

Cant. XI.

*The knight with that old Dragon fights
two dayes incessantly:
The third him ouerthrowes, and gayns
most glorious victory.*

[1]

High time now gan it wex for *Vna faire*,
To thinke of those her captiue Parents deare,
And their forwasted kingdome to repaire:
Whereto when as they now approched neare,
With hartie words her knight she gan to cheare,
And in her modest manner thus bespake;
Deare knight, as deare, as euer knight was deare,
That all these sorrowes suffer for my sake,
High heauen behold the tedious toyle, ye for me take.

[2]

Now are we come vnto my natiue soyle,
And to the place, where all our perils dwell;
Here haunts that feend, and does his dayly spoyle,
Therefore henceforth be at your keeping well,
And euer ready for your foeman fell.
The sparke of noble courage now awake,
And striue your excellent selfe to excell;
That shall ye euermore renowned make
Aboue all knights on earth, that batteill vndertake.

[3]

And pointing forth, lo yonder is (said she)
The brasen towre in which my parents deare
For dread of that huge feend emprisond be,
Whom I from far, see on the walles appeare
Whose sight my feeble soule doth greatly cheare:
And on the top of all, I doe espye
The watchman wayting tydings glad to heare,
That ô my parents might I happily
Vnto you bring, to ease you of your misery.

[4]

With that they heard a roaring hideous sound,
That all the ayre with terrour filled wide,

And seemd vneath to shake the stedfast ground.
Eftsoones that dreadfull Dragon they espide,
Where stretch he lay vpon the sunny side,
Of a great hill, himselfe like a great hill.
But all so soone, as he from far descride
Those glistring armes, that heauen with light did fill,
He rousd himselfe full blith, and hastned them vntill.

[5]

Then bad the knight this Lady yede aloofe,
And to an hill her selfe with draw aside,
From whence she might behold that battailles proof
And eke be safe from daunger far descryde:
She him obayd, and turnd a little wyde.
Now O thou sacred Muse, most learned Dame,
Faire ympe of *Phoebus*, and his aged bride,
The Nourse of time, and euerlasting fame,
That warlike hands ennoblest with immortall name;

[6]

O gently come into my feeble brest,
Come gently, but not with that mighty rage,
Wherewith the martiall troupes thou doest infest,
And harts of great Heroës doest enrage,
That nought their kindled courage may aswage;
Soone as thy dreadfull trompe begins to sownd;
The God of warre with his fiers equipage
Thou doest awake, sleepe neuer he so sownd,
And feared nations doest with horroure sterne astownd.

[7]

Faire Goddess lay that furious fit aside,
Till I of warres and bloody *Mars* doe sing,
And Briton fields with Sarazin bloud bedyde,
Twixt that great faery Queene and Paynim king,
That with their horroure heauen and earth did ring,
A worke of labour long, and endlesse prayse:
But, now awhile let downe that haughtie string,
And to my tunes thy second tenor rayse,
That I this man of God his godly armes may blaze.

[8]

By this the dreadfull Beast drew nigh to hand,

Halfe flying, and halfe footing in his hast,
That with his largenesse measured much land,
And made wide shadow vnder his huge wast;
As mountaine doth the valley ouercast.
Approching nigh, he reared high afore
His body monstrous, horrible, and wast,
Which to increase his wondrous greatnesse more,
Was swolne with wrath, & poyson, & with bloody gore.

[9]

And ouer, all with brazen scales was armd,
Like plated coate of steele, so couched neare,
That nought mote perce, ne might his corse be harmd
With dint of sword, nor push of pointed speare;
Which as an Eagle, seeing pray appeare,
His aery plumes doth rouze, full rudely dight,
So shaked he, that horrour was to heare,
For as the clashing of an Armour bright,
Such noyse his rouzed scales did send vnto the knight.

[10]

His flaggy wings when forth he did display,
Were like two sayles, in which the hollow wynd
Is gathered full, and worketh speedy way:
And eke the pennes, that did his pineons bynd
Were like mayne-yards, with flying canuas lynd,
With which whenas him list the ayre to beat,
And there by force vnwonted passage find,
The cloudes before him fled for terrour great,
And all the heauens stood still amazed with his threat.

[11]

His huge long tayle, wound vp in hundred foldes,
Does ouerspred his long bras-scaly backe,
Whose wreathed boughts when euer he vnfoldes,
And thicke entangled knots adown does slacke.
Bespotted all with shields of red and blacke,
It sweepeth all the land behind him farre,
And of three furlongs does but litle lacke;
And at the point two stings in-fixed arre,
Both deadly sharpe, that sharpest steele exceeden farre.

