

Cant. VI.

*Both Scudamour and Arthegall
Doe fight with Britomart,
He sees her face; doth fall in loue,
and soone from her depart.*

[1]

WHat equall torment to the grieffe of mind,
And pynning anguish hid in gentle hart,
That inly feeds it selfe with thoughts vnkind,
And nourisheth her owne consuming smart?
What medicine can any Leaches art
Yeeld such a sore, that doth her griuance hide,
And will to none her maladie impart?
Such was the wound that *Scudamour* did gride;
For which *Dan Phebus* selfe cannot a salue prouide.

[2]

Who hauing left that restlesse house of *Care*,
The next day, as he on his way did ride,
Full of melancholie and sad misfare,
Through misconcept; all vnawares espide
An armed Knight vnder a forrest side,
Sitting in shade beside his grazing steede;
Who soone as them approaching he descride,
Gan towards them to pricke with eger speede,
That seem'd he was full bent to some mischieuous deede.

[3]

Which *Scudamour* perceiuing, forth issewed
To haue rencountred him in equall race;
But soone as th'other nigh approaching, vewed
The armes he bore, his speare he gan abase,
And voide his course: at which so suddain case
He wondred much. But th'other thus can say;
Ah gentle *Scudamour*, vnto your grace
I me submit, and you of pardon pray,
That almost had against you trespassed this day.

[4]

Whereto thus *Scudamour*, Small harme it were
For any knight, vpon a ventrous knight

Without displeasance for to proue his spere.
But reade you Sir, sith ye my name haue hight,
What is your owne, that I mote you requite.
Certes (sayd he) ye mote as now excuse
Me from discouering you my name aright:
For time yet serues that I the same refuse,
But call ye me the *Saluage Knight*, as others vse.

[5]

Then this, Sir *Saluage Knight* (quoth he) areede;
Or doe you here within this forrest wonne,
That seemeth well to answeere to your weede?
Or haue ye it for some occasion donne?
That rather seemes, sith knowen armes ye shonne.
This other day (sayd he) a stranger knight
Shame and dishonour hath vnto me donne;
On whom I waite to wreake that foule despight,
When euer he this way shall passe by day or night.

[6]

Shame be his meede (quoth he) that meaneth shame.
But what is he, by whom ye shamed were?
A stranger knight, sayd he, vnknowne by name,
But knowne by fame, and by an Hebene speare,
With which he all that met him, downe did beare.
He in an open Turney lately held,
Fro me the honour of that game did reare;
And hauing me all wearie earst, downe feld,
The fayrest Ladie reft, and euer since withheld.

[7]

When *Scudamour* heard mention of that speare,
He wist right well, that it was *Britomart*,
The which from him his fairest loue did beare.
Tho gan he swell in euery inner part,
For fell despight, and gnaw his gealous hart,
That thus he sharply sayd; Now by my head,
Yet is not this the first vnknightly part,
Which that same knight, whom by his launce I read,
Hath doen to noble knights, that many makes him dread.

[8]

For lately he my loue hath fro me reft,

And eke defiled with foule villanie
The sacred pledge, which in his faith was left,
In shame of knighthood and fidelitie;
The which ere long full deare he shall abie.
And if to that auenge by you decreed
This hand may helpe, or succour ought supplie,
It shall not fayle, when so ye shall it need.
So both to wreake their wrathes on *Britomart* agreed.

[9]

Whiles thus they communed, lo farre away
A Knight soft ryding towards them they spyde,
Attyr'd in forraine armes and straunge aray:
Who~ when they nigh approcht, they plaine descryde
To be the same, for whom they did abyde.
Sayed then Sir *Scudamour*, Sir *Saluage* knight
Let me this craue, sith first I was defyde,
That first I may that wrong to him requite:
And if I hap to fayle, you shall recure my right.

[10]

Which being yeilded, he his threatfull speare
Gan fewter, and against her fiercely ran.
Who soone as she him saw approaching neare
With so fell rage, her selfe she lightly gan
To dight, to welcome him, well as she can:
But entertaind him in so rude a wise,
That to the ground she smote both horse and man;
Whence neither greatly hasted to arise,
But on their common harmes together did deuse.

[11]

But *Artegall* beholding his mischaunce,
New matter added to his former fire;
And eft auentring his steeleheaded lance,
Against her rode, full of despiteous ire,
That nought but spoyle and vengeance did require,
But to himselfe his felonous intent
Returning, disappointed his desire,
Whiles vnawares his saddle he forwent,
And found himselfe on ground in great amazement.

