

Cant. X.

*Scudamour doth his conquest tell,
Of vertuous Amoret:
Great Venus Temple is describ'd,
And louers life forth set.*

[1]

TRue he it said, what euer man it sayd,
That loue with gall and hony doth abound,
But if the one be with the other wayd,
For euery dram of hony therein found,
A pound of gall doth ouer it redound.
That I too true by triall haue approued:
For since the day that first with deadly wound
My heart was launcht, and learned to haue loued,
I neuer ioyed howre, but still with care was moued.

[2]

And yet such grace is giuen them from aboue,
That all the cares and euill which they meet,
May nought at all their settled mindes remoue,
But seeme gainst common sence to them most sweet;
As bosting in their martyrdome vnmeet.
So all that euer yet I haue endured,
I count as naught, and tread downe vnder feet,
Since of my loue at length I rest assured,
That to disloyalty she will not be allured.

[3]

Long were to tell the trauell and long toile,
Through which this shield of loue I late haue wonne,
And purchased this peerelesse beauties spoile,
That harder may be ended, then begonne.
But since ye so desire, your will be donne.
Then hearke ye gentle knights and Ladies free,
My hard mishaps, that ye may learne to shonne;
For though sweet loue to conquer glorious bee,
Yet is the paine thereof much greater then the fee.

[4]

What time the fame of this renowned prise
Flew first abroad, and all mens eares possest,

I hauing armes then taken, gan auise
To winne me honour by some noble gest,
And purchase me some place amongst the best.
I boldly thought (so young mens thoughts are bold)
That this same braue emprize for me did rest,
And that both shield and she whom I behold,
Might be my lucky lot; sith all by lot we hold.

[5]

So on that hard aduenture forth I went,
And to the place of perill shortly came.
That was a temple faire and auncient,
Which of great mother *Venus* bare the name,
And farre renowned through exceeding fame;
Much more then that, which was in *Paphos* built,
Or that in *Cyprus*, both long since this same,
Though all the pillours of the one were guilt,
And all the others pauement were with yuory spilt.

[6]

And it was seated in an Island strong,
Abounding all with delices most rare,
And wall'd by nature gainst inuaders wrong,
That none mote haue accesse, nor inward fare,
But by one way, that passage did prepare.
It was a bridge ybuilt in goodly wize,
With curious Corbes and pendants grauen faire,
And arched all with porches, did arize
On stately pillours, fram'd after the Doricke guize.

[7]

And for defence thereof, on th'other end
There reared was a castle faire and strong,
That warded all which in or out did wend,
And flancked both the bridges sides along,
Gainst all that would it faine to force or wrong.
And therein wonned twenty valiant Knights;
All twenty tride in warres experience long;
Whose office was, against all [m]anner wights
By all meanes to maintaine, that castels ancients rights.

[8]

Before that Castle was an open plaine,

And in the midst thereof a piller placed;
On which this shield, of many sought in vaine,
The shield of Loue, whose guerdon me hath graced,
Was hangd on high with golden ribbands laced;
And in the marble stone was written this,
With golden letters goodly well enchaced,
Blessed the man that well can vse his blis:
VVhose euer be the shield, faire Amoret be his.

[9]

Which when I red, my heart did inly earne,
And pant with hope of that aduentures hap:
Ne stayed further newes thereof to learne,
But with my speare vpon the shield did rap,
That all the castle ringed with the clap.
Streight forth issewd a Knight all arm'd to prooffe,
And brauely mounted to his most mishap:
Who staying nought to question from aloofe,
Ran fierce at me, that fire glaunst from his horses hoofe.

[10]

Whom boldly I encountred (as I could)
And by good fortune shortly him vnseated.
Eftsoones out sprung two more of equall mould;
But I them both with equall hap defeated:
So all the twenty I likewise entreated,
And left them groning there vpon the plaine.
Then preacing to the pillour I repeated
The read thereof for guerdon of my paine,
And taking downe the shield, with me did it retaine.

[11]

So forth without impediment I past,
Till to the Bridges vtter gate I came:
The which I found sure lockt and chained fast.
I knockt, but no man aunswred me by name;
I cald, but no man answerd to my clame.
Yet I perseuer'd still to knocke and call,
Till at the last I spide within the same,
Where one stood peeping through a creuis small,
To whom I cald aloud, halfe angry therewithall.

[12]

That was to weete the Porter of the place,
Vnto whose trust the charge thereof was lent:
His name was *Doubt*, that had a double face,
Th'one forward looking, th'other backward bent,
Therein resembling *Ianus* auncient,
Which hath in charge the ingate of the yeare:
And euermore his eyes about him went,
As if some proued perill he did feare,
Or did misdoubt some ill, whose cause did not appeare.

