

Cant. III.

*Merlin bewrayes to Britomart,
the state of Artegall.
And shewes the famous Progeny
which from them springen shall.*

[1]

Most sacred fire, that burnest mightily
In liuing brests, ykindled first aboue,
Emongst th'eternall spheres and lamping sky,
And thence poud into men, which men call Loue;
Not that same, which doth base affections moue
In brutish minds, and filthy lust inflame,
But that sweet fit, that doth true beautie loue,
And choseth vertue for his dearest Dame,
Whence spring all noble deeds and neuer dying fame:

[2]

Well did Antiquitie a God thee deeme,
That ouer mortall minds hast so great might,
To order them, as best to thee doth seeme,
And all their actions to direct aright;
The fatall purpose of diuine foresight,
Thou doest effect in destined descents,
Through deepe impression of thy secret might,
And stirredst vp th'Heroes high intents,
Which the late world admyres for wondrous moniments.

[3]

But thy dread darts in none doe triumph more,
Ne brauer prooffe in any, of thy powre
Shew'dst thou, then in this royall Maid of yore,
Making her seeke an vnknowne Paramoure,
From the worlds end, through many a bitter stowre:
From whose two loynes thou afterwards did rayse
Most famous fruits of matrimoniall bowre,
Which through the earth haue spread their liuing prayse,
That fame in trompe of gold eternally displayes.

[4]

Begin then, ô my dearest sacred Dame,
Daughter of *Phoebus* and of *Memorie*,

That doest ennoble with immortall name
The warlike Worthies, from antiquitie,
In thy great volume of Eternitie:
Begin, ô *Clio*, and recount from hence
My glorious Soueraines goodly auncestie,
Till that by dew degrees and long pretence,
Thou haue it lastly brought vnto her Excellence.

[5]

Full many wayes within her troubled mind,
Old *Glauce*, cast, to cure this Ladies grieve:
Full many waies she sought, but none could find,
Nor herbes, nor charmes, nor counsell, that is chiefe
And choisest med'cine for sicke harts reliefe:
For thy great care she tooke, and greater feare,
Least that it should her turne to foule reprieft,
And sore reproch, when so her father deare
Should of his dearest daughters hard misfortune heare.

[6]

At last she her auisd, that he, which made
That mirrhour, wherein the sicke Damosell
So straungely vewed her straunge louers shade,
To weet, the learned *Merlin*, well could tell,
Vnder what coast of heauen the man did dwell,
And by what meanes his loue might best be wrought:
For though beyond the *Africk Ismaell*,
Or th'Indian *Peru* he were, she thought
Him forth through infinite endeuour to haue sought.

[7]

Forthwith themselues disguising both in straunge
And base attyre, that none might them bewray,
To *Maridunum*, that is now by chaunge
Of name *Cayr-Merdin* cald, they tooke their way:
There the wise *Merlin* whylome wont (they say)
To make his wonne, low vnderneath the ground,
In a deepe delue, farre from the vew of day,
That of no liuing wight he mote be found,
When so he counseld with his sprights encompass round.

[8]

And if thou euer happen that same way
To trauell, goe to see that dreadfull place:

It is an hideous hollow caue (they say)
Vnder a rocke that lyes a litle space
From the swift *Barry*, tombling downe apace,
Emongst the woodie hilles of *Dyneuowre*:
But dare thou not, I charge, in any cace,
To enter into that same balefull Bowre,
For fear the cruell Feends should thee vnwares deuowre.

[9]

But standing high aloft, low lay thine eare,
And there such ghastly noise of yron chaines,
And brasen Caudrons thou shalt rombling heare,
Which thousand sprights with long enduring paines
Doe tosse, that it will stonne thy feeble braines,
And oftentimes great grones, and grievous stounds,
When too huge toile and labour them constraines:
And oftentimes loud strokes, and ringing sounds
From vnder that deepe Rocke most horribly rebounds.

[10]

The cause some say is this: A litle while
Before that *Merlin* dyde, he did intend,
A brasen wall in compas to compile
About *Cairmardin*, and did it commend
Vnto these Sprights, to bring to perfect end.
During which worke the Ladie of the Lake,
Whom long he lou'd, for him in hast did send,
Who thereby forst his workemen to forsake,
Them bound till his returne, their labour not to slake.

