

## CANTO THIRTEENTH.

### ARGUMENT:

Continuing in the same circle, the seventh, the Poets encounter the harpies, and their habitation, a great forest, trackless and tangled, formed of men who had been changed into trees, whose branches exuded blood when broken. Such was the abode and the fate of suicides. One of these broken and bleeding trees was a Florentine, Lano. Squanderers are there pursued by their parasites in the form of black bitches.

PERSONS SPEAKING: Dante. The shade of Virgil. Pietro delle Vigne of Capua, Lano, Giacomo, and another, suicides.

PERSONS APPEARING: Harpies. Men rooted as trees. The wasteful.

THE ford was broad, and not yet quite across  
Was Nessus, when into a wood, where trace  
Of path was none, we walked with usual pace.  
Not green its foliage was, but dull as dross,  
All gnarled its branches as by Furies whipped,  
For fruit it had but thorns, which poisons  
dripped.  
Between Cecina and Corneto wilds  
So rough and dense seek not fierce beasts that  
shun  
The tracts where cultivation hath begun.

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The Harpies.

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Here throngs the harpy crew, which all defiles, 10  
They who the Trojans from their filthy groves  
With dismal prophecies shrill of evil drove.  
Wide wings they have ; clawed feet ; in neck and face  
They human are ; their feathered bellies large ;  
And from the trees sad utterings they discharge.  
And said to me the Master, full of grace :  
"Thou 'rt in the second ring this circle holds,  
And so wilt be until the third enfolds

"Thyself and me its fearful sands within. 19  
Therefore look well, and thou shalt surely see  
Confirmed what elsewhere hath been said by me."  
And now of wailings heard I such a din  
On every side and yet no person saw,  
That I confused stood still in silent awe.  
I think he thought I thought such voices came  
From people who from us themselves to screen  
Lurked midst those dense and savage trunks un-  
seen.

Therefore he said : "If thou should'st from the  
same 28  
Break off some little shoot, the thoughts thy mind  
Doth entertain erroneous thou wilt find."  
Then forward somewhat stretched I forth my hand,  
And broke a branchlet from a thorny tree  
Whose trunk cried out : "Ah ! why dost thou  
rend me ?"  
And, as the dark blood sought the gloomy sand,  
Again its cry went forth : "Ah ! why me tear ?  
Is thy hard heart of pity's promptings bare ?

"Men once we were, and now to trees are turned ; 37  
Should not thine hand more signs of mercy  
show

Had we been souls of serpents here below ?"  
As when a green brand is at one end burned,  
From out the other drops the burning sends,  
And hiss on hiss with 'scaping vapor blends,  
So from that broken twig words came and blood  
Together forth, whereat I let it fall,  
And stood like one whom terror doth appall.

"If he, offended soul," as so I stood, 46  
My Sage replied, "could have believed before  
What in my verse he only read as lore,  
Not he against thee would his hand have raised ;  
But so incredibly strange appeared the thing,  
I bade him do what causes me a sting.  
But tell him who thou wast, him thus amazed,  
That he amends may make and help thy fame,  
Returned, as is allowed, there whence he came."

And thus the trunk : "As music sweet doth please 55  
Mine ears thy voice, and mute I cannot stay ;  
As I talk on may 't not upon ye weigh !  
He am I who of Frederick's heart both keys  
Possessed ; I locked, unlocked, and yet with soft  
And easy motion, such that 't was not oft  
One other person was there who could seize  
His secret deep ; and to the glorious post  
My deep fidelity sleep and life me cost.

"That harlot that from Cæsar's dwelling ne'er 64  
Turned her adulterous eyes, the common bane  
And vice that give all human courts a stain,  
Inflamed 'gainst me all minds ; through them severe  
T'wards me Augustus' self became, and so  
My joyous honors lapsed to grievous woe.  
In its indignant mood, my angry soul,  
Thinking by death indignity to evade,  
Me just, towards myself unjust, hath made.

"By the new roots that hath this bleeding bole, 73  
To you I swear that ne'er my good faith swerved  
From him my lord, who honors rich deserved,  
And if of you shall either see again  
The breathing world, my memory strengthen  
there,  
Which blows have felled that Envy sole could  
dare."

He ceased ; a moment passed, and then, "Refrain  
Not thou from speech ; improve the hour," my  
Guide  
Me urged, "if more thou seek'st beside!"

