

Cant. VIII.

*The gentle Squire recouers grace,
Sclaunder her guests doth staine:
Corflambo chaseth Placidus,
And is by Arthure slaine.*

[1]

WELL said the wiseman, now prou'd true by this,
Which to this gentle Squire did happen late,
That the displeasure of the mighty is
Then death it selfe more dread and desperate.
Fornaught the same may calme ne mitigate,
Till time the tempest doe thereof delay
With sufferance soft, which rigour can abate,
And haue the sterne remembrance wypt away
Of bitter thoughts, which deepe therein infixed lay.

[2]

Like as it fell to this vnhappy boy,
Whose tender heart the faire *Belphebe* had,
With one sterne looke so daunted, that no ioy
In all his life, which afterwards he lad,
He euer tasted, but with penaunce sad
And pensiue sorrow pind and wore away,
Ne euer laught, ne once shew'd countenance glad;
But alwaies wept and wailed night and day,
As blasted bloosme through heat doth languish & decay

[3]

Till on a day, as in his wonted wise
His doole he made, there chaunst a turtle Doue
To come, where he his dolours did deuise,
That likewise late had lost her dearest loue,
Which losse her made like passion also proue.
Who seeing his sad plight, her tender heart
With deare compassion deeply did emmoue,
That she gan mone his vnderdeserued smart,
And with her dolefull accent beare with him a part.

[4]

Shee sitting by him as on ground he lay,
Her mournefull notes full piteously did frame,

And thereof made a lamentable lay,
So sensibly compyld, that in the same
Him seemed oft he heard his owne right name.
With that he forth would poure so plenteous teares,
And beat his breast vnworthy of such blame,
And knocke his head, and rend his rugged heares,
That could haue perst the hearts of Tigres & of Beares.

[5]

Thus long this gentle bird to him did vse,
Withouten dread of perill to repaire
Vnto his wonne, and with her mournefull muse
Him to recomfort in his greatest care,
That much did ease his mourning and misfare:
And euery day for guerdon of her song,
He part of his small feast to her would share;
That at the last of all his woe and wrong
Companion she became, and so continued long.

[6]

Vpon a day as she him sate beside,
By chance he certaine miniments forth drew,
Which yet with him as relickes did abide
Of all the bounty, which *Belphebe* threw
On him, whilst goodly grace she did him shew:
Amongst the rest a iewell rich he found,
That was a Ruby of right perfect hew,
Shap'd like a heart, yet bleeding of the wound,
And with a litle golden chaine about it bound.

[7]

The same he tooke, and with a riband new,
In which his Ladies colours were, did bind
About the turtles necke, that with the vew
Did greatly solace his engrieued mind.
All vnawares the bird, when she did find
Her selfe so deckt, hernimble wings displaid,
And flew away, as lightly as the wind:
Which sodaine accident him much dismaid,
And looking after long, did marke which way she straid.

[8]

But when as long he looked had in vaine,

Yet saw her forward still to make her flight,
His weary eie returnd to him againe,
Full of discomfort and disquiet plight,
That both his iuell he had lost so light,
And eke his deare companion of his care.
But that sweet bird departing, flew forth right
Through the wideregion of the wastfull aire,
Vntill she came where wonned his *Belphebe* faire.

[9]

There found she her (as then it did betide)
Sitting in couert shade of arbors sweet,
After late weary toile, which she had tride
In saluage chase, to rest as seem'd her meet.
There she alighting, fell before her feet,
And gan to her her mournfull plaint to make,
As was herwont, thinking to let her weet
The great tormenting grieve, that for her sake
Her gentle Squire through her displeasure did pertake.

[10]

She her beholding with attentive eye,
At length did marke about her purple brest
That precious iuell, which she formerly
Had knowne right well with coloured ribbands drest:
Therewith she rose in hast, and her addrest
With ready hand it to haue reft away.
But the swift bird obeyd not her behest,
But swaru'd aside, and there againe did stay;
She follow'd her, and thought againe it to assay.

[11]

And euer when she nigh approcht, the Doue
Would flit a litle forward, and then stay,
Till she drew neare, and then againe remoue;
So tempting her still to pursue the pray,
And still from her escaping soft away:
Till that at length into that forrest wide,
She drew her far, and led with slow delay.
In th'end she her vnto that place did guide,
Whereas that wofull man in languor did abide.

