

Cant. VIII.

*Prince Arthure ouercomes Disdaine,
Quites Mirabell from dread:
Serena found of Saluages,
By Calepine is freed.*

[1]

YE gentle Ladies, in whose soueraine powre
Loue hath the glory of his kingdome left,
And th'hearts of men, as your eternall dowre,
In yron chaines, of liberty bereft,
Deliuered hath into your hands by gift;
Be well aware, how ye the same doe vse,
That pride doe not to tyranny you lift;
Least if men you of cruelty accuse,
He from you take that chiefedome, which ye doe abuse.

[2]

And as ye soft and tender are by kynde,
Adornd with goodly gifts of beauties grace,
So be ye soft and tender eeke in mynde;
But cruelty and hardnesse from you chace,
That all your other praises will deface,
And from you turne the loue of men to hate.
Ensamble take of *Mirabellaes* case,
Who from the high degree of happy state,
Fell into wretched woes, which she repented late.

[3]

Who after thraldome of the gentle Squire,
Which she beheld with lamentable eye,
Was touched with compassion entire,
And much lamented his calamity,
That for her sake fell into misery:
Which booted nought for prayers, nor for threat
To hope for to release or mollify;
For aye the more, that she did them entreat
The more they him misust, and cruelly did beat.

[4]

So as they forward on their way did pas,
Him still reuiling and afflicting sore,

They met Prince *Arthure* with Sir *Enias*,
(That was that courteous Knight, whom he before
Hauing subdew'd, yet did to life restore,)
To whom as they approacht, they gan augment
Their cruelty, and him to punish more,
Scourging and haling him more vehement;
As if it them should grieue to see his punishment.

[5]

The Squire him selfe when as he saw his Lord,
The wisse of his wretchednesse, in place,
Was much asham'd, that with an hempen cord
He like a dog was led in captiue case,
And did his head for bashfulnesse abase,
As loth to see, or to be seene at all:
Shame would be hid. But whenas *Enias*
Beheld two such, of two such villaines thrall,
His manly mynde was much emmoued therewithall.

[6]

And to the Prince thus sayd; See you Sir Knight,
The greatest shame that euer eye yet saw?
Yond Lady and her Squire with foule despight
Abusde, against all reason and all law,
Without regard of pittie or of awe.
See how they doe that Squire beat and reuile;
See how they doe the Lady hale and draw.
But if ye please to lend me leaue a while,
I will them soone acquite, and both of blame assoile.

[7]

The Prince assented, and then he streight way
Dismounting light, his shield about him threw,
With which approachng, thus he gan to say;
Abide ye caytiue treachetours vntrew,
That haue with treason thrall'd vnto you
These two, vnworthy of your wretched bands;
And now your crime with cruelty pursew.
Abide, and from them lay your loathly hands;
Or else abide the death, that hard before you stands.

[8]

The villaine stayd not aunswer to inuent,

But with his yron club preparing way,
His mindes sad message backe vnto him sent;
The which descended with such dreadfull sway,
That seemed nought the course thereof could stay:
No more then lightening from the lofty sky.
Ne list the Knight the powre thereof assay,
Whose doome was death, but lightly slipping by,
Vnwares defrauded his intended destiny.

[9]

And to requite him with the like againe,
With his sharpe sword he fiercely at him flew,
And strooke so strongly, that the Carle with paine
Saued him selfe, but that he there him slew:
Yet sau'd not so, but that the bloud it drew,
And gaue his foe good hope of victory.
Who therewith flesht, vpon him set anew,
And with the second stroke, thought certainly
To haue supplyde the first, and paide the vsury.

[10]

But Fortune aunswerd not vnto his call;
For as his hand was heaued vp on hight,
The villaine met him in the middle fall,
And with his club bet backe his brondyron bright
So forcibly, that with his owne hands might
Rebeaten backe vpon him selfe againe,
He driuen was to ground in selfe despight;
From whence ere he recouery could gaine,
He in his necke had set his foote with fell disdaine.

