

Cant. VII.

*Amoret rapt by greedie lust
Belphebe saues from dread,
The Squire her loues, and being blam'd
his dayes in dole doth lead.*

[1]

Great God of loue, that with thy cruell dart
Doe'st conquer greatest conquerors on ground,
And setst thy kingdome in the captiue harts
Of Kings and Keasars, to thy seruice bound,
What glorie, or what guerdon hast thou found
In feeble Ladies tyranning so sore;
And adding anguish to the bitter wound,
With which their liues thou lancedst long afore,
By heaping stormes of trouble on them daily more?

[2]

So whylome didst thou to faire *Florimell*;
And so and so to noble *Britomart*:
So doest thou now to her, of whom I tell,
The louely *Amoret*, whose gentle hart
Thou martyrest with sorow and with smart,
In saluage forrests, and in deserts wide,
With Beares and Tygers taking heauie part,
Withouten comfort, and withouten guide,
That pittie is to heare the perils, which she tride.

[3]

So soone as she with that braue Britonesse
Had left that Turneyment for beauties prise,
They trauel'd long, that now for wearinesse,
Both of the way, and warlike exercise,
Both through a forest ryding did deuise
T'alight, and rest their wearie limbs awhile.
There heauie sleepe the eye-lids did surprise
Of *Britomart* after long tedious toyle,
That did her passed paines in quiet rest assoyle.

[4]

The whiles faire *Amoret*, of nought affeard,
Walkt through the wood, for pleasure, or for need;

When suddenly behind her backe she heard
One rushing forth out of the thickest weed,
That ere she backe could turne to taken heed,
Had vnawares her snatched vp from ground.
Feebly she shriekt, but so feebly indeed,
That *Britomart* heard not the shrilling sound,
There where through weary trauel she lay sleeping sound.

[5]

It was to weet a wilde and saluage man,
Yet was no man, but onely like in shape,
And eke in stature higher by a span,
All ouer growne with haire, that could awhape
An hardy hart, and his wide mouth did gape
With huge great teeth, like to a Bore:
For he liu'd all on rauin and on rape
Of men and beasts; and fed on fleshly gore,
The signe whereof yet stain'd his bloody lips afore.

[6]

His neather lip was not like man nor beast,
But like a wide deepe poke, downe hanging low,
In which he wont the relickes of his feast,
And cruell spoyle, which he had spard, to stow:
And ouer it his huge great nose did grow,
Full dreadfully empurpled all with bloud;
And downe both sides two wide long eares did glow,
And raught downe to his waste, when vp he stood,
More great then th'eares of Elephants by *Indus* flood.

[7]

His wast was with a wreath of yuie greene
Engirt about, ne other garment wore:
For all his haire was like a garment seene;
And in his hand a tall young oake he bore,
Whose knottie snags were sharpned all afore,
And beath'd in fire for steele to be in sted.
But whence he was, or of what wombe ybore,
Of beasts, or of the earth, I haue not red:
But certes was with milke of Wolues and Tygres fed.

[8]

This vgly creature in his armes her snatcht,

And through the forrest bore her quite away,
With briers and bushes all to rent and scratcht;
Ne care he had, ne pittie of the pray,
Which many a knight had sought so many a day.
He stayed not, but in his armes her bearing
Ran, till he came to th'end of all his way,
Vnto his caue farre from all peoples hearing,
And there he threw her in, nought feeling, ne nought fearing.

[9]

For she deare Ladie all the way was dead,
Whilest he in armes her bore; but when she felt
Her selfe downe soust, she waked out of dread
Streight into grieffe, that her deare hart nigh swelt,
And eft gan into tender teares to melt.
Then when she lookt about, and nothing found
But darknesse and dread horreur, where she dwelt,
She almost fell againe into a swoound,
Ne wist whether aboue she were, or vnder ground.

[10]

With that she heard some one close by her side
Sighing and sobbing sore, as if the paine
Her tender hart in peeces would diuide:
Which she long listning, softly askt againe
What mister wight it was that so did plaine?
To whom thus aunswer'd was: Ah wretched wight
That seekes to know anothers grieffe in vaine,
Vnwetting of thine owne like haplesse plight:
Selfe to forget to mind another, is ouersight.

[11]

Aye me (said she) where am I, or with whom?
Emong the liuing, or emong the dead?
What shall of me vnhappy maid become?
Shall death be th'end, or ought else worse, aread.
Vnhappy mayd (then answerd she) whose dread
Vntride, is lesse then when thou shalt it try:
Death is to him, that wretched life doth lead,
Both grace and gaine; but he in hell doth lie,
That liues a loathed life, and wishing cannot die.