[11]

In the meane time through that false Ladies traine,
He was surprisd, and buried vnder beare,
Ne euer to his worke returnd againe:
Nath'lesse those feends may not their worke forbear,
So greatly his commaundement they feare,
But there doe toyle and trauell day and night,
Vntill that brasen wall they vp doe reare:
For *Merlin* had in Magicke more insight,
Then euer him before or after liuing wight.

[12]

For he by words could call out of the sky
Both Sunne and Moone, and make them him obey:
The land to sea, and sea to maineland dry,
And darkesome night he eke could turne to day:
Huge hostes of men he could alone dismay,
And hostes of men of meanest things could frame,
When so him list his enimies to fray:
That to this day for terror of his fame,
The feends do quake, when any him to them does name.

[13]

And sooth, men say that he was not the sonne
Of mortall Syre, or other liuing wight,
But wondrously begotten, and begonne
By false illusion of a guilefull Spright,
On a faire Ladie Nonne, that whilome hight
Matilda, daughter to *Pubidius*,
Who was the Lord of *Mathrauall* by right,
And coosen vnto king *Ambrosius*:
Whence he indued was with skill so maruellous.

[14]

They here ariuing, staid a while without,
Ne durst aduenture rashly in to wend,
But of their first intent gan make new dout
For dread of daunger, which it might portend:
Vntill the hardie Mayd (with loue to frend)
First entering, the dreadfull Mage there found
Deepe busied bout worke of wondrous end,
And writing strange characters in the ground,
With which the stubborn feends he to his seruice bound.

[15]

He nought was moued at their entrance bold:
For of their comming well he wist afore,
Yet list them bid their businesse to vnfold,
As if ought in this world in secret store
Were from him hidden, or vnknowne of yore.
Then *Glauce* thus, let not it thee offend,
That we thus rashly through thy darkesome dore,
Vnwares haue prest: for either fatall end,
Or other mightie cause vs two did hither send.

[16]

He bad tell on; And then she thus began.

Now haue three Moones with borrow'd brothers light,
Thrice shined faire, and thrice seem'd dim and wan,
Sith a sore euill, which this virgin bright
Tormenteth, and doth plunge in dolefull plight,
First rooting tooke; but what thing it mote bee,
Or whence it sprong, I cannot read aright:

But this I read, that but if remedee,
Thou her afford, full shortly I her dead shall see.

[17]

Therewith th'Enchaunter softly gan to smyle

At her smooth speeches, weeting inly well,
That she to him dissembled womanish guyle,
And to her said, Beldame, by that ye tell,
More need of leach-craft hath your Damozell,
Then of my skill: who helpe may haue elsewhere,
In vaine seekes wonders out of Magicke spell.

Th'old woman vox half blanck, those words to heare;
And yet was loth to let her purpose plaine appeare.

[18]

And to him said, If any leaches skill,

Or other learned meanes could haue redrest
This my deare daughters deepe engrafted ill,
Certes I should be loth thee to molest:
But this sad euill, which doth her infest,
Doth course of naturall cause farre exceed,
And housed is within her hollow brest,

That either seemes some cursed witches deed,
Or euill spright, that in her doth such torment breed.

[19]

The wisard could no lenger beare her bord,

But brusting forth in laughter, to her sayd;
Glauce, what needs this colourable word,
To cloke the cause, that hath it selfe bewrayd?
Ne ye faire *Britomartis*, thus arayd,
More hidden are, then Sunne in cloudy vele;
Whom thy good fortune, hauing fate obeyd,
Hath hither brought, for succour to appele:

The which the powres to thee are pleased to reuele.

[20]

The doubtfull Mayd, seeing her selfe descryde,
Was all abasht, and her pure yuory
Into a cleare Carnation suddeine dyde;
As faire *Aurora* rising hastily,
Doth by her blushing tell, that she did lye
All night in old *Tithonus* frosen bed,
Whereof she seemes ashamed inwardly.
But her old Nourse was nought dishartened,
But vauntage made of that, which *Merlin* had ared.