[12]

But stings and sharpest steele did far exceed
The sharpnesse of his cruell rending clawes;
Dead was it sure, as sure as death in deed,
What euer thing does touch his rauinous pawes,
Or what within his reach he euer drawes.
But his most hideous head, my tounge to tell,
Does tremble: for his deepe deuouring iawes
Wide gaped, like the griesly mouth of hell,
Through which into his darke abisse all rauin fell.

[13]

And that more wondrous was, in either iaw
Three ranckes of yron teeth enraunged were,
In which yet trickling bloud and gobbets raw
Of late deuoured bodies did appeare,
That sight thereof bred cold congealed feare:
Which to increase, and all atonce to kill,
A cloud of smothering smoake and sulphur seare
Out of his stinking gorge forth steemed still,
That all the ayre about with smoke and stench did fill.

[14]

His blazing eyes, like two bright shining shields,
Did burne with wrath, and sparkled liuing fyre;
As two broad Beacons, set in open fields,
Send forth their flames farre off to euery shyre,
And warning giue, that enemies conspyre,
With fire and sword the region to inuade;
So flam'd his eyne with rage and rancorous yre:
But farre within, as in a hollow glade,
Those glaring lampes were set, that made a dreadfull shade.

[15]

So dreadfully he towards him did pas,
Forelifting vp aloft his speckled brest,
And often bounding on the brused gras,
As for great ioyance of his newcome guest.
Eftsoones he gan aduance his haughty crest,
As chauffed Bore his bristles doth vpreare,
And shoke his scales to battell readie drest;
That made the *Redcrosse* Knight nigh quake for feare,
As bidding bold defiance to his foeman neare.

[16]

The knight gan fairely couch his steadie speare,
And fiercely ranne at him with rigorous might:
The pointed steele arriuing rudely theare,
His harder hide would neither perce, nor bight,
But glauncing by forth passed forward right;
Yet sore amoued with so puissant push,
The wrathfull beast about him turned light,
And him so rudely passing by, did brush
With his long tayle, that horse and man to ground did rush.

[17]

Both horse and man vp lightly rose againe,
And fresh encounter towards him adress:
But th'idle stroke yet backe recoyld in vaine,
And found no place his deadly point to rest.
Exceeding rage enflam'd the furious beast,
To be auenged of so great despight;
For neuer felt his imperceable brest
So wondrous force from hand of liuing wight;
Yet had he prou'd the powre of many a puissant knight.

[18]

Then with his wauing wings displayed wyde,
Himselfe vp high he lifted from the ground,
And with strong flight did forcibly diuide
The yielding aire, which nigh too feeble found
Her flitting partes, and element vnfound,
To beare so great a weight: he cutting way
With his broad sayles, about him soared round:
At last low stouping with vnweldie sway,
Snatcht vp both horse & man, to beare them quite away.

[19]

Long he them bore aboue the subiect plaine,
So farre as Ewghen bowe a shaft may send,
Till struggling strong did him at last constraine,
To let them downe before his flightes end:
As hagarde hauke presuming to contend
With hardie fowle, aboue his hable might,
His wearie pounces all in vaine doth spend,
To trusse the pray too heauie for his flight;
Which comming downe to ground, does free it selfe by fight.

[20]

He so disseized of his gryping grosse,
The Knight his thrillant speare againe assayd
In his bras-plated body to embosse,
And three mens strength vnto the stroke he layd;
Wherewith the stiffe beame quaked, as affrayd,
And glauncing from his scaly necke, did glyde
Close vnder his left wing, then broad displayd.
The percing steele there wrought a wound full wyde,
That with the vncouth smart the Monster lowdly cryde.

[21]

He cryde, as raging seas are wont to rore,
When wintry storme his wrathfull wreck does threat,
The rolling billowes beat the ragged shore,
As they the earth would shoulder from her seat,
And greedie gulfe does gape, as he would eat
His neighbour element in his reuenge:
Then gin the blustring brethren boldly threat,
To moue the world from off his stedfast henge,
And boystrous battell make, each other to auenge.

[22]

The steely head stucke fast still in his flesh,
Till with his cruell clawes he snatcht the wood,
And quite a sunder broke. Forth flowed fresh
A gushing riuier of blacke goarie blood,
That drowned all the land, whereon he stood;
The streame thereof would driue a water-mill.
Trebly augmented was his furious mood
With bitter sense of his deepe rooted ill,
That flames of fire he threw forth from his large nosethrill.