[11]

With that the foole, which did that end awayte,
Came running in, and whilest on ground he lay,
Laide heauy hands on him, and held so straye,
That downe he kept him with his scornefull sway,
So as he could not weld him any way.
The whiles that other villaine went about
Him to haue bound, and thrald without delay;
The whiles the foole did him reuile and flout,
Threatning to yoke them tow & tame their corage stout.

[12]

As when a sturdy ploughman with his hynde
By strength haue ouerthrowne a stubborne steare,
They downe him hold, and fast with cords do bynde,
Till they him force the buxome yoke to beare:
So did these two this Knight oft tug and teare.
Which when the Prince beheld, there standing by,
He left his lofty steede to aide him neare,
And buckling soone him selfe, gan fiercely fly
Vppon that Carle, to saue his friend from ieopardy.

[13]

The villaine leauing him vnto his mate
To be captiu'd, and handled as he list,
Himselfe addrest vnto this new debate,
And with his club him all about so blist,
That he which way to turne him scarcely wist:
Sometimes aloft he layd, sometimes alow;
Now here, now there, and oft him neare he mist;
So doubtfully, that hardly one could know
Whether more wary were to giue or ward the blow.

[14]

But yet the Prince so well enured was
With such huge strokes, approued oft in fight,
That way to them he gaue forth right to pas.
Ne would endure the daunger of their might,
But wayt aduantage, when they downe did light.
At last the caytiue after long discourse,
When all his strokes he saw auoyded quite,
Resolued in one t'assemble all his force,
And make one end of him without ruth or remorse.

[15]

His dreadfull hand he heaued vp aloft,
And with his dreadfull instrument of yre,
Thought sure haue pownded him to powder soft,
Or deepe emboweld in the earth entyre:
But Fortune did not with his will conspire.
For ere his stroke attayned his intent,
The noble childe preuenting his desire,
Vnder his club with wary boldnesse went,
And smote him on the knee, that neuer yet was bent.

[16]

It neuer yet was bent, ne bent it now,
Albe the stroke so strong and puissant were,
That seem'd a marble pillour it could bow,
But all that leg, which did his body beare,
It crackt throughout, yet did no bloud appeare;
So as it was vnable to support
So huge a burden on such broken geare,
But fell to ground, like to a lumpe of durt,
Whence he assayd to rise, but could not for his hurt.

[17]

Eftsoones the Prince to him full nimbly stept,
And least he should recouer foote againe,
His head meant from his shoulders to haue swept.
Which when the Lady saw, she cryde amaine;
Stay stay, Sir Knight, for loue of God abstaine,
For that vnwares ye weetlesse doe intend;
Slay not that Carle, though worthy to be slaine:
For more on him doth then him selfe depend;
My life will by his death haue lamentable end.

[18]

He staide his hand according her desire,
Yet nathemore him suffred to arize;
But still suppressing gan of her inquire,
What meaning mote those vncouth words comprize,
That in that villaines health her safety lies:
That, were no might in man, nor heart in Knights,
Which durst her dreaded reskue enterprize,
Yet heauens them selues, that fauour feeble rights,
Would for it selfe redresse, and punish such despights.

[19]

Then bursting forth in teares, which gushed fast
Like many water streames, a while she stayd;
Till the sharpe passion being ouerpast,
Her tongue to her restord, then thus she sayd;
Nor heauens, nor men can me most wretched mayd
Deliuier from the doome of my desart,
The which the God of loue hath on me layd,
And damned to endure this direfull smart,
For penance of my proud and hard rebellious hart.

[20]

In prime of youthly yeares, when first the flowre
Of beauty gan to bud, and bloosme delight,
And nature me endu'd with plenteous dowre,
Of all her gifts, that pleasde each liuing sight,
I was belou'd of many a gentle Knight,
And sude and sought with all the seruice dew:
Full many a one for me deepe groand and sight,
And to the dore of death for sorrow drew,
Complayning out on me, that would not on them rew.

