

Cant. VI.

*The Hermite heales both Squire and dame
Of their sore maladies:
He Turpine doth defeate, and shame
For his late villanies.*

[1]

NO wound, which warlike hand of enemy
Inflicts with dint of sword, so sore doth light,
As doth the poysnous sting, which infamy
Infixeth in the name of noble wight:
For by no art, nor any leaches might
It euer can recured be againe;
Ne all the skill, which that immortall spright
Of Podalyrius did in it retaine,
Can remedy such hurts; such hurts are hellish paine.

[2]

Such were the wounds, the which that Blatant Beast
Made in the bodies of that Squire and Dame;
And being such, were now much more increast,
For want of taking heede vnto the same,
That now corrupt and curelesse they became.
Howbe that carefull Hermite did his best,
With many kindes of medicines meete, to tame
The poysnous humour, which did most infest
Their ranckling wounds, & euery day them duely drest.

[3]

For he right well in Leaches craft was seene,
And through the long experience of his dayes,
Which had in many fortunes tossed beene,
And past through many perillous assayes,
He knew the diuerse went of mortall wayes,
And in the mindes of men had great insight;
Which with sage counsell, when they went astray,
He could enforme, and them reduce aright,
And al the passio~s heale, which wou~d the weaker spright.

[4]

For whylome he had bene a doughty Knight,
As any one, that liued in his daies,

And proued oft in many perillous fight,
Of which he grace and glory wonne alwaies,
And in all battels bore away the baies.
But being now attacht with timely age,
And weary of this worlds vnquiet waies,
He tooke him selfe vnto this Hermitage,
In which he liu'd alone, like carelesse bird in cage.

[5]

One day, as he was searching of their wounds,
He found that they had festred priuily,
And ranckling inward with vnruley stounds,
The inner parts now gan to putrify,
That quite they seem'd past helpe of surgery,
And rather needed to be disciplinde
With holesome reede of sad sobriety,
To rule the stubborne rage of passion blinde:
Giue salues to euery sore, but counsell to the minde.

[6]

So taking them apart into his cell,
He to that point fit speaches gan to frame,
As he the art of words knew wondrous well,
And eke could doe, as well as say the same,
And thus he to them sayd; faire daughter Dame,
And you faire sonne, which here thus long now lie
In piteous languor, since ye hither came,
In vaine of me ye hope for remedie,
And I likewise in vaine doe salues to you applie.

[7]

For in your selfe your onely helpe doth lie,
To heale your selues, and must proceed alone
From your owne will, to cure your maladie.
Who can him cure, that will be cur'd of none?
If therefore health ye seeke, obserue this one.
First learne your outward sences to refraine
From things, that stirre vp fraile affection;
Your eies, your eares, your tongue, your talke restaine
From that they most affect, and in due termes containe.

[8]

For from those outward sences ill affected,

The seede of all this euill first doth spring,
Which at the first before it had infected,
Mote easie be supprest with little thing:
But being growen strong, it forth doth bring
Sorrow, and anguish, and impatient paine
In th'inner parts, and lastly scattering
Contagious poysone close through euery vaine,
It neuer rests, till it haue wrought his finall bane.

[9]

For that beastes teeth, which wounded you tofore,
Are so exceeding venemous and keene,
Made all of rusty yron, ranckling sore,
That where they bite, it booteth not to weene
With salue, or antidote, or other mene
It euer to amend: ne maruaile ought;
For that same beast was bred of hellish strene,
And long in darksome Stygian den vprought,
Begot of foule Echidna, as in bookes is taught.

[10]

Echidna is a Monster direfull dred,
Whom Gods doe hate, and heauens abhor to see;
So hideous is her shape, so huge her hed,
That euen the hellish fiends affrighted bee
At sight thereof, and from her presence flee:
Yet did her face and former parts professe
A faire young Mayden, full of comely glee;
But all her hinder parts did plaine expresse
A monstrous Dragon, full of fearefull vglinesse.

[11]

To her the Gods, for her so dreadfull face,
In fearefull darkenesse, furthest from the skie,
And from the earth, appointed haue her place,
Mongst rocks and caues, where she enrold doth lie
In hideous horrour and obscurity,
Wasting the strength of her immortall age.
There did Typhaon with her company,
Cruell Typhaon, whose tempestuous rage
Make th'heauens tremble oft, & him with vowes asswage.

