

THE FIFTH
BOOKE OF THE
FAERIE QVEENE.

Contayning,
THE LEGEND OF ARTEGALL
OR
OF IUSTICE.

[1]

S O oft as I with state of present time,
The image of the antique world compare,
When as mans age was in his freshest prime.
And the first blossome of faire vertue bare,
Such oddes I finde twixt those, and these which are,
As that, through long continuance of his course,
Me seemes the world is runne quite out of square,
From the first point of his appointed sourse,
And being once amisse growes daily wourse and wourse.

[2]

For from the golden age, that first was named,
It's now at earst become a stonie one;
And men themselues, the which at first were framed
Of earthly mould, and form'd of flesh and bone,
Are now transformed into hardest stone:
Such as behind their backs (so backward bred)
Were throwne by *Pyrrha* and *Deucalione*:
And if then those may any worse be red,
They into that ere long will be degenerated.

[3]

Let none then blame me, if in discipline
Of vertue and of ciuill vses lore,
I doe not forme them to the common line
Of present dayes, which are corrupted sore,
But to the antique vse, which was of yore,
When good was onely for it selfe desyred,
And all men sought their owne, and none no more;
When Iustice was not for most meed outhyred,

But simple Truth did rayne, and was of all admyred.

[4]

For that which all men then did vertue call,
Is now cald vice; and that which vice was hight,
Is now hight vertue, and so vs'd of all:
Right now is wrong, and wrong that was is right,
As all things else in time are chaunged quight.
Ne wonder; for the heauens reuolution
Is wandred farre from, where it first was pight,
And so doe make contrarie constitution
Of all this lower world, toward his dissolution.

[5]

For who so list into the heauens looke,
And search the courses of the rowling spheares,
Shall find that from the point, where they first tooke
Their setting forth, in these few thousand yeares
They all are wandred much; that plaine appeares.
For that same golden fleecy Ram, which bore
Phrixus and *Helle* from their stepdames feares,
Hath now forgot, where he was plast of yore,
And shouldred hath the Bull, which fayre *Europa* bore.

[6]

And eke the Bull hath with his bow-bent horne
So hardly butted those two twinnes of *Ioue*,
That they haue crusht the Crab, and quite him borne
Into the great *Nemoean* lions groue.
So now all range, and doe at randon roue
Out of their proper places farre away,
And all this world with them amisse doe moue,
And all his creatures from their course astray,
Till they arriue at their last ruinous decay.

[7]

Ne is that same great glorious lampe of light,
That doth enlumine all these lesser fyres,
In better case, ne keepes his course more right,
But is miscaried with the other Spheres.
For since the terme of fourteene hundred yeres,
That learned *Ptolomae* his hight did take,
He is declyned from that marke of theirs,

Nigh thirtie minutes to the Southerne lake;
That makes me feare in time he will vs quite forsake.

[8]

And if to those Aegyptian wisards old,
Which in Star-read were wont haue best insight,
Faith may be giuen, it is by them told,
That since the time they first tooke the Sunnes hight,
Foure times his place he shifted hath in sight,
And twice hath risen, where he now doth West,
And wested twice, where he ought rise aright.
But most is *Mars* amisse of all the rest,
And next to him old *Saturne*, that was wont be best.

[9]

For during *Saturnes* ancient raigne it's sayd,
That all the world with goodnesse did abound:
All loued vertue, no man was affrayd
Of force, ne fraud in wight was to be found:
No warre was knowne, no dreadfull trompets sound,
Peace vniuersall rayn'd mongst men and beasts,
And all things freely grew out of the ground:
Iustice sate high ador'd with solemne feasts,
And to all people did diuide her dred beheasts.

[10]

Most sacred vertue she of all the rest,
Resembling God in his imperiall might;
Whose soueraine powre is herein most exprest,
That both to good and bad he dealeth right,
And all his workes with Iustice hath bedight.
That powre he also doth to Princes lend,
And makes them like himselfe in glorious sight,
To sit in his owne seate, his cause to end,
And rule his people right, as he doth recommend.

[11]

Dread Souerayne Goddess, that doest highest sit
In seate of iudgement, in th'Almighties place,
And with magnificke might and wondrous wit
Doest to thy people righteous doome aread,
That furthest Nations filles with awfull dread,
Pardon the boldnesse of thy basest thrall,

That dare discourse of so diuine a read,
As thy great iustice praysed ouer all:
The instrument whereof loe here thy *Artegall*.

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