[12]

This dismall day hath thee a caytiue made,
And vassall to the vilest wretch aliue,
Whose cursed vsage and vngodly trade
The heauens abhorre, and into darkenesse driue.
For on the spoile of women he doth lue,
Whose bodies chast, when euer in his powre
He may them catch, vnable to gainestriue,
He with his shamefull lust doth first deflowre,
And afterwards themselues doth cruelly deuoure.

[13]

Now twenty daies, by which the sonnes of men
Diuide their works, haue past through heuen sheene,
Since I was brought into this dolefull den;
During which space these sory eies haue seen
Seauen women by him slaine, and eaten clene.
And now no more for him but I alone,
And this old woman here remaining beene;
Till thou cam'st hither to augment our mone,
And of vs three to morrow he will sure eate one.

[14]

Ah dreadfull tidings which thou doest declare,
(Quoth she) of all that euer hath bene knownen:
Full many great calamities and rare
This feeble brest endured hath, but none
Equall to this, where euer I haue gone.
But what are you, whom like vnlucky lot
Hath linckt with me in the same chaine attone?
To tell (quoth she) that which ye see, needs not;
A wofull wretched maid, of God and man forgot.

[15]

But what I was, it irkes me to reherse;
Daughter vnto a Lord of high degree;
That ioyd in happy peace, till fates peruerse
With guilefull loue did secretly agree,
To ouerthrow my state and dignitie.
It was my lot to loue a gentle swaine,
Yet was he but a Squire of low degree;
Yet was he meet, vnlesse mine eye did faine,
By any Ladies side for Leman to haue laine.

[16]

But for his meannesse and disparagement,
My Sire, who me too dearely well did loue,
Vnto my choise by no meanes would assent,
But often did my folly fowle reprove.
Yet nothing could my fixed mind remoue,
But whether willed or nilled friend or foe,
I me resolu'd the vtmost end to proue,
And rather then my loue abandon so,
Both sire, and friends, and all for euer to forgo.

[17]

Thenceforth I sought by secret meanes to worke
Time to my will, and from his wrathfull sight
To hide th'intent, which in my heart did lurke,
Till I thereto had all things ready dight.
So on a day vnweeting vnto wight,
I with that Squire agreeede away to flit,
And in a priuy place, betwixt vs hight,
Within a groue appointed him to meete;
To which I boldly came vpon my feeble feete.

[18]

But ah vnhappy houre me thither brought:
For in that place where I him thought to find,
There was I found, contrary to my thought,
Of this accursed Carle of hellish kind,
The shame of men, and plague of womankind,
Who trussing me, as Eagle doth his pray,
Me hether brought with him, as swift as wind,
Where yet vntouched till this present day,
I rest his wretched thrall, the sad *AEmylia*.

[19]

Ah sad *AEmylia* (then sayd *Amoret*,)
Thy ruefull plight I pittie as mine owne.
But read to me, by what deuise or wit,
Hast thou in all this time, from him vnknowne
Thine honor sau'd, though into thraldome throwne.
Through helpe (quoth she) of this old woman here
I haue so done, as she to me hath showne.
For euer when he burnt in lustfull fire,
She in my stead supplide his bestiall desire.

[20]

Thus of their euils as they did discourse,
And each did other much bewaile and mone;
Loe where the villaine selfe, their sorrowes sourse,
Came to the caue, and rolling thence the stone,
Which wont to stop the mouth thereof, that none
Might issue forth, came rudely rushing in,
And spredding ouer all the flore alone,
Gan dight him selfe vnto his wonted sinne;
Which ended, then his bloody banket should beginne.

[21]

Which when as fearefull *Amoret* perceiued,
She staid not the vtmost end thereof to try,
But like a ghastly Gelt, whose wits are reaued,
Ran forth in hast with hideous outcry,
For horroure of his shamefull villany.
But after her full lightly he vprose,
And her pursu'd as fast as she did flie:
Full fast she flies, and farre afore him goes,
Ne feeles the thorns and thickets pricke her tender toes.

[22]

Nor hedge, nor ditch, nor hill, nor dale she staies,
But ouerleapes them all, like Robucke light,
And through the thickest makes her nighest waies;
And euermore when with regardfull sight
She looking backe, espies that griesly wight
Approching nigh, she gins to mend her pace,
And makes her feare a spur to hast her flight:
More swift then *Myrrh'* or *Daphne* in her race,
Or any of the Thracian Nymphes in saluage chase.

[23]

Long so she fled, and so he follow'd long,
Ne liuing aide for her on earth appeares,
But if the heauens helpe to redresse her wrong,
Moued with pity of her plenteous teares.
It fortun'd *Belphebe* with her peares
The woody Nymphs, and with that louely boy,
Was hunting then the Libbards and the Beares,
In these wild woods, as was her wonted ioy,
To banish sloth, that oft doth noble mindes annoy.

