

Cant. V.

*Prince Arthur heares of Florimell:
three fosters Timias wound,
Belphebe finds him almost dead,
and reareth out of sownd.*

[1]

Wonder it is to see, in diuerse minds,
How diuersly loue doth his pageants play,
And shewes his powre in variable kinds:
The bafer wit, whose idle thoughts alway
Are wont to cleaue vnto the lowly clay,
It stirreth vp to sensuall desire,
And in lewd slouth to wast his carelesse day:
But in braue sprite it kindles goodly fire,
That to all high desert and honour doth aspire.

[2]

Ne suffereth it vncomely idlenesse,
In his free thought to build her sluggish nest:
Ne suffereth it thought of vngentlenesse,
Euer to creepe into his noble brest,
But to the highest and the worthiest
Lifteth it vp, that else would lowly fall:
It lets not fall, it lets it not to rest:
It lets not scarce this Prince to breath at all,
But to his first poursuit him forward still doth call.

[3]

Who long time wandred through the forrest wyde,
To finde some issue thence, till that at last
He met a Dwarfe, that seemed terrifyde
With some late perill, which he hardly past,
Or other accident, which him aghast;
Of whom he asked, whence he lately came,
And whither now he trauelled so fast:
For sore he swat, and running through that same
Thicke forest, was be scratcht, & both his feet nigh lame.

[4]

Panting for breath, and almost out of hart,
The Dwarfe him answerd, Sir, ill mote I stay

To tell the same. I lately did depart
From Faery court, where I haue many a day
Serued a gentle Lady of great sway,
And high accompt through out all Elfin land,
Who lately left the same, and tooke this way:
Her now I seeke, and if ye vnderstand
Which way she fared hath, good Sir tell out of hand.

[5]

What mister wight (said he) and how arayd?
Royally clad (quoth he) in cloth of gold,
As meetest may beseeme a noble mayd;
Her faire lockes in rich circlet be enrolld,
And fairer wight did neuer Sunne behold,
And on a Palfrey rides more white then snow,
Yet she her selfe is whiter manifold:
The surest signe, whereby ye may her know,
Is, that she is the fairest wight aliue, I trow.

[6]

Now certes swaine (said he) such one I weene,
Fast flying through this forest from her fo,
A foule ill fauoured foster, I haue seene;
Her selfe, well as I might, I reskewd tho,
But could not stay; so fast she did foregoe,
Carried away with wings of speedy feare.
Ah dearest God (quoth he) that is great woe,
And wondrous ruth to all, that shall it heare.
But can ye read Sir, how I may her find, or where.

[7]

Perdy me leuer were to weeten that,
(Said he) then ransome of the richest knight,
Or all the good that euer yet I gat:
But froward fortune, and too forward Night
Such happinesse did, maulgre, to me spight,
And fro me reft both life and light attone.
But Dwarfe aread, what is that Lady bright,
That through this forest wandreth thus alone;
For of her errour straunge I haue great ruth and mone.

[8]

That Lady is (quoth he) where so she bee,

The bountiest virgin, and most debonaire,
That euer liuing eye I weene did see;
Liues none this day, that may with her compare
In stedfast chastitie and vertue rare,
The goodly ornaments of beautie bright;
And is ycleped *Florimell* the faire,
Faire *Florimell* belou'd of a many a knight,
Yet she loues none but one, that *Marinell* is hight.

[9]

A Sea-nymphes sonne, that *Marinell* is hight,
Of my deare Dame is loued dearely well;
In other none, but him, she sets delight,
All her delight is set on *Marinell*;
But he sets nought at all by *Florimell*:
For Ladies loue his mother long ygoe
Did him, they say, forwarne through sacred spell.
But fame now flies, that of a forreine foe
He is yslaine, which is the ground of all our woe.

[10]

Fiue dayes there be, since he (they say) was slaine,
And foure, since *Florimell* the Court for-went,
And vowed neuer to returne againe,
Till him aliue or dead she did inuent.
Therefore, faire Sir, for loue of knighthood gent,
And honour of trew Ladies, if ye may
By your good counsell, or bold hardiment,
Or succour her, or me direct the way;
Do one, or other good, I you most humbly pray.

