

Cant. I.

*Calidore saues from Maleffort,
A Damzell vsed vylde:
Doth vanquish Crudor, and doth make
Briana wexe more mylde.*

[1]

OF Court it seemes, men Courtesie doe call,
For that it there most vseth to abound;
And well beseemeth that in Princes hall
That vertue should be plentifully found,
Which of all goodly manners is the ground,
And roote of ciuill conuersation.
Right so in Faery court it did redound,
Where curteous Knights and Ladies most did won
Of all on earth, and made a matchlesse paragon.

[2]

But mongst them all was none more courteous Knight,
Then *Calidore*, beloued ouer all,
In whom it seemes, that gentlenesse of spright
And manners mylde were planted naturall;
To which he adding comely guize withall,
And gracious speach, did steale mens hearts away.
Nathlesse thereto he was full stout and tall,
And well approu'd in batteilous affray,
That him did much renowme, and far his fame display.

[3]

Ne was there Knight, ne was there Lady found
In Faery court, but him did deare embrace,
For his faire vsage and conditions sound,
The which in all mens liking gayned place,
And with the greatest purchast greatest grace:
Which he could wisely vse, and well apply,
To please the best, and th'euill to embase.
For he loathd leasing, and base flattery,
And loued simple truth and stedfast houesty.

[4]

And now he was in trauell on his way,
Vppon an hard aduenture sore bestad,

Whenas by chaunce he met vpon a day
With *Artegall*, returning yet halfe sad
From his late conquest, which he gotten had.
Who whenas each of other had a sight,
They knew them selues, and both their persons rad:
When *Calidore* thus first; Haile noblest Knight
Of all this day on ground, that breathen liuing spright.

[5]

Now tell, if please you, of the good successe,
Which ye haue had in your late enterprize.
To whom Sir *Artegall* gan to expresse
His whole exploite, and valorous emprize,
In order as it did to him arize.
Now happy man (sayd then Sir *Calidore*)
Which haue so goodly, as ye can deuize,
Atchieu'd so hard a quest, as few before;
That shall you most renowned make for euermore.

[6]

But where ye ended haue, now I begin
To tread an endlesse trace, withouten guyde,
Or good direction, how to enter in,
Or how to issue forth in waies vntryde,
In perils strange, in labours long and wide,
In which although good Fortune me befall,
Yet shall it not by none be testifyde.
What is that quest (quoth then Sir *Artegall*)
That you into such perils presently doth call?

[7]

The Blattant Beast (quoth he) I doe pursew,
And through the world incessantly doe chase,
Till I him ouertake, or else subdew:
Yet know I not or how, or in what place
To find him out, yet still I forward trace.
What is that Blattant Beast? (then he replide)
It is a Monster bred of hellishe race,
(Then answerd he) which often hath annoyd
Good Knights and Ladies true, and many else destroyd.

[8]

Of *Cerberus* whilome he was begot,

And fell Chimaera in her darkesome den,
Through fowle commixture of his filthy blot;
Where he was fostred long in *Stygian* fen,
Till he to perfect ripenesse grew, and then
Into this wicked world he forth was sent,
To be the plague and scourge of wretched men:
Whom with vile tongue and venemous intent
He sore doth wound, and bite, and cruelly torment.

[9]

Then since the saluage Island I did leaue
Sayd *Artegall*, I such a Beast did see,
The which did seeme a thousand tongues to haue,
That all in spight and malice did agree,
With which he bayd and loudly barkt at mee,
As if that he attonce would me deuoure.
But I that knew my selfe from perill free,
Did nought regard his malice nor his powre,
But he the more his wicked poyson forth did poure.

[10]

That surely is that Beast (saide *Calidore*)
Which I pursue, of whom I am right glad
To heare these tidings, which of none afore
Through all my weary trauell I haue had:
Yet now some hope your words vnto me add.
Now God you speed (quoth then *Sir Artégall*)
And keepe your body from the daunger drad:
For ye haue much adoe to deale withall,
So both tooke goodly leaue, and parted seuerall.

[11]

Sir Calidore thence trauelled not long,
When as by chaunce a comely Squire he found,
That thorough some more mighty enemies wrong,
Both hand and foote vnto a tree was bound:
Who seeing him from farre, with piteous sound
Of his shrill cries him called to his aide.
To whom approching, in that painefull stound
When he him saw, for no demaunds he staide,
But first him losde, and afterwards thus to him saide.

[12]

Vnhappy Squire, what hard mishap thee brought
Into this bay of perill and disgrace?
What cruell hand thy wretched thraldome wrought,
And thee captuyed in this shamefull place?
To whom he answerd thus; My haplesse case
Is not occasiond through my misdesert,
But through misfortune, which did me abase
Vnto this shame, and my young hope subuert,
Ere that I in her guilefull traines was well expert.