[21]

And sayd, Sith then thou knowest all our grieve,
(For what doest not thou know?) of grace I pray,
Pitty our plaint, and yield vs meet reliefe.
With that the Prophet still a while did stay,
And then his spirite thus gan forth display;
Most noble Virgin, that by fatall lore
Hast learn'd to loue, let no whit thee dismay
The hard begin, that meets thee in the dore.
And with sharpe fits thy tender hart oppresseth sore.

[22]

For so must all things excellent begin,
And eke enrooted deepe must be that Tree,
Whose big embodied braunches shall not lin,
Till they to heauens hight forth stretched bee.
For from thy wombe a famous Progenie
Shall spring, out of the auncient *Troian* blood,
Which shall reuiue the sleeping memorie
Of those same antique Peres, the heauens brood,
Which *Greece* and *Asian* riuers stained with their blood.

[23]

Renowmed kings, and sacred Emperours,
Thy fruitfull Ofspring, shall from thee descend;
Braue Captaines, and most mighty warriours,
That shall their conquests through all lands extend,
And their decayed kingdomes shall amend:
The feeble Britons, broken with long warre,
They shall vpreare, and mightily defend
Against their forrein foe, that comes from farre,
Till vniuersall peace compound all ciuill iarre.

[24]

It was not, *Britomart*, thy wandring eye,
Glauncing vnwares in charmed looking glas,
But the streight course of heauenly destiny,
Led with eternall prouidence, that has
Guided thy glaunce, to bring his will to pas:
Ne is thy fate, ne is thy fortune ill,
To loue the prowtest knight, that euer was.
Therefore submit thy wayes vnto his will,
And do by all dew meanes thy destiny fulfill.

[25]

But read (said *Glauce*) thou Magitian
What meanes shall she out seeke, or what wayes take?
How shall she know, how shall she find the man?
Or what needs her to toyle, sith fates can make
Way for themselues, their purpose to partake?
Then *Merlin* thus; Indeed the fates are firme,
And may not shrinck, though all the world do shake:
Yet ought mens good endeouours them confirme,
And guide the heauenly causes to their constant terme.

[26]

The man whom heauens haue ordaynd to bee
The spouse of *Britomart*, is *Arthegall*:
He wonneth in the land of *Fayeree*,
Yet is no Fary borne, ne sib at all
To Elfes, but sprong of seed terrestriall,
And whilome by false Faries stolne away,
Whiles yet in infant cradle he did crall;
Ne other to himselfe is knowne this day,
But that he by an Elfe was gotten of a *Fay*.

[27]

But sooth he is the some of *Gorlois*,
And brother vnto *Cador* Cornish king,
And for his warlike feates renowned is,
From where the day out of the sea doth spring,
Vntill the closure of the Euening.
From thence, him firmly bound with faithfull band,
To this his natue soyle thou backe shalt bring,
Strongly to aide his countrey, to withstand
The powre of forrein Paynims, which inuade thy land.

[28]

Great aid thereto his mighty puissance,
And dreaded name shall giue in that sad day:
Where also prooue of thy prow valiaunce
Thou then shalt make, t'increase thy louers pray.
Long time ye both in armes shall beare great sway,
Till thy wombes burden thee from them do call,
And his last fate him from thee take away,
Too rathe cut off by practise criminall
Of secret foes, that him shall make in mischief fall.

[29]

Where thee yet shall he leaue for memory
Of his late puissance, his Image dead,
That liuing him in all actiuitie
To thee shall represent. He from the head
Of his coosin *Constantius* without dread
Shall take the crowne, that was his fathers right,
And therewith crowne himselfe in th'others stead:
Then shall he issew forth with dreadfull might,
Against his Saxon foes in bloudy field to fight.

[30]

Like as a Lyon, that in drowsie caue
Hath long time slept, himselfe so shall he shake,
And comming forth, shall spread his banner braue
Ouer the troubled South, that it shall make
The warlike *Mertians* for feare to quake:
Thrise shall he fight with them, and twise shall win,
But the third time shall faire accordaunce make:
And if he then with victorie can lin,
He shall his dayes with peace bring to his earthly In.

[31]

His sonne, hight *Vortipore*, shall him succede
In kingdome, but not in felicity;
Yet shall he long time warre with happy speed,
And with great honour many battels try:
But at the last to th'importunity
Of froward fortune shall be forst to yield.
But his sonne *Malgo* shall full mightily
Auenge his fathers losse, with speare and shield,
And his proud foes discomfit in victorious field.