[23]

His hideous tayle then hurled he about,
And therewith all enwrapt the nimble thyes
Of his froth-fomy steed, whose courage stout
Striuing to loose the knot, that fast him tyes,
Himselfe in streighter bandes too rash implies,
That to the ground he is perforce constraynd
To throw his rider: who can quickly ryse
From off the earth, with durty bloud distaynd,
For that reprochefull fall right fowly he disdaynd.

[24]

And fiercely tooke his trenchand blade in hand,
With which he stroke so furious and so fell,
That nothing seemd the puissance could withstand:
Vpon his crest the hardned yron fell,
But his more hardned crest was armd so well,
That deeper dint therein it would not make;
Yet so extremely did the buffe him quell,
That from thenceforth he shund the like to take,
But when he saw them come, he did them still forsake.

[25]

The knight was wroth to see his stroke beguyld,
And smote againe with more outrageous might;
But backe againe the sparckling steele recoyld,
And left not any marke, where it did light;
As if in Adamant rock it had been pight.
The beast impatient of his smarting wound,
And of so fierce and forcible despight,
Thought with his wings to stye aboute the ground;
But his late wounded wing vnseruiceable found.

[26]

Then full of grieffe and anguish vehement,
He lowdly brayd, that like was neuer heard,
And from his wide deuouring ouen sent
A flake of fire, that flashing in his beard,
Him all amazd, and almost made affeard:
The scorching flame sore swinged all his face,
And through his armour all his bodie seard,
That he could not endure so cruell cace,
But thought his armes to leaue, and helmet to vnlace.

[27]

Not that great Champion of the antique world,
Whom famous Poetes verse so much doth daunt,
And hath for twelue huge labours high extold,
So many furies and sharpe fits did haunt,
When him the poysoned garment did enchaunt
With *Centaures* bloud, and bloudie verses charm'd,
As did this knight twelue thousand dolours daunt,
Whom fyrie steele now burnt, that earst him arm'd,
That erst him goodly arm'd, now most of all him harm'd.

[28]

Faint, wearie, sore, emboyled, grieued, brent
With heat, toyle, wounds, armes, smart, & inward fire
That neuer man such mischiefes did torment;
Death better were, death did he oft desire,
But death will neuer come, when needes require.
Whom so dismayd when that his foe beheld,
He cast to suffer him no more respire,
But gan his sturdie sterne about to weld,
And him so strongly stroke, that to the ground him feld.

[29]

It fortun'd (as faire it then befell)
Behind his backe vnweeting, where he stood,
Of auncient time there was a springing well,
From which fast trickled forth a siluer flood,
Full of great vertues, and for med'cine good.
Whylome, before that cursed Dragon got
That happie land, and all with innocent blood
Defyld those sacred waues, it rightly hot
The Well of Life, ne yet his vertues had forgot.

[30]

For vnto life the dead it could restore,
And guilt of sinfull crimes cleane wash away,
Those that with sicknesse were infected sore,
It could recure, and aged long decay
Renew, as it were borne that very day.
Both *Silo* this, and *Jordan* did excell,
And th'English *Bath*, and eke the german *Spau*,
Ne can *Cephise*, nor *Hebrus* match this well:
Into the same the knight backe ouerthrowen, fell.

[31]

Now gan the golden *Phoebus* for to steepe
His fierie face in billowes of the west,
And his faint steedes watred in Ocean deepe,
Whiles from their iournall labours they did rest,
When that infernall Monster, hauing kest
His wearie foe into that liuing well,
Can high aduance his broad discoloured brest,
Aboue his wonted pitch, with countenance fell,
And clapt his yron wings, as victor he did dwell.

[32]

Which when his penfue Ladie saw from farre,
Great woe and sorrow did her soule assay,
As weening that the sad end of the warre,
And gan to highest God entirely pray,
That feared chance from her to turne away;
With folded hands and knees full lowly bent
All night she watcht, ne once adowne would lay
Her daintie limbs in her sad dreriment,
But praying still did wake, and waking did lament.

[33]

The morrow next gan early to appeare,
That *Titan* rose to runne his daily race;
But early ere the morrow next gan reare
Out of the sea faire *Titans* deawy face,
Vp rose the gentle virgin from her place,
And looked all about, if she might spy
Her loued knight to moue his manly pace:
For she had great doubt of his safety,
Since late she saw him fall before his enemy.

