

## CANTO THE TWENTY-SECOND.

## A R G U M E N T.

The three Poets arrive at the Stage of INTEMPERANCE ; where they see a miraculous Tree, the Counter-part of the Tree of Knowledge ; from whence they hear certain monitory Sounds, adapted to the Place and Audience.

**L**IKE Light, receding from th' incumbent gloom,  
 Heav'n's Envoy pass'd behind, whose waving plume  
 Had wafted from my unbenighted face  
 One mark of Sin : when, rising on the breeze,  
 A gentle concert swell'd by soft degrees,  
 And thus, responsive rose the dulcet lays :

## II.

*“ Happy are they that hunger for the food  
 Of Righteousness, and thirst for EDEN's flood.”*  
 Another Voice reply'd, accordant soon :  
*“ When will its streams my fervent heat allay ? ”*  
 Then the soft accents seem'd to die away,  
 Tho' Echo still return'd the heav'nly tune.

## III.

Still something of my mortal load behind  
 I left, where'er the circling bound disjoin'd  
     Gave a new passage to another Sphere.  
 Light, up the rugged scale I trip'd along,  
 With the two Masters of the ROMAN song;  
     Nor seem'd my limbs their usual weight to bear.

## IV.

“ Where Love is kindled by congenial fire,”  
 My sapient Guide observ'd, “ the strong desire  
     By its external signs is quickly known,  
 Since JUVENAL in LIMBO's chains was bound;  
 By his discourse your love to me I found,  
     Which warm'd my breast in that ungenial Zone.

## V.

“ How easy seems my toil with such a Friend,  
 Up those eternal rampires to ascend,  
     With gentle slope, they seem to court our feet:  
 But tell (if Amity's strict laws allow  
 ME to enquire, and you the cause to show)  
     How Av'rice in that breast could find a feat!

## VI.

“ Could fordid Love of Gold a lodging find  
 Within the limits of that mighty Mind,  
     That o'er the fields of Nature lov'd to stray,  
 And knew to touch the springs of Grief and Joy.”  
 He spoke; and thus I heard his Friend's reply,  
     “ Your friendship glows in ev'ry word you say.

VII.

“ By its effect, the Fancy seems to find  
 The cause, that often lies in shades behind ;  
 You thought me bound beneath, in MAMMON’S  
 Far diff’rent was the crime I wash’d away [chain :  
 With briny tears, while CYNTHIA’S gentle ray  
 A thousand times was seen to wax and wane.

VIII.

“ In that dire conflict, on the STYGIAN shore  
 I had been doom’d to toil for evermore,  
 But that a gleam of heav’nly Grace impress’d  
 The meaning of your lofty song so clear,  
 When Lust of Gold you blame, with tone severe,  
 It quickly chac’d away the latent pest.

IX.

“ Nigh one extreme, the other soon appear’d,  
 Still changing as th’opponent Passion veer’d,  
 And turn’d the fickle Mind’s alternate scale :  
 With cautious care to squander or to hoard,  
 I shun’d alike, and thus my soul restor’d ;  
 Else I had sunk to the TARTARIAN Vale.

X.

“ Alas ! how many, in the Day of Doom,  
 With horrent hair, shall quit the yawning Tomb,  
 Condemn’d for want of thought ! What countless  
 Profusion breeds ; and how it lures along, [harms  
 With soft assuasive voice, the willing throng :  
 A subtle Demon, deck’d in Angel charms !

*St. x. l. 1. Alas ! how many,—] See INFERNO, Canto vii.*

## XI.

“ But crimes oppos’d, a like degree of pain  
 Are doom’d to suffer in Lustration’s Reign.  
 Thus I, a Prodigal among the brood  
 Of Misers, mingled in the dust, bewail’d  
 Our common crimes, in that vile durance held,  
 Till Time and Penitence the Soul renew’d.”

## XII.

Then thus to him that sung JOCASTA’S pain,  
 Began the Master of the rural strain;  
 “ Still some remaining doubts my foul affair;  
 Your song no vestige of EMMANUEL shows,  
 No sudden spark of pure devotion glows,  
 Nor faith, by which our deeds alone avail.

## XIII.

“ What beam of Noon, or Spirit of the Night,  
 Illum’d your darkness with celestial Light,  
 What Lamp ætherial led your favour’d prow  
 Cross the pure waters by the Fisher plough’d ?” —  
 The Bard reply’d, “ You both the gifts bestow’d,  
 And with the palm and laurel deck’d my brow.

## XIV.

“ Like one, that bears a shaded lamp, you threw  
 A beamy light behind, unseen by you;

*St. xii. l. 1. —him that sung JOCASTA’S pain,]* STATIUS. See his THEBAID.

*St. xiv. l. 1. Like one that bears a shaded lamp—]* This simile of VIRGIL, bearing a light of what he himself was unconscious, applied to the Lines in his POLLIO supposed to be prophetic of the MESSIAH, is well conceived.

And with benighted feet your Pupil led,  
 By the long radiance streaming from your hand,  
 To the blest entrance of the promis'd Land,  
 And to its blooming bounds my journey sped.

XV.

“ When first you sung the Golden Times' return,  
 And a new Progeny from Æther born,  
 To bless the world, with Justice by his side;  
 I caught at once, from your immortal lyre,  
 The flame of SALEM, and the Poet's fire,  
 And seiz'd the deathless boon, to you deny'd.

XVI.

“ But if you wish my words should paint at large  
 The means that led to EDEN's happy verge,  
 Attend, and hear the process of my fate:  
 The world, now pregnant with celestial seed,  
 Scatter'd from Zone to Zone, with Angel's speed  
 Deliver'd to the Sun her heav'nly freight.”

