

Cant. VIII.

*Faire virgin to redeeme her deare
brings Arthur to the fight:
Who slayes that Gyant, wounds the beast,
and strips Duessa quight.*

[1]

AY me, how many perils doe enfold
The righteous man, to make him daily fall?
Were not, that heauenly grace doth him vphold,
And stedfast truth acquite him out of all.
Her loue is firme, her care continuall,
So oft as he through his owne foolish pride,
Or weaknesse is to sinfull bands made thrall:
Else should this *Redcrosse* knight in bands haue dyde,
For whose deliuerance she this Prince doth thither guide.

[2]

They sadly traueild thus, vntill they came
Nigh to a castle builded strong and hie:
Then cryde the Dwarfe, lo yonder is the same,
In which my Lord my liege doth lucklesse lie,
Thrall to that Gyants hatefull tyrannie:
Therefore, deare Sir, your mightie powres assay.
The noble knight alighted by and by
From loftie steede, and bad the Ladie stay,
To see what end of fight should him befall that day.

[3]

So with the Squire, th'admirer of his might,
He marched forth towards that castle wall;
Whose gates he found fast shut, ne liuing wight
To ward the same, nor answere commers call.
Then tooke that Squire an horne of bugle small,
Which hong adowne his side in twisted gold,
And tassels gay. Wyde wonders ouer all
Of that same hornes great vertues weren told,
Which had approued bene in vses manifold.

[4]

Was neuer wight, that heard that shrilling sound,
But trembling feare did feele in euery vaine;

Three miles it might be easie heard around,
And Ecchoes three answerd it selfe againe:
No false enchauntment, nor deceitfull traine
Might once abide the terror of that blast,
But presently was voide and wholly vaine:
No gate so strong, no locke so firme and fast,
But with that percing noise flew open quite, or brast.

[5]

The same before the Geants gate he blew,
That all the castle quaked from the ground,
And euery dore of freewill open flew.
The Gyant selfe dismaied with that sownd,
Where he with his *Duessa* dalliance fownd,
In hast came rushing forth from inner bowre,
With staring countenance sterne, as one astownd,
And staggering steps, to weet, what suddein stowre,
Had wrought that horror strange, and dar'd his dreaded powre.

[6]

And after him the proud *Duessa* came,
High mounted on her manyheaded beast,
And euery head with fyrie tongue did flame,
And euery head was crowned on his creast,
And bloudie mouthed with late cruell feast.
That when the knight beheld, his mightie shild
Vpon his manly arme he soone address,
And at him fiercely flew, with courage fild,
And eger greedinesse through euery member thild.

[7]

Therewith the Gyant buckled him to fight,
Inflam'd with scornfull wrath and high disdaine,
And lifting vp his dreadfull club on hight,
All arm'd with ragged snubbes and knottie graine,
Him thought at first encounter to haue slaine.
But wise and warie was that noble Pere,
And lightly leaping from so monstrous maine,
Did faire auoide the violence him nere;
It booted nought, to thinke, such thunderbolts to beare.

[8]

Ne shame he thought to shunne so hideous might:

The idle stroke, enforcing furious way,
Missing the marke of his misaymed sight
Did fall to ground, and with his heaue sway
So deeply dinted in the driuen clay,
That three yardees deepe a furrow vp did throwe:
The sad earth wounded with so sore assay,
Did grone full grieuous vnderneath the blow,
And trembling with strange feare, did like an earthquake show.

[9]

As when almightie *Ioue* in wrathfull mood,
To wreake the guilt of mortall sinnes is bent,
Hurles forth his thundring dart with deadly food,
Enrold in flames, and smouldring dreriment,
Through riuen cloudes and molten firmament;
The fierce threeforked engin making way,
Both loftie towres and highest trees hath rent,
And all that might his angry passage stay,
And shooting in the earth, casts vp a mount of clay.

[10]

His boystrous club, so buried in the ground,
He could not rearen vp againe so light,
But that the knight him at auantage found,
And whiles he stroue his combred clubbe to quight
Out of the earth, with blade all burning bright
He smote off his left arme, which like a blocke
Did fall to ground, depriu'd of natue might;
Large streames of bloud out of the truncked stocke
Forth gushed, like fresh water streame from riuen rocke.

