

Cant. I.

*Guyon by Archimage abusd,
The Redcrosse knight awaytes,
Findes Mordant and Amauia slaine
With pleasures poisoned baytes.*

[1]

THat cunning Architect of cancred guile,
Whom Princes late displeasure left in bands,
For falsed letters and suborned wile,
Soone as the *Redcrosse* knight he vnderstands,
To beene departed out of *Eden* lands,
To serue againe his soueraine Elfin Queene,
His artes he moues, and out of caytiues hands
Himselfe he frees by secret meanes vnseene;
His shackles emptie left, him selfe escaped cleene.

[2]

And forth he fares full of malicious mind,
To worken mischief and auenging woe,
Where euer he that godly knight may find,
His onely hart sore, and his onely foe,
Sith *Vna* now he algates must forgoe,
Whom his victorious hands did earst restore
To natiues crowne and kingdome late ygoe:
Where she enjoyes sure peace for euermore,
As weather-beaten ship arriu'd on happie shore.

[3]

Him therefore now the obiect of his spight
And deadly food he makes: him to offend
By forged treason, or by open fight
He seekes, of all his drift the aymed end:
Thereto his subtile engins he does bend
His practick wit, and his faire filed tong,
With thousand other sleights: for, well he kend,
His credit now in doubtfull ballaunce hong;
For hardly could be hurt, who was already stong.

[4]

Still as he went, he craftie stales did lay.
With cunning traines him to entrap vnwares,

And priue spials plast in all his way,
To weete what course he takes, and how he fares;
To ketch him at a vantage in his snares.
By triall of his former harmes and cares,
But now so wise and warie was the knight,
That he descride, and shonned still his slight:
The fish that once was caught, new bait will hardly bite.

[5]

Nath'lesse th'Enchaunter would not spare his paine,
In hope to win occasion to his will;
Which when he long awaited had in vaine,
He chaungd his minde from one to other ill:
For to all good he enemy was still.
Vpon the way him fortun'd to meet
Faire marching vnderneath a shady hill,
A goodly knight, all armd in harnesse meete,
That from his head no place appeared to his feete.

[6]

His carriage was full comely and vpright,
His countenance demure and temperate;
But yet so sterne and terrible in sight,
That cheard his friends, and did his foes amate:
He was an Elfin borne of noble state,
And mickle worship in his natiue land;
Well could he tourney and in lists debate,
And knighthood tooke of good Sir *Huons* hand,
When with king *Oberon* he came to Faerie land.

[7]

Him als accompanyd vpon the way
A comely Palmer, clad in blacke attire,
Of ripest yeares, and haires all hoarie gray,
That with a staffe his feeble steps did stire,
Least his long way his aged limbes should tire:
And if by lookes one may the mind aread,
He seemd to be a sage and sober sire,
And euer with slow pace the knight did lead,
Who taught his trampling steed with equall steps to tread.

[8]

Such whenas *Archimago* them did view,

He weened well to worke some vncouth wile,
Eftsoones vntwisting his deceitfull clew,
He gan to weaue a web of wicked guile,
And with a faire countenance and flattring stile
To them approaching, thus the Knight bespake:
Faire sonne of *Mars*, that seeke with warlike spoile.
And great atchieu'ments great your selfe to make,
Vouchsafe to stay your steed for humble misers sake.

[9]

He stayd his steed for humble misers sake,
And bad tell on the tenor of his plaint;
Who feigning then in euery limbe to quake,
Through inward feare, and seeming pale and faint
With piteous mone his percing speach gan paint;
Deare Lady how shall I declare thy cace,
Whom late I left in langourous constraint?
Would God thy selfe now present were in place,
To tell this ruefull tale; thy sight could win thee grace.

[10]

Or rather would, O would it so had chaunst,
That you, most noble Sir, had present beene,
When that lewd ribauld with vile lust aduaunst
Layd first his filthy hands on virgin cleene,
To spoile her daintie corse so faire and sheene,
As on the earth, great mother of vs all,
With liuing eye more faire was neuer seene,
Of chastitie and honour virginall:
Witnesse ye heauens, whom she in vaine to helpe did call.

