

## *Cant. I.*

*Guyon encountreth Britomart,  
faire Florimell is chaced:  
Duessaes traines and Malecastaes  
champions are defaced.*

[1]

THE famous Briton Prince and Faerie knight,  
After long wayes and perilous paines endured,  
Hauing their wearie limbes to perfect plight  
Restord, and sory wounds right well recured,  
Of the faire *Alma* greatly were procured,  
To make there lenger sojourne and abode;  
But when thereto they might not be allured,  
From seeking praise, and deeds of armes abroad,  
They courteous conge tooke, and forth together yode.

[2]

But the captiu'd *Acrasia* he sent,  
Because of trauell long, a nigher way,  
With a strong gard, all reskew to preuent,  
And her to Faerie-court safe to conuay,  
That her for witnesse of his hard assay,  
Vnto his *Faerie* Queene he might present:  
But he himselfe betooke another way,  
To make more triall of his hardiment,  
And seeke aduentures, as he with Prince *Arthur* went.

[3]

Long so they trauelled through wastefull wayes,  
Where daungers dwelt, and perils most did wonne,  
To hunt for glorie and renowned praise;  
Full many Countries they did ouerronne,  
From the vprising to the setting Sunne,  
And many hard aduentures did atchieue;  
Of all the which they honour euer wonne,  
Seeking the weake oppressed to relieue,  
And to recouer right for such, as wrong did grieue.

[4]

At last as through an open plaine they yode,  
They spide a knight, that towards pricked faire,

And him beside an aged Squire there rode,  
That seem'd to couch vnder his shield three-square,  
As if that age bad him that burden spare,  
And yield it those, that stouter could it wield:  
He them espying, gan himselfe prepare,  
And on his arme addresse his goodly shield  
That bore a Lion passant in a golden field.

[5]

Which seeing good Sir *Guyon*, deare besought  
The Prince of grace, to let him runne that turne.  
He graunted: then the Faery quickly raught  
His poynant speare, and sharpely gan to spurne  
His fomy steed, whose fierie feete did burne  
The verdant grasse, as he thereon did tread;  
Ne did the other backe his foot returne,  
But fiercely forward came withouten dread,  
And bent his dreadfull speare against the others head.

[6]

They bene ymet, and both their poynts arriued,  
But *Guyon* droue so furious and fell,  
That seem'd both shield and plate it would haue riued;  
Nathelesse it bore his foe not from his sell,  
But made him stagger, as he were not well:  
But *Guyon* selfe, ere well he was aware,  
Nigh a speares length behind his crouper fell,  
Yet in his fall so well himselfe he bare,  
That mischieuous mischance his life & limbes did spare.

[7]

Great shame and sorrow of that fall he tooke;  
For neuer yet, since warlike armes he bore,  
And shiuering speare in bloudie field first shooke,  
He found himselfe dishonored so sore.  
Ah gentlest knight, that euer armour bore,  
Let not thee grieue dismounted to haue beene,  
And brought to ground, that neuer wast before;  
For not thy fault, but secret powre vnseene,  
That speare enchanted was, which layd thee on the greene.

[8]

But weenedst thou what wight thee ouerthrew,

Much greater grieve and shamefuller regret  
For thy hard fortune then thou wouldst renew,  
That of a single damzell thou wert met  
On equall plaine, and there so hard beset;  
Euen the famous *Britomart* it was,  
Whom straunge aduenture did from *Britaine* fet,  
To seeke her loue (loue farre sought alas,)   
Whose image she had feene in *Venus* looking glas.

[9]

Full of disdainfull wrath, he fierce vprose,  
For to reuenge that foule reprochfull shame,  
And snatching his bright sword, began to close  
With her on foot, and stoutly forward came;  
Die rather would he then endure that same.  
Which when his Palmer saw, he gan to feare  
His toward perill and vntoward blame,  
Which by that new rencounter he should reare:  
For death sate on the point of that enchanted speare.