[11]

So may you gaine to you full great renowne,
Of all good Ladies through the world so wide,
And haply in her hart find highest rowme,
Of whom ye seeke to be most magnifide:
At least eternall meede shall you abide.
To whom the Prince; Dwarfes, comfort to thee take,
For till thou tidings learne, what her betide,
I here auow thee neuer to forsake.
Ill weares he armes, that nill them vse for Ladies sake.

[12]

So with the Dwarf he backe return'd againe,
To seeke his Lady, where he mote her find;
But by the way he greatly gan complaine
The want of his good Squire late left behind,
For whom he wondrous pensie grew in mind,
For doubt of daunger, which mote him betide;
For him he loued aboue all mankind,
Hauing him trew and faithfull euer tride,
And bold, as euer Squire that waited by knights side.

[13]

Who all this while full hardly was assayd
Of deadly daunger, which to him betid;
For whiles his Lord pursed that noble Mayd,
After that foster fowle he fiercely rid,
To bene auenged of the shame, he did
To that faire Damzell: Him he chaced long
Through the thicke woods, wherein he would haue hid
His shamefull head from his auengement strong.
And oft him threatned death for his outrageous wrong.

[14]

Nathlesse the villen sped himselfe so well,
Whether through swiftnesse of his speedy beast;
Or knowledge of those woods, where he did dwell,
That shortly he from daunger was releast,
And out of sight escaped at the least;
Yet not escaped from the dew reward
Of his bad deeds, which dayly he increast,
Ne ceased not, till him oppressed hard
The heauy plague, that for such leachours is prepard.

[15]

For soone as he was vanisht out of sight,
His coward courage gan emboldned bee,
And cast t'auenge him of that fowle despight,
Which he had borne of his bold enimee.
Tho to his brethren came: for they were three
Vngratious children of one gracelesse sire,
And vnto them complained, how that he
Had vsed bene of that foolehardy Squire;
So them with bitter words he stird to bloody ire.

[16]

Forthwith themselves with their sad instruments
Of spoyle and murder they gan arme byliue,
And with him forth into the forest went,
To wreake the wrath, which he did earst reuiue
In their sterne breasts, on him which late did driue
Their brother to reproch and shamefull flight:
For they had vow'd, that neuer he aliue
Out of that forest should escape their might;
Vile rancour their rude harts had fild with such despight.

[17]

Within that wood there was a couert glade,
Foreby a narrow foord, to them well knowne,
Through which it was vneath for wight to wade;
And now by fortune it was ouerflowne:
By that same way they knew that Squire vnknowne
Mote algates passe; for thy themselves they set
There in await, with thicke woods ouer growne,
And all the while their malice they did whet
With cruell threats, his passage through the ford to let.

[18]

It fortun'd, as they deuized had,
The gentle Squire came ryding that same way,
Vnweeting of their wile and treason bad,
And through the ford to passen did assay;
But that fierce foster, which late fled away,
Stoutly forth stepping on the further shore,
Him boldly bad his passage there to stay,
Till he had made amends, and full restore
For all the damage, which he had him doen afore.

[19]

With that at him a quiu'ring dart he threw,
With so fell force and villeinous despighte,
That through his haberieon the forkehead flew,
And through the linked mayles empierced quite,
But had no powre in his soft flesh to bite:
That stroke the hardy Squire did sore displease,
But more that him he could not come to smite;
For by no meanes the high banke he could sease,
But labour'd long in that deepe ford with vaine disease.

[20]

And still the foster with his long bore-speare
Him kept from landing at his wished will;
Anone one sent out of the thicket neare
A cruell shaft, headed with deadly ill,
And fethered with an vn lucky quill;
The wicked steele stayd not, till it did light
In his left thigh, and deeply did it thrill:
Exceeding grieve that wound in him empight,
But more that with his foes he could not come to fight.

[21]

At last through wrath and vengeance making way,
He on the bancke arriu'd with mickle paine,
Where the third brother him did sore assay,
And droue at him with all his might and maine
A forrest bill, which both his hands did straine;
But warily he did auoide the blow,
And with his speare requited him againe,
That both his sides were thrilled with the throw,
And a large streame of blood out of the wound did flow.

[22]

He tombling downe, with gnashing teeth did bite
The bitter earth, and bad to let him in
Into the balefull house of endlesse night,
Where wicked ghosts do waile their former sin.
Tho gan the battell freshly to begin;
For nathemore for that spectacle bad,
Did th'other two their cruell vengeance blin,
But both attonce on both sides him bestad,
And load vpon him layd, his life for to haue had.

