

Cant. III.

*The spousals of faire Florimell,
where turney many knights:
There Braggadocio is vncas'd
in all the Ladies sights.*

[1]

After long stormes and tempests ouerblowne,
The sunne at length his ioyous face doth cleare:
So when as fortune all her spight hath showne,
Some blisfull houres at last must needes appeare;
Else should afflicted wights oftimes despeire.
So comes it now to *Florimell* by tourne,
After long sorrowes suffered whyleare,
In which captiu'd she many moneths did mourne,
To tast of ioy, and to wont pleasures to retourne.

[2]

Who being freed from *Proteus* cruell band
By *Marinell*, was vnto him affide,
And by him brought againe to Faerie land;
Where he her spous'd, and made his ioyous bride.
The time and place was blazed farre and wide;
And solemne feasts and giusts ordain'd therefore.
To which there did resort from euery side
Of Lords and Ladies infinite great store;
Ne any Knight was absent, that braue courage bore.

[3]

To tell the glorie of the feast that day,
The goodly seruice, the deuicefull sights,
The bridegromes state, the brides most rich aray,
The pride of Ladies, and the worth of knights,
The royall banquets, and the rare delights
Were worke fit for an Herauld, not for me:
But for so much as to my lot here lights,
That with this present treatise doth agree,
True vertue to aduance, shall here recounted bee.

[4]

When all men had with full satietie
Of meates and drinke their appetites suffiz'd,

To deedes of armes and prooфе of cheualrie
They gan themselues addresse, full rich aguiz'd,
As each one had his furnitures deuiz'd.
And first of all issu'd Sir *Marinell*,
And with him sixe knights more, which enterpriz'd
To chalenge all in right of *Florimell*,
And to maintaine, that she all others did excell.

[5]

The first of them was hight Sir *Orimont*,
A noble Knight, and tride in hard assayes:
The second had to name Sir *Bellisont*,
But second vnto none in prowesse prayse;
The third was *Brunell*, famous in his dayes;
The fourth *Ecastor*, of exceeding might;
The fift *Armeddan*, skild in louely layes;
The sixth was *Lansack*, a redoubted Knight:
All sixe well seene in armes, and prou'd in many a fight.

[6]

And them against came all that list to giust,
From euery coast and countrie vnder sunne:
None was debard, but all had leave that lust.
The trompets sound; then all together ronne.
Full many deedes of armes that day were donne,
And many knights vnhorst, and many wounded,
As fortune fell; yet litle lost or wonne:
But all that day the greatest prayse redounded
To *Marinell*, whose name the Heralds loud resounded.

[7]

The second day, so soone as morrow light
Appear'd in heauen, into the field they came,
And there all day continew'd cruell fight,
With diuers fortune fit for such a game,
In which all stroue with perill to winne fame.
Yet whether side was victor, note be ghest:
But at the last the trompets did proclaim
That *Marinell* that day deserued best.
So they disparted were, and all men went to rest.

[8]

The third day came, that should due tryall lend

Of all the rest, and then this warlike crew
Together met, of all to make an end.
There *Marinell* great deeds of armes did shew;
And through the thickest like a Lyon flew,
Rashing off helmes, and ryuing plates a sonder,
That euery one his daunger did eschew.
So terribly his dreadfull strokes did thonder,
That all men stood amaz'd, & at his might did wonder.

[9]

But what on earth can alwayes happie stand?
The greater prowesse greater perils find.
So farre he past amongst his enemies band,
That they haue him enclosed so behind,
As by no meanes he can himselfe outwind.
And now perforce they haue him prisoner taken;
And now they doe with captiue bands him bind;
And now they lead him thence, of all forsaken,
Vnlesse some succour had in time him ouertaken.

[10]

It fortun'd whylest they were thus ill beset,
Sir *Artegall* into the Tilt-yard came,
With *Braggadocio*, whom he lately met
Upon the way, with that his snowy Dame.
Where when he vnderstood by common fame,
What euill hap to *Marinell* betid,
He much was mou'd at so vnworthie shame,
And streight that boaster prayd, with whom he rid,
To change his shield with him, to be the better hid.