[11]

How may it be, (said then the knight halfe wroth,)
That knight should knighthood euer so haue shent?
None but that saw (quoth he) would weene for troth,
How shamefully that Maid he did torment.
Her looser golden lockes he rudely rent,
And drew her on the ground, and his sharpe sword,
Against her snowy brest be fiercely bent,
And threatned death with many a bloudie word;
Toung hates to tell the rest, that eye to see abhord.

[12]

Therewith amoued from his sober mood,
And liues he yet (said he) that wrought this act,
And doen the heauens affoord him vitall food?
He liues, (quoth he) and boasteth of the fact,
Ne yet hath any knight his courage crackt.
Where may that treachour then (said he) be found,
Or by what meanes may I his footing tract?
That shall I shew (said he) as sure, as hound
The stricken Deare doth chalenge by the bleeding wound.

[13]

He staid not lenger talke, but with fierce ire,
And zealous hast away is quickly gone
To seeke that knight, where him that craftie Squire
Supposd to be. They do arriue anone,
Where sate a gentle Lady all alone,
With garments rent, and haire discheueled,
Wringing her hands, and making piteous mone;
Her swollen eyes were much disfigured,
And her faire face with teares was fowly blubbered.

[14]

The knight, approching nigh, thus to her said,
Faire Ladie, through foule sorrow ill bedight,
Great pittie is to see you thus dismaid,
And marre the blossome of your beautie bright:
For thy appease your grieffe and heaueie plight,
And tell the cause of your conceiued paine.
For if he liue, that hath you doen despight;
He shall you doe due recompence againe,
Or else his wrong with greater puissance maintaine.

[15]

Which when she heard, as in despightfull wise,
She wilfully her sorrow did augment,
And offred hope of comfort did despise:
Her golden lockes most cruelly she rent,
And scratcht her face with ghastly dreriment,
Ne would she speake, ne see, ne yet be seene,
But hid her visage, and her head downe bent,
Either for grieuous shame, or for great teene,
As if her hart with sorrow had transfixed beene.

[16]

Till her that Squire bespake, Madame my liefé,
For Gods deare loue be not so wilfull bent,
But doe vouchsafe now to receiue reliefe,
The which good fortune doth to you present.
For what bootes it to weepe and to wayment,
When ill is chaunst, but doth the ill increase,
And the weake mind with double woe torment?
When she her Squire heard speake, she gan appease
Her voluntarie paine, and feele some secret ease.

[17]

Eftsoone she said, Ah gentle trustie Squire,
What comfort can I wofull wretch conceaue,
Or why should euer I henceforth desire,
To see faire heauens face, and life not leaue,
Sith that false Traytor did my honour reaué?
False traytour certes (said the Faerie knight)
I read the man, that euer would deceaue
A gentle Ladie, or her wrong through might:
Death were too little paine for such a foule despight.

[18]

But now, faire Lady, comfort to you make,
And read, who hath ye wrought this shamefull plight.
That short reuenge the man may ouertake,
Where so he be, and soone vpon him light.
Certes (said she) I wote not how he hight;
But vnder him a gray steede did he wield,
Whose sides with dapled circles weren dight;
Vpright he rode, and in his siluer shield
He bore a bloudie Crosse, that quartred all the field.

[19]

Now by my head (said *Guyon*) much I muse,
How that same knight should do so foule amis,
Or euer gentle Damzell so abuse:
For, may I boldly say, he surely is
A right good Knight, and true of word ywis:
I present was, and can it witness well,
When armes he swore, and streight did enterpris
Th'adventure of the *Errant damozell*,
In which he hath great glorie wonne, as I heare tell.

[20]

Nathlesse, he shortly shall againe be tryde,
And fairely quite him of th'imputed blame:
Else be ye sure, he dearely shall abyde,
Or make you good amendment for the same:
All wrongs haue mends, but no amends of shame.
Now therefore Ladie, rise out of your paine,
And see the saluing of your blotted name.
Full loath she seemd thereto, but yet did faine;
For she was inly glad her purpose so to gaine.