[24]

It so befell, as oft it fals in chace,
That each of them from other sundred were,
And that same gentle Squire arriu'd in place,
Where this same cursed caytiue did appeare,
Pursuing that faire Lady full of feare,
And now he her quite ouertaken had;
And now he her away with him did beare
Vnder his arme, as seeming wondrous glad,
That by his grenning laughter mote farre off be rad.

[25]

With drery sight the gentle Squire espying,
Doth hast to crosse him by the nearest way,
Led with that wofull Ladies piteous crying,
And him assailes with all the might he may,
Yet will not he the louely spoile downe lay,
But with his craggy club in his right hand,
Defends him selfe, and saues his gotten pray.
Yet had it bene right hard him to withstand,
But that he was full light and nimble on the land.

[26]

Thereto the villaine vsed craft in fight;
For euer when the Squire his iauelin shooke,
He held the Lady forth before him right,
And with her body, as a buckler, broke
The puissance of his intended stroke.
And if it chaunst, (as needs it must in fight)
Whilest he on him was greedy to be wroke,
That any little blow on her did light,
Then would he laugh aloud, and gather great delight.

[27]

Which subtill sleight did him encumber much,
And made him oft, when he would strike, forbear;
For hardly could he come the carle to touch,
But that he her must hurt, or hazard neare:
Yet he his hand so carefully did beare,
That at the last he did himselfe attaine,
And therein left the pike head of his speare.
A streame of coleblacke bloud thence gusht amaine,
That all her silken garments did with bloud bestaine.

[28]

With that he threw her rudely on the flore,
And laying both his hands vpon his glaue,
With dreadfull strokes let driue at him so sore,
That forst him flie abacke, himselfe to saue:
Yet he therewith so felly still did raue,
That scarce the Squire his hand could once vpreare,
But for aduantage ground vnto him gaue,
Tracing and trauersing, now here, now there;
For bootlesse thing it was to think such blowes to beare.

[29]

Whilest thus in battell they embusied were,
Belphebe raunging in that forrest wide,
The hideous noise of their huge strokes did heare,
And drew thereto, making her eare her guide.
Whom when that theefe approching nigh espide,
With bow in hand, and arrowes ready bent,
He by his former combate would not bide,
But fled away with ghastly dreriment,
Well knowing her to be his deaths sole instrument.

[30]

Whom seeing flie, she speedily poursewed
With winged feete, as nimble as the winde,
And euer in her bow she ready shewed,
The arrow, to his deadly marke desynde.
As when *Latonaes* daughter cruell kynde,
In vengement of her mothers great disgrace,
With fell despight her cruell arrowes tynde
Gainst wofull *Niobes* vnhappy race,
That all the gods did mone her miserable case.

[31]

So well she sped her and so far she ventred,
That ere vnto his hellish den he raught,
Euen as he ready was there to haue entred,
She sent an arrow forth with mighty draught,
That in the very dore him ouercaught,
And in his nape arriuing, through it thrild
His greedy throte, therewith in two distraught,
That all his vitall spirites thereby spild,
And all his hairy brest with gory bloud was fild.

[32]

Whom when on ground she groueling saw to rowle,
She ran in hast his life to haue bereft:
But ere she could him reach, the sinfull sowle
Hauing his carrion corse quite sencelesse left,
Was fled to hell, surcharg'd with spoile and theft.
Yet ouer him she there long gazing stood,
And oft admir'd his monstrous shape, and oft
His mighty limbs, whilst all with filthy bloud
The place there ouerflowne, seemd like a sodaine flood.

[33]

Thenceforth she past into his dreadfull den,
Where nought but darkesome drerinesse she found,
Ne creature saw, but hearkned now and then
Some litle whispering, and soft groning sound.
With that she askt, what ghosts there vnder ground
Lay hid in horror of eternall night?
And bad them, if so be they were not bound,
To come and shew themselues before the light,
Now freed from feare and danger of that dismall wight.

[34]

Then forth she said *AEmylia* issewed,
Yet trembling euery ioynt through former feare;
And after her the Hag, there with her mewed,
A foule and lothsome creature did appeare;
A leman fit for such a louer deare.
That mou'd *Belphebe* her no lesse to hate,
Then for to rue the others heauy cheare;
Of whom she gan enquire of her estate.
Who all to her at large, as hapned, did relate.

[35]

Thence she them brought toward the place, where late
She left the gentle Squire with *Amoret*:
There she him found by that new louely mate,
Who lay the whiles in swoune, full sadly set,
From her faire eyes wiping the deawy wet,
Which softly stild, and kissing them atweene,
And handling soft the hurts, which she did get.
For of that Carle she sorely bruz'd had beene,
Als of his owne rash hand one wound was to be seene.