[13]

Not farre from hence, vpon yond rocky hill,
Hard by a streight there stands a castle strong,
Which doth obserue a custome lewd and ill,
And it hath long mayntaind with mighty wrong:
For may no Knight nor Lady passe along
That way, (and yet they needs must passe that way,)
By reason of the streight, and rocks among,
But they that Ladies lockes doe shaue away,
And that knights berd for toll, which they for passage pay

[14]

A shamefull vse as euer I did heare,
Sayd *Calidore*, and to be ouerthrowne.
But by what meanes did they at first it reare,
And for what cause, tell if thou haue it knowne.
Sayd then that Squire: The Lady which doth owne
This Castle, is by name *Briana* hight.
Then which a prouder Lady liueth none:
She long time hath deare lou'd a doughty Knight,
And sought to win his loue by all the meanes she might.

[15]

His name is Crudor, who through high disdaine
And proud despight of his selfe pleasing mynd,
Refused hath to yeeld her loue againe,
Vntill a Mantle she for him doe fynd,
With beards of Knights and locks of Ladies lynd.
Which to prouide, she hath this Castle dight,
And therein hath a Seneschall assynd,
Cald *Maleffort*, a man of mickle might,
Who executes her wicked will, with worse despight.

[16]

He this same day, as I that way did come
With a faire Damzell, my beloued deare,
In execution of her lawlesse doome,
Did set vppon vs flying both for feare:
For little bootes against him hand to reare.
Me first he tooke, vnhabable to withstond;
And whiles he her pursued euery where,
Till his returne vnto this tree he bond:
Ne wote I surely, whether her he yet haue fond.

[17]

Thus whiles they spake, they heard a ruefull shrieke
Of one loud crying, which they streight way ghest,
That it was she, the which for helpe did seeke.
Tho looking vp vnto the cry to lest,
They saw that Carle from farre, with hand vnblest
Hayling that mayden by the yellow heare,
That all her garments from her snowy brest,
And from her head her lockes he nigh did teare,
Ne would he spare for pittie, nor refraine for feare.

[18]

Which haynous sight when *Calidore* beheld,
Eftsoones he loosd that Squire, and so him left,
With hearts dismay and inward dolour queld,
For to pursue that villaine, which had reft
That piteous spoile by so iniurious theft.
Whom ouertaking, loude to him he cryde;
Leaue faytor quickely that misgotten weft
To him, that hath it better iustifyde,
And turne thee soone to him, of whom thou art defyde.

[19]

Who hearkning to that voice, him selfe vpreard,
And seeing him so fiercely towardes make,
Against him stoutly ran, as nought afeard,
But rather more enrag'd for those words sake;
And with sterne count'naunce thus vnto him spake.
Art thou the caytiue, that defyest me,
And for this Mayd, whose party thou doest take,
Wilt giue thy beard, though it but little bee?
Yet shall it not her lockes for raunsome fro me free.

[20]

With that he fiercely at him flew, and layd
On hideous strokes with most importune might,
That oft he made him stagger as vnstayd,
And oft recuile to shunne his sharpe despight.
But *Calidore*, that was well skild in fight,
Him long forbore, and still his spirite spar'd,
Lying in waite, how him he damadge might.
But when he felt him shrinke, and come to ward,
He greater grew, and gan to driue at him more hard.

[21]

Like as a water streame, whose swelling sourse
Shall driue a Mill, within strong bancks is pent,
And long restrayned of his ready course;
So soone as passage is vnto him lent,
Breakes forth, and makes his way more violent.
Such was the fury of Sir *Calidore*,
When once he felt his foeman to relent;
He fiercely him pursu'd, and pressed sore,
Who as he still decayd, so he encreased more.

[22]

The heauy burden of whose dreadfull might
When as the Carle no longer could sustaine,
His heart gan faint, and streight he tooke his flight
Toward the Castle, where if need constraine,
His hope of refuge vsed to remaine.
Whom *Calidore* perceiuing fast to flie,
He him pursu'd and chaced through the plaine,
That he for dread of death gan loude to crie
Vnto the ward, to open to him hastilie.

[23]

They from the wall him seeing so aghast,
The gate soone opened to receiue him in,
But *Calidore* did follow him so fast,
That euen in the Porch he him did win,
And cleft his head asunder to his chin.
The carkarsse tumbling downe within the dore,
Did choke the entraunce with a lump of sin,
That it could not be shut, whilest *Calidore*
Did enter in, and slew the Porter on the flore.