Whereon I to the Bard : "Do thou him ask 82  
What things thou think'st I would, for so my heart  
Feels pity's weight, my lips refuse their part."  
Resumed he then : "So may the man the task  
Do freely for thee which thy words entreat,  
Imprisoned soul, when he the light shall meet,  
Do thou be pleased to let us further know  
How in these knots the soul is so confined,  
And whether thence it may itself unbind."

Then strongly blew the trunk, and soon the flow 91  
Of vapor changed to words: "In phrases few  
Response hereto shall come from me to you.  
When quits the spirit fierce its mortal frame  
Whence it itself hath torn, it Minos sends  
Into the circle whereunto it tends,  
The Seventh Circle, such its grade of blame.  
Not choice but fortune gives it place to sprout;  
There, like seed cast, it works its changes out,

"And shoots, a sapling, forth, a savage plant. 100  
The Harpies feeding on its leaves give woe,  
And to the woe an outlet whence to go.  
Like to the others, we too, shadows gaunt,  
Our spoils shall seek, yet shall not wear again;  
What one rejects that he should not regain.  
Them hither shall we drag, and they shall hang  
Suspended each upon its tree forlorn,  
Where there shall grimly meet ghost, flesh, and  
thorn."

Still were we listening to the trunk, when rang 109  
Upon our ears a note which us surprised,  
Intent on being further thus advised.  
Aroused were we like one who feels come nigh  
To where he stands the boar and chase, while  
flash  
Pursuit, pursued, and trembling branches crash.  
And lo! upon the left hand there did fly  
With violence such that every fan of the wood  
They broke, two souls, in terror, torn and nude.

The foremost : "Come, now, come, O Death !" and  
he 118  
Who lagged cried, for he thought himself too slow,  
"Thy legs were not so ready, Lano, ho,  
At Toppo's jousts !" and then, perhaps that free  
In speed his legs no further were, one stoop  
He made into a bush, it, he, a group.  
And at their rear, she-mastiffs black, at speed,  
Filled all the wood ; eager they were and fleet  
As leash-slipped greyhounds ; him who made his  
seat

Within the bush their teeth attacked with greed 127  
And him to pieces with much snarling tore ;  
Then they away his wretched members bore.  
Now by the hand my Guide me took and led  
Unto the bush, which through its bleeding rents  
In vain was blowing sorrowful laments.  
It "Jacopo of Sant' Andrèa" said  
"In making me thy screen wherein's thy gain ?  
Or why for thy bad life should I have pain ?"

And when quite to it had approached my Guide, 136  
He said : "What wast thou who thy blood dost blow  
And speech through wounds so many brimmed  
with woe ?"  
And he to us, "Ye souls," most sadly cried,  
"Who this dishonoring mutilation see  
Which thus my leaves have rudely torn from me,  
O gather ye them up at this shrub's foot !  
I of that city was which changed its first  
Chief patron to the Baptist, whence a thirst

"In that rejected one's keen heart was put 145  
 To make her sad, and were it not that clings  
 To Arno's bridge some wreck which of him sings,  
 Those of her people who, when ashes laid ~  
 O'er all her face by Attila's torches brought,  
 Rebuilt her site, would site in vain have sought.  
 Of mine own dwelling I my gibbet made."

## NOTES TO THE THIRTEENTH CANTO.

7. "*Wilds.*" Dante continues the mention of Corneto from the last stanza. The mention there had already made it a word of horror. The Cecina is a small river emptying into the Mediterranean not far from Leghorn. The tract alluded to is wild and thinly-peopled, abounding in stunted forests and putrid lagoons, the haunts of deer, goats, and the wild boar.

This is the fatal Maremma (*campagna vicina al mare*, a country by the sea-shore) to which Dante will again make allusion in the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-ninth Cantos of the *Inferno*, and the Fifth Canto of the *Purgatorio*.

According to Forsyth, *Italy*, p. 156, this region, though now worse than a desert, is supposed to have been, in former times, both fertile and salubrious. Traces still exist of Roman cisterns, and, in the most repulsive part of the tract one may still see the ruins of Populonium. All nature conspires to drive man away from this fatal region; but the Casentine peasants still migrate thither in the winter to feed their cattle, and there they sow wheat, make charcoal, saw lumber, cut hoop-poles, and peel the cork-oak. On the return of summer they break up their camps; but sometimes too late; the Maremmian disease claims its victims.

"Where the path  
 Is lost in rank luxuriance, and to breathe  
 Is to inhale distemper, if not death;  
 Where the wild-boar retreats, when hunters chafe,