[21]

Her purpose was not such, as she did faine,
Ne yet her person such, as it was seene;
But vnder simple shew and semblant plaine
Lurkt false *Duessa* secretly vnseene,
As a chast Virgin, that had wronged beene:
So had false *Archimago* her disguisd,
To cloke her guile with sorrow and sad teene;
And eke himselfe had craftily deuisd
To be her Squire, and doe her seruice well aguisd.

[22]

Her late forlorne and naked he had found,
Where she did wander in waste wildernesse,
Lurking in rockes and caues farre vnder ground,
And with greene mosse cou'ring her nakednesse,
To hide her shame and loathly filthinesse;
Sith her Prince *Arthur* of proud ornaments
And borrow'd beautie spoyld. Her nathelesse
Th'enchauter finding fit for his intents,
Did thus reuest, and deckt with due habiliments.

[23]

For all he did, was to deceiue good knights,
And draw them from pursuit of praise and fame,
To slug in slouth and sensuall delights,
And end their daies with irrenowmed shame.
And now exceeding grieffe him ouercame,
To see the *Redcrosse* thus aduaunced hye;
Therefore this craftie engine he did frame,
Against his praise to stirre vp enmitie
Of such, as vertues like mote vnto him allye.

[24]

So now he *Guyon* guides an vncouth way,
Through woods & mountaines, till they came at last
Into a pleasant dale, that lowly lay
Betwixt two hils, whose high heads ouerplast,
The valley did with coole shade ouercast;
Through midst thereof a little riuier rold,
By which there sate a knight with helme vnlast,
Himselke refreshing with the liquid cold,
After his trauell long, and labours manifold.

[25]

Loe yonder he, cryde *Archimage* alowd,
That wrought the shamefull fact, which I did shew;
And now he doth himselke in secret shrowd,
To flie the vengeance for his outrage dew;
But vaine: for, ye shall dearely do him rew,
So God ye speed, and send you good successe;
Which we farre off will here abide to vew.
So they him left, inflam'd with wrathfulnesse,
That streight against that knight his speare he did addresse.

[26]

Who seeing him from farre so fierce to pricke,
His warlike armes about him gan embrace,
And in the rest his readie speare did sticke;
Tho when as still he saw him towards pace,
He gan rencounter him in equall race.
They bene ymet, both readie to affrap,
When suddenly that warrriour gan abace
His threatned speare, as if some new mishap
Had him betidde, or hidden daunger did entrap.

[27]

And cryde, Mercie Sir knight, and mercie Lord,
For mine offence and heedlesse hardiment,
That had almost committed crime abhord,
And with reprochfull shame mine honour shent,
Whiles cursed steele against that badge I bent,
The sacred badge of my Redeemers death,
Which on your shield is set for ornament:
But his fierce foe his steede could stay vneath,
Who prickt with courage kene, did cruell battell breath.

[28]

But when he heard him speake, streight way he knew
His error, and himselfe inclyning sayd;
Ah deare Sir *Guyon*, well becommeth you,
But me behoueth rather to vpbrayd,
Whose hastie hand so farre from reason strayd,
That almost it did haynous violence
On that faire image of that heauenly Mayd,
That decks and armes your shield with faire defence:
Your court'sie takes on you anothers due offence.

[29]

So bene they both attone, and doen vpreare
Their beuers bright, each other for to greete;
Goodly comportance each to other beare,
And entertaine themselues with court'sies meet.
Then said the *Redcrosse* knight, Now mote I weat,
Sir *Guyon*, why with so fierce saliaunce,
And fell intent ye did at earst me meet;
For sith I know your goodly gouernaunce,
Great cause, I ween, you guided, or some vncouth chaunce.

[30]

Certes (said he) well mote I shame to tell
The fond encheason, that me hither led.
A false infamous faitour late befell
Me for to meet, that seemed ill bested,
And playnd of grieuous outrage, which he red
A knight had wrought against a Ladie gent;
Which to auenge, he to this place me led,
Where you he made the marke of his intent,
And now is fled; foule shame him follow, where he went.

[31]

So can he turne his earnest vnto game,
Through goodly handing and wise temperance.
By this, his aged guide in presence came;
Who soone as on that knight his eye did glance,
Eftsoones of him had perfect cognizance,
Sith him in Faerie court he late auizd;
And said, faire sonne, God giue you happie chance,
And that deare Crosse vpon your shield deuizd,
Wherewith aboute all knights ye goodly seeme aguizd.