[24]

With that the rest, the which the Castle kept,
About him flockt, and hard at him did lay;
But he them all from him full lightly swept,
As doth a Steare, in heat of sommers day.
With his long taile the bryzes brush away.
Thence passing forth, into the hall he came,
Where of the Lady selfe in sad dismay
He was ymett, who with vncomely shame
Gan him salute, and fowle vpbrayd with faulty blame.

[25]

False traytor Knight, (sayd she) no Knight at all,
But scorne of armes that hast with guilty hand
Murdred my men, and slaine my Seneschall;
Now comest thou to rob my house vnmand,
And spoile my selfe, that can not thee withstand?
Yet doubt thou not, but that some better Knight
Then thou, that shall thy treason vnderstand,
Will it auenge, and pay thee with thy right:
And if none do, yet shame shal thee with shame requight

[26]

Much was the Knight abashed at that word;
Yet answerd thus; Not vnto me the shame,
But to the shamefull doer it afford.
Bloud is no blemish; for it is no blame
To punish those, that doe deserue the same;
But they that breake bands of ciuilitie,
And wicked customes make, those doe defame
Both noble armes and gentle curtesie.
No greater shame to man then inhumanitie.

[27]

Then doe your selfe, for dread of shame, forgoe
This euill manner, which ye here maintaine,
And doe in stead thereof mild curt'sie showe
To all, that passe. That shall you glory gaine
More then his loue, which thus ye seeke t'obtaine.
Wherewith all full of wrath, she thus replyde;
Vile recreant, know that I doe much disdain
Thy courteous lore, that doest my loue deride,
Who scornes thy ydle scoffe, and bids thee be defyde.

[28]

To take defiaunce at a Ladies word
(Quoth he) I hold it no indignity;
But were he here, that would it with his sword
Abett, perhaps he mote it deare aby.
Cowherd (quoth she) were not, that thou wouldst fly,
Ere thou doe come, he should be soone in place.
If I doe so, (sayd he) then liberty
I leaue to you, for aye me to disgrace
With all those shames, that erst ye spake me to deface.

[29]

With that a Dwarfè she cald to her in hast,
And taking from her hand a ring of gould,
A priuy token, which betweene them past,
Bad him to flie with all the speed he could,
To *Crudor*, and desire him that he would
Vouchsafe to reskue her against a Knight,
Who through stro~g powre had now her self in hould,
Hauing late slaine her Seneschall in fight,
And all her people murdred with outrageous might.

[30]

The Dwarfè his way did hast, and went all night;
But *Calidore* did with her there abyde
The comming of that so much threatned Knight,
Where that discourteous Dame with scornfull pryde,
And fowle entreaty him indignifyde,
That yron heart it hardly could sustaine:
Yet he, that could his wrath full wisely guyde,
Did well endure her womanish disdaine,
And did him selfe from fraile impatience refraine.

[31]

The morrow next, before the lampe of light,
Aboue the earth vpreard his flaming head,
The Dwarfè, which bore that message to her knight,
Brought aunswere backe, that ere he tasted bread,
He would her succour, and aliuè or dead
Her foe deliuer vp into her hand:
Therefore he wild her doe away all dread;
And that of him she mote assured stand,
He sent to her his basenet, as a faithfull band.

[32]

Thereof full blyth the Lady streight became,
And gan t'augment her bitternesse much more:
Yet no whit more appalled for the same,
Ne ought dismayed was Sir *Calidore*,
But rather did more chearefull seeme therefore.
And hauing soone his armes about him dight,
Did issue forth, to meete his foe afore;
Where long he stayed not, when as a Knight
He spide come pricking on with al his powre and might.

[33]

Well weend he streight, that he should be the same,
Which tooke in hand her quarrell to maintaine;
Ne stayd to aske if it were he by name,
But coucht his speare, and ran at him amaine.
They bene ymett in midst of the plaine,
With so fell fury, and dispiteous forse,
That neither could the others stroke sustaine,
But rudely rowld to ground both man and horse,
Neither of other taking pitty nor remorse.

[34]

But *Calidore* vprose againe full light,
Whiles yet his foe lay fast in sencelesse sound,
Yet would he not him hurt, although he might:
For shame he weend a sleeping wight to wound.
But when *Briana* saw that drery stound,
There where she stood vpon the Castle wall,
She deem'd him sure to haue bene dead on ground,
And made such piteous mourning therewithall,
That from the battlements she ready seem'd to fall.

[35]

Nathlesse at length him selfe he did vpreare
In lustlesse wise, as if against his will,
Ere he had slept his fill, he wakened were,
And gan to stretch his limbs; which feeling ill
Of his late fall, a while he rested still:
But when he saw his foe before in vew,
He shooke off luskishnesse, and courage chill
Kindling a fresh, gan battell to renew,
To proue if better foote then horsebacke would ensew.