[21]

But let them loue that list, or liue or die;
Me list not die for any louers doole:
Ne list me leaue my loued libertie,
To pittie him that list to play the foole:
To loue my selfe I learned had in schoole.
Thus I triumphed long in louers paine,
And sitting carelesse on the scorners stoole,
Did laugh at those that did lament and plaine:
But all is now repayd with interest againe.

[22]

For loe the winged God, that woundeth harts,
Causde me be called to accompt therefore,
And for reuengement of those wrongfull smarts,
Which I to others did inflict afore,
Addeem'd me to endure this penaunce sore;
That in this wize, and this vnmeete array,
With these two lewd companions, and no more,
Disdaine and *Scorne*, I through the world should stray,
Till I haue sau'd so many, as I earst did slay.

[23]

Certes (sayd then the Prince) the God is iust,
That taketh vengeaunce of his peoples spoile.
For were no law in loue, but all that lust,
Might them oppresse, and painefully turmoile,
His kingdome would continue but a while.
But tell me Lady, wherefore doe you beare
This bottle thus before you with such toile,
And eeke this wallet at your backe arreare,
That for these Carles to carry much more comely were?

[24]

Here in this bottle (sayd the sory Mayd)
I put the teares of my contrition,
Till to the brim I haue it full defrayd:
And in this bag which I behinde me don,
I put repentaunce for things past and gon.
Yet is the bottle leake, and bag so torne,
That all which I put in, fals out anon;
And is behinde me trodden downe of *Scorne*,
Who mocketh all my paine, & laughs the more I mourn.

[25]

The Infant hearkned wisely to her tale,
And wondred much at *Cupids* iudg'ment wise,
That could so meekly make proud hearts auale,
And wreake him selfe on them, that him despise.
Then suffred he *Disdaine* vp to arise,
Who was not able vp him selfe to reare,
By meanes his leg through his late luckelesse prise,
Was crackt in twaine, but by his foolish feare
Was holpen vp, who him supported standing neare.

[26]

But being vp, he lookt againe aloft,
As if he neuer had receiued fall;
And with sterne eye-browes stared at him oft,
As if he would haue daunted him with all:
And standing on his tiptoes, to seeme tall,
Downe on his golden feete he often gazed,
As if such pride the other could apall;
Who was so far from being ought amazed,
That he his lookes despised, and his boast dispraized.

[27]

Then turning backe vnto that captiue thrall,
Who all this while stood there beside them bound,
Vnwilling to be knowne, or seene at all,
He from those bands weend him to haue vnwound.
But when approching neare, he plainly found,
It was his owne true groome, the gentle Squire,
He thereat wext exceedingly astound,
And him did oft embrace, and oft admire,
Ne could with seeing satisfie his great desire.

[28]

Meane while the Saluage man, when he beheld
That huge great foole oppressing th'other Knight,
Whom with his weight vnweldy downe he held,
He flew vpon him, like a greedy kight
Vnto some carrion offered to his sight,
And downe him plucking, with his nayles and teeth
Gan him to hale, and teare, and scratch, and bite;
And from him taking his owne whip, therewith
So sore him scourgeth, that the bloud downe followeth.

[29]

And sure I weene, had not the Ladies cry
Procur'd the Prince his cruell hand to stay,
He would with whipping, him haue done to dye:
But being checkt, he did abstaine streight way,
And let him rise. Then thus the Prince gan say;
Now Lady sith your fortunes thus dispose,
That if ye list haue liberty, ye may,
Vnto your selfe I freely leaue to chose,
Whether I shall you leaue, or from these villaines lose.

[30]

Ah nay Sir Knight (sayd she) it may not be,
But that I needes must by all meanes fulfill
This penaunce, which enioyned is to me,
Least vnto me betide a greater ill;
Yet no lesse thanks to you for your good will.
So humbly taking leaue, she turnd aside,
But *Arthure* with the rest, went onward still
On his first quest, in which did him betide
A great aduenture, which did him from them deuide.

[31]

But first it falleth me by course to tell
Of faire *Serena*, who as earst you heard,
When first the gentle Squire at variaunce fell
With those two Carles, fled fast away, afeard
Of villany to be to her inferd:
So fresh the image of her former dread,
Yet dwelling in her eye, to her appeared,
That euery foote did tremble, which did tread,
And euery body two, and two she foure did read.