[13]

On th'one side he, on th'other sate *Delay*,
Behinde the gate, that none her might espy;
Whose manner was all passengers to stay,
And entertaine with her occasions sly,
Through which some lost great hope vnheedily,
Which neuer they recouer might againe;
And others quite excluded forth, did ly
Long languishing there in vnpittied paine,
And seeking often entraunce, afterwards in vaine.

[14]

Me when as he had priuily espide,
Bearing the shield which I had conquerd late,
He kend it streight, and to me opened wide.
So in I past, and streight he closd the gate.
But being in, *Delay* in close awaite
Caught hold on me, and thought my steps to stay,
Feigning full many a fond excuse to prate,
And time to steale, the threasure of mans day,
Whose smallest minute lost, no riches render may.

[15]

But by no meanes my way I would forslow,
For ought that euer she could doe or say,
But from my lofty steede dismounting low,
Past forth on foote, beholding all the way
The goodly workes, and stones of rich assay,
Cast into sundry shapes by wondrous skill,
That like on earth no where I reckon may:
And vnderneath, the riuer rolling still
With murmure soft, that seem'd to serue the workmans will.

[16]

Thence forth I passed to the second gate,
The *Gate of good desert*, whose goodly pride
And costly frame, were long here to relate.
The same to all stoode alwaies open wide:
But in the Porch did euermore abide
An hideous Giant, dreadfull to behold,
That stopt the entraunce with his spacious stride,
And with the terrour of his countenance bold
Full many did affray, that else faine enter would.

[17]

His name was *Daunger* dreaded ouer all,
Who day and night did watch and duely ward,
From fearefull cowards, entrance to forstall,
And faint-heart-fooles, whom shew of perill hard
Could terrifie from Fortunes faire adward:
For oftentimes faint hearts at first espiall
Of his grim face, were from approaching scard;
Vnworthy they of grace, whom one deniall
Excludes from fairest hope, withouten further triall.

[18]

Yet many doughty warriours, often tride
In greater perils to be stout and bold,
Durst not the sternnesse of his looke abide,
But soone as they his countenance did behold,
Began to faint, and feele their corage cold.
Againe some other, that in hard assaies
Were cowards knowne, and litle count did hold,
Either through gifts, or guile, or such like waies,
Crept in by stouping low, or stealing of the kaies.

[19]

But I though nearest man of many moe,
Yet much disdainning vnto him to lout,
Or creepe betweene his legs, so in to goe,
Resolu'd him to assault with manhood stout,
And either beat him in, or driue him out.
Eftsoones aduauncing that enchaunted shield,
With all my might I gan to lay about:
Which when he saw, the glaue which he did wield
He gan forthwith t'auale, and way vnto me yield.

[20]

So as I entred, I did backward looke,
For feare of harme, that might lie hidden there;
And loe his hindparts, whereof heed I tooke,
Much more deformed fearefull vgly were,
Then all his former parts did earst appere.
For hatred, murther, treason, and despight,
With many moe lay in ambushment there,
Awayting to entrap the warelesse wight,
Which did not them preuent with vigilant foresight.

[21]

Thus hauing past all perill, I was come
Within the compasse of that Islands space;
The which did seeme vnto my simple doome,
The onely pleasant and delightfull place,
That euer troden was of footings trace.
For all that nature by her mother wit
Could frame in earth, and forme of substance base,
Was there, and all that nature did omit,
Art playing second natures part, supplied it.

[22]

No tree, that is of count, in greenewood growes,
From lowest Iuniper to Ceder tall,
No flowre in field, that daintie odour throwes,
And deckes his branch with blossomes ouer all,
But there was planted, or grew naturall:
Nor sense of man so coy and curious nice,
But there mote find to please it selfe withall;
Nor hart could wish for any queint deice,
But there it present was, and did fraile sense entice.

[23]

In such luxurious plentie of all pleasure,
It seem'd a second paradise to bee,
So lauishly enricht with natures treasure,
That if the happie soules, which doe possesse
Th'Elysian fields, and liue in lasting blesse,
Should happen this with liuing eye to see,
They soone would loath their lesser happinesse,
And wish to life return'd againe to ghesse,
That in this ioyous place they mote haue ioyance free.

[24]

Fresh shadowes, fit to shroud from sunny ray;
Faire lawnds, to take the sunne in season dew;
Sweet springs, in which a thousand Nymphs did play;
Soft rombling brookes, that gentle slomber drew;
High reared mounts, the lands about to vew;
Low looking dales, disloignd from common gaze;
Delightfull bowres, to solace louers trew;
False Labyrinthes, fond runners eyes to daze;
All which by nature made did nature selfe amaze.