[12]

Of that commixtion they did then beget
This hellish Dog, that hight the Blatant Beast;
A wicked Monster, that his tongue doth whet
Gainst all, both good and bad, both most and least,
And poures his poysnous gall forth to infest
The noblest wights with notable defame:
Ne euer Knight, that bore so lofty creast,
Ne euer Lady of so honest name,
But he them spotted with reproch, or secrete shame.

[13]

In vaine therefore it were, with medicine
To goe about toalue such kynd of sore,
That rather needes wise read and discipline,
Then outward salues, that may augment it more.
Aye me (sayd then Serena sighing sore)
What hope of helpe doth then for vs remaine,
If that no salues may vs to health restore?
But sith we need good counsell (sayd the swaine)
Aread good sire, some counsell, that may vs sustaine.

[14]

The best (sayd he) that I can you aduize,
Is to auoide the occasion of the ill:
For when the cause, whence euill doth arize,
Remoued is, th'effect surceaseth still.
Abstaine from pleasure, and restraine your will,
Subdue desire, and bridle loose delight,
Vse scanted diet, and forbeare your fill,
Shun secresie, and talke in open sight:
So shall you soone repaire your present euill plight.

[15]

Thus hauing sayd, his sickly patients
Did gladly hearken to his graue behest,
And kept so well his wise commaundements,
That in short space their malady was ceast,
And eke the biting of that harmefull Beast
Was throughly heal'd. Tho when they did perceave
Their wounds recur'd, and forces reincreast,
Of that good Hermite both they tooke their leaue,
And went both on their way, ne ech would other leaue.

[16]

But each th'other vow'd t'accompany,
The Lady, for that she was much in dred,
Now left alone in great extremity,
The Squire, for that he courteous was indeed,
Would not her leue alone in her great need.
So both together traueld, till they met
With a faire Mayden clad in mourning weed,
Vpon a mangy iade vnmeeteley set,
And a lewd foole her leading thorough dry and wet.

[17]

But by what meanes that shame to her befell,
And how thereof her selfe she did acquite,
I must a while forbeare to you to tell;
Till that, as comes by course, I doe recite,
What fortune to the Briton Prince did lite,
Pursuing that proud Knight, the which whileare
Wrought to Sir Calidore so foule despight;
And eke his Lady, though she sickly were,
So lewdly had abusde, as ye did lately heare.

[18]

The Prince according to the former token,
Which faire Serene to him deliuered had,
Pursu'd him streight, in mynd to bene ywroken
Of all the vile demeane, and vsage bad,
With which he had those two so ill bestad:
Ne wight with him on that aduenture went,
But that wylde man, whom though he oft forbad,
Yet for no bidding, nor for being shent,
Would he restrayned be from his attendement.

[19]

Arriuing there, as did by chaunce befall,
He found the gate wyde ope, and in he rode,
Ne stayd, till that he came into the hall:
Where soft dismounting like a weary lode,
Vpon the ground with feeble feete he trode,
As he vnable were for very neede
To moue one foote, but there must make abode;
The whiles the saluage man did take his steede,
And in some stable neare did set him vp to feede.

[20]

Ere long to him a homely groome there came,
That in rude wise him asked, what he was,
That durst so boldly, without let or shame,
Into his Lords forbidden hall to passe.
To whom the Prince, him fayning to embase,
Mylde answer made; he was an errant Knight,
The which was fall'n into this feeble case,
Through many wounds, which lately he in fight,
Receiued had, and prayd to pitty his ill plight.

[21]

But he, the more outrageous and bold,
Sternely did bid him quickly thence auaunt,
Or deare aby, for why his Lord of old
Did hate all errant Knights, which there did haunt,
Ne lodging would to any of them graunt,
And therefore lightly bad him packe away,
Not sparing him with bitter words to taunt;
And therewithall rude hand on him did lay,
To thrust him out of dore, doing his worst assay.

[22]

Which when the Saluage comming now in place,
Beheld, eftsoones he all enraged grew,
And running streight vpon that villaine base,
Like a fell Lion at him fiercely flew,
And with his teeth and nailes, in present vew,
Him rudely rent, and all to peeces tore:
So miserably him all helpelesse slew,
That with the noise, whilst he did loudly rore,
The people of the house rose forth in great vprore.