[12]

Eftsoones she flew vnto his fearelesse hand,
And there a piteous ditty new deuiz'd,
As if she would haue made him vnderstand,
His sorrowes cause to be of her despis'd.
Whom when she saw in wretched weedes disguiz'd,
With heary glib deform'd, and meiger face,
Like ghost late risen from his graue agryz'd,
She knew him not, but pittied much his case,
And wisht it were in her to doe him any grace.

[13]

He her beholding, at her feet downe fell,
And kist the ground on which her sole did tread,
And washt the same with water, which did well
From his moist eies, and like two streames proceed,
Yet spake no word, whereby she might aread
What mister wight he was, or what he ment,
But as one daunted with her presence dread,
Onely few ruefull lookes vnto her sent,
As messengers of his true meaning and intent.

[14]

Yet nathemore his meaning she ared,
But wondred much at his so selcouth case,
And by his persons secret seemlyhed
Well weend, that he had beene some man of place,
Before misfortune did his hew deface:
That being mou'd with ruth she thus bespake.
Ah wofull man, what heauens hard disgrace,
Or wrath of cruell wight on thee ywrake?
Or selfe disliked life doth thee thus wretched make?

[15]

If heauen, then none may it redresse or blame,
Sith to his powre we all are subiect borne:
If wrathfull wight, then fowle rebuke and shame
Be theirs, that haue so cruell thee forlorne;
But if through inward grieve or wilfull scorne
Of life it be, then better doe aduise.
For he whose daies in wilfull woe are worne,
The grace of his Creator doth despise,
That will not vse his gifts for thanklesse nigardise.

[16]

When so he heard her say, eftsoones he brake
His sodaine silence, which he long had pent,
And sighing inly deepe, her thus bespake;
Then haue they all themselues against me bent:
For heauen, first author of my languishment,
Enuying my too great felicity,
Did closely with a cruell one consent,
To cloud my daies in dolefull misery,
And make me loath this life, still longing for to die.

[17]

Ne any but your selfe, ô dearest dred,
Hath done this wrong, to wreake on worthlesse wight
Your high displesure, through misdeeming bred:
That when your pleasure is to deeme aright,
Ye may redresse, and me restore to light.
Which sory words her mightie hart did mate
With mild regard, to see his ruefull plight,
That her inburning wrath she gan abate,
And him receiu'd againe to former fauours state.

[18]

In which he long time afterwards did lead
An happie life with grace and good accord,
Fearlesse of fortunes chaunge or enuies dread,
And eke all mindlesse of his owne deare Lord
The noble Prince, who neuer heard one word
Of tydings, what did vnto him betide,
Or what good fortune did to him afford,
But through the endlesse world did wander wide,
Him seeking euermore, yet no where him descride.

[19]

Till on a day as through that wood he rode,
He chaunst to come where those two Ladies late,
Aemylia and *Amoret* abode,
Both in full sad and sorrowfull estate;
The one right feeble through the euill rate
Of food, which in her duresse she had found:
The other almost dead and desperate
Through her late hurts, and through that haplesse wound,
With which the Squire in her defence her sore astound.

[20]

Whom when the Prince beheld, he gan to rew
The euill case in which those Ladies lay;
But most was moued at the piteous vew
Of *Amoret*, so neare vnto decay,
That her great daunger did him much dismay.
Eftsoones that pretious liquour forth he drew,
Which he in store about him kept alway,
And with few drops thereof did softly dew
Her wounds, that vnto strength restor'd her soone anew.

[21]

Tho when they both recouered were right well,
He gan of them inquire, what euill guide
Them thether brought, and how their harmes befell.
To whom they told all, that did them betide,
And how from thradome vile they were vntide
Of that same wicked Carle, by Virgins hond;
Whose bloudie corse they shew'd him there beside,
And eke his caue, in which they both were bond:
At which he wondred much, when all those signes he fond.

