

# Inferno Canto 32

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## Canto XXXII

### Argument

This Canto treats of the first, and, in part, of the second of those rounds, into which the ninth and last, or frozen circle, is divided. In the former, called Caina, Dante finds Camiccione de' Pazzi, who gives him an account of other sinners who are there punished; and in the next, named Antenora, he hears in like manner from Bocca degli Abbati who his fellow-sufferers are.

Could I command rough rhymes and hoarse, to suit  
That hole of sorrow o'er which every rock  
His firm abutment rears, then might the vein  
Of fancy rise full springing: but not mine  
Such measures, and with faltering awe I touch  
The mighty theme; for to describe the depth  
Of all the universe, is no emprise  
To jest with, and demands a tongue not used  
To infant babbling. But let them assist  
My song, the tuneful maidens, by whose aid  
Amphion wall'd in Thebes; so with the truth  
My speech shall best accord. Oh ill - starr'd folk,  
Beyond all others wretched! who abide  
In such a mansion, as scarce thought finds words  
To speak of, better had ye here on earth  
Been flocks, or mountain goats. As down we stood  
In the dark pit beneath the giants' feet,  
But lower far than they, and I did gaze  
Still on the lofty battlement, a voice  
Bespake me thus: "Look how thou walkest. Take  
Good heed, thy soles do tread not on the heads  
Of thy poor brethren." Thereupon I turn'd,  
And saw before and underneath my feet  
A lake, whose frozen surface liker seem'd  
To glass than water. Not so thick a veil  
In winter e'er hath Austrian Danube spread  
O'er his still course, nor Tanais far remote  
Under the chilling sky. Roll'd o'er that mass  
Had Tabernich or Pietrapana[1] fallen,  
Not e'en its rim had creak'd. As peeps the frog  
Croaking above the wave, what time in dreams

The village gleaner oft pursues her toil,  
So, to where modest shame appears, thus low  
Blue pinch'd and shrined in ice the spirits stood,  
Moving their teeth in shrill note like the stork.  
His face each downward held; their mouth the cold,  
Their eyes express'd the dolour of their heart.

[1: Tabernich or Pietrapana." The one a mountain in Sclavonia, the other in that tract of country called the Garfagnana, not far from Lucca.]

A space I look'd around, then at my feet  
Saw two so strictly join'd, that of their head  
The very hairs were mingled. "Tell me ye,  
Whose bosoms thus together press," said I,  
"Who are ye?" At that sound their necks they bent;  
And when their looks were lifted up to me,  
Straightway their eyes, before all moist within,  
Distill'd upon their lips, and the frost bound  
The tears betwixt those orbs, and held them there.  
Plank unto plank hath never cramp closed up  
So stoutly. Whence, like two enraged goats,  
They clash'd together: them such fury seized.

And one, from whom the cold both ears had reft,  
Exclaim'd, still looking downward: "Why on us  
Dost speculate so long? If thou wouldst know  
Who are these two,[2] the valley, whence his wave  
Bisenzio slopes, did for its master own  
Their sire Alberto, and next him themselves.  
They from one body issued: and throughout  
Caina thou mayst search, nor find a shade  
More worthy in congealment to be fix'd;  
Not him,[3] whose breast and shadow Arthur's hand  
At that one blow dissever'd; not Focaccia,[4]

[2: Alessandro and Napoleone, sons of Alberto Alberti, who murdered each other. They were proprietors of the valley of Falterona, where the Bisenzio rises, falling into the Arno six miles from Florence.]

[3: Mordred, son of King Arthur. In the romance of Lancelot of the Lake, Arthur, having discovered the traitorous intentions of his son, pierces him through with his lance, so that the sunbeam passes through the body.]

[4: Focaccia of Cancellieri (the Pistoian family), whose atrocious act of revenge against his uncle is said to have given rise to the parties, Bianchi and Neri, in the year 1300.]

No, not this spirit, whose o'erjutting head  
Obstructs my onward view; he bore the name  
Of Mascheroni:[5] Tuscan if thou be,

Well knowest who he was. And to cut short  
All further question, in my form behold  
What once was Camiccione.[6] I await  
Carlino[7] here my kinsman, whose deep guilt  
Shall wash out mine." A thousand visages  
Then mark'd I, which the keen and eager cold  
Had shaped into a doggish grin; whence creeps  
A shivering horror o'er me, at the thought  
Of those frore shallows. While we journey'd on  
Toward the middle, at whose point unites  
All heavy substance, and I trembling went  
Through that eternal chillness, I know not  
If will it were, or destiny, or chance,  
But, passing 'midst the heads, my foot did strike  
With violent blow against the face of one.