[32]

Behold the man, and tell me *Britomart*,
If ay more goodly creature thou didst see;
How like a Gyaunt in each manly part
Beares he himselfe with portly maiestee,
That one of th'old *Heroes* seemes to bee:
He the six Islands, comprouinciall
In auncient times vnto great Britaine,
Shall to the same reduce, and to him call
Their sundry kings to do their homage seuerall.

[33]

All which his sonne *Careticus* awhile
Shall well defend, and *Saxons* powre suppress,
Vntill a straunger king from vnknowne soyle
Arriuing, him with multitude oppresse;
Great *Gormond*, hauing with huge mightnesse
Ireland subdewd, and therein fixt his throne,
Like a swift Otter, fell through emptinesse,
Shall ouerswim the sea with many one
Of his Norueyses, to assist the Britons fone.

[34]

He in his furie all shall ouerrunne,
And holy Church with faithlesse hands deface,
That thy sad people vtterly fordonne,
Shall to the vtmost mountaines fly apace:
Was neuer so great wast in any place,
Nor so fowle outrage doen by liuing men:
For all thy Cities they shall sacke and race,
And the greene grasse, that groweth, they shall bren,
That euen the wild beast shall dy in starued den.

[35]

Whiles thus the Britons do in languour pine,
Proud *Etheldred* shall from the North arise,
Seruing th'ambitious will of *Augustine*,
And passing *Dee* with hardy enterprise,
Shall backe repulse the valiaunt *Brockwell* twice,
And *Bangor* with massacred Martyrs fill;
But the third time shall rew his foolhardise:
For *Cadwan* pittying his peoples ill,
Shall stoutly him defeat, and thousand *Saxons* kill.

[36]

But after him, *Cadwallin* mightily
On his sonne *Edwin* all those wrongs shall wreake;
Ne shall auaille the wicked sorcery
Of false *Pellite*, his purposes to breake,
But him shall slay, and on a gallows bleake
Shall giue th'enchauter his vnhappy hire
Then shall the Britons, late dismayd and weake,
From their long vassalage gin to respire,
And on their Paynim foes auenge their ranckled ire.

[37]

Ne shall he yet his wrath so mitigate,
Till both the sonnes of *Edwin* he haue slaine,
Offricke and *Osricke*, twinnes vnfortunate,
Both slaine in battell vpon Layburne plaine,
Together with the king of *Louthiane*,
Hight *Adin*, and the king of *Orkeny*,
Both ioynt partakers of the fatall paine:
But *Penda*, fearefull of like desteny,
Shall yield him selfe his liegeman, and sweare fealty.

[38]

Him shall he make his fatall Instrument,
T'afflict the other *Saxons* vnsubdewd;
He marching forth with fury insolent
Against the good king *Oswald*, who indewd
With heauenly powre, and by Angels reskewd,
All holding crosses in their hands on hye,
Shall him defeate withouten bloud imbrewd:
Of which, that field for endlesse memory,
Shall *Heuenfield* be cald to all posterity.

[39]

Whereat *Cadwallin* wroth, shall forth issew,
And an huge hoste into Northumber lead,
With which he godly *Oswald* shall subdew,
And crowne with martyrdome his sacred head.
Whose brother *Oswin*, daunted with like dread,
With price of siluer shall his kingdome buy,
And *Penda*, seeking him adowne to tread,
Shall tread adowne, and do him fowly dye,
But shall with gifts his Lord *Cadwallin* pacify.

[40]

Then shall *Cadwallin* dye, and then the raine
Of *Britons* eke with him attonce shall dye;
Ne shall the good *Cadwallader* with paine,
Or powre, be hable it to remedy,
When the full time prefixt by destiny,
Shalbe expird of *Britons* regiment.
For heauen it selfe shall their successe enuy,
And them with plagues and murrins pestilent
Consume, till all their warlike puissaunce be spent.

[41]

Yet after all these sorrowes, and huge hills
Of dying people, during eight yeares space,
Cadwallader not yielding to his ills,
From *Armoricke*, where long in wretched cace
He liu'd, returning to his natue place,
Shalbe by vision staid from his intent:
For th'heauens haue decreed, to displace
The *Britons*, for their sinnes dew punishment,
And to the *Saxons* ouer-giue their gouernment.