[10]

And hasting towards him, gan faire perswade,  
Not to prouoke misfortune, nor to weene  
His speares default to mend with cruell blade;  
For by his mightie Science he had seene  
The secret vertue of that weapon keene,  
That mortall puissance mote not withstond:  
Nothing on earth mote alwaies happie beene.  
Great hazard were it, and aduenture fond,  
To loose long gotten honour with one euill hond.

[11]

By such good meanes he him discourselled,  
From prosecuting his reuenging rage;  
And eke the Prince like treaty handeled,  
His wrathfull will with reason to asswage,  
And laid the blame, not to his carriage,  
But to his starting steed, that swaru'd asyde,  
And to the ill purueyance of his page,  
That had his furnitures not firmly tyde:  
So is his angry courage fairely pacifyde.

[12]

Thus reconciliation was betwene them knit,  
Through goodly temperance, and affection chaste,  
And either vowd with all their power and wit,  
To let not others honour be defaste,  
Of friend or foe, who euer it embaste,  
Ne armes to beare against the others syde:  
In which accord the Prince was also plaste,  
And with that golden chaine of concord tyde.  
So goodly all agreed, they forth yfere did ryde.

[13]

O goodly vsage of those antique times,  
In which the sword was seruant vnto right;  
When not for malice and contentious crimes,  
But all for praise, and prooffe of manly might,  
The martiall brood accustomed to fight:  
Then honour was the meed of victorie,  
And yet the vanquished had no despight:  
Let later age that noble vse enuie,  
Vile rancour to auoid, and cruell surquedrie.

[14]

Long they thus trauelled in friendly wise,  
Through countries waste, and eke well edifyde,  
Seeking aduentures hard, to exercise  
Their puissance, whylome full dernely tryde:  
At length they came into a forrest wide,  
Whose hideous horror and sad trembling sound  
Full griesly seem'd: Therein they long did ryde,  
Yet tract of liuing creatures none they found,  
Saue Beares, Lyons, & Buls, which romed them around.

[15]

All suddenly out of the thickest brush,  
Vpon a milke-white Palfrey all alone,  
A goodly Ladie did foreby them rush,  
Whose face did seeme as cleare as Christall stone,  
And eke through feare as white as whales bone:  
Her garments all were wrought of beaten gold,  
And all her steed with tinsell trappings shone,  
Which fled so fast, that nothing mote him hold,  
And scarce them leasure gaue, her passing to behold.

[16]

Still as she fled, her eye she backward threw,  
As fearing euill, that pursewd her fast;  
And her faire yellow locks behind her flew,  
Loosely disperst with puffe of euery blast:  
All as a blazing starre doth farre outcast  
His hearie beames, and flaming locks dispred,  
At sight whereof the people stand aghast:  
But the sage wisard telles, as he has red,  
That it importunes death and dolefull drerihead.

[17]

So, as they gazed after her a while,  
Lo where a grisly Foster forth did rush,  
Breathing out beastly lust her to defile:  
His tyreling iade he fiercely forth did push,  
Through thicke and thin, both ouer banke and bush,  
In hope her to attaine by hooke or crooke,  
That from his gorie sides the bloud did gush:  
Large were his limbes, and terrible his looke,  
And in his clownish hand a sharp bore speare he shooke.

[18]

Which outrage when those gentle knights did see,  
Full of great enuie and fell gealosy,  
They stayd not to auise, who first should bee,  
But all spurd after fast, as they mote fly,  
To reskew her from shamefull villany.  
The Prince and *Guyon* equally byliue  
Her selfe pursewd, in hope to win thereby  
Most goodly meed, the fairest Dame aliue:  
But after the foule Foster *Timias* did striue.

[19]

The whiles faire *Britomart*, whose constant mind,  
Would not so lightly follow beauties chace,  
Ne reckt of Ladies loue, did stay behind,  
And them awaited there a certaine space,  
To weet if they would turne backe to that place:  
But when she saw them gone, she forward went,  
As lay her iourney, through that perlous Pace,  
With stedfast courage and stout hardiment;  
Ne euill thing she fear'd, ne euill thing she ment.