[32]

Loy may you haue, and euerlasting fame,
Of late most hard atchieu'ment by you donne,
For which enrolled is your glorious name
In heauenly Registers about the Sunne,
Where you a Saint with Saints your seat haue wonne:
But wretched we, where ye haue left your marke,
Must now anew begin, like race to runne,
God guide thee, *Guyon*, well to end thy warke,
And to the wished hauen bring thy weary barke.

[33]

Palmer, (him answered the *Redcrosse* Knight)
His be the praise, that this atchieu'ment wrought,
Who made my hand the organ of his might;
More then goodwill to me attribute nought:
For, all I did, I did but as I ought.
But you, faire Sir, whose pageant next ensewes,
Well mote yee thee, as well can wish your thought.
That home ye may report these happie newes;
For, well yee worthie bene for worth and gentle thewes.

[34]

So courteous conge both did giue and take,
With right hands plighted, pledges of good will.
Then *Guyon* forward gan his voyage make,
With his blacke Palmer, that him guided still.
Still he him guided ouer dale and hill,
And with his steedie staffe did point his way:
His race with reason, and with words his will,
From foule intemperance he oft did stay,
And suffred not in wrath his hastie steps to stray.

[35]

In this faire wize they traueild long yfere,
Through many hard assayes, which did betide;
Of which he honour still away did beare,
And spred his glorie through all countries wide.
At last, as chaunst them by a forest side
To passe, for succour from the scorching ray,
They heard a ruefull voice, that dearly cride
With percing shriekes, and many a dolefull lay;
Which to attend, a while their forward steps they stay.

[36]

But if that carelesse heuens (quoth she) despise
The doome of iust reuenge, and take delight
To see sad pageants of mens miseries,
As bound by them to liue in lifes despight,
Yet can they not warne death from wretched wight.
Come then, come soone, come sweetest death to mee,
And take away this long lent loathed light:
Sharpe be thy wounds, but sweet the medicines bee,
That long captiued soules from wearie thraldome free.

[37]

But thou, sweet Babe, whom frowning froward fate
Hath made sad witnessse of thy fathers fall,
Sith heauen thee deignes to hold in liuing state,
Long maist thou liue, and better thriue withall,
Then to thy lucklesse parents did befall:
Liue thou, and to thy mother dead attest,
That cleare she dide from blemish criminall;
Thy litle hands embrewd in bleeding brest,
Loe I for pledges leaue. So giue me leaue to rest.

[38]

With that, a deadly shrieke she forth did throw,
That through the wood reecchoed againe,
And after gaue a grone so deepe and low,
That seemd her tender hart was rent in twaine,
Or thrild with point of thorough piercing paine;
As gentle Hynd, whose sides with cruell steele
Through launched, forth her bleeding life does raine,
Whiles the sad pang approching she does feele,
Brayes out her latest breath, and vp her eyes doth seele.

[39]

Which when that warriour heard, dismounting strait
From his tall steed, he rusht into the thicke,
And soone arriued, where that sad pourtraict
Of death and labour lay, halfe dead, halfe quicke,
In whose white alabaster brest did sticke
A cruell knife, that made a griesly wound,
From which forth gusht a streme of gorebloud thick,
That all her goodly garments staind around,
And into a deepe sanguine dide the grassie ground.

[40]

Pittifull spectacle of deadly smart,
Beside a bubbling fountaine low she lay,
Which she increased with her bleeding hart,
And the cleane waues with purple gold did ray;
Als in her lap a louely babe did play
His cruell sport, in stead of sorrow dew;
For in her streaming blood he did embay
His litle hands, and tender ioyns embrew;
Pitifull spectacle, as euer eye did view.

[41]

Besides them both, vpon the soiled gras
The dead corse of an armed knight was spred,
Whose armour all with bloud besprinckled was;
His ruddie lips did smile, and rosy red
Did paint his chearefull cheekes, yet being ded,
Seemd to haue beene a goodly personage,
Now in his freshest flowre of lustie hed,
Fit to inflame faire Lady with loues rage,
But that fiers fate did crop the blossome of his age.

