

## CANTO THE THIRTY-FIRST.

## A R G U M E N T.

BEATRICE takes her Place in the Emyreum, and sends the Spirit of St. BERNARD to the Poet, to describe to him the following Scenes.

IN circles verging from the central bow'r,  
 Like the fair foliage of a snow-white flow'r,  
 Orb within Orb, the cohorts of the Blest  
 Delighted fate; while round the point of Noon,  
 Wide hov'ring warblers, with FAVONIAN tune,  
 O'er the fair scene a purple umbrage cast.

## II.

In holy hymns their heav'nly Sire they sung,  
 Then o'er th' ELYSIAN scene in transport hung,  
 Blessing and blest'd; like HYBLA's swarms below,  
 Thro' germinating joys a while they stray'd,  
 Then, rising on the blast with wings display'd,  
 Up to the welkin soar'd, a splendid shew.

## III.

With inexpressive Love their aspects glow'd,  
 A golden gleam their spreading pinions show'd,  
 And their white vestments floated on the breeze ;  
 There, as in many a maze they fleet around,  
 New joys, deep kindling o'er the deep profound,  
 Breath'd the sweet calm of everlasting Peace.

## IV.

They fann'd the kindling ardours of the Sky,  
 And round diffus'd a glow of gen'ral joy  
 Over the splendid courts and burning Sphere ;  
 And, tho' a boundless prospect interpos'd,  
 My eye commanded all the winged Host,  
 Still as they sunk and soar'd, distinct and clear.

## V.

Such is the nature of Celestial Light,  
 It to the faithful gives angelic sight,  
 Each dim terrestrial cloud dispersing far ;  
 These holy Squadrons, at whatever time  
 They took their station in these Courts sublime,  
 Of Light and Love an equal bounty share.

## VI.

**G**REAT TRINAL POW'R, from whose omnific beam  
 New transports in these Bands for ever stream,

*St. iv. l. 1. They fann'd the kindling ardours, &c.]* The nature of active Benevolence, and of every species of virtuous exertion, whether with regard to the social virtues, or those which more immediately regard ourselves, seems to be represented in the allegory ; as the faculties of the Mind not only acquire new vigour by exercise, but society reaps the advantage not only of the benefits conferred but of the example given.

Look downward, and with holy calm allay  
 The low-borne hurricane that beats so fore,  
 And wastes so wide the desolated shore,  
 Shedding thick darkness o'er my wint'ry day.

## VII.

If those that roam o'er SCYTHIA's snowy bound,  
 Where fair CALISTO runs her lofty round  
 With her bright Son about the Northern Star,  
 Wonder'd to see majestic ROME of yore  
 In her proud zenith of Imperial Pow'r ;  
 Think with what eyes I view'd this prospect fair.

## VIII.

Judge my surprize, so lately call'd from Earth,  
 To view the secrets of the Second Birth,  
 From the short glimpses of the changing Moon  
 To the bright dawn of everlasting Light,  
 From FLORENCE, plung'd in crimes and Stygian Night,  
 To finless climes beneath eternal Noon !

## IX.

Between Surprize and Joy, my dubious Mind  
 To paint the wond'rous scene no words could find,  
 Nor wish'd to hear. As on a solemn Fane  
 Intent, a Pilgrim's eyes are seen to dwell,  
 Resolv'd her miracles of art to tell,  
 In silence thus I view'd the heav'nly Train.

## X.

Wide wand'ring o'er the labyrinth of Light,  
 Above, below, I turn'd my raptur'd fight

O'er the wide theatre, from stage to stage ;  
 And now the whole circumference I view'd, [stood,  
 Where, cheer'd by Heav'n's broad smile, the Ransom'd  
 Gather'd from many a clime and various age.

## XI.

With aspect all benign, they blest'd the view,  
 Those joys returning which from Heav'n they drew,  
 And spoke the soul of Love in ev'ry glance ;  
 In ev'ry look celestial Virtue glow'd,  
 Each gesture bland a faintly spirit show'd,  
 That rapt my faculties in holy trance.

## XII.

While in this wond'rous post, exalted high,  
 I look'd on all the Holy Family,  
 Fix'd in their glorious posts, or moving round ;  
 Then, with new-kindled wish, that inly burn'd  
 To learn the secrets of their state, I turn'd  
 To Her, who led me thro' the sacred bound.

## XIII.

While I delay'd to ask the fainted Dame  
 To clear my rising doubts, a Senior came ;  
 Clad in the drapery of Heav'n he stood,  
 His look, his gesture, ere he spoke, confess'd  
 The warm paternal feelings of the Blest,  
 And all the virtues of the great and good.

## XIV.

“ Where is my kind æthereal Guide ? ” I cry'd.  
 Mildly he said, “ Let ev'ry thought subside

That dwells on *her* ; to calm your fears I came,  
 And chase your anxious doubts, at her request :  
 In yon' third stage, enthron'd among the Blest,  
 You yet may see the heav'n-translated Dame."

## XV.

I look'd aloft, and saw her beamy Throne ;  
 Clear rays converging from th' empyreal Zone,  
 Fashion'd of woven beams, a bright Tiar,  
 Decking with heav'nly gems the Virgin's brow,  
 Far more resplendent than the show'ry bow,  
 Full moon, or summer sun, or dawning star.