[22]

And euermore he greatly did desire
To know, what Virgin did them thence vnbind;
And oft of them did earnestly inquire,
Where was her won, and how he mote her find.
But when as nought according to his mind
He could outlearne, he them from ground did reare:
No seruice lothsome to a gentle kind;
And on his warlike beast them both did beare,
Himselfe by them on foot, to succour them from feare.

[23]

So when that forrest they had passed well,
A litle cotage farre away they spide,
To which they drew, ere night vpon them fell;
And entring in, found none therein abide,
But one old woman sitting there beside,
Vpon the ground in ragged rude attyre,
With filthy lockes about her scattered wide,
Gnawing her nayles for felnesse and for yre,
And there out sucking venime to her parts entyre.

[24]

A foule and loathly creature sure in sight,
And in conditions to be loath'd no lesse:
For she was stuff with rancour and despight
Vp to the throat, that oft with bitterness
It forth would breake, and gush in great excesse,
Pouring out streames of poyson and of gall
Gainst all, that truth or vertue doe professe,
Whom she with leasings lewdly did miscall,
And wickedly backbite: Her name men *Sclaunder* call.

[25]

Her nature is all goodnesse to abuse,
And causelesse crimes continually to frame,
With which she guiltlesse persons may accuse,
And steale away the crowne of their goodname;
Ne euer Knight so bold, ne euer Dame
So chast and loyall liu'd, but she would striue
With forged cause them falsely to defame;
Ne euer thing so well was doen aliue,
But she with blame would blot, & of due praise depriue.

[26]

Her words were not, as common words are ment,
T'expresse the meaning of the inward mind,
But noysome breath, and poysnous spirit sent
From inward parts, with cancred malice lind,
And breathed forth with blast of bitter wind;
Which passing through the eares, would pierce the hart,
And wound the soule it selfe with grieve vnkind:
For like the stings of Aspes, that kill with smart,
Her spightfull words did pricke, & wound the inner part.

[27]

Such was that Hag, vnmeet to host such guests,
Whom greatest Princes court would welcome fayne,
But neede, that answers not to all requests,
Bad them not looke for better entertayne;
And eke that age despysed nicenesse vaine,
Enur'd to hardnesse and to homely fare,
Which them to warlike discipline did trayne,
And manly limbs endur'd with litle care
Against all hard mishaps and fortunelesse misfare.

[28]

Then all that euening welcommed with cold,
And chearelesse hunger, they together spent;
Yet found no fault, but that the Hag did scold
And rayle at them with grudgefull discontent,
For lodging there without her owne consent:
Yet they endured all with patience milde,
And vnto rest themselues all onely lent,
Regardlesse of that queane so base and vilde,
To be vniustly blamd, and bitterly reuilde.

[29]

Here well I weene, when as these rimes be red
With misregard, that some rash witted wight,
Whose looser thought will lightly be misled,
These gentle Ladies will misdeeme too light,
For thus conuersing with this noble Knight;
Sith now of dayes such temperance is rare
And hard to finde, that heat of youthfull spright
For ought will from his greedie pleasure spare,
More hard for hungry steed t'abstaine from pleasant lare.

[30]

But antique age yet in the infancie
Of time, did liue then like an innocent,
In simple truth and blamelesse chastitie,
Ne them of guile had made experiment,
But voide of vile and treacherous intent,
Held vertue for it selfe in soueraine awe:
Then loyall loue had royall regiment,
And each vnto his lust did make a lawe,
From all forbidden things his liking to withdraw.

[31]

The Lyon there did with the Lambe consort,
And eke the Doue sate by the Faulcons side,
Ne each of other feared fraud or tort,
But did in safe securitie abide,
Withouten perill of the stronger pride:
But when the world woxe old, it woxe warre old
(Whereof it hight) and hauing shortly tride
The traines of wit, in wickednesse woxe bold,
And dared of all sinnes the secrets to vnfold.

[32]

Then beautie, which was made to represent
The great Creatours owne resemblance bright,
Vnto abuse of lawlesse lust was lent,
And made the baite of bestiall delight:
Then faire grew foule, and foule grew faire in sight,
And that which wont to vanquish God and man,
Was made the vassall of the victors might;
Then did her glorious flowre wax dead and wan,
Despisd and troden downe of all that ouerran.