[20]

At last as nigh out of the wood she came,  
A stately Castle farre away she spyde,  
To which her steps directly she did frame.  
That Castle was most goodly edifyde,  
And plaste for pleasure nigh that forrest syde:  
But faire before the gate a spacious plaine,  
Mantled with greene, it selfe did spredden wyde,  
On which she saw sixe knights, that did darraine  
Fierce battell against one, with cruell might and maine.

[21]

Mainely they all attonce vpon him laid,  
And sore beset on euery side around,  
That nigh he breathlesse grew, yet nought dismaid,  
Ne euer to them yielded foot of ground  
All had he lost much bloud through many a wound,  
But stoutly dealt his blowes, and euery way  
To which he turned in his wrathfull stound,  
Made them recoile, and fly from dred decay,  
That none of all the sixe, before him durst assay.

[22]

Like dastard Cures, that hauing at a bay  
The salvage beast embost in wearie chace,  
Dare not aduenture on the stubborne pray,  
Ne byte before, but rome from place to place,  
To get a snatch, when turned is his face.  
In such distresse and doubtfull ieopardy,  
When *Britomart* him saw, she ran apace  
Vnto his reskew, and with earnest cry,  
Bad those same sixe forbear that single enemy.

[23]

But to her cry they list not lenden eare,  
Ne ought the more their mightie stroakes surceasse,  
But gathering him round about more neare,  
Their direfull rancour rather did encrease;  
Till that she rushing through the thickest preasse,  
Perforce disparted their compacted gyre,  
And soone compeld to hearken vnto peace:  
Tho gan she myldly of them to inqyre  
The cause of their dissention and outrageous yre.

[24]

Whereto that single knight did answere frame;  
These sixe would me enforce by oddes of might,  
To chaunge my lief, and loue another Dame,  
That death me liefer were, then such despight,  
So vnto wrong to yield my wrested right:  
For I loue one, the truest one on ground,  
Ne list me chaunge; she th'*Errant Damzell* hight,  
For whose deare sake full many a bitter stownd,  
I haue endur'd, and tasted many a bloody wound.

[25]

Certes (said she) then bene ye sixe to blame,  
To weene your wrong by force to iustifie:  
For knight to leaue his Ladie were great shame,  
That faithfull is, and better were to die.  
All losse is lesse, and lesse the infamie,  
Then losse of loue to him, that loues but one;  
Ne may loue be compeld by maisterie;  
For soone as maisterie comes, sweet loue anone  
Taketh his nimble wings, and soone away is gone.

[26]

Then spake one of those sixe, There dwelleth here  
Within this castle wall a Ladie faire,  
Whose soueraine beautie hath no liuing pere,  
Thereto so bounteous and so debonaire,  
That neuer any mote with her compaire.  
She hath ordaind this law, which we approue,  
That euery knight, which doth this way repaire,  
In case he haue no Ladie, nor no loue,  
Shall doe vnto her seruice neuer to remoue.

[27]

But if he haue a Ladie or a Loue,  
Then must he her forgoe with foule defame,  
Or else with vs by dint of sword approue,  
That she is fairer, then our fairest Dame,  
As did this knight, before ye hither came.  
Perdie (said *Britomart*) the choice is hard:  
But what reward had he, that ouercame?  
He should aduaunced be to high regard,  
(Said they) and haue our Ladies loue for his reward.

[28]

Therefore a read Sir, if thou haue a loue.  
Loue haue I sure, (quoth she) but Lady none;  
Yet will I not fro mine owne loue remoue,  
Ne to your Lady will I seruice done,  
But wreake your wrongs wrought to this knight alone,  
And proue his cause. With that her mortall speare  
She mightily auentred towards one,  
And downe him smot, ere well aware he weare,  
Then to the next she rode, & downe the next did beare.

[29]

Ne did she stay, till three on ground she layd,  
That none of them himselfe could reare againe;  
The fourth was by that other knight dismayd,  
All were he wearie of his former paine,  
That now there do but two of six remaine;  
Which two did yield, before she did them smight.  
Ah (said she then) now may ye all see plaine,  
That truth is strong, and trew loue most of might,  
That for his trusty seruauents doth so strongly fight.