[12]

Lightly he started vp out of that stound,
And snatching forth his direfull deadly blade,
Did leape to her, as doth an eger hound
Thrust to an Hynd within some couert glade,
Whom without perill he cannot inuade.
With such fell greedines he her assayled,
That though she mounted were, yet he her made
To giue him ground, (so much his force preuayled)
And shun his mightie strokes, gainst which no armes auayled.

[13]

So as they coursed here and there, it chaunst
That in her wheeling round, behind her crest
So sorely he her strooke, that thence it glaunst
Adowne her backe, the which it fairely blest
From foule mischance; ne did it euer rest,
Till on her horses hinder parts it fell;
Where byting deepe, so deadly it imprest,
That quite it chynd his backe behind the sell,
And to alight on foote her algates did compell.

[14]

Like as the lightning brond from riuenskie,
Throwne out by angry *Ioue* in his vengeance,
With dreadfull force falles on some steeple hie;
Which battring, downe it on the church doth glance,
And teares it all with terrible mischance.
Yet she no whit dismayd, her steed forsooke,
And casting from her that enchaunted lance,
Vnto her sword and shield her soone betooke;
And therewithall at him right furiously she strooke.

[15]

So furiously she strooke in her first heat,
Whiles with long fight on foot he breathlesse was,
That she him forced backward to retreat,
And yeeld vnto her weapon way to pas:
Whose raging rigour neither steele nor bras
Could stay, but to the tender flesh it went,
And pour'd the purple bloud forth on the gras;
That all his mayle yriv'd, and plates yrent,
Shew'd all his bodie bare vnto the cruell dent.

[16]

At length when as he saw her hastie heat
Abate, and panting breath begin to fayle,
He through long sufferance growing now more great,
Rose in his strength, and gan her fresh assayle,
Heaping huge strokes, as thicke as showre of hayle,
And lashing dreadfully at euery part,
As if he thought her soule to disentrayle.
Ah cruell hand, and thrise more cruell hart,
That workst such wrecke on her, to whom thou dearest art.

[17]

What yron courage euer could endure,
To worke such outrage on so faire a creature?
And in his madnesse thinke with hands impure
To spoyle so goodly workmanship of nature,
The maker selfe resembling in her feature?
Certes some hellish furie, or some feend
This mischiefe framd, for their first loues defeature,
To bath their hands in bloud of dearest freend,
Thereby to make their loues beginning, their lines end.

[18]

Thus long they trac'd, and trauerst to and fro,
Sometimes pursewing, and sometimes pursewed,
Still as aduantage they espyde thereto:
But toward th'end Sir *Arthegall* renewed
His strength still more, but she still more decrewed.
At last his lucklesse hand he heau'd on hie,
Hauing his forces all in one accrewed,
And therewith stroke at her so hideouslie,
That seemed nought but death mote be her destinie.

[19]

The wicked stroke vpon her helmet chaunst,
And with the force, which in it selfe it bore,
Her ventayle shard away, and thence forth glaunst
A downe in vaine, ne harm'd her any more.
With that her angels face, vnseene afore,
Like to the ruddie morne appeard in sight,
Deawed with siluer drops, through sweating sore,
But somewhat redder, then beseem'd aright,
Through toylesome heate and labour of her weary fight.

[20]

And round about the same, her yellow heare
Hauing through stirring loosd their wonted band,
Like to a golden border did appeare,
Framed in goldsmithes forge with cunning hand:
Yet goldsmithes cunning could not vnderstand
To frame such subtile wire, so shinie cleare.
For it did glister like the golden sand,
The which *Pactolus* with his waters shere,
Throwes forth vpon the riuage round about him nere.

[21]

And as his hand he vp againe did reare,
Thinking to worke on her his vtmost wracke,
His powrelesse arme benumbd with secret feare
From his reuengefull purpose shronke abacke,
And cruell sword out of his fingers slacke
Fell downe to ground, as if the steele had sence,
And felt some ruth, or sence his hand did lacke,
Or both of them did thinke, obedience
To doe to so diuine a beauties excellence.

[22]

And he himselfe long gazing thereupon,
At last fell humbly downe vpon his knee,
And of his wonder made religion,
Weening some heauenly goddesse he did see,
Or else vnweeting, what it else might bee;
And pardon her besought his errour frayle,
That had done outrage in so high degree:
Whilest trembling horrour did his sense assayle,
And made ech member quake, and manly hart to quayle.

[23]

Nathesle she full of wrath for that late stroke,
All that long while vpheld her wrathfull hand,
With fell intent, on him to bene ywroke,
And looking sterne, still ouer him did stand,
Threatning to strike, vnlesse he would withstand:
And bad him rise, or surely he should die.
But die or liue for nought he would vpstand
But her of pardon prayd more earnestlie,
Or wreake on him her will for so great iniurie.