[36]

Which when she saw, with sodaine glauncing eye,
Her noble heart with sight thereof was fild
With deepe disdain, and great indignity,
That in her wrath she thought them both haue thrild,
With that selfe arrow, which the Carle had kild:
Yet held her wrathfull hand from vengeance sore,
But drawing nigh, ere he her well beheld;
Is this the faith she said, and said no more,
But turnd her face, and fled away for euermore.

[37]

He seeing her depart, arose vp light,
Right sore agrieued at her sharpe reproofe,
And follow'd fast: but when he came in sight,
He durst not nigh approach, but kept aloofe,
For dread of her displeasures vtmost proofe.
And euermore, when he did grace entreat,
And framed speaches fit for his behoofe,
Her mortall arrowes, she at him did threat,
And forst him backe with fowle dishonor to retreat.

[38]

At last when long he follow'd had in vaine,
Yet found no ease of grieffe, nor hope of grace,
Vnto those woods he turned backe againe,
Full of sad anguish, and in heauy case:
And finding there fit solitary place
For wofull wight, chose out a gloomy glade,
Where hardly eye mote see bright heauens face,
For mossy trees, which couered all with shade
And sad melancholy, there he his cabin made.

[39]

His wonted warlike weapons all he broke,
And threw away, with vow to vse no more,
Ne thenceforth euer strike in battell stroke,
Ne euer word to speake to woman more;
But in that wilderness, of men forlore,
And of the wicked world forgotten quight,
His hard mishap in dolor to deplore,
And wast his wretched daies in wofull plight;
So on him selfe to wreake his follies owne despight.

[40]

And eke his garment, to be thereto meet,
He wilfully did cut and shape anew;
And his faire lockes, that wont with ointment sweet
To be embaulm'd, and sweat out dainty dew,
He let to grow and griesly to concrew,
Vncomb'd, vncurl'd, and carelesly vnshed;
That in short time his face they ouergrew,
And ouer all his shoulders did dispred,
That who he whilome was, vneath was to be red.

[41]

There he continued in this carefull plight,
Wretchedly wearing out his youthly yeares,
Through wilfull penury consumed quight,
That like a pined ghost he soone appeares.
For other food then that wilde forrest beares,
Ne other drinke there did he euer tast,
Then running water, tempred with his teares,
The more his weakened body so to wast:
That out of all mens knowledge he was worne at last.

[42]

For on a day, by fortune as it fell,
His owne deare Lord Prince *Arthure* came that way,
Seeking aduentures, where he mote heare tell;
And as he through the wandring wood did stray,
Hauing espide this Cabin far away,
He to it drew, to weet who there did wonne;
Weening therein some holy Hermit lay,
That did resort of sinfull people shonne;
Or else some woodman shrowded there from scorching sunne.

[43]

Arriuing there, he found this wretched man,
Spending his daies in dolour and despaire,
And through long fasting woxen pale and wan,
All ouergrowen with rude and rugged haire;
That albeit his owne deare Squire he were,
Yet he him knew not, ne auiz'd at all,
But like strange wight, whom he had seene no where,
Saluting him, gan into speach to fall,
And pittie much his plight, that liu'd like outcast thrall.

[44]

But to his speach he aunswered no whit,
But stood still mute, as if he had beene dum,
Ne signe of sence did shew, ne common wit,
As one with grieve and anguise ouercum,
And vnto euery thing did aunswere mum:
And euer when the Prince vnto him spake,
He louted lowly, as did him becum,
And humble homage did vnto him make,
Midst sorrow shewing ioyous semblance for his sake.

[45]

At which his vncouth guise and vsage quaint
The Prince did wonder much, yet could not ghesse
The cause of that his sorrowfull constraint;
Yet weend by secret signes of manlinesse,
Which close appeard in that rude brutishnesse,
That he whilome some gentle swaine had beene,
Traind vp in feats of armes and knightlinesse;
Which he obseru'd, by that he him had seene
To weld his naked sword, and try the edges keene.

[46]

And eke by that he saw on euery tree,
How he the name of one engrauen had,
Which likly was his liefest loue to be,
For whom he now so sorely was bestad;
Which was by him *BELPHEBE* rightly rad.
Yet who was that *Belphebe*, he ne wist;
Yet saw he often how he wexed glad,
When he it heard, and how the ground he kist,
Wherein it written was, and how himselfe he blist:

[47]

Tho when he long had marked his demeanor,
And saw that all he said and did, was vaine,
Ne ought mote make him change his wonted tenor,
Ne ought mote ease or mitigate his paine,
He left him there in languor to remaine,
Till time for him should remedy prouide,
And him restore to former grace againe.
Which for it is too long here to abide,

I will deferre the end vntill another tide.

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