[34]

At last she saw, where he vpstarted braue
Out of the well, wherein he drenched lay;
As Eagle fresh out of the Ocean waue,
Where he hath left his plumes all hoary gray,
And deckt himselfe with feathers youthly gay,
Like Eyas hauke vp mounts vnto the skies,
His newly budded pineons to assay,
And marueiles at himselfe, still as he flies:
So new, this new-borne knight to battell new did rise.

[35]

Whom, when the damned feend so fresh did spy,
No wonder if he wondred at the sight,
And doubted, whether his late enemy
It were, or other new supplied knight.
He, now to proue his late renewed might,
High brandishing his bright deaw-burning blade,
Vpon his crested scalpe so sore did smite,
That to the scull a yawning wound it made:
The deadly dint his dulled senses all dismaid.

[36]

I wote not, whether the reuenging steele
Were hardned with that holy water dew,
Wherein he fell, or sharper edge did feele,
Or his baptized hands now greater grew;
Or other secret vertue did ensew;
Else neuer could the force of fleshly arme,
Ne molten mettall in his bloud embrew:
For till that stownd could neuer wight him harme,
By subtilty, nor slight, nor might, nor mighty charme.

[37]

The cruell wound enraged him so sore,
That loud he yelded for exceeding paine;
As hundred ramping Lyons seem'd to rore,
Whom rauenous hunger did thereto constraine:
Then gan he tosse aloft his stretched traine,
And therewith scourge the buxome aire so sore,
That to his force to yeelden it was faine;
Ne ought his sturdie strokes might stand afore,
That high trees ouerthrew, and rocks in peeces tore.

[38]

The same aduauncing high aboue his head,
With sharpe intended sting so rude him smot,
That to the earth him droue, as stricken dead;
Ne liuing wight would haue him life behot:
The mortall sting his angry needle shot
Quite through his shield, and in his shoulder seasd,
Where fast it stucke, ne would there out be got:
The grieffe thereof him wondrous sore diseasd,
Ne might his ranckling paine with patience be appeasd.

[39]

But yet more mindfull of his honour deare,
Then of the grieuous smart, which him did wring,
From loathed soile he can him lightly reare,
And stroue to loose the farre infixed string:
Which when in vaine he tryde with struggeling,
Inflam'd with wrath, his raging blade he heft,
And strooke so strongly, that the knotty sting
Of his huge taile he quite in sunder cleft,
Fieue ioynts thereof he hewd, and but the stump him left.

[40]

Hart cannot thinke, what outrage, and what cryes,
With foule enfouldred smoake and flashing fire,
The hell-bred beast threw forth vnto the skyes,
That all was couered with darknesse dire:
Then fraught with rancour, and engorged ire,
He cast at once him to auenge for all,
And gathering vp himselfe out of the mire,
With his vneuen wings did fiercely fall,
Vpon his sunne-bright shield, and gript it fast withall.

[41]

Much was the man encombred with his hold,
In feare to lose his weapon in his paw,
Ne wist yet, how his talants to vnfold;
For harder was from *Cerberus* greedie iaw
To pluck a bone, then from his cruell claw
To reauie by strength, the griped gage away:
Thrice he assaid it from his foot to draw,
And thrice in vaine to draw it did assay,
It booted nought to thinke, to robbe him of his pray.

[42]

Tho when he saw no power might preuaile,
His trustie sword he cald to his last aid,
Wherewith he fiercely did his foe assaile,
And double blowes about him stoutly laid,
That glauncing fire out of the yron plaid;
As sparckles from the Anduile vse to fly,
When heauie hammers on the wedge are swaid;
Therewith at last he forst him to vnty
One of his grasping feet, him to defend thereby.

[43]

The other foot, fast fixed on his shield,
Whenas no strength, nor stroks mote him constraine
To loose, ne yet the warlike pledge to yield,
He smot thereat with all his might and maine,
That nought so wondrous puissance might sustaine;
Vpon the ioynt the lucky steele did light,
And made such way, that hewd it quite in twaine;
The paw yet missed not his minisht might,
But hong still on the shield, as it at first was pight.

[44]

For griefe thereof, and diuelish despight,
From his infernall founnace forth he threw
Huge flames, that dimmed all the heauens light,
Enrold in duskish smoke and brimstone blew;
As burning *Aetna* from his boyling stew
Doth belch out flames, and rockes in peeces broke,
And ragged ribs of mountaines molten new,
Enwrapt in coleblacke clouds and filthy smoke,
That all the land with stench, and heauen with horror choke.