[11]

Dismaied with so desperate deadly wound,
And eke impatient of vnwonted paine,
He loudly brayd with beastly yelling sound,
That all the fields rebellowed againe;
As great a noyse, as when in Cymbrian plaine
An heard of Bulles, whom kindly rage doth sting,
Do for the milkie mothers want complaine,
And fill the fields with troublous bellowing,
The neighbour woods around with hollow murmuring.

[12]

That when his deare *Duessa* heard, and saw
The euill stownd, that dangerd her estate,
Vnto his aide she hastily did draw
Her dreadfull beast, who swolne with bloud of late
Came ramping forth with proud presumptuous gate,
And threatned all his heads like flaming brands.
But him the Squire made quickly to retrate,
Encountring fierce with single sword in hand,
And twixt him and his Lord did like a bulwarke stand.

[13]

The proud *Duessa* full of wrathfull spight,
And fierce disdain, to be affronted so,
Enforst her purple beast with all her might
That stop out of the way to ouerthroe,
Scorning the let of so vnequall foe:
But nathemore would that couragious swayne
To her yeeld passage, gainst his Lord to goe,
But with outrageous stroakes did him restraine,
And with his bodie bard the way atwixt them twaine.

[14]

Then tooke the angrie witch her golden cup,
Which still she bore, replete with magick artes;
Death and despeyre did many thereof sup,
And secret poyson through their inward parts,
Th'eternall bale of heauie wounded harts;
Which after charmes and some enchauntments said,
She lightly sprinkled on his weaker parts;
Therewith his sturdie courage soone was quayd,
And all his senses were with suddeine dread dismayd.

[15]

So downe he fell before the cruell beast,
Who on his necke his bloudie clawes did seize,
That life nigh crusht out of his panting brest:
No powre he had to stirre, nor will to rize.
That when the carefull knight gan well auise,
He lightly left the foe, with whom he fought,
And to the beast gan turne his enterprise;
For wondrous anguish in his hart it wrought,
To see his loued Squire into such thraldome brought.

[16]

And high aduauncing his bloud-thirstie blade,
Stroke one of those deformed heads so sore,
That of his puissance proud ensample made;
His monstrous scalpe downe to his teeth it tore,
And that misformed shape mis-shaped more:
A sea of bloud gusht from the gaping wound,
That her gay garments staynd with filthy gore,
And ouerflowed all the field around;
That over shoes in bloud he waded on the ground.

[17]

Thereat he roared for exceeding paine,
That to haue heard, great horror would haue bred,
And scourging th'emptie ayre with his long traine,
Through great impatience of his grieued hed
His gorgeous ryder from her loftie sted
Would haue cast downe, and trod in durtie myre,
Had not the Gyant soone her succoured;
Who all enrag'd with smart and franticke yre,
Came hurtling in full fierce, and forst the knight retyre.

[18]

The force, which wont in two to be disperst,
In one alone left hand he now vnites,
Which is through rage more strong then both were erst;
With which his hideous club aloft he dites,
And at his foe with furious rigour smites,
That strongest Oake might seeme to ouerthrow:
The stroke vpon his shield so heauie lites,
That to the ground it doubleth him full low,
What mortall wight could euer beare so monstrous blow?

[19]

And in his fall his shield, that couered was,
Did loose his vele by chaunce, and open flew:
The light whereof, that heauens light did pas,
Such blazing brightnesse through the aier threw,
That eye mote not the same endure to vew.
Which when the Gyaunt spyde with staring eye,
He downe let fall his arme, and soft withdrew
His weapon huge, that heaued was on hye
For to haue slaine the man, that on the ground did lye.

[20]

And eke the fruitfull-headed beast, amaz'd
At flashing beames of that sunshiny shield,
Became starke blind, and all his senses daz'd,
That downe he tumbled on the durtie field,
And seem'd himselfe as conquered to yield.
Whom when his maistresse proud perceiu'd to fall,
Whiles yet his feeble feet for faintnesse reeld,
Vnto the Gyant loudly she gan call,
O helpe *Orgoglio*, helpe, or else we perish all.