[33]

And now it is so vtterly decayd,
That any bud thereof doth scarce remaine,
But if few plants preseru'd through heauenly ayd,
In Princes Court doe hap to sprout againe,
Dew'd with her drops of bountie Soueraine,
Which from that goodly glorious flowre proceed,
Sprung of the auncient stocke of Princes straine,
Now th'onely remnant of that royall breed,
Whose noble kind at first was sure of heauenly seed.

[34]

Tho soone as day discouered heauens face
To sinfull men with darknes ouerdight,
This gentle crew gan from their eye-lids chace
The drowzie humour of the dampish night,
And did themselues vnto their iourney dight.
So forth they yode, and forward softly paced,
That them to view had bene an vncouth sight;
How all the way the Prince on footpace traced,
The Ladies both on horse, together fast embraced.

[35]

Soone as they thence departed were afore,
That shamefull Hag, the slaunder of her sexe,
Them follow'd fast, and them reuiled sore,
Him calling theefe, them whores; that much did vex
His noble hart; thereto she did annexe
False crimes and facts, such as they neuer ment,
That those two Ladies much asham'd did wexe:
The more did she pursue her lewd intent,
And rayl'd and rag'd, till she had all her poyson spent.

[36]

At last when they were passed out of sight,
Yet she did not her spightfull speach forbear,
But after them did barke, and still backbite,
Though there were none her hatefull words to heare:
Like as a curre doth felly bite and teare
The stone, which passed straunger at him threw;
So she them seeing past the reach of eare,
Against the stones and trees did rayle anew,
Till she had duld the sting, which in her tongs end grew.

[37]

They passing forth kept on their readie way,
With easie steps so soft as foot could stryde,
Both for great feeblesse, which did oft assay
Faire *Amoret*, that scarcely she could ryde,
And eke through heauie armes, which sore annoyd
The Prince on foot, not wonted so to fare;
Whose steadie hand was faine his steede to guyde,
And all the way from trotting hard to spare,
So was his toyle the more, the more that was his care.

[38]

At length they spide, where towards them with speed
A Squire came gallopping, as he would flie
Bearing a litle Dwarfe before his steed,
That all the way full loud for aide did crie,
That seem'd his shrikes would rend the brasen skie:
Whom after did a mightie man pursew,
Ryding vpon a Dromedare on hie,
Of stature huge, and horrible of hew,
That would haue maz'd a man his dreadfull face to vew.

[39]

For from his fearefull eyes two fierie beames,
More sharpe then points of needles did proceede,
Shooting forth farre away two flaming streames,
Full of sad powre, that poysonous bale did breede
To all, that on him lookt without good heed,
And secretly his enemies did slay:
Like as the Basiliske of serpents seede,
From powrefull eyes close venim doth conuay
Into the lookers hart, and killeth farre away.

[40]

He all the way did rage at that same Squire,
And after him full many threatnings threw,
With curses vaine in his auengefull ire:
But none of them (so fast away he flew)
Him ouertooke, before he came in vew.
Where when he saw the Prince in armour bright,
He cald to him aloud, his case to rew,
And rescue him through succour of his might,
From that his cruell foe, that him pursewd in sight.

[41]

Eftsoones the Prince tooke downe those Ladies twaine
From loftie steede, and mounting in their stead
Came to that Squire, yet trembling euery vaine:
Of whom he gan enquire his cause of dread;
Who as he gan the same to him aread,
Loe hard behind his backe his foe was prest,
With dreadfull weapon aymed at his head,
That vnto death had doen him vnredrest,
Had not the noble Prince his readie stroke represt.

[42]

Who thrusting boldly twixt him and the blow,
The burden of the deadly brunt did beare
Vpon his shield, which lightly he did throw
Ouer his head, before the harne came neare.
Nathlesse it fell with so despitous dreare
And heaueie sway, that hard vnto his crowne
The shield it droue, and did the couering reare,
Therewith both Squire and dwarfe did tomble downe
Vnto the earth, and lay long while in senselesse swowne.

[43]

Whereat the Prince full wrath, his strong right hand
In full auengement heaued vp on hie,
And stroke the Pagan with his steely brand
So sore, that to his saddle bow thereby
He bowed low, and so a while did lie:
And sure had not his massie yron mace
Betwixt him and his hurt bene happily,
It would haue cleft him to the girding place,
Yet as it was, it did astonish him long space.