[25]

And all without were walkes and all eyes dight,
With diuers trees, enrang'd in euen rankes;
And here and there were pleasant arbors pight,
And shadie seates, and sundry flowring bankes,
To sit and rest the walkers wearie shankes,
And therein thousand payres of louers walkt,
Praysing their god, and yeelding him great thanks,
Ne euer ought but of their true loues talkt,
Ne euer for rebuke or blame of any balt.

[26]

All these together by themselues did sport
Their spotlesse pleasures, and sweet loues content.
But farre away from these, another sort
Of louers lincked in true harts consent;
Which loued not as these, for like intent,
But on chast vertue grounded their desire,
Farre from all fraud, or fayned blandishment;
Which in their spirits kindling zealous fire,
Braue thoughts and noble deedes did euermore aspire.

[27]

Such were great *Hercules*, and *Hyllus* deare;
Trew *Ionathan*, and *Dauid* trustie tryde;
Stout *Theseus*, and *Pirithous* his feare;
Pylades and *Orestes* by his syde;
Myld *Titus* and *Gesippus* without pryde;
Damon and *Pythias* whom death could not seuer:
All these and all that euer had bene tyde,
In bands of friendship there did liue for euer,
Whose liues although decay'd, yet loues decayed neuer.

[28]

Which when as I, that neuer tasted blis,
Nor happie howre, beheld with gazefull eye,
I thought there was none other heauen then this;
And gan their endlesse happinesse enuye,
That being free from feare and gealosye,
Might frankly there their loues desire possesse;
Whilest I through paines and perlous ieopardie,
Was forst to seeke my lifes deare patronesse:
Much dearer be the things, which come through hard distresse.

[29]

Yet all those sights, and all that else I saw,
Might not my steps withhold, but that forthright
Vnto that purposed place I did me draw,
Where as my loue was lodged day and night:
The temple of great *Venus*, that is hight
The Queene of beautie, and of loue the mother,
There worshipped of euery liuing wight;
Whose goodly workmanship farre past all other
That euer were on earth, all were they set together.

[30]

Not that same famous Temple of *Diane*,
Whose hight all *Ephesus* did ouersee,
And which all *Asia* sought with vowes prophane,
One of the worlds seuen wonders sayd to bee,
Might match with this by many a degree:
Nor that, which that wise King of *Iurie* framed,
With endlesse cost, to be th'Almighties see;
Nor all that else through all the world is named
To all the heathen Gods, might like to this be clamed.

[31]

I much admyring that so goodly frame,
Vnto the porch approcht, which open stood;
But therein sate an amiable Dame,
That seem'd to be of very sober mood,
And in her semblant shewed great womanhood:
Strange was her tyre; for on her head a crowne
She wore much like vnto a Danisk hood,
Poudred with pearle and stone, and all her gowne
Enwouen was with gold, that raught full low a downe.

[32]

On either side of her, two young men stood,
Both strongly arm'd, as fearing one another;
Yet were they brethren both of halfe the blood,
Begotten by two fathers of one mother,
Though of contrarie natures each to other:
The one of them hight *Loue*, the other *Hate*,
Hate was the elder, *Loue* the younger brother;
Yet was the younger stronger in his state
Then th'elder, and him maystred still in all debate.

[33]

Nathlesse that Dame so well them tempred both,
That she them forced hand to ioyne in hand,
Albe that *Hatred* was thereto full loth,
And turn'd his face away, as he did stand,
Vnwilling to behold that louely band.
Yet she was of such grace and vertuous might,
That her commaundment he could not withstand,
But bit his lip for felonous despight,
And gnasht his yron tuskes at that displeasing sight.

[34]

Concord she cleeped was in common reed,
Mother of blessed *Peace*, and *Friendship* trew;
They both her twins, both borne of heauenly seed,
And she her selfe likewise diuinely grew;
The which right well her workes diuine did shew:
For strength, and wealth, and happinesse she lends,
And strife, and warre, and anger does subdew:
Of litle much, of foes she maketh frends,
And to afflicted minds sweet rest and quiet sends.

[35]

By her the heauen is in his course contained,
And all the world in state vnmoued stands,
As their Almighty maker first ordained,
And bound them with inuiolable bands;
Else would the waters ouerflow the lands,
And fire deuoure the ayre, and hell them quight,
But that she holds them with her blessed hands.
She is the nourse of pleasure and delight,
And vnto *Venus* grace the gate doth open right.