[21]

At her so pitteous cry was much amou'd,
Her champion stout, and for to ayde his frend,
Againe his wonted angry weapon proou'd:
But all in vaine: for he has read his end
In that bright shield, and all their forces spend
Themselues in vaine: for since that glauncing sight,
He hath no powre to hurt, nor to defend;
As where th'Almighties lightning brond does light,
It dimmes the dazed eyen, and daunts the senses quight.

[22]

Whom when the Prince, to battell new addrest,
And threatning high his dreadfull stroke did see,
His sparkling blade about his head he blest,
And smote off quite his right leg by the knee,
That downe he tombled; as an aged tree,
High growing on the top of rocky clift,
Whose hartstrings with keene steele nigh hewen be,
The mightie trunck halfe rent, with ragged rift
Doth roll adowne the rocks, and fall with fearefull drift.

[23]

Or as a Castle reared high and round,
By subtile engins and malicious slight
Is vndermined from the lowest ground,
And her foundation forst, and feebled quight,
At last, downe falles, and with her heaped hight
Her hastie ruine does more heaueie make,
And yields it selfe vnto the victours might;
Such was this Gyaunts fall, that seemd to shake
The stedfast globe of earth, as it for feare did quake.

[24]

The knight then lightly leaping to the pray,
With mortall steele him smot againe so sore,
That headlesse his vnweldy body lay,
All wallowd in his owne foule bloody gore,
Which flowed from his wounds in wondrous store,
But soone as breath out of his breast did pas,
That huge great body, which the Gyaunt bore,
Was vanisht quite, and of that monstrous mas
Was nothing left, but like an emptie bladder was.

[25]

Whose grieuous fall, when false *Duess*a spide,
Her golden cup she cast vnto the ground,
And crowned mitre rudely threw aside;
Such percing grieffe her stubborne hart did wound,
That she could not endure that dolefull stound,
But leauing all behind her, fled away:
The light-foot Squire her quickly turnd around,
And by hard meanes enforcing her to stay,
So brought vnto his Lord, as his deserued pray.

[26]

The royall Virgin, which beheld from farre,
In pensieue plight, and sad perplexitie,
The whole atchieuement of this doubtfull warre,
Came running fast to greet his victorie,
With sober gladnesse, and myld modestie,
And with sweet ioyous cheare him thus bespake;
Faire branch of noblesse, flowre of cheualrie,
That with your worth the world amazed make,
How shall I quite the paines, ye suffer for my sake?

[27]

And you fresh bud of vertue springing fast,
Whom these sad eyes saw nigh vnto deaths dore,
What hath poore Virgin for such perill past,
Wherewith you to reward? Accept therefore
My simple selfe, and seruice euermore;
And he that high does sit, and all things see
With equall eyes, their merites to restore,
Behold what ye this day haue done for mee,
And what I cannot quite, requite with vsuree.

[28]

But sith the heauens, and your faire handling
Haue made you maister of the field this day,
Your fortune maister eke with gouerning,
And well begun end all so well, I pray,
Ne let that wicked woman scape away;
For she it is that did my Lord bethrall,
My dearest Lord, and deepe in dongeon lay,
Where he his better dayes hath wasted all.
O heare, how piteous he to you for ayd does call.

[29]

Forthwith he gaue in charge vnto his Squire,
That scarlot whore to keepen carefully;
Whiles he himselfe with greedie great desire
Into the Castle entred forcibly.
Where liuing creature none he did espye;
Then gan he lowdly through the house to call:
But no man car'd to answeere to his crye.
There raignd a solemne silence ouer all,
Nor voice was heard, nor wight was seene in bowre or hall.

[30]

At last with creeping crooked pace forth came
And old old man, with beard as white as snow,
That on a staffe his feeble steps did frame,
And guide his wearie gate both too and fro:
For his eye sight him failed long ygo,
And on his arme a bounch of keyes he bore,
The which vnused rust did ouergrow:
Those were the keyes of euery inner dore,
But he could not them vse, but kept them still in store.