[30]

Too well we see, (said they) and proue too well  
Our faulty weaknesse, and your matchlesse might:  
For thy faire Sir, yours be the Damozell,  
Which by her owne law to your lot doth light,  
And we your liege men faith vnto you plight.  
So vnderneath her feet their swords they shard,  
And after her besought, well as they might,  
To enter in, and reape the dew reward:  
Shee graunted, and then in they all together far'd.

[31]

Long were it to describe the goodly frame,  
And stately port of Castle Ioyeous,  
(For so that Castle hight by commune name)  
Where they were entertaind with curteous  
And comely glee of many gracious  
Faire Ladies, and many a gentle knight,  
Who through a Chamber long and spacious,  
Eftsoones them brought vnto their Ladies sight.  
That of them cleeped was the *Lady of delight*.



[32]

But for to tell the sumptuous aray  
Of that great chamber, should be labour lost:  
For liuing wit, I weene, cannot display  
The royall riches and exceeding cost,  
Of euery pillour and of euery post;  
Which all of purest bullion framed were,  
And with great pearles and pretious stones embost,  
That the bright glister of their beames cleare  
Did sparckle forth great light, and glorious did appeare.

[33]

These straunger knights through passing, forth were led  
Into an inner rowme, whose royaltee  
And rich purveyance might vneath be red;  
Mote Princes place be seeme so deckt to bee.  
Which stately manner when as they did see,  
The image of superfluous riotize,  
Exceeding much the state of meane degree,  
They greatly wondred, whence so sumptuous guize  
Might be maintaynd, and each gan diuersely deuize.

[34]

The wals were round about apparelled  
With costly clothes of *Arras* and of *Toure*,  
In which with cunning hand was pourtrahed  
The loue of *Venus* and her Paramoure  
The faire *Adonis*, turned to a flowre,  
A worke of rare deuice, and wondrous wit.  
First did it shew the bitter balefull stowre,  
Which her assayd with many a feruent fit,  
When first her tender hart was with his beautie smit.

[35]

Then with what sleights and sweet allurements she  
Entyst the Boy, as well that art she knew,  
And wooed him her Paramour to be;  
Now making girlonds of each flowre that grew,  
To crowne his golden lockes with honour dew;  
Now leading him into a secret shade  
From his Beauperes, and from bright heauens vew,  
Where him to sleepe she gently would perswade,  
Or bathe him in a fountaine by some couert glade.

[36]

And whilst he slept, she ouer him would spred  
Her mantle, colour'd like the starry skyes,  
And her soft arme lay vnderneath his head,  
And with ambrosiall kisses bathe his eyes;  
And whilest he bath'd with her two crafty spyes,  
She secretly would search each daintie lim,  
And throw into the well sweet Rosemaryes,  
And fragrant violets, and Pances trim,  
And euer with sweet Nectar she did sprinkle him.

[37]

So did she steale his heedlesse hart away,  
And ioyd his loue in secret vnespyde.  
But for she saw him bent to cruell play,  
To hunt the saluage beast in forrest wyde,  
Dreadfull of daunger, that mote him betyde,  
She oft and oft aduiz'd him to refraine  
From chase of greater beasts, whose brutish pryde  
Mote breede him scath vnwares: but all in vaine;  
For who can shun the chaunce, that dest'ny doth ordaine?

[38]

Lo, where beyond he lyeth languishing,  
Deadly engored of a great wild Bore,  
And by his side the Goddesse groueling  
Makes for him endlesse mone, and euermore  
With her soft garment wipes away the gore,  
Which staines his snowy skin with hatefull hew:  
But when she saw no helpe might him restore,  
Him to a dainty flowre she did transmew,  
Which in that cloth was wrought, as if it liuely grew.