[5: Sassol Mascheroni, a Florentine, who murdered his uncle.]

[6: Camiccione de' Pazzi of Valdarno, by whom his kinsman Ubertino  
was treacherously put to death.]

[7: "Carlino." One of the same family. He betrayed the Castel di  
Piano Travigne, in Valdarno, to the Florentines, after the refugees of the  
Bianca and Ghibelline party had defended it against a siege for twenty - nine  
days, in the summer of 1302.]

"Wherefore dost bruise me?" weeping the exclaim'd;  
"Unless thy errand be some fresh revenge  
For Montaperto,[8] wherefore troublest me?"

[8: The defeat of the Guelfi at Montaperto through the treachery of  
Bocca degli Abbati, who, during the engagement, cut off the hand of Giacopo  
del Vacca de' Pazzi, the Florentine standard - bearer.]

I thus: "Instructor, now await me here,  
That I through him may rid me of my doubt:  
Thenceforth what haste thou wilt." The teacher paused  
And to that shade I spake, who bitterly  
Still cursed me in his wrath. "What art thou, speak,  
That railest thus on others?" He replied:  
"Now who art thou, that smiting others' cheeks,  
Through Antenora[9] roamest, with such force  
As were past sufferance, wert thou living still?"

[9: So called from Antenor, who, according to Dictys Cretensis (de  
Bello Troj. lib. v.) and Dares Phrygius (De Excidio Trojae) betrayed Troy his  
country," Lombardi.]

"And I am living, to thy joy perchance,"  
Was my reply, "if fame be dear to thee,  
That with the rest I may thy name enrol."

"The contrary of what I covet most,"  
Said he, "thou tender'st: hence! nor vex me more.  
Ill knowest thou to flatter in this vale."

Then seizing on his hinder scalp I cried"  
"Name thee, or not a hair shall tarry here."

"Rend all away," he answer'd, "yet for that  
I will not tell, nor show thee, who I am,  
Though at my head thou pluck a thousand times."

Now I had grasp'd his tresses, and stript off  
More than one tuft, he barking, with his eyes  
Drawn in and downward, when another cried,  
"What ails thee, Bocca? Sound not loud enough  
Thy chattering teeth, but thou must bark outright?  
What devil wrings thee?" - "Now," said I, "be dumb,  
Accursed traitor! To thy shame, of thee  
True tidings will I bear." - "Off!" he replied;  
"Tell what thou list: but, as thou 'scape from hence,  
To speak of him whose tongue hath been so glib,  
Forget not: here he wails the Frenchman's gold.  
'Him of Duera,'[10] Thou canst say, 'I mark'd,  
Where the starved sinners pine.' If thou be ask'd  
What other shade was with them, at thy side  
Is Beccaria,[11] whose red gorge distain'd  
The biting axe of Florence. Further on,  
If I misdeem not, Soldanieri,[12] bides,  
With Ganellon,[13] and Tribaldello,[14] him  
Who oped Faenza when the people slept."

[10: Buoso of Cremona, of the family of Duera, bribed by Guy de Montfort to leave a pass between Piedmont and Parma, with the defence of which he had been intrusted by the Ghibellines, open to the army of Charles of Anjou, A. D. 1265, at which the people of Cremona were so enraged that they extirpated the whole family. G. Villani.]

[11: Abbot of Vallombrosa, Pope's legate at Florence, beheaded for his intrigues with the Ghibellines.]

[12: "Gianni Soldanieri," says Villani, Hist. lib. vii. c. xiv., "put himself at the head of the people, in the hopes of rising into power, not aware that the result would be mischief to the Ghibelline party, and his own ruin." - A. D. 1266.]

[13: The betrayer of Charlemain, mentioned by Archbishop Turpin. He is a type of treachery with the poets of the Middle Ages.]

[14: Tribaldello de' Manfredi, bribed to betray the city of Faenza, 1282.]

We now had left him, passing on our way,  
When I beheld two spirits by the ice  
Pent in one hollow, that the head of one

Was cowl unto the other; and as bread  
Is raven'd up through hunger, the uppermost  
Did so apply his fangs to the other's brain,  
Where the spine joins it. Not more furiously  
On Menalippus' temples Tydeus gnaw'd,  
Than on that skull and on its garbage he.

"O thou! who show'st so beastly sign of hate  
'Gainst him thou prey'st on, let me hear," said I,  
"The cause, on such condition, that if right  
Warrant thy grievance, knowing who ye are,  
And what the color of his sinning was,  
I may repay thee in the world above,  
If that, wherewith I speak, be moist so long."