

Cant. VIII.

*The Witch creates a snowy Lady,
like to Florimell,
Who wrongd by Carle by Proteus sau'd,
is sought by Paridell.*

[1]

SO oft as I this history record,
My hart doth melt with meere compassion,
To thinke, how causelesse of her owne accord
This gentle Damzell, whom I write vpon,
Should plonged be in such affliction,
Without all hope of comfort or reliefe,
That sure I weene, the hardest hart of stone,
Would hardly find to aggrauate her grieffe;
For misery craues rather mercie, then reprofile.

[2]

But that accursed Hag, her hostesse late,
Had so enranckled her malitious hart,
That she desyrd th'abridgement of her fate,
Or long enlargement of her painefull smart.
Now when the Beast, which by her wicked art
Late forth she sent, she backe returning spyde,
Tyde with her broken girdle, it a part
Of her rich spoyles, whom he had earst destroyd,
She weend, and wondrous gladnesse to her hart applyde.

[3]

And with it running hast'ly to her sonne,
Thought with that sight him much to haue reliued;
Who thereby deeming sure the thing as donne,
His former grieffe with furie fresh reuiued,
Much more then earst, and would haue algates riued
The hart out of his brest: for sith her ded
He surely dempt, himselfe he thought depriued
Quite of all hope, where with he long had fed
His foolish maladie, and long time had misled.

[4]

With thought whereof, exceeding mad he grew,
And in his rage his mother would haue slaine,

Had she not fled into a secret mew,
Where she was wont her Sprights to entertaine
The maisters of her art: there was she faine
To call them all in order to her ayde,
And them coniure vpon eternall paine,
To counsell her so carefully dismayd,
How she might heale her sonne, whose senses were decayd.

[5]

By their aduise, and her owne wicked wit,
She there deuiz'd a wondrous worke to frame,
Whose like on earth was neuer framed yit,
That euen Nature selfe enuide the same,
And grudg'd to see the counterfet should shame
The thing it selfe. In hand she boldly tooke
To make another like the former Dame,
Another *Florimell*, in shape and looke
So liuely and so like, that many it mistooke.

[6]

The substance, whereof she the bodie made,
Was purest snow in massie mould congeald,
Which she had gathered in a shadie glade
Of the *Riphoean* hils, to her reueald
By errant Sprights, but from all men conceald:
The same she tempred with fine Mercury,
And virgin wex, that neuer yet was seald,
And mingled them with perfect vermily,
That like a liuely sanguine it seem'd to the eye.

[7]

In stead of eyes two burning lampes she set
In siluer sockets, shyning like the skyes,
And a quicke mouing Spirit did arret
To stirre and roll them, like a womans eyes;
In stead of yellow lockes she did devise,
With golden wyre to weaue her curled head;
Yet golden wyre was not so yellow thrise
As *Florimells* faire haire: and in the stead
Of life, she put a Spright to rule the carkasse dead.

[8]

A wicked Spright yfraught with fawning guile,

And faire resemblance aboue all the rest,
Which with the Prince of Darknesse fell lomewhile,
From heauens blisse and euerlasting rest;
Him needed not instruct, which way were best
Himselfe to fashion likest *Florimell*,
Ne how to speake, ne how to vse his gest,
For he in counterfeisance did excell,
And all the wyles of wemens wits knew passing well.

[9]

Him shaped thus, she deckt in garments gay,
Which *Florimell* had left behind her late,
That who so then her saw, would surely say,
It was her selfe, whom it did imitate,
Or fairer then her selfe, if ought algate
Might fairer be. And then she forth her brought
Vnto her sonne, that lay in feeble state;
Who seeing her gan streight vpstart, and thought
She was the Lady selfe, who he so long had sought.

[10]

Tho fast her clipping twixt his armes twaine,
Extremely ioyed in so happie sight,
And soone forgot his former sickly paine;
But she, the more to seeme such as she hight,
Coyly rebutted his embracement light;
Yet still with gentle countenant retained,
Enough to hold a foole in vaine delight:
Him long she so with shadowes entertained,
As her Creatresse had in charge to her ordained.