[36]

By her I entring halfe dismayed was,
But she in gentle wise me entertayned,
And twixt her selfe and loue did let me pas;
But *Hatred* would my entrance haue restrayned,
And with his club me threatned to haue brayned,
Had not the Ladie with her powrefull speach
Him from his wicked will vneath refrayned;
And th'other eke his malice did empeach,
Till I was throughly past the perill of his reach.

[37]

Into the inmost Temple thus I came,
Which fuming all with frankensence I found,
And odours rising from the altars flame.
Vpon an hundred marble pillors round
The roofe up high was lifted from the ground,
All deckt with crownes, & chaynes, and girlands gay,
And thousand pretious gifts worth many a pound,
The which sad louers for their vowes did pay;
And all the ground was strow'd with flowres, as fresh as may.

[38]

An hundred Altars round about were set,
All flaming with their sacrifices fire,
That with the steme thereof the Temple swet,
Which rould in clouds to heauen did aspire,
And in them bore true louers vowes entire:
And eke an hundred brasen caudrons bright,
To bath in ioy and amorous desire,
Euery of which was to a damzell hight;
For all the Priests were damzels, in soft linnen dight.

[39]

Right in the midst the Goddess selfe did stand
Vpon an altar of some costly masse,
Whose substance was vneath to vnderstand:
For neither pretious stone, nor durefull brasse,
Nor shining gold, nor mouldring clay it was;
But much more rare and pretious to esteeme,
Pure in aspect, and like to christall glasse,
Yet glasse was not, if one did rightly deeme,
But being faire and brickle, likest glasse did seeme.

[40]

But it in shape and beautie did excell
All other Idoles, which the heathen adore,
Farre passing that, which by surpassing skill
Phidias did make in *Paphos* Isle of yore,
With which that wretched Greeke, that life forlore
Did fall in loue: yet this much fairer shined,
But couered with a slender veile afore;
And both her feete and legs together twyned
Were with a snake, whose head & tail were fast combyned.

[41]

The cause why she was couered with a vele,
Was hard to know, for that her Priests the same
From peoples knowledge labour'd to concele.
But sooth it was not sure for womanish shame,
Nor any blemish, which the worke mote blame;
But for, they say, she hath both kinds in one,
Both male and female, both vnder one name:
She syre and mother is her selfe alone,
Begets and eke conceiues, ne needeth other none.

[42]

And all about her necke and shoulders flew
A flocke of litle loues, and sports, and ioyes,
With nimble wings of gold and purple hew;
Whose shapes seem'd not like to terrestriall boyes,
But like to Angels playing heauenly toyes;
The whilest their eldest brother was away,
Cupid their eldest brother; he enioyes
The wide kingdome of loue with Lordly sway,
And to his law compels all creatures to obay.

[43]

And all about her altar scattered lay
Great sorts of louers piteously complayning,
Some of their losse, some of their loues delay,
Some of their pride, some paragons disdayning,
Some fearing fraud, some fraudulently fayning,
As euery one had cause of good or ill.
Amongst the rest some one through loues constrayning,
Tormented sore, could not containe it still,
But thus brake forth, that all the temple it did fill.

[44]

Great *Venus*, Queene of beautie and of grace,
The ioy of Gods and men, that vnder skie
Doest fayrest shine, and most adorne thy place,
That with thy smyling looke doest pacifie
The raging seas, and makst the stormes to flie;
Thee goddesse, thee the winds, the clouds doe feare,
And when thou spreadst thy mantle forth on hie,
The waters play and pleasant lands appeare,
And heuens laugh, & al the world shews ioyous cheare.

[45]

Then doth the daedale earth throw forth to thee
Out of her fruitfull lap abundant flowres,
And then all liuing wights, soone as they see
The spring breake forth out of his lusty bowres,
They all doe learne to play the Paramours;
First doe the merry birds, thy pretty pages
Priuily pricked with thy lustfull powres,
Chirpe loud to thee out of their leauy cages,
And thee their mother call to coole their kindly rages.

[46]

Then doe the saluage beasts begin to play
Their pleasant friskes, and loath their wanted food;
The Lyons rore, the Tygres loudly bray,
The raging Buls rebellow through the wood,
And breaking forth, dare tempt the deepest flood,
To come where thou doest draw them with desire:
So all things else, that nourish vitall blood,
Soone as with fury thou doest them inspire,
In generation seeke to quench their inward fire.

[47]

So all the world by thee at first was made,
And dayly yet thou doest the same repayre:
Ne ought on earth that merry is and glad,
Ne ought on earth that louely is and fayre,
But thou the same for pleasure didst prepayre.
Thou art the root of all that ioyous is,
Great God of men and women, queene of th'ayre,
Mother of laughter, and welspring of blisse,
O graunt that of my loue at last I may not misse.