[44]

But when he to himselfe returnd againe,
All full of rage he gan to curse and sweare,
And vow by *Mahoune* that he should be slaine.
With that his murderous mace he vp did reare,
That seemed nought the souse thereof could beare,
And therewith smote at him with all his might.
But ere that it to him approched neare,
The royall child with readie quicke foresight,
Did shun the prooffe thereof and it auoyded light.

[45]

But ere his hand he could recure againe,
To ward his bodie from the balefull stound,
He smote at him with all his might and maine,
So furiously, that ere he wist, he found
His head before him tombling on the ground.
The whiles his babling tongue did yet blaspheme
And curse his God, that did him so confound;
The whiles his life ran foorth in bloudie streame,
His soule descended downe into the Stygian reame.

[46]

Which when that Squire beheld, he woxe full glad
To see his foe breath out his spright in vaine:
But that same dwarfe right sorie seem'd and sad,
And howld aloud to see his Lord there slaine,
And rent his haire and scratcht his face for paine.
Then gan the Prince at leasure to inquire
Of all the accident, there hapned plaine,
And what he was, whose eyes did flame with fire;
All which was thus to him declared by that Squire.

[47]

This mightie man (quoth he) whom you haue slaine,
Of an huge Geauntesse whylome was bred;
And by his strength rule to himselfe did gaine
Of many Nations into thraldome led,
And mightie kingdomes of his force adred;
Whom yet he conquer'd not by bloudie fight,
Ne hostes of men with banners brode dispred,
But by the powre of his infectious sight,
With which he killed all, that came within his might.

[48]

Ne was he euer vanquished afore,
But euer vanquisht all, with whom he fought;
Ne was there man so strong, but he downe bore,
Ne woman yet so faire, but he her brought
Vnto his bay, and captiued her thought.
For most of strength and beautie his desire
Was spoyle to make, and wast them vnto nought,
By casting secret flakes of lustfull fire
From his false eyes, into their harts and parts entire.

[49]

Therefore *Corflambo* was he cald aright,
Though namelesse there his bodie now doth lie,
Yet hath he left one daughter that is hight
The faire *Poeana*; who seemes outwardly
So faire, as euer yet saw liuing eie:
And were her vertue like her beautie bright,
She were as faire as any vnder skie.
But ah she giuen is to vaine delight,
And eke too loose of life, and eke of loue too light.

[50]

So as it fell there was a gentle Squire,
That lou'd a Ladie of high parentage,
But for his meane degree might not aspire
To match so high, her friends with counsell sage,
Dissuaded her from such a disparage.
But she, whose hart to loue was wholly lent,
Out of his hands could not redeeme her gage,
But firmly following her first intent,
Resolu'd with him to wend, gainst all her friends consent.

[51]

So twixt themselues they pointed time and place,
To which when he according did repaire,
An hard mishap and disauentrous case
Him chaunst; in stead of his *Aemylia* faire
This Gyants sonne, that lies there on the laire
An headlesse heape, him vnawares there caught,
And all dismayd through mercillesse despaire,
Him wretched thrall vnto his dongeon brought,
Where he remaines, of all vnsuccour'd and vnsought.

[52]

This Gyants daughter came vpon a day
Vnto the prison in her ioyous glee,
To view the thrals, which there in bondage lay:
Amongst the rest she chaunced there to see
This louely swaine the Squire of low degree;
To whom she did her liking lightly cast,
And wooed him her paramour to bee:
From day to day she woo'd and prayd him fast,
And for his loue him promist libertie at last.

[53]

He though affide vnto a former loue,
To whom his faith he firmly ment to hold,
Yet seeing not how thence he mote remoue,
But by that meanes, which fortune did vnfold,
Her graunted loue, but with affection cold
To win her grace his libertie to get.
Yet she him still detaines in captiue hold,
Fearing least if she should him freely set,
He would her shortly leaue, and former loue forget.