[11]

Till on a day, as he disposed was
To walke the woods with that his Idole faire,
Her to disport, and idle time to pas,
In th'open freshnesse of the gentle aire,
A knight that way there chaunced to repaire;
Yet knight was not, but a boastfull swaine,
That deedes of armes had euer in despaire,
Proud *Braggadocchio*, that in vaunting vaine
His glory did repose, and credit did maintaine.

[12]

He seeing with that Chorle so faire a wight,
Decked with many a costly ornament,
Much merueiled thereat, as well he might,
And thought that match a fowled disparagement:
His bloudie speare eftsoones he boldly bent
Against the silly clowne, who dead through feare,
Fell streight to ground in great astonishment;
Villein (said he) this Ladie is my deare,
Dy, if thou it gainesay: I will away her beare.

[13]

The fearefull Chorle durst not gainesay, nor dooe,
But trembling stood, and yielded him the pray;
Who finding litle leasure her to wooe,
On *Tromparts* steed her mounted without stay,
And without reskew led her quite away.
Proud man himselfe then *Braggadocchio* deemed,
And next to none, after that happie day,
Being possessed of that spoyle, which seemed
The fairest wight on ground, and most of men esteemed.

[14]

But when he saw himselfe free from poursute,
He gan make gentle purpose to his Dame,
With termes of loue and lewdnesse dissolute;
For he could well his glozing speaches frame
To such vaine vses, that him best became:
But she thereto would lend but light regard,
As seeming sory, that she euer came
Into his powre, that vsed her so hard,
To reauue her honor, which she more then life prefard.

[15]

Thus as they two of kindnesse treated long,
There them by chaunce encountred on the way
An armed knight, vpon a courser strong,
Whose trampling feet vpon the hollow lay
Seemed to thunder, and did nigh affray
That Capons courage: yet he looked grim,
And fain'd to cheare his Ladie in dismay;
Who seem'd for feare to quake in euery lim,
And her to saue from outrage, meekely prayed him.

[16]

Fiercely that stranger forward came, and nigh
Approching, with bold words and bitter threat,
Bad that same boaster, as he mote, on high
To leaue to him that Lady for excheat,
Or bide him battell without further treat.
That challenge did too peremptory seeme,
And fild his senses with abashment great;
Yet seeing nigh him ieopardy extreme,
He it dissembled well, and light seem'd to esteeme.

[17]

Saying, Thou foolish knight, that weenst with words
To steale away, that I with blowes haue wonne,
And brought throug points of many perilous swords:
But if thee list to see thy Courser ronne,
Or proue thy selfe, this sad encounter shonne,
And seeke else without hazard of thy hed.
At those proud words that other knight begonne
To wexe exceeding wroth, and him ared
To turne his steede about, or sure he should be ded.

[18]

Sith then (said *Braggadocchio*) needes thou wilt,
Thy dayes abridge, through prooffe of puissance,
Turne we our steedes, that both in equall tilt
May meet againe, and each take happie chance.
This said, they both a furlongs mounenance
Retyrd their steeds, to ronne in euen race:
But *Braggadocchio* with his bloudie lance
Once hauing turnd, no more returnd his face,
But left his loue to losse, and fled himselfe apace.

[19]

The knight him seeing fly, had no regard
Him to poursew, but to the Ladie rode,
And hauing her from *Trompart* lightly reard,
Vpon his Courser set the louely lode,
And with her fled away without abode.
Well weened he, that fairest *Florimell*
It was, with whom in company he yode,
And so her selfe did alwaies to him tell;
So made him thinke him selfe in heauen, that was in hell.

[20]

But *Florimell* her selfe was farre away,
Driuen to great distresse by Fortune straunge,
And taught the carefull Mariner to play,
Sith late mischaunce had her compeld to chaunge
The land for sea, at randon there to raunge:
Yet there that cruell Queene auengeresse,
Not satisfide so farre her to estraunge
From courtly blisse and wonted happinesse,
Did heape on her new waues of weary wretchednesse.

[21]

For being fled into the fishers bote,
For refuge from the Monsters crueltie,
Long so she on the mightie maine did flote,
And with the tide droue forward careleslie;
For th'aire was milde, and cleared was the skie,
And all his windes *Dan Aeolus* did keepe,
From stirring vp their stormy enmitie,
As pitying to see her waile and weepe;
But all the while the fisher did securely sleepe.