[42]

Whom when the good Sir *Guyon* did behold,
His hart gan wexe as starke, as marble stone,
And his fresh bloud did frieze with fearefull cold,
That all his senses seemd bereft attone,
At last his mightie ghost gan deepe to grone,
As Lyon grudging in his great disdaine,
Mournes inwardly, and makes to himselfe mone;
Till ruth and fraile affection did constraine,
His stout courage to stoupe, and shew his inward paine.

[43]

Out of her gored wound the cruell steele
He lightly snatcht, and did the floudgate stop
With his faire garment: then gan softly feele
Her feeble pulse, to proue if any drop
Of liuing bloud yet in her veines did hop;
Which when he felt to moue, he hoped faire
To call backe life to her forsaken shop;
So well he did her deadly wounds repaire,
That at the last she gan to breath out liuing aire.

[44]

Which he perceiuing greatly gan reioice,
And goodly counsell, that for wounded hart
Is meetest med'cine, tempred with sweet voice;
Ay me, deare Lady, which the image art
Of ruefull pittie, and impatient smart,
What direfull chance, armd with reuenging fate,
Or cursed hand hath plaid this cruell part,
Thus fowle to hasten your vntimely date;
Speake, O deare Lady speake: help neuer comes too late.

[45]

Therewith her dim eie-lids she vp gan reare,
On which the dreary death did sit, as sad
As lump of lead, and made darke cloudes appeare;
But when as him all in bright armour clad
Before her standing she espied had,
As one out of a deadly dreame affright,
She weakely started, yet she nothing drad:
Streight downe againe her selfe in great despight,
She groueling threw to ground, as hating life and light.

[46]

The gentle knight her soone with carefull paine
Vplifted light, and softly did vphold:
Thrice he her reard, and thrice she sunke againe,
Till he his armes about her sides gan fold,
And to her said; Yet if the stony cold
Haue not all seized on your frozen hart,
Let one word fall that may your grieffe vnfold,
And tell the secret of your mortall smart;
He oft findes present helpe, who does his grieffe impart.

[47]

Then casting vp a deadly looke, full low,
Shee sight from bottom of her wounded brest,
And after, many bitter throbs did throw
With lips full pale, and foltring tongue opprest,
These words she breathed forth from riuen chest;
Leaue, ah leaue off, what euer wight thou bee,
To let a wearie wretch from her dew rest,
And trouble dying soules tranquillitee.
Take not away now got, which none would giue to me.

[48]

Ah farre be it (said he) Deare dame fro mee,
To hinder soule from her desired rest,
Or hold sad life in long captiutee:
For, all I seeke, is but to haue redrest
The bitter pangs, that doth your heart infest.
Tell then, ô Lady tell, what fatall priefe
Hath with so huge misfortune you opprest?
That I may cast to compasse your reliefe,
Or die with you in sorrow, and partake your grieffe.

[49]

With feeble hands then stretched forth on hye,
As heauen accusing guiltie of her death,
And with dry drops congealed in her eye,
In these sad words she spent her vtmost breath:
Heare then, ô man, the sorrowes that vneath
My tongue can tell, so farre all sense they pas:
Loe this dead corpse, that lyes here vnderneath,
The gentlest knight, that euer on greene gras
Gay steed with spurs did prick, the good Sir Mortdant was:

[50]

Was, (ay the while, that he is not so now)
My Lord my loue; my deare Lord, my deare loue,
So long as heauens iust with equall brow,
Vouchsafed to behold vs from aboue,
One day when him high courage did emmoue,
As wont ye knights to seeke aduentures wilde,
He pricked forth, his puissant force to proue,
Me then he left enwombed of this child,
This lucklesse child, whom thus ye see with bloud defild.

[51]

Him fortun'd (hard fortune ye may ghesse)
To come, where vile *Acrasia* does wonne,
Acrasia a false enchaunteresse,
That many errant knights hath foule fordonne:
Within a wandring Island, that doth ronne
And stray in perilous gulfe, her dwelling is,
Faire Sir, if euer there ye trauell, shonne
The cursed land where many wend amis,
And know it by the name; it hight the *Bowre of blis*.