[42]

Then woe, and woe, and euerlasting woe,
Be to the Briton babe, that shalbe borne,
To liue in thraldome of his fathers foe;
Late King, now captiue, late Lord, now forlorne,
The worlds reproch, the cruell victours scorne,
Banisht from Princely bowre to wastfull wood:
O who shall helpe me to lament, and mourne
The royall seed, the antique *Troian* blood,
Whose Empire lenger here, then euer any stood.

[43]

The Damzell was full deepe empassioned,
Both for his grieffe, and for her peoples sake,
Whose future woes so plaine he fashioned,
And sighing sore, at length him thus bespake;
Ah but will heauens fury neuer slake,
Nor vengeance huge relent it selfe at last?
Will not long misery late mercy make,
But shall their name for euer be defast,
And quite from th'earth their memory be rast?

[44]

Nay but the terme (said he) is limited,
That in this thraldome *Britons* shall abide,
And the iust reuolution measured,
That they as Straungers shalbe notifide.
For twise foure hundreth shalbe supplide,
Ere they to former rule restor'd shalbee.
And their importune fates all satisfide:
Yet during this their most obscuretee,
Their beames shall oft breake forth, that men them faire may see.

[45]

For *Rhodoricke*, whose surname shalbe Great,
Shall of him selfe a braue ensample shew,
That Saxon kings his friendship shall intreat;
And *Howell Dha* shall goodly well indew
The saluage minds with skill of iust and trew;
Then *Griffyth Conan* also shall vp reare
His dreaded head, and the old sparkes renew
Of natiue courage, that his foes shall feare,
Least backe againe the kingdome he from them should beare.

[46]

Ne shall the Saxons selues all peaceably
Enioy the crowne, which they from Britons wonne
First ill, and after ruled wickedly:
For ere two hundred yeares be full ouerronne,
There shall a Rauen far from rising Sunne,
With his wide wings vpon them fiercely fly,
And bid his faithlesse chickens ouerronne
The fruitfull plaines, and with fell cruelty,
In their auenge, tread downe the victours surquedry.

[47]

Yet shall a third both these, and thine subdew;
There shall a Lyon from the sea-bord wood
Of *Neustria* come roring, with a crew
Of hungry whelpes, his battailous bold brood,
Whose clawes were newly dipt in cruddy blood,
That from the Daniske Tyrants head shall rend
Th'vsurped crowne, as if that he were wood,
And the spoile of the countrey conquered
Emongst his young ones shall diuide with bountyhed.

[48]

Tho when the terme is full accomplishid,
There shall a sparke of fire, which hath long-while
Bene in his ashes raked vp, and hid,
Be freshly kindled in the fruitfull Ile
Of *Mona*, where it lurked in exile;
Which shall breake forth into bright burning flame,
And reach into the house, that beares the stile
Of royall maiesty and soueraigne name;
So shall the Briton bloud their crowne againe reclame.

[49]

Thenceforth eternall vnion shall be made
Betweene the nations different afore,
And sacred Peace shall louingly perswade
The warlike minds, to learne her goodly lore,
And ciuile armes to exercise no more:
Then shall a royall virgin raine, which shall
Stretch her white rod ouer the *Belgicke* shore,
And the great Castle smite so sore with all,
That it shall make him shake, and shortly learne to fall.

[50]

But yet the end is not. There *Merlin* stayd,
As ouercomen of the spirites powre,
Or other ghastly spectacle dismayd,
That secretly he saw, yet note discoure:
Which suddein fit, and halfe extatick stoure
When the two fearefull women saw, they grew
Greatly confused in behauioure;
At last the fury past, to former hew
She turnd againe, and chearefull looks did shew.

[51]

Then, when them selues they well instructed had
Of all, that needed them to be inquired,
They both conceiuing hope of comfort glad,
With lighter hearts vnto their home retird;
Where they in secret counsell close conspird,
How to effect so hard an enterprize,
And to possesse the purpose they desird:
Now this, now that twixt them they did deuise,
And diuerse plots did frame, to maske in strange deuise.