[22]

At last when droncke with drowsinesse, he woke,
And saw his drouer driue along the streame,
He was dismayd, and thrise his breast he stroke,
For maruell of that accident extreame;
But when he saw, that blazing beauties beame,
Which with rare light his bote did beautifie,
He marueild more, and thought he yet did dreame
Not well awakt, or that some extasie
Assotted had his sense, or dazed was his eie.

[23]

But when her well auizing, he perceiued
To be no vision, nor fantasticke sight,
Great comfort of her presence he conceiued,
And felt in his old courage new delight
To gin awake, and stirre his frozen spright:
Tho rudely askt her, how she thither came.
Ah (said she) father, I note read aright,
What hard misfortune brought me to the same;
Yet am I glad that here I now in safety am.

[24]

But thou good man, sith farre in sea we bee,
And the great waters gin apace to swell,
That now no more we can the maine-land see,
Haue care, I pray, to guide the cock-bote well,
Least worse on sea then vs on land befell.
Thereat th'old man did nought but fondly grin,
And said, his boat the way could wisely tell:
But his deceitfull eyes did neuer lin,
To looke on her faire face, and marke her snowy skin.

[25]

The sight whereof in his congealed flesh,
Infixt such secret sting of greedy lust,
That the drie withered stocke it gan refresh,
And kindled heat, that soone in flame forth Brust:
The driest wood is soonest burnt to dust.
Rudely to her he lept, and his rough hand
Where ill became him, rashly would haue thrust,
But she with angry scorne him did withstond,
And shamefully reprov'd for his rudenesse fond.

[26]

But he, that neuer good nor maners knew,
Her sharpe rebuke full litle did esteeme;
Hard is to teach an old horse amble trew.
The inward smoke, that did before but steeme,
Broke into open fire and rage extreme,
And now he strength gan adde vnto his will,
Forcing to doe, that did him fowle misseeme:
Beastly he threw her downe, ne car'd to spill
Her garments gay with scales of fish, that all did fill.

[27]

The silly virgin stroue him to withstand,
All that she might, and him in vaine reuild:
She struggled strongly both with foot and hand,
To saue her honor from that villaine vild,
And cride to heauen, from humane helpe exild.
O ye braue knights, that boast this Ladies loue,
Where be ye now, when she is nigh defild
Of filthy wretch? well may shee you reprove
Of falshood or of slouth, when most it may behoue.

[28]

But if that thou, Sir *Satyran*, didst weete,
Or thou, Sir *Peridure*, her sorie state,
How soone would yee assemble many a fleete,
To fetch from sea, that ye at land lost late;
Towres, Cities, Kingdomes ye would ruinate,
In your auengement and dispiteous rage,
Ne ought your burning fury mote abate;
But if Sir *Calidore* could it presage,
No liuing creature could his cruelty asswage.

[29]

But sith that none of all her knights is nye,
See how the heauens of voluntary grace,
And soueraine fauour towards chastity,
Doe succour send to her distressed cace:
So much high God doth innocence embrace.
It fortun'd, whilst thus she stifly stroue,
And the wide sea importuned long space
With shrilling shriekes, *Proteus* abrode did roue,
Along the fomy waues driuing his finny droue.

[30]

Proteus is Shepheard of the seas of yore,
And hath the charge of *Neptunes* mightie heard;
An aged sire with head all frowy hore,
And sprinckled frost vpon his deawy beard:
Who when those pittifull outcries he heard,
Through all the seas so ruefully resound,
His charet swift in haste he thither steard,
Which with a teeme of scaly *Phocas* bound
Was drawne vpon the waues, that fomed him around.

[31]

And comming to that Fishers wandring bote,
That went at will, withouten carde or sayle,
He therein saw that yrkesome sight, which smote
Deepe indignation and compassion frayle
Into his hart attonce: streight did he hayle
The greedy villein from his hoped pray,
Of which he now did very litle fayle,
And with his staffe, that driues his Heard astray,
Him bet so sore, that life and sense did much dismay.