[32]

Through hills & dales, through bushes & through breres
Long thus she fled, till that at last she thought
Her selfe now past the perill of her feares.
Then looking round about, and seeing nought.
Which doubt of daunger to her offer mought,
She from her palfrey lighted on the plaine,
And sitting downe, her selfe a while bethought
Of her long trauell and turmoyling paine;
And often did of loue, and oft of lucke complaine.

[33]

And euermore she blamed *Calepine*,
The good Sir *Calepine*, her owne true Knight,
As th'onely author of her wofull tine:
For being of his loue to her so light,
As her to leaue in such a piteous plight.
Yet neuer Turtle truer to his make,
Then he was tride vnto his Lady bright:
Who all this while endured for her sake,
Great perill of his life, and restlesse paines did take.

[34]

Tho when as all her plaints, she had displayd,
And well disburdened her engrieued brest,
Vpon the grasse her selfe adowne she layd;
Where being tyrde with trauell, and opprest
With sorrow, she betooke her selfe to rest.
There whilest in *Morpheus* bosome safe she lay,
Fearelesse of ought, that mote her peace molest,
False Fortune did her safety betray,
Vnto a straunge mischaunce, that menac'd her decay.

[35]

In these wylde deserts, where she now abode,
There dwelt a saluage nation, which did liue
Of stealth and spoile, and making nightly rode
Into their neighbours borders; ne did giue
Them selues to any trade, as for to driue
The painefull plough, or cattell for to breed,
Or by aduentrous marchandize to thriue;
But on the labours of poore men to feed,
And serue their owne necessities with others need.

[36]

Thereto they vsde one most accursed order,
To eate the flesh of men, whom they mote fynde,
And straungers to deuoure, which on their border
Were brought by errour, or by wreckfull wynde.
A monstrous cruelty gainst course of kynde.
They towards euening wandring euery way,
To seeke for booty, came by fortune blynde,
Whereas this Lady, like a sheepe astray,
Now drowned in the depth of sleepe all fearelesse lay.

[37]

Soone as they spide her, Lord what gladfull glee
They made amongst them selues; but when her face
Like the faire yuory shining they did see,
Each gan his fellow solace and embrace,
For ioy of such good hap by heauenly grace.
Then gan they to deuize what course to take:
Whether to slay her there vpon the place,
Or suffer her out of her sleepe to wake,
And then her eate attonce; or many meales to make.

[38]

The best aduizement was of bad, to let her
Sleepe out her fill, without encomberment:
For sleepe they sayd would make her battill better.
Then when she wakt, they all gae one consent,
That since by grace of God she there was sent,
Vnto their God they would her sacrificize,
Whose share, her guiltlesse bloud they would present,
But of her dainty flesh they did deuize
To make a common feast, & feed with gurmandize.

[39]

So round about her they them selues did place
Vpon the grasse, and diuersely dispose,
As each thought best to spend the lingring space.
Some with their eyes the daintest morsels chose;
Some praise her paps, some praise her lips and nose;
Some whet their kniues, and strip their elboes bare:
The Priest him selfe a garland doth compose
Of finest flowres, and with full busie care
His bloody vessels wash, and holy fire prepare.

[40]

The Damzell wakes, then all attonce vpstart,
And round about her flocke, like many flies,
Whooping, and hallowing on euery part,
As if they would haue rent the brasen skies.
Which when she sees with ghastly griefful eies,
Her heart does quake, and deadly pallid hew
Benumbes her cheekes: Then out aloud she cries,
Where none is nigh to heare, that will her rew,
And rends her golden locks, and snowy brests embrew.

[41]

But all bootes not: they hands vpon her lay;
And first they spoile her of her iewls deare,
And afterwards of all her rich array;
The which amongst them they in peeces teare,
And of the pray each one a part doth beare.
Now being naked, to their sordid eyes
The goodly treasures of nature appeare:
Which as they view with lustfull fantasyes,
Each wisheth to him selfe, and to the rest enuyes.