[24]

Which when as *Scudamour*, who now abrayd,
Beheld, whereas he stood not farre aside,
He was therewith right wondrously dismayd,
And drawing nigh, when as he plaine describe
That peerelesse paterne of Dame natures pride,
And heauenly image of perfection,
He blest himselfe, as one sore terrifide,
And turning his feare to faint deuotion,
Did worship her as some celestiall vision.

[25]

But *Glauce*, seeing all that chaunced there,
Well weeting how their errour to assoyle,
Full glad of so good end, to them drew nere,
And her salewd with seemely belaccoyle,
Ioyous to see her safe after long toyle.
Then her besought, as she to her was deare,
To graunt vnto those warriours truce a whyle;
Which yeilded, they their beuers vp did reare,
And shew'd themselues to her, such as indeed they were.

[26]

When *Britomart* with sharpe auizefull eye
Beheld the louely face of *Artegall*,
Tempred with sternesse and stout maiestie,
She gan eftsoones it to her mind to call,
To be the same which in her fathers hall
Long since in that enchaunted glasse she saw.
Therewith her wrathfull courage gan appall,
And haughtie spirits meekely to adaw,
That her enhaunced hand she downe can soft withdraw.

[27]

Yet she it forst to haue againe vpheld,
As fayning choler, which was turn'd to cold:
But euer when his visage she beheld,
Her hand fell downe, and would no longer hold
The wrathfull weapon gainst his countnance bold:
But when in vaine to fight she oft assayd,
She arm'd her tongue, and thought at him to scold;
Nathlesse her tongue not to her will obayd,
But brought forth speeches myld, when she would haue missayd.

[28]

But *Scudamour* now woxen inly glad,
That all his gealous feare he false had found,
And how that Hag his loue abused had
With breach of faith and loyaltie vnsound,
The which long time his grieued hart did wound,
Her thus bespake; certes Sir *Artegall*,
I ioy to see you lout so low on ground,
And now become to liue a Ladies thrall,
That whylome in your minde wont to despise them all.

[29]

Soone as she heard the name of *Artegall*,
Her hart did leape, and all her hart-strings tremble,
For sudden ioy, and secret feare withall,
And all her vitall powres with motion nimble,
To succour it, themselues gan there assemble,
That by the swift recourse of flushing blood
Right plaine appeard, though she it would dissemble,
And fayned still her former angry mood,
Thinking to hide the depth by troubling of the flood.

[30]

When *Glauce* thus gan wisely all vpknit;
Ye gentle Knights, whom fortune here hath brought,
To be spectators of this vncouth fit,
Which secret fate hath in this Ladie wrought,
Against the course of kind, ne meruaile nought,
Ne thenceforth feare the thing that hethertoo
Hath troubled both your mindes with idle thought,
Fearing least she your loues away should woo,
Feared in vaine, sith meanes ye see there wants theretoo.

[31]

And you Sir *Artegall*, the saluage knight,
Henceforth may not disdaine, that womans hand
Hath conquered you anew in second fight:
For whylome they haue conquerd sea and land,
And heauen it selfe, that nought may them withstand
Ne henceforth be rebellious vnto loue,
That is the crowne of knighthood, and the band
Of noble minds deriued from aboue,
Which being knit with vertue, neuer will remoue.

[32]

And you faire Ladie knight, my dearest Dame,
Relent the rigour of your wrathfull will,
Whose fire were better turn'd to other flame;
And wiping out remembrance of all ill,
Graunt him your grace, but so that he fulfill
The penance, which ye shall to him impart:
For louers heauen must passe by sorrowes hell.
Thereat full inly blushed *Britomart*;
But *Artegall* close smyling ioy'd in secret hart.

[33]

Yet durst he not make loue so suddenly,
Ne thinke th'affection of her hart to draw
From one to other so quite contrary:
Besides her modest countenance he saw
So goodly graue, and full of princely aw,
That it his ranging fancie did refraine,
And looser thoughts to lawfull bounds withdraw;
Whereby the passion grew more fierce and faine,
Like to a stubborne steede whom strong hand would re|straine.

[34]

But *Scudamour* whose hart twixt doubtfull feare
And feeble hope hung all this while suspence,
Desiring of his *Amoret* to heare
Some gladfull newes and sure intelligence,
Her thus bespake; But Sir without offence
Mote I request you tydings of my loue,
My *Amoret*, sith you her freed fro thence,
Where she captiued long, great woes did proue;
That where ye left, I may her seeke, as doth behoue.

[35]

To whom thus *Britomart*, certes Sir knight,
What is of her become, or whether reft,
I can not vnto you aread a right.
For from that time I from enchaunters theft
Her freed, in which ye her all hopelesse left,
I her preseru'd from perill and from feare,
And euermore from villenie her kept:
Ne euer was there wight to me more deare
Then she, ne vnto whom I more true loue did beare.