[45]

The heate whereof, and harmefull pestilence,
So sore him noyd, that forst him to retire
A little backward for his best defence,
To saue his bodie from the scorching fire,
Which he from hellish entrailes did expire.
It chaunst (eternall God that chaunce did guide)
As he recoyled backward, in the mire
His nigh forwearied feeble feet did slide,
And downe he fell, with dread of shame sore terrifide.

[46]

There grew a goodly tree him faire beside,
Loaden with fruit and apples rosie red,
As they in pure vermilion had beene dide,
Whereof great vertues ouer all were red:
For happie life to all, which thereon fed,
And life eke euerlasting did befall:
Great God it planted in that blessed sted
With his almightie hand, and did it call
The tree of life, the crime of our first fathers fall.

[47]

In all the world like was not to be found,
Saue in that soile, where all good things did grow,
And freely sprong out of the fruitfull ground,
As incorrupted Nature did them sow,
Till that dread Dragon all did ouerthrow.
Another like faire tree eke grew thereby,
Whereof whoso did eat, eftsoones did know
Both good and ill: O mornefull memory:
That tree through one mans fault hath doen vs all to dy.

[48]

From that first tree forth flowd, as from a well,
A trickling streame of Balme, most soueraine
And daintie deare, which on the ground still fell,
And ouerflowed all the fertill plaine,
As it had deawed bene with timely raine:
Life and long health that gracious ointment gaue,
And deadly woundes could heale and reare againe
The senselesse corse appointed for the graue.
Into that same he fell: which did from death him saue.

[49]

For nigh thereto the euer damned beast
Durst not approach, for he was deadly made,
And all that life preserued, did detest:
Yet he it off aduentur'd to inuade.
By this the drouping day-light gan to fade,
And yeeld his roome to sad succeeding night,
Who with her sable mantle gan to shade
The face of earth, and wayes of liuing wight,
And high her burning torch set vp in heauen bright.

[50]

When gentle *Vna* saw the second fall
Of her deare knight, who wearie of long fight,
And faint through losse of bloud, mou'd not at all,
But lay as in a dreame of deepe delight,
Besmeard with pretious Balme, whose vertuous might
Did heale his wounds, and scorching heat alay,
Againe she stricken was with sore affright,
And for his safetie gan deuoutly pray;
And watch the noyous night, and wait for ioyous day.

[51]

The ioyous day gan early to appeare,
And faire *Aurora* from her deawy bed
Of aged *Tithone* gan her selfe to reare,
With rosie cheekes, for shame as blushing red;
Her golden lockes for haste were loosely shed
About her eares, when *Vna* her did marke
Clymbe to her charet, all with flowers spred;
From heauen high to chase the chearelesse darke,
With merry note her loud salutes the mounting larke.

[52]

Then freshly vp arose the doughtie knight,
All healed of his hurts and woundes wide,
And did himselfe to battell readie dight;
Whose early foe awaiting him beside
To haue deuourd, so soone as day he spyde,
When now he saw himselfe so freshly reare,
As if late fight had nought him damnifyde,
He woxe dismayd, and gan his fate to feare;
Nathlesse with wonted rage he him aduaunced neare.

[53]

And in his first encounter, gaping wide,
He thought attonce him to haue swallowd quight,
And rusht vpon him with outrageous pride;
Who him r'encountring fierce, as hauke in flight,
Perforce rebutted backe. The weapon bright
Taking aduantage of his open iaw,
Ran through his mouth with so importune might,
That deepe emperst his darksome hollow maw,
And back retyrd, his life bloud forth with all did draw.

[54]

So downe he fell, and forth his life did breath,
That vanisht into smoke and cloudes swift;
So downe he fell, that th'earth him vnderneath
Did grone, as feeble so great load to lift;
So downe he fell, as an huge rockie clift,
Whose false foundation waues haue washt away,
With dreadfull poyse is from the mayneland rift,
And rolling downe, great *Neptune* doth dismay;
So downe he fell, and like an heaped mountaine lay.

[55]

The knight himselfe euen trembled at his fall,
So huge and horrible a masse it seem'd;
And his deare Ladie, that beheld it all,
Durst not approche for dread, which she misdeem'd,
But yet at last, when as the direfull feend
She saw not stirre, off-shaking vaine affright,
She nigher drew, and saw that ioyous end:
Then God she praysd, and thankt her faithfull knight,

That had atchieu'd so great a conquest by his might.

[Original content ©2018 by Dirk Jol.]