[31]

But very vncouth sight was to behold
How he did fashion his vntoward pace:
For as he forward moou'd his footing old,
So backward still was turnd his wrinckled face;
Vnlike to men, who euer as they trace,
Both feet and face one way are wont to lead.
This was the auncient keeper of that place,
And foster father of the Gyant dead;
His name *Ignaro* did his nature right aread.

[32]

His reuerend haire and holy grautie
The knight much honourd, as beseemed well,
And gently askt, where all the people bee,
Which in that stately building wont to dwell.
Who answerd him full soft, he could not tell.
Againe he askt, where that same knight was layd,
Whom great *Orgoglio* with his puissaunce fell
Had made his caytiue thrall, againe he sayde,
He could not tell: ne euer other answere made.

[33]

Then asked he, which way he in might pas:
He could not tell, againe he answered.
Thereat the curteous knight displeas'd was,
And said, Old sire, it seemes thou hast not red
How ill it fits with that same siluer hed
In vaine to mock, or mockt in vaine to bee:
But if thou be, as thou art pourtrahed
With natures pen, in ages graue degree,
Aread in grauer wise, what I demaund of thee.

[34]

His answere likewise was, he could not tell.
Whose sencelesse speach, and doted ignorance
When as the noble Prince had marked well,
He ghest his nature by his countenance,
And calmd his wrath with goodly temperance.
Then to him stepping, from his arme did reach
Those keyes, and made himselfe free enterance.
Each dore he opened without any breach;
There was no barre to stop, nor foe him to empeach.

[35]

There all within full rich arayd he found,
With royall arras and resplendent gold.
And did with store of euery thing abound,
That greatest Princes presence might behold.
But all the floore (too filthy to be told)
With bloud of guiltlesse babes, and innocents trew,
Which there were slaine, as sheepe out of the fold,
Defiled was, that dreadfull was to vew,
And sacred ashes ouer it was strowed new.

[36]

And there beside of marble stone was built
An Altare, caru'd with cunning imagery,
On which true Christians bloud was often spilt,
And holy Martyrs often doen to dye,
With cruell malice and strong tyranny:
Whose blessed sprites from vnderneath the stone
To God for vengeance cryde continually,
And with great grieve were often heard to grone,
That hardest heart would bleede, to heare their pittious mone.

[37]

Through euery rowme he sought, and euery bowr,
But no where could he find that wofull thrall:
At last he came vnto an yron doore,
That fast was lockt, but key found not at all
Emongst that bounch, to open it withall;
But in the same a little grate was pight,
Through which he sent his voyce, and lowd did call
With all his powre, to weet, if liuing wight
Were housed there within, whom he enlargen might.

[38]

Therewith an hollow, dreary, murmuring voyce
These piteous plaints and dolours did resound;
O who is that, which brings me happy choyce
Of death, that here lye dying euery stound,
Yet lue perforce in balefull darkenesse bound?
For now three Moones haue changed thrice their hew,
And haue beene thrice hid vnderneath the ground,
Since I the heauens cheerfull face did vew,
O welcome thou, that doest of death bring tydings trew.

[39]

Which when that Champion heard, with percing point
Of pitty deare his hart was thrilled sore,
And trembling horrour ran through euery ioynt,
For ruth of gentle knight so fowle forlore:
Which shaking off, he rent that yron dore,
With furious force, and indignation fell;
Where entred in, his foot could find no flore,
But all a deepe descent, as darke as hell,
That breathed euer forth a filthy banefull smell.

[40]

But neither darknesse fowle, nor filthy bands,
Nor noyous smell his purpose could withhold,
(Entire affection hateth nicer hands)
But that with constant zeale, and courage bold,
After long paines and labours manifold,
He found the meanes that Prisoner vp to reare;
Whose feeble thighes, vnhabable to vphold
His pined corse, him scarce to light could beare.
A ruefull spectacle of death and ghastly dreere.