[23]

Who when on ground they saw their fellow slaine,
And that same Knight and Saluage standing by,
Vpon them two they fell with might and maine,
And on them layd so huge and horribly,
As if they would haue slaine them presently.
But the bold Prince defended him so well,
And their assault withstood so mightyly,
That maugre all their might, he did repell,
And beat them back, whilst many vnderneath him fell.

[24]

Yet he them still so sharply did pursew,
That few of them he left aliue, which fled,
Those euill tidings to their Lord to shew.
Who hearing how his people badly sped,
Came forth in hast: where when as with the dead
He saw the ground all strow'd, and that same Knight
And saluage with their blood fresh steeming red,
He woxe nigh mad with wrath and fell despight,
And with reprochfull words him thus bespake on hight.

[25]

Art thou he, traytor, that with treason vile,
Hast slaine my men in this vnmanly maner,
And now triumphest in the piteous spoile
Of these poore folk, whose soules with black dishonor
And foule defame doe decke thy bloudy baner?
The meede whereof shall shortly be thy shame,
And wretched end, which still attendeth on her.
With that him selfe to battell he did frame;
So did his forty yeomen, which there with him came.

[26]

With dreadfull force they all did him assaile,
And round about with boystrous strokes oppresse,
That on his shield did rattle like to haile
In a great tempest; that in such distresse,
He wist not to which side him to addresse.
And euermore that crauen cowherd Knight,
Was at his backe with heartlesse heedinesse,
Wayting if he vnwares him murther might:
For cowardize doth still in villany delight.

[27]

Whereof whenas the Prince was well aware,
He to him turnd with furious intent,
And him against his powre gan to prepare;
Like a fierce Bull, that being busie bent
To fight with many foes about him ment,
Feeling some curre behinde his heeles to bite,
Turnes him about with fell auengement;
So likewise turnde the Prince vpon the Knight,
And layd at him amaine with all his will and might.

[28]

Who when he once his dreadfull strokes had tasted,
Durst not the furie of his force abyde,
But turn'd abacke, and to retyre him hasted
Through the thick prease, there thinking him to hyde.
But when the Prince had once him plainly eyde,
He foot by foot him followed alway,
Ne would him suffer once to shrinke asyde
But ioyning close, huge lode at him did lay:
Who flying still did ward, and warding fly away.

[29]

But when his foe he still so eger saw,
Vnto his heele himselfe he did betake,
Hoping vnto some refuge to withdraw:
Ne would the Prince him euer foot forsake,
Where so he went, but after him did make.
He fled from roome to roome, from place to place,
Whylest euery ioynt for dread of death did quake,
Still looking after him, that did him chace;
That made him euermore increase his speedie pace.

[30]

At last he vp into the chamber came,
Whereas his loue was sitting all alone,
Wayting what tydings of her folke became.
There did the Prince him ouertake anone,
Crying in vaine to her, him to bemone;
And with his sword him on the head did smyte,
That to the gound he fell in senselesse swone:
Yet whether thwart or flatly it did lyte,
The tempred steele did not into his braynepan byte.

[31]

Which when the Ladie saw, with great affright
She starting vp, began to shrieke aloud,
And with her garment couering him from sight,
Seem'd vnder her protection him to shroud;
And falling lowly at his feet, her bowd
Upon her knee, intreating him for grace,
And often him besought, and prayd, and vowd;
That with the ruth of her so wretched case,
He stayd his second strooke, and did his hand abase.

[32]

Her weed she then withdrawing, did him discouer,
Who now come to himselfe, yet would not rize,
But still did lie as dead, and quake, and quiuere,
That euen the Prince his basenesse did despize,
And eke his Dame him seeing in such guize,
Gan him recomfort, and from ground to reare.
Who rising vp at last in ghastly wize,
Like troubled ghost did dreadfully appeare,
As one that had no life him left through former feare.

[33]

Whom when the Prince so deadly saw dismayd,
He for such basenesse shamefully him shent,
And with sharpe words did bitterly vpbrayd;
Vile cowheard dogge, now doe I much repent,
That euer I this life vnto thee lent,
Whereof thou caytive so vnworthie art;
That both thy loue, for lacke of hardiment,
And eke thy selfe, for want of manly hart,
And eke all knights hast shamed with this knightlesse part.