[36]

There then began a fearefull cruell fray
Betwixt them two, for maystery of might.
For both were wondrous practicke in that play,
And passing well expert in single fight,
And both inflam'd with furious despight:
Which as it still encreast, so still increast
Their cruell strokes and terrible affright;
Ne once for ruth their rigour they releast,
Ne once to breath a while their angers tempest ceast.

[37]

Thus long they trac'd and trauerst to and fro,
And tryde all waies, how each mote entrance make
Into the life of his malignant foe;
They hew'd their helmes, and plates asunder brake,
As they had potshares bene; for nought mote slake
Their greedy vengeaunces, but goary blood,
That at the last like to a purple lake
Of bloody gore congeal'd about them stood,
Which from their riuen sides forth gushed like a flood.

[38]

At length it chaunst, that both their hands on hie,
At once did heaue, with all their powre and might,
Thinking the vtmost of their force to trie,
And proue the finall fortune of the fight:
But *Calidore*, that was more quicke of sight,
And nimbler handed, then hisemie,
Preuented him before his stroke could light,
And on the helmet smote him formerlie,
That made him stoupe to ground with meeke humilitie.

[39]

And ere he could recouer foot againe,
He following that faire aduantage fast,
His stroke redoubled with such might and maine,
That him vpon the ground he groueling cast;
And leaping to him light, would haue vnlast
His Helme, to make vnto his vengeance way.
Who seeing, in what daunger he was plast,
Cryde out, Ah mercie Sir, doe me not slay,
But saue my life, which lot before your foot doth lay.

[40]

With that his mortall hand a while he stayd,
And hauing somewhat calm'd his wrathfull heat
With goodly patience, thus he to him sayd;
And is the boast of that proud Ladies threat,
That menaced me from the field to beat,
Now brought to this? By this now may ye learne,
Strangers no more so rudely to intreat,
But put away proud looke, and vsage sterne,
The which shal nought to you but foule dishonor yearne.

[41]

For nothing is more blamefull to a knight,
That court'sie doth as well as armes professe,
How euer strong and fortunate in fight,
Then the reproch of pride and crueltie.
In vaine he seeketh others to suppressse,
Who hath not learnd him selfe first to subdew:
All flesh is frayle, and full of ficklenesse,
Subiect to fortunes chance, still chaunging new;
What haps to day to me, to morrow may to you.

[42]

Who will not mercie vnto others shew,
How can he mercy euer hope to haue?
To pay each with his owne is right and dew.
Yet since ye mercie now doe need to craue,
I will it graunt, your hopelesse life to saue;
With these conditions, which I will propound:
First, that ye better shall your selfe behaue
Vnto all errant knights, whereso on ground;
Next that ye Ladies ayde in euery stead and stound.

[43]

The wretched man, that all this while did dwell
In dread of death, his heasts did gladly heare,
And promist to performe his precept well,
And whatsoever else he would requere.
So suffring him to rise, he made him sweare
By his owne sword, and by the crosse thereon,
To take *Briana* for his louing fere,
Withouten dowre or composition;
But to release his former foule condition.

[44]

All which accepting, and with faithfull oth
Bynding himselfe most firmly to obey,
He vp arose, how euer liefè or loth,
And swore to him true fealtie for aye.
Then forth he cald from sorrowfull dismay
The sad *Briana*, which all this beheld:
Who comming forth yet full of late affray,
Sir *Calidore* vpheard, and to her teld
All this accord, to which he *Crudor* had compeld.

[45]

Whereof she now more glad, then sory earst,
All ouercome with infinite affect,
For his exceeding courtesie, that pearst
Her stubborne hart with inward deepe effect,
Before his feet her selfe she did proiect,
And him adoring as her liues deare Lord,
With all due thanks, and dutifull respect,
Her selfe acknowledg'd bound for that accord,
By which he had to her both life and loue restord.

[46]

So all returning to the Castle glad,
Most ioyfully she them did entertaine,
Where goodly glee and feast to them she made,
To shew her thankfull mind and meaning faine,
By all the meanes she mote it best explaine:
And after all, vnto Sir *Calidore*
She freely gaue that Castle for his paine,
And her selfe bound to him for euermore;
So wondrously now chaung'd, from that she was afore.

[47]

But *Calidore* himselfe would not retaine
Nor land nor fee, for hyre of his good deede,
But gaue them streight vnto that Squire againe,
Whom from her Seneschall he lately freed,
And to his damzell as their rightfull meed,
For recompence of all their former wrong:
There he remaind with them right well agreed,
Till of his wounds he waxed hole and strong,

And then to his first quest he passed forth along.

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