[32]

The whiles the pitteous Ladie vp did ryse,
Ruffled and fowly raid with filthy soyle,
And blubbred face with teares of her faire eyes:
Her heart nigh broken was with weary toyle,
To saue her selfe from that outrageous spoyle,
But when she looked vp, to weet, what wight
Had her from so infamous fact assoyld,
For shame, but more for feare of his grim sight,
Downe in her lap she hid her face, and loudly shrighit.

[33]

Her selfe not saued yet from daunger dred
She thought, but chaung'd from one to other feare;
Like as a fearefull Partridge, that is fled
From the sharpe Hauke, which her attached neare,
And fals to ground, to seeke for succour theare,
Whereas the hungry Spaniels she does spy,
With greedy iawes her readie for to teare;
In such distresse and sad perplexity
Was *Florimell*, when *Proteus* she did see thereby.

[34]

But he endeouored with speeches milde
Her to recomfort, and accourage bold,
Bidding her feare no more her foeman vilde,
Nor doubt himselfe; and who he was, her told.
Yet all that could not from affright her hold,
Ne to recomfort her at all preuayld;
For her faint heart was with the frozen cold
Benumbd so inly, that her wits nigh fayld,
And all her senses with abashment quite were quayld.

[35]

Her vp betwixt his rugged hands he reard,
And with his frory lips full softly kist,
While the cold ysickles from his rough beard,
Dropped adowne vpon her yuorie brest:
Yet he himselfe so busily addest,
That her out of astonishment he wrought,
And out of that same fishers filthy nest
Remouing her, into his charet brought,
And there with many gentle termes her faire besought.

[36]

But that old leachour, which with bold assault
That beautie durst presume to violate,
He cast to punish for his hainous fault;
Then tooke he him yet trembling sith of late,
And tyde behind his charet, to aggrate
The virgin, whom he had abusde so sore:
So drag'd him through the waues in scornfull state,
And after cast him vp, vpon the shore;
But *Florimell* with him vnto his bowre he bore.

[37]

His bowre is in the bottome of the maine,
Vnder a mightie rocke, gainst which do raue
The roaring billowes in their proud disdain,
That with the angry working of the waue,
Therein is eaten out an hollow caue,
That seemes rough Masons hand with engines keene
Had long while laboured it to engraue:
There was his wonne, ne liuing wight was seene,
Saue one old *Nymph*, hight *Panope* to keepe it cleane.

[38]

Thither he brought the sory *Florimell*,
And entertained her the best he might
And *Panope* her entertaind eke well,
As an immortall mote a mortall wight,
To winne her liking vnto his delight:
With flattering words he sweetly wooed her,
And offered faire gifts t'allure her sight,
But she both offers and the offerer
Despysde, and all the fawning of the flatterer.

[39]

Daily he tempted her with this or that,
And neuer suffred her to be at rest:
But euermore she him refused flat,
And all his fained kindnesse did detest.
So firmly she had sealed vp her brest.
Sometimes he boasted, that a God he hight:
But she a mortall creature loued best:
Then he would make himselfe a mortall wight;
But then she said she lou'd none, but a Faerie knight.

[40]

Then like a Faerie knight himselfe he drest;
For euery shape on him he could endew:
Then like a king he was to her exprest,
And offred kingdomes vnto her in vew,
To be his Leman and his Ladie trew:
But when all this he nothing saw preuaile,
With harder meanes he cast her to subdew,
And with sharpe threates her often did assaile,
So thinking for to make her stubborne courage quaile.

[41]

To dreadfull shapes he did himselfe transforme,
Now like a Gyant, now like to a feend,
Then like a Centaure, then like to a storme,
Raging within the waues: thereby he weend
Her will to win vnto his wished end.
But when with feare, nor fauour, nor with all
He else could doe, he saw himselfe esteemd,
Downe in a Dongeon deepe he let her fall,
And threatned there to make her his eternall thrall.

[42]

Eternall thraldome was to her more liefé,
Then losse of chastitie, or change of loue:
Die had she rather in tormenting grieffe,
Then any should of falsenesse her reprove,
Or loosenesse, that she lightly did remoue.
Most vertuous virgin, glory be thy meed,
And crowne of heauenly praise with Saints aboue,
Where most sweet hymmes of this thy famous deed
Are still amongst them song, that far my rymes exceed.