XVII.

“ THIS Miracle, with the respondent Sign,  
 Of old, deliver'd in thy strain divine,  
 I ponder'd in the balance of the Mind,  
 And found the Gospel Proclamation chime  
 In such full concert with thy note sublime,  
 That scarce a trace of doubt was left behind.

XVIII.

“ In holy converse with the Saints I pass'd  
 My hours; but, when the wolvish Tyrant chac'd

These Lambs to death, yet still aloof I stood,  
 Till, with all other sects, their lives compar'd,  
 Made me all other doctrines disregard,  
 And ev'ry scruple of the heart subdu'd.

## XIX.

“ Long ere my Muse had led the **GRECIAN Band**  
 To the dire conflict on **ISMENO'S Strand**,  
 In other streams the pure baptismal rite  
 I shar'd; but still conceal'd my nascent faith.  
 Heav'n I provok'd, to shun a Mortal's wrath,  
 And worship'd **HADES**, and eternal Night.

## XX.

“ For this, while **PHOEBUS** journey'd round the Year  
 Four hundred times, I cours'd, in full career,  
 Round yon' low rampires, with the frigid train;  
 Who, dead to Charity's celestial glow,  
 Run at full speed, and kindle as they go,  
 Till Love has wing'd them for the blest'd domain.

## XXI.

“ But, oh! blest'd Poet! whose propitious hand  
 Drew the dark veil, and bade my views expand,  
 Till earthly Dread in heav'nly Hope was lost,  
 Tell, where is **TERENCE**? in what distant bound  
**CÆCILIVS** lives, or **PLAUTUS'** Shade renown'd?  
 Is Heav'n their lot, or **HADES'** gloomy coast?

*St. xx. l. 2. Four hundred times*] This accounts for most of the time of the Lustration of **STATIVS**, till the time of **DANTE**; viz. four hundred years in the Regions of **APATHY**, and five hundred in the Stage of **PRODIGALITY** and **AVARICE**.

*St. xxi. l. 4, 5. TERENCE, CÆCILIVS, PLAUTUS*] Celebrated **ROMAN Poets**.

## XXII.

“ Say, in what limits do they dwell below?  
 Are they ordain'd to blifs, or endless woe?”  
 “ With PERSIUS,” I reply'd; “ and many more,  
 Led by that GREEK who fung the toils of war;  
 Nurs'd by the Muses with peculiar care,  
 In lighter Bands they range the nether Shore.

## XXIII.

“ There oft we celebrate the Muses' Hill,  
 Where led, in turn, we quaff'd th' inspiring rill,  
 With PELLA's graver tones; the lighter key  
 Of blythe ANACREON there in concert joins;  
 With AGATHON, SIMONIDES combines,  
 And all the Tribes of ATTIC Harmony.

## XXIV.

“ ANTIGONE, DEIPHILE, is there,  
 And sad ISMONE, with dishevel'd hair,  
 As when her brother fell; ARGIA too,  
 HYPPIPYLE, and MANTO, join the throng,  
 And DEIDAMIA, with her Sisters young,  
 All fam'd in ancient times, and fung by you.”

## XXV.

Now either Poet, wrapt in thought profound,  
 In silence stood, to view the prospect round,

*St. xxiii. l. 3. With PELLA's graver tones—] EURIPIDES.*

*5. With AGATHON—] A Poet, mentioned by  
 ARISTOTLE, in his POETICS, as the Author of a Poem called  
 ANTHOS, or The FLOWER.*

Now landed near the first ascending stair;  
 Four Handmaids of the Sun their task had clos'd;  
 The fifth was ready at her radiant post,  
 And took her turn to guide the glowing Car.

## XXVI.

Then thus the gentle Guide: "If right I deem,  
 Still to the right hand, round the Hill's extreme,  
 Our way conducts us, if we still pursue  
 Our former custom in the climes of Death."  
 His brother Bard, that wore the THEBAN wreath,  
 With his kind vote confirm'd our hopes anew.

## XXVII.

The Phantoms sped before, while I, behind,  
 Glean'd from their talk the treasures of the Mind,  
 And learn'd new lessons of poetic skill:  
 But a strange Sight the conversation clos'd;  
 A tree, with fruitage hung, our way oppos'd,  
 Full in the Pass that led us up the Hill,

## XXVIII.

And as the Pine-tree points her boughs on high,  
 So this, directed to the nether Sky,  
 That none may climb the dole, suspends its sprays,  
 Thus spreading far, it seem'd to guard the Hill,  
 And streaming from its leaves, a limpid rill  
 Down the rude barrier spread a liquid maze.

## XXIX.

The brother Bards, approaching to the bough,  
 Heard a deep Voice within, in murmurs low:



*“ Touch not the fruit ! be Appetite suppress’d !  
 ’Twas not the fragrant fume of rosy wine  
 That MARY long’d for, when the Maid divine  
 Sought a supply for CANA’s nuptial feast.*

XXX.

“ The taste of wine, no ROMAN Matron knew;  
 Young DANIEL from th’ inviting feast withdrew,  
 And dreams divine his continence repaid :  
 To acorns hunger gave a savoury taste,  
 And limpid rills the thirsty fervour chac’d,  
 When its glad scenes the Golden Age display’d.

XXXI.

“ The Locust, and the wandering Bee, supply’d  
 The holy BAPTIST, in the desert wide,  
 With food ; and hence his glory spreads around  
 The peopled world, where’er the truth is known,  
 Where’er EMMANUEL’s sway the Nations own,  
 And still shall spread, to future times renown’d.”

END OF THE TWENTY-SECOND CANTO.