[34]

Yet further hast thou heaped shame to shame,
And crime to crime, by this thy cowheard feare.
For first it was to thee reprochfull blame,
To erect this wicked custome, which I heare,
Gainst errant Knights and Ladies thou dost reare;
Whom when thou mayst, thou dost of arms despoile,
Or of their vpper garment, which they weare:
Yet doest thou not with manhood, but with guile
Maintaine this euill vse, thy foes thereby to foile.

[35]

And lastly in approuance of thy wrong,
To shew such faintnesse and foule cowardize,
Is greatest shame: for oft it falles, that strong
And valiant knights doe rashly enterprize,
Either for fame, or else for exercize,
A wrongfull quarrell to maintaine by right;
Yet haue, through prowesse and their braue emprise,
Gotten great worship in this worldes sight.
For greater force there needs to maintaine wrong, then right.

[36]

Yet since thy life vnto this Ladie fayre
I giuen haue, lie in reproch and scorne;
Ne euer armes, ne euer knighthood dare
Hence to professe: for shame is to adorne
With so braue badges one so basely borne;
But onely breath sith that I did forgiue.
So hauing from his crauen bodie torne
Those goodly armes, he them away did giue
And onely suffered him this wretched life to liue.

[37]

There whilst he thus was setling things aboue,
Atwene that Ladie myld and recreant knight,
To whom his life he graunted for her loue,
He gan bethinke him, in what perilous plight
He had behynd him left that saluage wight,
Amongst so many foes, whom sure he thought
By this quite slaine in so vnequall fight:
Therefore descending backe in haste, he sought
If yet he were aliue, or to destruction brought.

[38]

There he him found enuironed about
With slaughtered bodies, which his hand had slaine,
And laying yet a fresh with courage stout
Upon the rest, that did aliue remaine;
Whom he likewise right sorely did constraine,
Like scattered sheepe, to seeke for safetie,
After he gotten had with busie paine
Some of their weapons, which thereby did lie,
With which he layd about, and made them fast to flie.

[39]

Whom when the Prince so felly saw to rage,
Approching to him neare, his hand he stayd,
And sought, by making signes, him to asswage:
Who them perceiuing, streight to him obayd,
As to his Lord, and downe his weapons layd,
As if he long had to his heasts bene trayned.
Thence he him brought away, and vp conuayd
Into the chamber, where that Dame remayned
With her vnworthy knight, who ill him entartayned.

[40]

Whom when the Saluage saw from daunger free,
Sitting beside his Ladie there at ease,
He well remembred, that the same was hee,
Which lately sought his Lord for to displease:
Tho all in rage, he on him streight did seaze,
As if he would in peeces him haue rent;
And were not, that the Prince did him appeaze,
He had not left one limbe of him vnrent:
But streight he held his hand at his commaundement.

[41]

Thus hauing all things well in peace ordayneid,
The Prince himselfe there all that night did rest,
Where him Blandina fayrely entartayned,
With all the courteous glee and goodly feast,
The which for him she could imagine best.
For well she knew the wayes to win good will
Of euery wight, that were not too infest,
And how to please the minds of good and ill,
Through tempering of her words & looks by wondrous skill.

[42]

Yet were her words and looks but false and fayned,
To some hid end to make more easie way,
Or to allure such fondlings, whom she trayned
Into her trap vnto their owne decay:
Thereto, when needed, she could weepe and pray,
And when her listed, she could fawne and flatter;
Now smyling smoothly, like to sommers day,
Now glooming sadly, so to cloke her matter;
Yet were her words but wynd, & all her teares but water.

[43]

Whether such grace were giuen her by kynd,
As women wont their guilefull wits to guyde;
Or learn'd the art to please, I doe not fynd.
This well I wote, that she so well applyde
Her pleasing tongue, that soone she pacifyde
The wrathfull Prince, & wrought her husbands peace.
Who nathelesse not therewith satisfyde,
His rancorous despight did not releassee,
Ne secretly from thought of fell reuenge surceasse.

[44]

For all that night, the whyles the Prince did rest
In carelesse couch, not weeting what was ment,
He watcht in close awayt with weapons prest,
Willing to worke his villenous intent
On him, that had so shamefully him shent:
Yet durst he not for very cowardize
Effect the same, whylest all the night was spent.
The morrow next the Prince did early rize,
And passed forth, to follow his first enterprize.

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