[39]

So was that chamber clad in goodly wize,  
And round about it many beds were dight,  
As whilome was the antique worldes guize,  
Some for vntimely ease, some for delight,  
As pleased them to vse, that vse it might:  
And all was full of Damzels, and of Squires,  
Dauncing and reueling both day and night,  
And swimming deepe in sensuall desires,  
And *Cupid* still emongst them kindled lustfull fires.

[40]

And all the while sweet Musick did diuide  
Her looser notes with *Lydian* harmony;  
And all the while sweet birdes thereto applide  
Their daintie layes and dulcet melody,  
Ay caroling of loue and iollity,  
That wonder was to heare their trim consort.  
Which when those knights beheld, with scornefull eye,  
They sdeigned such lasciuious disport,  
And loath'd the loose demeanure of that wanton sort.

[41]

Thence they were brought to that great Ladies vew,  
Whom they found sitting on a sumptuous bed,  
That glistred all with gold and glorious shew,  
As the proud *Persian* Queenes accustomed:  
She seemd a woman of great bountihed,  
And of rare beautie, sauing that askaunce  
Her wanton eyes, ill signes of womanhed,  
Did roll too highly, and too often glaunce,  
Without regard of grace, or comely amenaunce.

[42]

Long worke it were, and needlesse to deuize  
Their goodly entertainment and great glee:  
She caused them be led in curteous wize  
Into a bowre, disarmed for to bee,  
And cheared well with wine and spiceree:  
The *Redcrosse* Knight was soone disarmed there;  
But the braue Mayd would not disarmed be,  
But onely vented vp her vmbriere,  
And so did let her goodly visage to appere.

[43]

As when faire *Cynthia*, in darkesome night,  
Is in a noyous cloud enueloped,  
Where she may find the substaunce thin and light,  
Breakes forth her siluer beames, and her bright head  
Discouers to the world discomfited;  
Of the poore traueller, that went astray,  
With thousand blessings she is heried;  
Such was the beauty and the shining ray,  
With which faire *Britomart* gaue light vnto the day.

[44]

And eke those sixe, which lately with her fought,  
Now were disarmd, and did themselues present  
Vnto her vew, and company vnsought;  
For they all seemed curteous and gent,  
And all sixe brethren, borne of one parent,  
Which had them traynd in all ciuillitee,  
And goodly taught to tilt and turnament;  
Now were they liegemen to this Lady free,  
And her knights seruice ought, to hold of her in fee.

[45]

The first of them by name *Gardante* hight,  
A iolly person, and of comely vew;  
The second was *Parlante*, a bold knight,  
And next to him *Iocante* did ensew;  
*Basciante* did him selfe most curteous shew;  
But fierce *Bacchante* seemd too fell and keene;  
And yet in armes *Noctante* greater grew:  
All were faire knights, and goodly well beseene;  
But to faire *Britomart* they all but shadowes beene.

[46]

For she was full of amiable grace,  
And manly terrour mixed therewithall,  
That as the one stird vp affections bace,  
So th'other did mens rash desires apall,  
And hold them backe, that would in errour fall;  
As he, that hath espide a vermeill Rose,  
To which sharpe thornes and brers the way forstall,  
Dare not for dread his hardy hand expose,  
But wishing it farre off, his idle wish doth lose.

[47]

Whom when the Lady saw so faire a wight,  
All ignoraunt of her contrary sex,  
(For she her weend a fresh and lusty knight)  
She greatly gan enamoured to wex,  
And with vaine thoughts her falsed fancy vex:  
Her fickle hart conceiued hasty fire,  
Like sparkes of fire, which fall in sclender flex,  
That shortly brent into extreme desire,  
And ransackt all her veines with passion entire.

[48]

Eftsoones she grew to great impatience  
And into termes of open outrage burst,  
That plaine discouer'd her incontinence,  
Ne reekt she, who her meaning did mistrust;  
For she was giuen all to fleshly lust,  
And poured forth in sensuall delight,  
That all regard of shame she had discust,  
And meet respect of honour put to flight:  
So shamelesse beauty soone becomes a loathy sight,

[49]

Faire Ladies, that to loue captiued arre,  
And chaste desires do nourish in your mind,  
Let not her fault your sweet affections marre,  
Ne blot the bounty of all womankind;  
'Mongst thousands good one wanton Dame to find:  
Emongst the Roses grow some wicked weeds;  
For this was not to loue, but lust inclind;  
For loue does alwayes bring forth bounteous deeds,  
And in each gentle hart desire of honour breeds.