[36]

Till on a day as through a desert wyld
We trauelled, both wearie of the way
We did alight, and sate in shadow myld;
Where fearelesse I to sleepe me downe did lay.
But when as I did out of sleepe abray,
I found her not, where I her left whyleare,
But thought she wandred was, or gone astray.
I cal'd her loud, I so ught her farre and neare;
But no where could her find, nor tydings of her heare.

[37]

When *Scudamour* those heauie tydings heard,
His hart was thrild with point of deadly feare;
Ne in his face or bloud or life appeard,
But senselesse stood, like to a mazed steare,
That yet of mortall stroke the stound doth beare.
Till *Glauce* thus; Faire Sir, be nought dismayd
With needelesse dread, till certaintie ye heare:
For yet she may be safe though somewhat strayd;
Its best to hope the best, though of the worst affrayd.

[38]

Nathlesse he hardly of her chearefull speech
Did comfort take, or in his troubled sight
Shew'd change of better cheare: so sore a breach
That sudden newes had made into his spright;
Till *Britomart* him fairely thus behight;
Great cause of sorrow certes Sir ye haue:
But comfort take: for by this heauens light
I vow, you dead or liuing not to leaue,
Till I her find, and wreake on him that her did reauue.

[39]

Therewith he rested, and well pleased was.
So peace being confirm'd amongst them all,
They tooke their steeds, and forward thence did pas
Vnto some resting place, which mote befall,
All being guided by *Sir Artegall*.
Where goodly solace was vnto them made,
And dayly feasting both in bowre and hall,
Vntill that they their wounds well healed had,
And wearie limmes recur'd after late vsage bad.

[40]

In all which time, Sir *Artegall* made way
Vnto the loue of noble *Britomart*,
And with meeke seruice and much suit did lay
Continuall siege vnto her gentle hart,
Which being whylome launcht with louely dart,
More eath was new impression to receiue,
How euer she her paynd with womanish art
To hide her wound, that none might it perceiue:
Vaine is the art that seekes it selfe for to deceiue.

[41]

So well he woo'd her, and so well he wrought her,
With faire entreatie and sweet blandishment,
That at the length vnto a bay he brought her,
So as she to his speeches was content
To lend an eare, and softly to relent.
At last through many vowes which forth he pour'd,
And many othes, she yeelded her consent
To be his loue, and take him for her Lord,
Till they with mariage meet might finish that accord.

[42]

Tho when they had long time there taken rest,
Sir *Artegall*, who all this while was bound
Vpon an hard aduerture yet in quest,
Fit time for him thence to depart it found,
To follow that, which he did long propound;
And vnto her his congee came to take.
But her therewith full sore displeasd he found,
And loth to leaue her late betrothed make,
Her dearest loue full loth so shortly to forsake.

[43]

Yet he with strong perswasions her asswaged,
And wonne her will to suffer him depart;
For which his faith with her he fast engaged,
And thousand vowes from bottome of his hart,
That all so soone as he by wit or art
Could that atchieue, whereto he did aspire,
He vnto her would speedily reuert:
No longer space thereto he did desire,
But till the horned moone three courses did expire.

[44]

With which she for the present was appeased,
And yeelded leaue, how euer malcontent
She inly were, and in her mind displeased.
So early in the morrow next he went
Forth on his way, to which he was ybent.
Ne wight him to attend, or way to guide,
As whylome was the custome ancient
Mongst Knights, when on aduentures they did ride,
Saue that she algates him a while accompanide.

[45]

And by the way she sundry purpose found
Of this or that, the time for to delay,
And of the perils whereto he was bound,
The feare whereof seem'd much her to affray:
But all she did was but to weare out day.
Full oftentimes she leaue of him did take;
And eft againe deuiz'd some what to say,
Which she forgot, whereby excuse to make:
So loth she was his companie for to forsake.

[46]

At last when all her speeches she had spent,
And new occasion fayld her more to find,
She left him to his fortunes gouernment,
And backe returned with right heauie mind.
To *Scudamour*, who she had left behind,
With whom she went to seeke faire *Amoret*,
Her second care, though in another kind;
For vertues onely sake, which doth beget
True loue and faithfull friendship, she by her did set.

[47]

Backe to that desert forrest they retyred,
Where sorie *Britomart* had lost her late;
There they her sought, and euery where inquired,
Where they might tydings get of her estate;
Yet found they none. But by what haplesse fate,
Or hard misfortune she was thence conuayd,
And stolne away from her beloued mate,
Were long to tell; therefore I here will stay

Vntill another tyde, that I it finish may.

[Original content ©2018 by Dirk Jol.]