[23]

Tho when that villain he auiz'd, which late
Affrighted had the fairest Florimell,
Full of fiers fury, and indignant hate,
To him he turned, and with rigour fell
Smote him so rudely on the Pannikell,
That to the chin he cleft his head in twaine:
Downe on the ground his carkas groueling fell;
His sinfull soule with desperate disdain,
Out of her fleshly ferme fled to the place of paine.

[24]

That seeing now the onely last of three,
Who with that wicked shaft him wounded had,
Trembling with horreur, as that did foresee
The fearefull end of his auengement sad,
Through which he follow should his brethren bad,
His bootelesse bow in feeble hand vpcaught,
And therewith shot an arrow at the lad;
Which faintly fluttring, scarce his helmet raught,
And glauncing fell to ground, but him annoyed naught.

[25]

With that he would haue fled into the wood;
But *Timias* him lightly ouerhent,
Right as he entring was into the flood,
And strooke at him with force so violent,
That headlesse him into the foord he sent:
The carkas with the streame was carried downe,
But th'head fell backward on the Continent.
So mischief fel vpon the meaners crowne;
They three be dead with shame, the Squire liues with renowne.

[26]

He liues, but takes small ioy of his renowne;
For of that cruell wound he bled so sore,
That from his steed he fell in deadly swowne;
Yet still the bloud forth gusht in so great store,
That he lay wallowd all in his owne gore.
Now God thee keepe, thou gentlest Squire alieue,
Else shall thy louing Lord thee see no more,
But both of comfort him thou shalt depriue,
And eke thy selfe of honour, which thou didst atchiue.

[27]

Prouidence heauenly passeth liuing thought,
And doth for wretched mens reliefe make way;
For loe great grace or fortune thither brought
Comfort to him, that comfortlesse now lay.
In those same woods, ye well remember may,
How that a noble hunteresse did wonne,
She, that base *Braggadocchio* did affray,
And made him fast out of the forrest runne;
Belphoebe was her name, as faire as *Phoebus* sunne.

[28]

She on a day, as she pursewd the chace
Of some wild beast, which with her arrowes keene
She wounded had, the same along did trace
By tract of bloud, which she had freshly seene,
To haue besprinckled all the grassy greene;
By the great persue, which she there perceau'd,
Well hoped she the beast engor'd had beene,
And made more hast, the life to haue bereau'd:
But ah, her expectation greatly was deceau'd.

[29]

Shortly she came, whereas that woefull Squire
With bloud deformed, lay in deadly swownd:
In whose faire eyes, like lamps of quenched fire,
The Christall humour stood congealed rownd;
His locks, like faded leaues fallen to grownd,
Knotted with bloud, in bounces rudely ran,
And his sweete lips, on which before that stownd
The bud of youth to blossome faire began,
Spoild of their rosie red, were woxen pale and wan.

[30]

Saw neuer liuing eye more heauy sight,
That could haue made a rocke of stone to rew,
Or riue in twaine: which when that Lady bright
Besides all hope with melting eyes did vew,
All suddeinly abasht she chaunged hew,
And with sterne horror backward gan to start:
But when she better him beheld, she grew
Full of soft passion and vnwonted smart:
The point of pittie perced through her tender hart.

[31]

Meekely she bowed downe, to weete if life
Yet in his frosen members did remaine,
And feeling by his pulses beating rife,
That the weake soule her seat did yet retaine,
She cast to comfort him with busie paine:
His double folded necke she reard vpright,
And rubd his temples, and each trembling vaine;
His mayled haberieon she did vndight,
And from his head his heauy burganet did light,

[32]

Into the woods thenceforth in hast she went,
To seeke for hearbes, that mote him remedy;
For she of hearbes had great intendiment,
Taught of the Nymphes, which from her infancy
Her nourced had in trewe Nobility:
There, whether it diuine *Tobacco* were,
Or *Fanachaea*, or *Polygony*,
She found, and brought it to her patient deare
Who al this while lay bleeding out his hart-bloud neare.

[33]

The soueraigne weede betwixt two marbles plaine
She pownded small, and did in peeces bruze,
And then atweene her lilly handes twaine,
Into his wound the iuyce thereof did scruze,
And round about, as she could well it vze,
The flesh therewith she suppld and did steepe,
T'abate all spasme, and soke the swelling bruze,
And after hauing searcht the intuse deepe,
She with her scarfe did bind the wound from cold to keepe.