[11]

So forth he went, and soone them ouer hent,
Where they were leading *Marinell* away,
Whom he assayld with dreadlesse hardiment,
And forst the burden of their prize to stay.
They were an hundred knights of that array;
Of which th'one halfe vpon himselfe did set,
Th'other stayd behind to gard the pray.
But he ere long the former fiftie bet;
And from th'other fiftie soone the prisoner fet.

[12]

So backe he brought Sir *Marinell* againe;
Whom hauing quickly arm'd againe anew,
They both together ioyned might and maine,
To set afresh on all the other crew.
Whom with sore hauocke soone they ouerthrew,
And chaced quite out of the field, that none
Against them durst his head to perill shew.
So were they left Lords of the field alone:
So *Marinell* by him was rescu'd from his fone.

[13]

Which when he had perform'd, then backe againe
To *Braggadocio* did his shield restore:
Who all this while behind him did remaine,
Keeping there close with him in pretious store
That his false Ladie, as ye heard afore.
Then did the trumpets sound, and Judges rose,
And all these knights, which that day armour bore,
Came to the open hall, to listen whose
The honour of the prize should be adiudg'd by those.

[14]

And thether also came in open sight
Fayre *Florimell*, into the common hall,
To greet his guerdon vnto euery knight,
And best to him, to whom the best should fall.
Then for that stranger knight they loud did call,
To whom that day they should the girlond yield.
Who came not forth: but for Sir *Artegall*
Came *Braggadocio*, and did shew his shield,
Which bore the Sunne brode blazed in a golden field.

[15]

The sight whereof did all with gladnesse fill:
So vnto him they did addeeme the prise
Of all that Tryumph. Then the trumpets shrill
Don Braggadochios name resounded thrise:
So courage lent a cloke to cowardise.
And then to him came fayrest *Florimell*,
And goodly gan to greet his braue emprise,
And thousand thankes him yeeld, that had so well
Approu'd that day, that she all others did excell.

[16]

To whom the boaster, that all knights did blot,
With proud disdaine did scornefull answere make;
That what he did that day, he did it not
For her, but for his owne deare Ladies sake,
Whom on his perill he did vndertake,
Both her and eke all others to excell:
And further did vncomely speaches crake.
Much did his words the gentle Ladie quell,
And turn'd aside for shame to heare, what he did tell.

[17]

Then forth he brought his snowy *Florimele*,
Whom *Trompart* had in keeping there beside,
Couvered from peoples gazement with a vele.
Whom when discouered they had throughly eide,
With great amazement they were stupefide;
And said, that surely *Florimell* it was,
Or if it were not *Florimell* so tride,
That *Florimell* her selfe she then did pas.
So feeble skill of perfect things the vulgar has.

[18]

Which when as *Marinell* beheld likewise,
He was therewith exceedingly dismayd;
Ne wist he what to thinke, or to deuise,
But like as one, whom feends had made affrayd,
He long astonisht stood, ne ought he sayd,
Ne ought he did, but with fast fixed eies
He gazed still vpon that snowy mayd;
Whom euer as he did the more auize,
The more to be true *Florimell* he did surmize.

[19]

As when two sunnes appeare in the azure skye,
Mounted in *Phoebus* charet fierie bright,
Both darting forth faire beames to each mans eye,
And both adorn'd with lampes of flaming light,
All that behold so strange prodigious sight,
Not knowing natures worke, nor what to weene,
Are rapt with wonder, and with rare affright.
So stood Sir *Marinell*, when he had seene
The semblant of this false by his faire beauties Queene.

[20]

All which when *Artegall*, who all this while
Stood in the preasse close couered, well aduewed,
And saw that boasters pride and gracelesse guile,
He could no longer beare, but forth issewed,
And vnto all himselfe there open shewed,
And to the boaster said; Thou losell base,
That hast with borrowed plumes thy selfe endewed,
And others worth with leasings doest deface,
When they are all restor'd, thou shalt rest in disgrace.