[50]

Nought so of loue this looser Dame did skill,  
But as a coale to kindle fleshly flame,  
Giuing the bridle to her wanton will,  
And treading vnder foote her honest name:  
Such loue is hate, and such desire is shame.  
Still did she roue at her with crafty glaunce  
Of her false eyes, that at her hart did ayme,  
And told her meaning in her countenance;  
But *Britomart* dissembled it with ignoraunce.

[51]

Supper was shortly dight and downe they sat,  
Where they were serued with all sumptuous fare,  
Whiles fruitfull *Ceres*, and *Lyaeus* sat  
Pourd out their plenty, without spight or spare:  
Nought wanted there, that dainty was and rare;  
And aye the cups their bancks did ouerflow,  
And aye betweene the cups, she did prepare  
Way to her loue, and secret darts did throw;  
But *Britomart* would not such guilfull message know.

[52]

So when they slaked had the feruent heat  
Of appetite with meates of euery sort,  
The Lady did faire *Britomart* entreat,  
Her to disarm, and with delightfull sport  
To loose her warlike limbs and strong effort:  
But when she mote not there-vnto be wonne,  
(For she her sexe vnder that strange purport  
Did vse to hide, and plaine apparaunce shonne:)  
In plainer wise to tell her grieuance she begonne.

[53]

And all attonce discouered her desire  
With sighes, and sobs, and plaints, & piteous grieve,  
The outward sparkes of her in burning fire;  
Which spent in vaine, at last she told her brieve,  
That but if she did lend her short reliefe,  
And do her comfort, she mote algates dye.  
But the chaste damzell, that had neuer priefe  
Of such malengine and fine forgerie,  
Did easily beleue her strong extremitie.

[54]

Full easie was for her to haue belief,  
Who, by self-feeling of her feeble sexe,  
And by long triall of the inward grieve,  
Wherewith imperious loue her hart did vexe,  
Could iudge what paines do louing harts perplex.  
Who meanes no guile, beguiled soonest shall,  
And to faire semblaunce doth light faith annexe;  
The bird, that knowes not the false fowlers call,  
Into his hidden net full easily doth fall.

[55]

For thy she would not in discourteise wise,  
Scorne the faire offer of good will profest;  
For great rebuke it is, loue to despise,  
Or rudely sdeigne a gentle harts request;  
But with faire countenance, as beseemed best,  
Her entertaynd; nath'lesse she inly deemd  
Her loue too light, to wooe a wandring guest:  
Which she misconstruing, thereby esteemd  
That from like inward fire that outward smoke had steemd.

[56]

Therewith a while she her flit fancy fed,  
Till she mote winne fit time for her desire:  
But yet her wound still inward freshly bled,  
And through her bones the false instilled fire  
Did spread it selfe, and venime close inspire.  
Tho were the tables taken all away,  
And euery knight, and euery gentle Squire  
Can choose his dame with *Basciomani* gay,  
With whom he meant to make his sport & courtly play.

[57]

Some fell to daunce, some fell to hazardry,  
Some to make loue, some to make meriment,  
As diuerse wits to diuers things apply;  
And all the while faire *Malecasta* bent  
Her crafty engins to her close intent.  
By this th'eternall lampes, wherewith high *Ioue*  
Doth light the lower world, were halfe yspent,  
And the moist daughters of huge *Atlas* stroue  
Into the *Ocean* deepe to driue their weary droue.

[58]

High time it seemed then for euery wight  
Them to betake vnto their kindly rest;  
Eftsoones long waxen torches weren light,  
Vnto their bowres to guiden euery guest:  
Tho when the Britonesse saw all the rest  
Auoided quite, she gan her selfe despoile,  
And safe commit to her soft fethered nest,  
Where through long watch, & late dayes weary toile,  
She soundly slept, & carefull thoughts did quite assoile.

