me therefore this fauour for him finde,
That ye will not your wrath vpon him wreake,
Sith he cannot expresse his simple minde,
Ne yours conceiue, ne but by tokens speake:
Small praise to proue your powre on wight so weake.
With such faire words she did their heate asswage,
And the strong course of their displeasure breake,
That they to pittie turnd their former rage,
And each sought to supply the office of her page.

[31]

So hauing all things well about her dight,
She on her way cast forward to proceede,
And they her forth conducted, where they might
Finde harbour fit to comfort her great neede.
For now her wounds corruption gan to breed;
And eke this Squire, who likewise wounded was
Of that same Monster late, for lacke of heed,
Now gan to faint, and further could not pas
Through feeblenesse, which all his limbes oppressed has.

[32]

So forth they rode together all in troupe,
To seeke some place, the which mote yeeld some ease
To these sicke twaine, that now began to droupe,
And all the way the Prince sought to appease
The bitter anguish of their sharpe disease,
By all the courteous meanes he could inuent,
Somewhile with merry purpose fit to please,
And otherwhile with good encouragement,
To make them to endure the pains, did them torment.

[33]

Mongst which, *Serena* did to him relate
The foule discour'tsies and vnknightly parts,
Which *Turpine* had vnto her shewed late,
Without compassion of her cruell smart,
Although *Blandina* did with all her arts
Him otherwise perswade, all that she might;
Yet he of malice, without her desarts,
Not onely her excluded late at night,
But also trayterously did wound her weary Knight.

[34]

Wherewith the Prince sore moued, there auoud,
That soone as he returned backe againe,
He would auenge th'abuses of that proud
And shamefull Knight, of whom she did complaine.
This wize did they each other entertaine,
To passe the tedious trauell of the way;
Till towards night they came vnto a plaine,
By which a little Hermitage there lay,
Far from all neighbourhood, the which annoy it may.

[35]

And nigh thereto a little Chappell stode,
Which being all with Yuy ouerspred,
Deckt all the rooffe, and shadowing the roode,
Seem'd like a groue faire braunched ouer hed:
Therein the Hermite, which his life here led
In streight obseruance of religious vow,
Was wont his howres and holy things to bed;
And therein he likewise was praying now,
Whenas these Knights arriu'd, they wist not where nor how.

[36]

They stayd not there, but streight way in did pas.
Whom when the Hermite present saw in place,
From his deuotion streight he troubled was;
Which breaking of he toward them did pace,
With stayed steps, and graue beseeming grace:
For well it seem'd, that whilome he had beene
Soome goodly person, and of gentle race,
That could his good to all, and well did weene,
How each to entertaine with curt'sie well beseene.

[37]

And soothly it was sayd by common fame,
So long as age enabled him thereto,
That he had bene a man of mickle name,
Renowned much in armes and derring doe:
But being aged now and weary to
Of warres delight, and worlds contentious toyle,
The name of knighthood he did disauow,
And hanging vp his armes and warlike spoyle,
From all this worlds incombraunce did himselfe assoyle.

[38]

He thence them led into his Hermitage,
Letting their steedes to graze vpon the greene:
Small was his house, and like a little cage,
For his owne turne, yet inly neate and clene,
Deckt with greene boughes, and flowers gay beseene.
Therein he them full faire did entertaine
Not with such forged showes, as fitter beene
For courting fooles, that curtesies would faine,
But with entire affection and appearaunce plaine.

[39]

Yet was their fare but homely, such as hee
Did vse, his feeble body to sustaine;
The which full gladly they did take in glee,
Such as it was, ne did of want complaine,
But being well suffiz'd, them rested faine.
But faire *Serene* all night could take no rest,
Ne yet that gentle Squire for grieuous paine
Of their late woundes, the which the *Blatant Beast*
Had guen them, whose grieffe through suffraunce sore increast.

[40]

So all that night they past in great disease,
Till that the morning, bringing earely light
To guide mens labours, brought them also ease,
And some asswagement of their painefull plight.
Then vp they rose, and gan them selues to dight
Vnto their iourney; but that Squire and Dame
So faint and feeble were, that they ne might
Endure to trauell, nor one foote to frame:
Their hearts were sicke, their sides were sore, their feete were
lame.

[41]

Therefore the Prince, whom great affaires in mynd
Would not permit, to make their lenger stay,
Was forced there to leaue them both behynd,
In that good Hermits charge, whom he did pray
To tend them well. So forth he went his way,
And with him eke the saluage, that whyleare
Seeing his royall vsage and array,
Was greatly growne in loue of that braue pere,
Would needes depart, as shall declared be elsewhere.

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