[21]

That shield, which thou doest beare, was it indeed,
Which this dayes honour sau'd to *Marinell*;
But not that arme, nor thou the man I reed,
Which didst that seruice vnto *Florimell*.
For proofe shew forth thy sword, and let it tell,
What strokes, what dreadfull stoure it stird this day:
Or shew the wounds, which vnto thee befell;
Or shew the sweat, with which thou diddest sway
So sharpe a battell, that so many did dismay.

[22]

But this the sword, which wrought those cruell stounds,
And this the arme, the which that shield did beare,
And these the signes, (so shewed forth his wounds)
By which that glorie gotten doth appeare.
As for this Ladie, which he sheweth here,
Is not (I wager) *Florimell* at all;
But some fayre Franion, fit for such a fere,
That by misfortune in his hand did fall.
For proofe whereof, he bad them *Florimell* forth call.

[23]

So forth the noble Ladie was ybrought,
Adorn'd with honor and all comely grace:
Whereto her bashfull shamefastnesse ywrought
A great increase in her faire blushing face;
As roses did with lillies interlace.
For of those words, the which that boaster threw,
She inly yet conceiued great disgrace.
Whom when as all the people such did vew,
They shouted loud, and signes of gladnesse all did shew.

[24]

Then did he set her by that snowy one,
Like the true saint beside the image set,
Of both their beauties to make paragone,
And triall, whether should the honor get.
Streight way so soone as both together met,
Th'enchanted Damzell vanisht into nought:
Her snowy substance melted as with heat,
Ne of that goodly hew remayned ought,
But th'emptie girdle, which about her wast was wrought.

[25]

As when the daughter of *Thaumantes* faire,
Hath in a watry cloud displayed wide
Her goodly bow, which paints the liquid ayre;
That all men wonder at her colours pride;
All suddenly, ere one can looke aside,
The glorious picture vanisheth away,
Ne any token doth thereof abide:
So did this Ladies goodly forme decay,
And into nothing goe, ere one could it bewray.

[26]

Which when as all that present were, beheld,
They stricken were with great astonishment,
And their faint harts with senselesse horrour queld,
To see the thing, that seem'd so excellent,
So stolen from their fancies wonderment;
That what of it became, none vnderstood.
And *Braggadocio* selfe with dreriment
So daunted was in his despeyring mood,
That like a lifelesse corse immoueable he stood.

[27]

But *Artegall* that golden belt vptooke,
The which of all her spoyle was onely left;
Which was not hers, as many it mistooke,
But *Florimells* owne girdle, from her reft,
While she was flying, like a weary weft,
From that foule monster, which did her compell
To perils great; which he vnbuckling eft,
Presented to the fayrest *Florimell*;
Who round about her tender wast it fitted well.

[28]

Full many Ladies often had assayd,
About their middles that faire belt to knit;
And many a one suppos'd to be a mayd:
Yet it to none of all their loynes would fit,
Till *Florimell* about her fastned it.
Such power it had, that to no womans wast
By any skill or labour it would sit,
Vnlesse that she were continent and chast,
But it would lose or breake, that many had disgrast.

[29]

Whilst thus they busied were bout *Florimell*,
And boastfull *Braggadocio* to defame,
Sir *Guyon* as by fortune then befell,
Forth from the thickest preasse of people came,
His owne good steed, which he had stolne, to clame;
And th'one hand seizing on his golden bit,
With th'other drew his sword: for with the same
He ment the thiefe there deadly to haue smit:
And had he not bene held, he nought had fayld of it.

[30]

Thereof great hurly burly moued was
Throughout the hall, for that same warlike horse.
For *Braggadocio* would not let him pas;
And *Guyon* would him algates haue perorse,
Or it approue vpon his carriorn corse.
Which troublous stirre when *Artegall* perceiued,
He nigh them drew to stay th'auengers forse,
And gan inquire, how was that steed bereaued,
Whether by might extort, or else by slight deceaued.