[34]

By this he had sweet life recur'd againe,
And groning inly deepe, at last his eyes,
His watry eyes, drizzling like deawy raine,
He vp gan lift toward the azure skies,
From whence descend all hopelesse remedies:
Therewith he sigh'd, and turning him aside,
The goodly Mayd full of diuinities,
And gifts of heauenly grace he by him spide,
Her bow and gilden quiuer lying him beside.

[35]

Mercy deare Lord (said he) what grace is this,
That thou hast shewed to me sinfull wight,
To send thine Angell from her bowre of blis,
To comfort me in my distressed plight?
Angell, or Goddesse do I call thee right?
What seruice may I do vnto thee meete,
That hast from darkenesse me returnd to light,
And with thy heauenly salues and med'cines sweete,
Hast drest my sinfull wounds? I kisse thy blessed feete.

[36]

Thereat she blushing said, Ah gentle Squire,
Nor Goddesses I, nor Angell, but the Mayd,
And daughter of a woody Nymph, desire
No service, but thy safety and ayd;
Which if thou gaine, I shall be well apayd.
We mortall wights, whose liues and fortunes bee
To common accidents still open layd,
Are bound with common bond of frailtee,
To succour wretched wights, whom we captiued see.

[37]

By this her Damzels, which the former chace
Had vnderaken after her arriu'd,
As did *Belphebe*, in the bloody place,
And thereby deemd the beast had bene depriu'd
Of life, whom late their Ladies arrow ryu'd:
For thy the bloody tract they follow fast,
And euery one to runne the swiftest stryu'd;
But two of them the rest far ouerpast,
And where their Lady was, arriued at the last.

[38]

Where when they saw that goodly boy, with blood
Defowled, and their Lady dresse his wound,
They wondred much, and shortly vnderstood,
How him in deadly case their Lady fownd,
And reskewed out of the heauy stownd.
Eftsoones his warlike courser, which was strayd
Farre in the woods, whiles that he lay in swownd,
She made those Damzels search, which being stayd,
They did him set thereon, and forthwith them conuayd.

[39]

Into that forest farre they thence him led,
Where was their dwelling, in a pleasant glade,
With mountaines round about enuironed,
And mighty woods, which did the valley shade,
And like a stately Theatre it made,
Spreading it selfe into a spacious plaine.
And in the midst a little riuer plaide
Amongst the pumy stones, which seemd to plaine
With gentle murmure, that his course they did restraine.

[40]

Beside the same a dainty place there lay,
Planted with mirtle trees and laurels greene,
In which the birds song many a louely lay
Of gods high prayse, and of their loues sweet teene,
As it an earthly Paradize had beene:
In whose enclosed shadow there was pight
A faire Pavilion, scarcely to be seene,
The which was all within most richly dight,
That greatest Princes liuing it mote well delight.

[41]

Thither they brought that wounded Squire, and layd
In easie couch his feeble limbes to rest;
He rested him a while, and then the Mayd
His ready wound with better salues new drest;
Dayly she dressed him, and did the best
His grievous hurt to garish, that she might,
That shortly she his dolour hath redrest,
And his foule sore reduced to faire plight:
It she reduced, but himselfe destroyed quight.

[42]

O foolish Physick, and vnfruitfull paine,
That heales vp one and makes another wound:
She his hurt thigh to him recur'd againe,
But hurt his hart, the which before was sound,
Through an vnwary dart, which did rebound
From her faire eyes and gracious countenance.
What bootes it him from death to be vnbound,
To be captiued in endlesse duraunce
Of sorrow and despaire without alleageaunce?

[43]

Still as his wound did gather, and grow hole,
So still his hart woxe sore, and health decayd:
Madnesse to saue a part, and lose the whole.
Still whenas he beheld the heauenly Mayd,
Whiles dayly plaisters to his wound she layd,
So still his Malady the more increast,
The whiles her matchlesse beautie him dismayd.
Ah God, what other could he do at least,
But loue so faire a Lady, that his life releast?

[44]

Long while he stroue in his courageous brest,
With reason dew the passion to subdew,
And loue for to dislodge out of his nest:
Still when her excellencies he did vew,
Her soueraigne bounty, and celestiall hew,
The same to loue he strongly was constraind:
But when his meane estate he did renew,
He from such hardy boldnesse was restrained,
And of his lucklesse lot and cruell loue thus plained.