## XVI.

Not from the centre to th' extremest bound,  
 Where forked lightnings dance the welkin round,  
 So wide a distance seem'd, as from my eye  
 To her, who, crown'd with glory, fate above ;  
 Yet, wing'd with ev'ry glance, the shaft of Love  
 Still reach'd my heart across the boundless Sky.

## XVII.

" O thou, in whom my hopes for ever bloom,  
 Who bore for me the deep TARTAREAN gloom,  
 The sight of torture, and the Stygian yell,  
 With heartfelt gratitude I recognize  
 Thro' thee the matchless bounty of the Skies,  
 And feel my heart with strong affection swell !

## XVIII.

" In each gradation from the Vale of Death  
 To this bright Scene, where flow'rs celestial breathe,

You loos'd a link of that enormous chain  
 That bound me to the joys beneath the Moon ;  
 In various modes, to me the heav'nly Boon  
 You gave ; O may it ne'er be giv'n in vain !

XIX.

“ That heav'nly Image glowing in my breast  
 Preserve, in these ELYSIAN tints, express'd  
 By thy celestial art ; protect the Soul  
 Which thou hast fav'd, from each contagious stain,  
 That, when releas'd from this corporeal chain,  
 Its fiery essence may ascend the Pole.”

XX.

Thus my oraisons flow'd : the fainted Maid  
 Her approbation in a smile convey'd,  
 Soft as in Autumn's eve the rising Moon ;  
 Then, gazing upward, met with ravish'd sight  
 New emanations from the fount of Light,  
 Doubling the glories of th' empyreal Noon.

XXI.

Then thus her rev'rend Delegate began :  
 “ The end that crowns your journey, *Son of Man*,  
 I am decreed to shew, at her request :  
 Nor less inspir'd by Love's æthereal flame,  
 Tho' bosom'd in celestial bliss, I came,  
 A Guide immortal to a mortal guest.

XXII.

“ O'er this fair scene of Paradise extend  
 Thy sight ; the BEATIFIC VIEW will lend

New vigour to thy mental pow'rs, decreed  
 Yet far thro' yon' superior world to soar ;  
 She, whom my inmost faculties adore,  
 Has sent her BERNARD here thy steps to lead."

## XXIII.

As when the rude CROATIAN PILGRIM sees  
 The sacred semblance of the PRINCE OF PEACE  
 Stamp'd on the sacred Veil by art divine,  
 Tracing the lineaments with glad surprize,  
 " Is this the image of my God?" he cries,  
 And with new transport views the hallow'd Sign.

## XXIV.

At once, the fervor of the heav'nly Sire  
 Woke in my breast a correspondent fire,  
 Like that, which, in the world of Woe beneath,  
 Deep contemplation kindled in the dust,  
 And gave his Soul that keen empyreal gust,  
 Long ere the holy Man resign'd his breath.

## XXV.

" By gazing on the Prospect thus below,  
 You ne'er its full magnificence can know ;

*St. xxiii. l. 2. The sacred semblance—*] The VERONICA, or holy handkerchief, on which our Saviour's features are said to have been miraculously stamped, in his last agony in the Garden : it is said to be still preserved at ROME.

*St. xxv. l. 1. By gazing on the Prospect, &c.]* It is not clear whether DANTE means that he had hitherto looked on the scene in an horizontal view, or at least confined his prospect within a few degrees of it ; or whether he is to be understood as having, till now, perceived these splendid exhibitions in a sort of miraculous adumbration reflected by the river described above.

Lift up your eyes, and boldly view the bound  
 Of yon' celestial Arch; behold the Queen  
 Of Heav'n, how she adorns the living Scene,  
 And how yon' suppiants bend with awe profound."

## XXVI.

I look'd aloft, and as the Orient glows  
 With deeper tint when SOL his aspect shows,  
 Than where his wheels descend with swift career,  
 So a deep radiance to my wond'ring eyes  
 Seem'd up th' æthereal amplitude to rise,  
 Whose glorious Lamp illum'd the utmost Sphere.

## XXVII.

And as, when we expect the golden Team,  
 Whence CLYMEN'S SON was cast in PADUS' stream,  
 Before the glowing East the Stars decay,  
 So this fair Ensign of a brighter Morn  
 Seem'd with new light the region to adorn,  
 And thus its rivals seem'd to fade away.

## XXVIII.

Fanning with many a plume the limpid air,  
 An heav'nly Chorus round the Vision fair  
 Sung jubilee, like an ambrosial cloud  
 Spreading its golden canopy afar;  
 The Virgin smil'd, like PHOSPHOR'S rising Star,  
 And with new joy the mix'd Assembly glow'd.

## XXIX.

Could I a glorious dress of words bestow  
 On those rich scenes, that in my fancy glow,



The faintest shade of that celestial Scene  
I would not dare to paint ; the holy Sire  
And I, replete with sympathetic fire,  
Gaz'd on the glories of the VIRGIN QUEEN.

*St. xxix. l. 6. — VIRGIN QUEEN.] Viz. the Virgin MARY.*

END OF THE THIRTY-FIRST CANTO.