[31]

Who all that piteous storie, which befell
About that wofull couple, which were slaine,
And their young bloodie babe to him gan tell;
With whom whiles he did in the wood remaine,
His horse purloyned was by subtil traine:
For which he chalenged the thiefe to fight.
But he for nought could him thereto constraine.
For as the death he hated such despight,
And rather had to lose, then trie in armes his right.

[32]

Which *Artegall* well hearing, though no more
By law of armes there neede ones right to trie,
As was the wont of warlike knights of yore,
Then that his foe should him the field denie,
Yet further right by tokens to descrie,
He askt, what priuie tokens he did beare.
If that (said *Guyon*) may you satisfie,
Within his mouth a blacke spot doth appeare,
Shapt like a horses shoe, who list to seeke it there.

[33]

Whereof to make due tryall, one did take
The horse in hand, within his mouth to looke:
But with his heeles so sorely he him strake,
That all his ribs he quite in peeces broke,
That neuer word from that day forth he spoke.
Another that would seeme to haue more wit,
Him by the bright embrodered hedstall tooke:
But by the shoulder him so sore he bit,
That he him maymed quite, and all his shoulder split.

[34]

Ne he his mouth would open vnto wight,
Vntill that *Guyon* selfe vnto him spake,
And called *Brigadore* (so was he hight)
Whose voice so soone as he did vndertake,
Eftsoones he stood as still as any stake,
And suffred all his secret marke to see:
And when as he him nam'd, for ioy he brake
His bands, and follow'd him with gladfull glee,
And friskt, and flong aloft, and louted low on knee.

[35]

Thereby Sir *Artegall* did plaine areed,
That vnto him the horse belong'd, and sayd;
Lo there Sir *Guyon*, take to you the steed,
As he with golden saddle is arayd;
And let that losell, plainly now displayd,
Hence fare on foot, till he an horse haue gayned.
But the proud boaster gan his doome vpbrayd,
And him reuil'd, and rated, and disdayned,
That iudgement so vniust against him had ordayneid.

[36]

Much was the knight incenst with his lewd word,
To haue reuenged that his vileny;
And thrise did lay his hand vpon his sword,
To haue him slaine, or dearely doen aby.
But *Guyon* did his choler pacify,
Saying, Sir knight, it would dishonour bee
To you, that are our iudge of equity,
To wreake your wrath on such a carle as hee
It's punishment enough, that all his shame doe see.

[37]

So did he mitigate Sir *Artegall*,
But *Talus* by the backe the boaster hent,
And drawing him out of the open hall,
Upon him did inflict this punishment.
First he his beard did shauie, and fowly shent:
Then from him reft his shield, and it renuerst,
And blotted out his armes with falsehood blent,
And himselfe baffulde, and his armes vnherst,
And broke his sword in twaine, and all his armour sperst.

[38]

The whiles his guilefull groome was fled away:
But vaine it was to thinke from him to flie.
Who ouertaking him did disaray,
And all his face deform'd with infamie,
And out of court him scourged openly.
So ought all faytours, that true knighthood shame,
And armes dishonour with base villanie,
From all braue knights be banisht with defame:
For oft their lewdnes blotteth good deserts with blame.

[39]

Now when these counterfeits were thus vncased
Out of the foreside of their forgerie,
And in the sight of all men cleane disgraced,
All gan to iest and gibbe full merilie
At the remembrance of their knauerie.
Ladies can laugh at Ladies, Knights at Knights,
To thinke with how great vaunt of brauerie
He them abused, through his subtill slightes,
And what a glorious shew he made in all their sights.

[40]

There leue we them in pleasure and repast,
Spending their ioyous dayes and gladfull nights,
And taking vsurie of time forepast,
With all deare delices and rare delights,
Fit for such Ladies and such louely knights:
And turne were here to this faire furrowes end
Our wearie yokes, to gather fresher sprights,
That when as time to *Artegall* shall tend,
We on his first aduenture may him forward send.

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