[48]

So did he say: but I with murmure soft,
That none might heare the sorrow of my hart,
Yet inly groning deepe and sighing oft,
Besought her to graunt ease vnto my smart,
And to my wound her gracious help impart.
Whilest thus I spake, behold with happy eye
I spyde, where at the Idoles feet apart
A beuie of fayre damzels close did lye,
Wayting when as the Antheme should be sung on hye.

[49]

The first of them did seeme of ryper yeares,
And grauer countenance then all the rest;
Yet all the rest were eke her equall peares,
Yet vnto her obeyed all the best.
Her name was *VVomanhood*, that she exprest
By her sad semblant and demeanure wyse:
For stedfast still her eyes did fixed rest,
Ne rov'd at randon after gazers guyse,
Whose luring baytes oftymes doe heedlesse harts entyse.

[50]

And next to her sate goodly *Shamefastnesse*,
Ne euer durst her eyes from ground vpreare,
Ne euer once did looke vp from her desse,
As if some blame of euill she did feare,
That in her cheekes made roses oft appeare:
And her against sweet *Cherefulesse* was placed,
Whose eyes like twinkling stars in euening cleare,
Were deckt with smyles, that all sad humors chaced,
And darted forth delights, the which her goodly graced.

[51]

And next to her sate sober *Modestie*,
Holding her hand vpon her gentle hart;
And her against sate comely *Curtesie*,
That vnto euery person knew her part;
And her before was seated ouerthwart
Soft *Silence*, and submisse *Obedience*,
Both linckt together neuer to dispart,
Both gifts of God not gotten but from thence,
Both girlonds of his Saints against their foes offence.

[52]

Thus sate they all a round in seemely rate:
And in the midst of them a goodly mayd,
Euen in the lap of *VVomanhood* there sate,
The which was all in lilly white arayd,
With siluer streames amongst the linnen stray'd;
Like to the Morne, when first her shyning face
Hath to the gloomy world it selfe bewray'd,
That same was fayrest *Amoret* in place,
Shyning with beauties light, and heauenly vertues grace.

[53]

Whom soone as I beheld, my hart gan throb,
And wade in doubt, what best were to be donne:
For sacrilege me seem'd the Church to rob,
And folly seem'd to leaue the thing vndonne,
Which with so strong attempt I had begonne.
Tho shaking off all doubt and shamefast feare,
Which Ladies loue I heard had neuer wonne
Mongst men of worth, I to her stepped neare,
And by the lilly hand her labour'd vp to reare.

[54]

Thereat that formost matrone me did blame,
And sharpe rebuke, for being ouer bold;
Saying it was to Knight vnseemely shame,
Vpon a recluse Virgin to lay hold,
That vnto *Venus* seruices was sold.
To whom I thus, Nay but it fitteth best,
For *Cupids* man with *Venus* mayd to hold,
For ill your goddesse seruices are drest
By virgins, and her sacrifices let to rest.

[55]

With that my shield I forth to her did show,
Which all that while I closely had conceald;
On which when *Cupid* with his killing bow
And cruell shafts emblazond she beheld,
At sight thereof she was with terror queld,
And said no more: but I which all that while
The pledge of faith, her hand engaged held,
Like warie Hynd within the weedie soyle,
For no intreatie would forgoe so glorious spoyle.

[56]

And euermore vpon the Goddesse face
Mine eye was fixt, for feare of her offence,
Whom when I saw with amiable grace
To laugh at me, and fauour my pretence,
I was emboldned with more confidence,
And nought for nicenesse nor for enuy sparing,
In presence of them all forth led her thence,
All looking on, and like astonisht staring,
Yet to lay hand on her, not one of all them daring.

[57]

She often prayd, and often me besought,
Sometime with tender teares to let her goe,
Sometime with witching smyles: but yet for nought,
That euer she to me could say or doe,
Could she her wished freedome fro me wooe;
But forth I led her through the Temple gate,
By which I hardly past with much adoe:
But that same Ladie which me friended late
In entrance, did me also friend in my retrate.

[58]

No lesse did daunger threaten me with dread,
When as he saw me, maugre all his powre,
That glorious spoyle of beautie with me lead,
Then *Cerberus*, when *Orpheus* did recoure
His Lemman from the Stygian Princes boure.
But euermore my shield did me defend,
Against the storne of euery dreadfull stoure:
Thus safely with my loue I thence did wend.
So ended he his tale, where I this Canto end.

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