[54]

Yet so much fauour she to him hath hight,
Above the rest, that he sometimes may space
And walke about her gardens of delight,
Hauing a keeper still with him in place,
Which keeper is this Dwarfe, her dearling base,
To whom the keyes of euery prison dore
By her committed be, of speciall grace,
And at his will may whom he list restore,
And whom he list reserue, to be afflicted more.

[55]

Whereof when tydings came vnto mine eare,
Full inly sorie for the feruent zeale,
Which I to him as to my soule did beare;
I thether went where I did long conceale
My selfe, till that the Dwarfe did me reueale,
And told his Dame, her Squire of low degree
Did secretly out of her prison steale;
For me he did mistake that Squire to bee;
For neuer two so like did liuing creature see.

[56]

Then was I taken and before her brought,
Who through the likenesse of my outward hew,
Being likewise beguiled in her thought,
Gan blame me much for being so vntrew,
To seeke by flight her fellowship t'eschew,
That lou'd me deare, as dearest thing alieue.
Thence she commaunded me to prison new;
Whereof I glad did not gainesay nor striue,
But suffred that same Dwarfe me to her dongeon driue.

[57]

There did I finde mine onely faithfull frend
In heauy plight and sad perplexitie;
Whereof I sorie, yet my selfe did bend,
Him to recomfort with my companie.
But him the more agreeu'd I found thereby:
For all his ioy, he said, in that distresse
Was mine and his *Aemylias* libertie.
Aemylia well he lou'd, as I mote ghesse;
Yet greater loue to me then her he did professe.

[58]

But I with better reason him auiz'd,
And shew'd him how through error and mis-thought
Of our like persons eath to be disguiz'd,
Or his exchange, or freedome might be wrought.
Whereto full loth was he, ne would for ought
Consent, that I who stood all fearelesse free,
Should wilfully be into thraldome brought,
Till fortune did perforce it so decree.
Yet ouerrul'd at last, he did to me agree.

[59]

The morrow next about the wonted howre,
The Dwarfe cald at the doore of *Amyas*,
To come forthwith vnto his Ladies bowre.
In steed of whom forth came I *Placidus*,
And vndiscerned, forth with him did pas.
There with great ioyance and with gladsome glee,
Of faire *Poeana* I receiued was,
And oft inbrast, as if that I were hee,
And with kind words accoyd, vowing great loue to mee.

[60]

Which I, that was not bent to former loue,
As was my friend, that had her long refusd,
Did well accept, as well it did behoue,
And to the present neede it wisely vsd.
My former hardnesse first I faire excusd;
And after promist large amends to make.
With such smooth termes her error I abusd,
To my friends good, more then for mine owne sake,
For whose sole libertie I loue and life did stake.

[61]

Thenceforth I found more fauour at her hand,
That to her Dwarfe, which had me in his charge,
She bad to lighten my too heauie band,
And graunt more scope to me to walke at large.
So on a day as by the flowrie marge
Of a fresh streame I with that Elfe did play,
Finding no meanes how I might vs enlarge,
But if that Dwarfe I could with me conuay,
I lightly snatcht him vp, and with me bore away.

[62]

Thereat he shriekt aloud, that with his cry
The Tyrant selfe came forth with yelling bray,
And me pursew'd; but nathemore would I
Forgoe the purchase of my gotten pray,
But haue perforce him hether brought away.
Thus as they talked, loe where nigh at hand
Those Ladies two yet doubtfull through dismay
In presence came, desirous t'vnderstand
Tydings of all, which there had hapned on the land.

[63]

Where soone as sad *Aemylia* did espie
Her captiue louers friend, young *Placidus*;
All mindlesse of her wonted modestie,
She to him ran, and him with streight embras
Enfolding said, and liues yet *Amyas*?
He liues (quothe he) and his *Aemylia* loues.
Then lesse (said she) by all the woe I pas,
With which my weaker patience fortune proues.
But what mishap thus long him fro my selfe remoues?

[64]

Then gan he all this storie to renew,
And tell the course of his captiuitie;
That her deare hart full deeply made to rew,
And sigh full sore, to heare the miserie,
In which so long he mercillesse did lie.
Then after many teares and sorrowes spent,
She deare besought the Prince of remedie:
Who thereto did with readie will consent,
And well perform'd, as shall appeare by his euent.

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