[43]

Fit song of Angels caroled to bee;
But yet what so my feeble Muse can frame,
Shall be t'aduance thy goodly chastitee,
And to enroll thy memorable name,
In th'heart of euery honourable Dame,
That they thy vertuous deedes may imitate,
And be partakers of thy endlesse fame.
It yrkes me, leaue thee in this wofull state,
To tell of *Satyrane*, where I him left of late.

[44]

Who hauing ended with that *Squire of Dames*
A long discourse of his aduentures vaine,
The which himselfe, then Ladies more defames,
And finding not th'*Hyena* to be slaine,
With that same *Squire*, returned backe againe
To his first way. And as they forward went,
They spyde a knight faire pricking on the plaine,
As if he were on some aduenture bent,
And in his port appeared manly hardiment.

[45]

Sir *Satyrane* him towards did addresse,
To weet, what wight he was, and what his quest:
And comming nigh, eftsoones he gan to gesse
Both by the burning hart, which on his brest
He bare, and by the colours in his crest,
That *Paridell* it was. Tho to him yode,
And him saluting, as beseemed best,
Gan first inquire of tydings farre abroad;
And afterwarde, on what aduenture now he rode.

[46]

Who thereto answering, said; The tydings bad,
Which now in Faerie court all men do tell,
Which turned hath great mirth, to mourning sad,
Is the late ruine of proud *Marinell*,
And suddein parture of faire *Florimell*,
To find him forth: and after her are gone
All the braue knights, that doen in armes excell,
To sauegard her, ywandred all alone;
Amongst the rest my lot (vnworthy) is to be one.

[47]

Ah gentle knight (said then Sir *Satyrane*)
Thy labour all is lost, I greatly dread,
That hast a thanklesse seruice on thee ta'ne,
And offrest sacrifice vnto the dead:
For dead, I surely doubt, thou maist aread
Henceforth for euer *Florimell* to be,
That all the noble knights of *Maydenhead*,
Which her ador'd, may sore repent with me,
And all faire Ladies may for euer sory be.

[48]

Which words when *Paridell* had heard, his hew
Gan greatly chaunge, and seem'd dismayd to bee;
Then said, Faire Sir, how may I weene it trew,
That ye doe tell in such vncertaintee?
Or speake ye of report, or did ye see
Iust cause of dread, that makes ye doubt so sore?
For perdie else how mote it euer bee,
That euer hand should dare for to engore
Her noble blood? the heauens such crueltie abhore.

[49]

These eyes did see, that they will euer rew
T'haue seene, (quoth he) when as a monstrous beast
The Palfrey, whereon she did trauell, slew,
And of his bowels made his bloudie feast:
Which speaking token sheweth at the least
Her certaine losse, if not her sure decay:
Besides, that more suspition increast,
I found her golden girdle cast astray,
Distaynd with durt and bloud, as relique of the pray.

[50]

Aye me, (said *Paridell*) the signes be sad,
And but God turne the same to good soothsay,
That Ladies safetie is sore to be drad:
Yet will I not forsake my forward way,
Till triall doe more certaine truth bewray.
Faire Sir (quoth he) well may it you succeed,
Ne long shall *Satyrane* behind you stay,
But to the rest, which in this Quest proceed
My labour adde, and be partaker of their speed.

[51]

Ye noble knights (said then the *Squire of Dames*)
Well may ye speed in so praiseworthy paine:
But sith the Sunne now ginnes to slake his beames,
In deawy vapours of the westerne maine,
And lose the teme out of his weary waine,
More not mislike you also to abate
Your zealous hast, till morrow next againe
Both light of heauen, and strength of men relate:
Which if ye please, to yonder castle turne your gate.

[52]

That counsell pleased well; so all yfere
Forth marched to a Castle them before,
Where soone arriuing, they restrained were
Of readie entrance, which ought euermore
To errant knights be comun: wondrous sore
Thereat displeasd they were, till that young Squire
Gan them informe the cause, why that same dore
Was shut to all, which lodging did desire:
The which to let you weet, will further time require.

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