[59]

Now whenas all the world in silence deepe  
Yshrowded was, and euery mortall wight  
Was drowned in the depth of deadly sleepe,  
Faire *Malecasta*, whose engrieued spright  
Could find no rest in such perplexed plight,  
Lightly arose out of her weary bed,  
And vnder the blacke vele of guilty Night,  
Her with a scarlot mantle couered,  
That was with gold and Ermines faire enueloped.

[60]

Then panting soft, and trembling euery ioynt,  
Her fearefull feet towards the bowre she moued;  
Where she for secret purpose did appoynt  
To lodge the warlike mayd vnwisely loued,  
And to her bed approaching, first she prooued,  
Whether she slept or wak't, with her soft hand  
She softly felt, if any member mooued,  
And lent her weary eare to vnderstand,  
If any puffle of breath, or signe of sence she fond.

[61]

Which, whenas none she fond, with easie shift,  
For feare least her vnwares she should abrayd,  
Th'embroderd quilt she lightly vp did lift,  
And by her side her selfe she softly layd,  
Of euery finest fingers touch affrayd;  
Ne any noise she made, ne word she spake,  
But inly sigh't. At last, the royall Mayd  
Out of her quiet slomber did awake,  
And chaungd her weary side, the better ease to take.

[62]

Where feeling one close couched by her side,  
She lightly lept out of her filed bed,  
And to her weapon ran, in minde to gride  
The loathed leachour. But the Dame halfe ded  
Through suddeine feare and gastly drerihed,  
Did shrieke alowd, that through the house it rong,  
And the whole family therewith adred,  
Rashly out of their rouzed couches sprong,  
And to the troubled chamber all in armes did throng.

[63]

And those six Knights, that Ladies Champions,  
And eke the *Redcrosse* knight ran to the stownd,  
Halfe armd and halfe vnarmd, with them attons:  
Where when confusedly they came, they fownd  
Their Lady lying on the sencelesse grownd;  
On th'other side, they saw the warlike Mayd  
All in her snow-white smocke, with locks vnbownd,  
Threatning the poynt of her auenging blade,  
That with so troublous terrour they were all dismayde.



[64]

About their Lady first they flockt arownd,  
Whom hauing laid in comfortable couch,  
Shortly they reard out of her frosen swownd;  
And afterwards they gan with foule reproch  
To stirre vp strife, and troublous contecke broch:  
But by ensample of the last dayes losse,  
None of them rashly durst to her approach,  
Ne in so glorious spoile themselues embosse;  
Her succourd eke the Champion of the bloudy Crosse.

[65]

But one of those sixe knights, *Gardante* hight,  
Drew out a deadly bowe and arrow keene,  
Which forth he sent with felonous despight,  
And fell intent against the virgin sheene:  
The mortall steele stayd not, till it was seene  
To gore her side, yet was the wound not deepe,  
But lightly rased her soft silken skin,  
That drops of purple bloud thereout did weepe,  
Which did her lilly smock with staines of vermeil steepe,

[66]

Wherewith enrag'd she fiercely at them flew,  
And with her flaming sword about her layd,  
That none of them foule mischief could eschew,  
But with her dreadfull strokes were all dismayd:  
Here, there, and euery where about her swayd  
Her wrathfull steele, that none mote it abide;  
And eke the *Redcrosse* knight gaue her good aid,  
Ay ioyning foot to foot, and side to side,  
That in short space their foes they haue quite terrifide.

[67]

Tho whenas all were put to shamefull flight,  
The noble *Britomartis* her arayd,  
And her bright armes about her body dight:  
For nothing would she lenger there be stayd,  
Where so loose life, and so vngentle trade  
Was vs'd of Knights and Ladies seeming gent:  
So earely ere the grosse Earthes gryesy shade,  
Was all disperst out of the firmament,

They tooke their steeds, & forth vpon their iourney went.

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