[42]

Her yuorie necke, her alablaster brest,
Her paps, which like white silken pillowes were,
For loue in soft delight thereon to rest;
Her tender sides her bellie white and clere,
Which like an Altar did it selfe vprere,
To offer sacrifice diuine thereon;
Her goodly thighes, whose glorie did appeare
Like a triumphall Arch, and thereupon
The spoiles of Princes hang'd, which were in battel won.

[43]

Those daintie parts, the dearlings of delight,
Which mote not be prophan'd of common eyes,
Those villeins vew'd with loose lasciuious sight,
And closely tempted with their craftie spyes;
And some of them gan mongst themselues deuize,
Thereof by force to take their bestly pleasure.
But them the Priest rebuking, did aduize
To dare not to pollute so sacred treasure,
Vow'd to the gods: religion held euen theeues in measure.

[44]

So being stayd, they her from thence directed
Vnto a litle groue not farre asyde,
In which an altar shortly they erected,
To slay her on. And now the Euentyde
His brode black wings had through the heauens wyde
By this dispred, that was the tyme ordayned
For such a dismall deed, their guilt to hyde:
Of few greeneurfes an altar soone they fayned,
And deckt it all with flowres, which they nigh hand obtayned.

[45]

Tho when as all things readie were aright,
The Damzell was before the altar set,
Being alreadie dead with fearefull fright.
To whom the Priest with naked armes full net
Approching nigh, and murdrous knife well whet,
Gan mutter close a certaine secret charme,
With other diuelish ceremonies met:
Which doen he gan aloft t'aduance his arme,
Whereat they shouted all, and made a loud alarme.

[46]

Then gan the bagpipes and the hornes to shrill,
And shrieke aloud, that with the peoples voyce
Confused, did the ayre with terror fill,
And made the wood to tremble at the noyce:
The whyles she wayld, the more they did reioyce.
Now mote ye vnderstand that to this groue
Sir *Calepine* by chaunce, more then by choyce,
The selfe same euening fortune hether droue,
As he to seeke *Serena* through the woods did roue.

[47]

Long had he sought her, and through many a soyle
Had traueled still on foot in heauie armes,
Ne ought was tyred with his endlesse toyles,
Ne ought was feared of his certaine harmes:
And now all weetlesse of the wretched stormes,
In which his loue was lost, he slept full fast,
Till being waked with these loud alarmes,
He lightly started vp like one aghast,
And catching vp his arms streight to the noise forth past.

[48]

There by th'vncertaine glims of starry night,
And by the twinkling of their sacred fire,
He mote perceiue a litle dawning sight
Of all, which there was doing in that quire:
Mongst whom a woman spoyld of all attire
He spyde, lamenting her vnluckie strife,
And groning sore from griued hart entire;
Eftsoones he saw one with a naked knife
Readie to launch her brest, and let out loued life.

[49]

With that he thrusts into the thickest throng,
And euen as his right hand adowne descends,
He him preuenting, layes on earth along,
And sacrificeth to th'inferrall feends.
Then to the rest his wrathfull hand he bends,
Of whom he makes such hauocke and such hew,
That swarmes of damned soules to hell he sends:
The rest that scape his sword and death eschew,
Fly like a flocke of doues before a Faulcons vew.

[50]

From them returning to that Ladie backe,
Whom by the Altar he doth sitting find,
Yet fearing death, and next to death the lacke
Of clothes to couer, what they ought by kind,
He first her hands beginneth to vnbind;
And then to question of her present woe;
And afterwards to cheare with speaches kind.
But she for nought that he could say or doe,
One word durst speake, or answere him awhit thereto.

[51]

So inward shame of her vncomely case
She did conceiue, through care of womanhood,
That though the night did couer her disgrace,
Yet she in so vnwomanly a mood,
Would not bewray the state in which she stood.
So all that night to him vnknown she past.
But day, that doth discouer bad and good,
Ensewing, made her knownen to him at last:

The end whereof Ile keepe vntill another cast.

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