[41]

His sad dull eyes deepe sunck in hollow pits,
Could not endure th'vnwonted sunne to view;
His bare thin cheekes for want of better bits,
And empty sides deceiued of their dew,
Could make a stony hart his hap to rew;
His rawbone armes, whose mighty brawned bowrs
Were wont to riue steele plates, & helmets hew,
Were cleane consum'd, and all his vitall powres
Decayd, and all his flesh shronk vp like withered flowres.

[42]

Whom when his Lady saw, to him she ran
With hasty ioy: to see him made her glad,
And sad to view his visage pale and wan,
Who earst in flowres of freshest youth was clad.
Tho when her well of teares she wasted had,
She said, Ah dearest Lord, what euill starre
On you hath fround, and poured his influence bad,
That of your selfe ye thus berobbed arre,
And this misseeming hew your manly looks doth marre?

[43]

But welcome now my Lord, in wele or woe,
Whose presence I kaue lackt too long a day;
And fie on Fortune mine auowed foe,
Whose wrathfull wreakes themselues doe now alay,
And for these wrongs shall treble penaunce pay
Of treble good: good growes of euils priefe.
The chearelesse man, whom sorrow did dismay,
Had no delight to treaten of his grieffe;
His long endured famine needed more relieffe.

[44]

Faire Lady, then said that victorious knight,
The things, that grieuous were to do, or beare,
Them to renew, I wote, breeds no delight;
Best musicke breeds delight in loathing eare:
But th'onely good, that growes of passed feare,
Is to be wise, and ware of like agein.
This dayes ensample hath this lesson deare
Deepe written in my heart with yron pen,
That blisse may not abide in state of mortall men.

[45]

Henceforth sir knight, take to you wonted strength,
And maister these mishaps with patient might;
Loe where your foe lyes stretcht in monstrous length,
And loe that wicked woman in your sight,
The roote of all your care, and wretched plight,
Now in your powre, to let her liue, or dye.
To do her dye (quoth *Vna*) were despight,
And shame t'auenge so weake an enemy;
But spoile her of her scarlot robe, and let her fly.

[46]

So as she bad, that witch they disaraid,
And robd of royall robes, and purple pall,
And ornaments that richly were displaid;
Ne spared they to strip her naked all.
Then when they had despoild her tire and call,
Such as she was, their eyes might her behold,
That her mishaped parts did them appall,
A loathly, wrinkled hag, ill faouered, old,
Whose secret filth, good manners biddeth not be told.

[47]

Her craftie head was altogether bald,
And as in hate of honorable eld,
Was ouergrowne with scurfe and filthy scald;
Her teeth out of her rotten gummes were feld,
And her sowre breath abhominably smeld;
Her dried dugs, like bladders lacking wind,
Hong downe, and filthy matter from them weld;
Her wrizled skin as rough, as maple rind,
So scabby was, that would haue loathd all womankind.

[48]

Her neather parts, the shame of all her kind,
My chaster Muse for shame doth blush to write
But at her rompe she growing had behind
A foxes taile, with dong all fowly dight;
And eke her feete most monstrous were in sight;
For one of them was like an Eagles claw,
With griping talaunts armd to greedy fight,
The other like a Beares vneuen paw:
More vgly shape yet neuer liuing creature saw.

[49]

Which when the knights beheld, amazd they were,
And wondred at so fowle deformed wight.
Such then (said *Vna*) as she seemeth here,
Such is the face of falshood, such the sight
Of fowle *Duessa*, when her borrowed light
Is laid away, and counterfesaunce knowne.
Thus when they had the witch disrobed quight,
And all her filthy feature open showne,
They let her goe at will, and wander wayes vnknowne.

[50]

She flying fast from heauens hated face,
And from the world that her discovered wide,
Fled to the wastfull wildernesse apace,
From liuing eyes her open shame to hide,
And lurket in rocks and caues long vnespide.
But that faire crew of knights, and *Vna* faire
Did in that castle afterwards abide,
To rest them selues, and weary powres repaire,
Where store they found of all, that dainty was and rare.

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