[52]

Her blisse is all in pleasure and delight,
Wherewith she makes her louers drunken mad;
And then with words and weeds of wondrous might,
On them she workes her will to vses bad:
My lifest Lord she thus beguiled had;
For he was flesh: (all flesh doth frailtie breed.)
Whom, when I heard to beene so ill bestad,
Weake wretch I wrapt my selfe in Palmers weed,
And cast to seeke him forth through daunger & great dread.

[53]

Now had faire *Cynthia* by euen tournes
Full measured three quarters of her yeare,
And thrice three times had fild her crooked hornes,
Whenas my wombe her burdein would forbear,
And bad me call *Lucina* to me neare.
Lucina came: a manchild forth I brought:
The woods, the Nymphes, my bowres, my midwiues weare,
Hard helpe at need. So deare thee babe I bought,
Yet nought too deare I deemd, while so my dear I sought.

[54]

Him so I sought, and so at last I found,
Where him that witch had thralled to her will,
In chaines of lust and lewd desires ybound,
And so transformed from his former skill,
That me he knew not, neither his owne ill;
Till through wise handling and faire gouernance,
I him recured to a better will,
Purged from drugs of foule intemperance:
Then meanes I gan devise for his deliuerance.

[55]

Which when the vile Enchaunteresse perceiu'd,
How that my Lord from her I would repriue,
With cup thus charmd, him parting she deceiu'd;
Sad verse, giue death to him that death does giue,
And losse of loue, to her that loues to liue,
So soone as Bacchus with the Nymphes does lincke,
So parted we, and on our iourney driue,
Till comming to this well, he stoupt to drinke:
The charme fulfilled, dead suddenly he downe did sincke.

[56]

Which, when I wretch, Not one word more she sayd
But breaking off, the end for want of breath,
And slyding soft, as downe to sleepe her layd,
And ended all her woe in quiet death.
That seeing good Sir *Guyon*, could vneath
From teares abstaine; for grieffe his hart did grate,
And from so heauie sight his head did wreath,
Accusing fortune, and too cruell fate,
Which plunged had faire Ladie in so wretched state.

[57]

Then turning to the Palmer said, Old syre,
Behold the image of mortalitie,
And feeble nature cloth'd with fleshly tyre,
When raging passion with fierce tyrannie
Robs reason of her due regalitie,
And makes it seruant to her basest part:
The strong it weakens with infirmitie,
And with bold furie armes the weakest hart;
The strong through pleasure soonest falles,
the weake through smart.

[58]

But temperance (said he) with golden squire
Betwixt them both can measure out a meane,
Neither to melt in pleasures whot desire,
Nor fry in hartlesse grieffe and dolefull teene.
Thrise happie man, who fares them both atweene:
But sith this wretched woman ouercome
Of anguish, rather then of crime hath beene,
Reserue her cause to her eternall doome,
And in the meane vouchsafe her honorable toombe.

[59]

Palmer (quoth he) death is an euill doome
To good and bad, the common Inne of rest;
But after death, the tryall is to come,
When best shall be to them, that liued best:
But both alike, when death hath both supprest,
Religious reuerence doth buriall teene,
Which who so wants, wants so much of his rest:
For all so great shame after death I weene,

As selfe to dyen bad, vnburied bad to beene.

[60]

So, both agree their bodies to engraue;
The great earthes wombe they open to the sky,
And with sad Cypresse seemely it embraue,
Then couering with a clod their closed eye,
They lay therein those corses tenderly,
And bid them sleepe in euerlasting peace.
But ere they did their vtmost obsequy,
Sir *Guyon* more affection to increace,
Bynempt a sacred vow, which none should aye release.

[61]

The dead knights sword out of his sheath he drew,
With which he cut a locke of all their heare,
Which medling with their bloud and earth, he threw
Into the graue, and gan deuoutly sweare;
Such and such euill God on *Guyon* reare,
And worse and worse young Orphane be thy paine,
If I or thou dew vengeance doe forbear,
Till guiltie bloud her guerdon doe obtaine:
So shedding many teares, they closd the earth againe.

[Original content ©2018 by Dirk Jol.]