[45]

Vnthankfull wretch (said he) is this the meed,
With which her soueraigne mercy thou doest quight?
Thy life she saued by her gracious deed,
But thou doest weene with villeinous despight,
To blot her honour, and her heavenly light.
Dye rather, dye, then so disloyally
Deeme of her high desert, or seeme so light:
Faire death it is to shonne more shame, to dy:
Dye rather, dy, then euer loue disloyally.

[46]

But if to loue disloyalty it bee,
Shall I then hate her, that from deathes dore
Me brought? ah farre be such reproch fro mee.
What can I lesse do, then her loue therefore,
Sith I her dew reward cannot restore:
Dye rather, dye, and dying do her serue,
Dying her serue, and liuing her adore;
Thy life she gaue, thy life she doth deserue:
Dye rather, dye, then euer from her seruice swerue.

[47]

But foolish boy, what bootes thy seruice bace
To her, to whom the heauens do serue and sew?
Thou a meane Squire, of meeke and lowly place,
She heavenly borne, and of celestiall hew.
How then? of all loue taketh equall vew:
And doth not highest God vouchsafe to take
The loue and seruice of the basest crew?
If she will not, dye meekly for her sake;
Dye rather, dye, then euer so faire loue forsake.

[48]

Thus warreid he long time against his will,
Till that through weaknesse he was forst at last,
To yield himselfe vnto the mighty ill:
Which as a victour proud, gan ransack fast
His inward parts, and all his entrayles wast,
That neither bloud in face, nor life in hart
It left, but both did quite drye vp, and blast;
As percing leuin, which the inner part
Of euery thing consumes, and calcineth by art.

[49]

Which seeing faire *Belphoebe*, gan to feare,
Least that his wound were inly well not healed,
Or that the wicked steele empoysned were:
Litle she weend, that loue he close concealed;
Yet still he wasted, as the snow congealed,
When the bright sunne his beams thereon doth beat;
Yet neuer he his hart to her reuealed,
But rather chose to dye for sorrow great,
Then with dishonorable termes her to entreat.

[50]

She gracious Lady, yet no paines did spare,
To do him ease, or do him remedy:
Many Restoratiues of vertues rare,
And costly Cordialles she did apply,
To mitigate his stubborne mallady:
But that sweet Cordiall, which can restore
A loue-sick hart, she did to him enuy;
To him, and to all th'vnworthy world forlore
She did enuy that soueraigne salue, in secret store.

[51]

That dainty Rose, the daughter of her Morne,
More deare then life she tendered, whose flowre
The girland of her honour did adorne:
Ne suffred she the Middayes scorching powre,
Ne the sharp Northerne wind thereon to showre,
But lapped vp her silken leaues most chaire,
When so the froward skye began to lowre:
But soone as calmed was the Christall aire,
She did it faire dispred, and let to florish faire.

[52]

Eternall God in his almighty powre,
To make ensample of his heauenly grace,
In Paradize whilome did plant this flowre,
Whence he it fetcht out of her natieue place,
And did in stocke of earthly flesh enrace,
That mortall men her glory should admire
In gentle Ladies brest, and bounteous race
Of woman kind it fairest flowre doth spire,
And beareth fruit of honour and all chast desire.

[53]

Faire ympes of beautie, whose bright shining beames
Adorne the world with like to heauenly light,
And to your willes both royalties and Realmes
Subdew, through conquest of your wondrous might,
With this faire flowre your goodly girlonds dight,
Of chastity and vertue virginall,
That shall embellish more your beautie bright,
And crowne your heades with heauenly coronall,
Such as the Angels weare before Gods tribunall.

[54]

To your faire selues a faire ensample frame,
Of this faire virgin, this Belphebe faire,
To whom in perfect loue, and spotlesse fame
Of chastitie, none liuing may compaire:
Ne poysnous Enuy iustly can empaire
The prayse of her fresh flowring Maidenhead;
For thy she standeth on the highest staire
Of th'honorable stage of womanhead,
That Ladies all may follow her ensample dead.

[55]

In so great prayse of stedfast chastity,
Nathlesse she was so curteous and kind,
Tempred with grace, and goodly modesty,
That seemed those two vertues stroue to find
The higher place in her Heroick mind:
So striuing each did other more augment,
And both encreast the prayse of woman kind,
And both encreast her beautie excellent;
So all did make in her a perfect complement.

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