## Disease in the Inferno





Some of the people whom Dante and Virgil see, as they tour the world of the *Inferno*, are covered with markings of disease. Gustave Dore illustrates that passage, from Canto XXIX (29) with this engraving.

These are the words which match the picture (from Henry Cary's translation):

... Step by step
We journey'd on, in silence looking round
And list'ning those diseas'd, who strove in vain
To lift their forms. Then two I mark'd, that sat
Propp'd 'gainst each other, as two brazen pans
Set to retain the heat. From head to foot,
A tetter bark'd them round. Nor saw I e'er
Groom currying so fast, for whom his lord
Impatient waited, or himself perchance
Tir'd with long watching, as of these each one
Plied quickly his keen nails, through furiousness
Of ne'er abated pruriency. The crust
Came drawn from underneath in flakes, like scales
Scrap'd from the bream or fish of broader mail.

## Dore's image matches lines 79-81:

...The crust Came drawn from underneath in flakes, like scales Scrap'd from the bream or fish of broader mail.

In other words ... the bodies of these people were grossly covered with a crusty substance which resembled fish scales (or worse).

Click on the image for a better view.

## Credits:

Gustave Dore created this engraving to be included in a version of the "Divine Comedy" which was published in 1890. It is from "Dante Alighieri's Inferno from the Original by Dante Alighieri and Illustrated with the Designs of Gustave Doré" (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890).

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