[52]

At last the Nourse in her foolhardy wit
Conceiu'd a bold deuise, and thus bespake;
Daughter, I deeme that counsell aye most fit,
That of the time doth dew aduauntage take;
Ye see that good king *Vther* now doth make
Strong warre vpon the Paynim brethren, hight
Octa and *Oza*, whom he lately brake
Beside *Cayr Verolame*, in victorious fight,
That now all *Britanie* doth burne in armes bright.

[53]

That therefore nought our passage may empeach,
Let vs in feigned armes our selues disguise,
And our weake hands (whom need new strength shall teach
The dreadfull speare and shield to exercize:
Ne certes daughter that same warlike wize
I weene, would you misseeme; for ye bene tall,
And large of limbe, t'atchieue an hard emprize,
Ne ought ye want, but skill, which practize small
Will bring, and shortly make you a mayd Martiall.

[54]

And sooth, it ought your courage much inflame,
To heare so often, in that royall hous,
From whence to none inferiour ye came:
Bards tell of many women valorous
Which haue full many feats aduenturous
Performd, in paragone of proudest men:
The bold *Bunduca*, whose victorious
Exploits made *Rome* to quake, stout *Guendolen*,
Renowmed *Martia*, and redoubted *Emmilen*.

[55]

And that, which more then all the rest may sway,
Late dayes ensample, which these eyes beheld,
In the last field before *Meneuia*
Which *Vther* with those forrein Pagans held,
I saw a *Saxon* Virgin, the which feld
Great *Vlfin* thrise vpon the bloody plaine,
And had not *Carados* her hand withheld
From rash reuenge, she had him surely slaine,
Yet *Carados* himselve from her escapt with paine.

[56]

Ah read, (quoth *Britomart*) how is she hight?
Faire *Angela* (quoth she) men do her call,
No whit lesse faire, then terrible in fight:
She hath the leading of a Martiall
And mighty people, dreaded more then all
The other *Saxons*, which do for her sake
And loue, themselues of her name *Angles* call.
Therefore faire Infant her ensample make
Vnto thy selfe, and equall courage to thee take.

[57]

Her harty words so deepe into the mynd
Of the young Damzell sunke, that great desire
Of warlike armes in her forthwith they tynd,
And generous stout courage did inspire,
That she resolu'd, vnmeeting to her Sire,
Aduent'rous knighthood on her selfe to don,
And counseld with her Nourse, her Maides attire
To turne into a massy habergeon,
And bad her all things put in readinesse anon.

[58]

Th'old woman nought, that needed, did omit;
But all things did conuiently puruay:
It fortun'd (so time their turne did fit)
A band of Britons ryding on forray
Few dryes before, had gotten a great pray
Of Saxon goods, emongst the which was seene
A goodly Armour, and full rich aray,
Which long'd to *Angela*, the Saxon Queene,
All fretted round with gold, and goodly well beseene.

[59]

The same, with all the other ornaments,
King *Ryence* caused to be hanged hy
In his chiefe Church, for endlesse moniments
Of his successe and gladfull victory:
Of which her selfe auising readily,
In th'euening late old *Glauce* thither led
Faire *Britomart*, and that same Armory
Downe taking, her therein appareled,
Well as she might, and with braue bauldrick garnished.

[60]

Beside those armes there stood a mighty speare,
Which *Bladud* made by Magick art of yore,
And vsd the same in battell aye to beare;
Sith which it had bin here preseru'd in store,
For his great vertues proued long afore:
For neuer wight so fast in sell could sit,
But him perforce vnto the ground it bore:
Both speare she tooke, and shield, which hong by it:
Both speare & shield of great powre, for her purpose fit

[61]

Thus when she had the virgin all arayd,
Another harnesse, which did hang thereby,
About her selfe she dight, that the young Mayd
She might in equall armes accompany,
And as her Squire attend her carefully:
Tho to their ready Steeds they clombe full light,
And through back wayes, that none might them espy,
Couered with secret cloud of silent night,
Themselues they forth conuayd, & passed forward right.

[62]

Ne rested they, till that to Faery lond
They came, as *Merlin* them directed late:
Where meeting with this *Redcrosse* knight, she fond
Of diuerse things discourses to dilate,
But most of *Arthegall*, and his estate.
At last their wayes so fell, that they mote part
Then each to other well affectionate,
Friendship professed with vnfained hart,
The *Redcrosse* knight diuerst, but forth rode *Britomart*.

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