

The Number 192: Inside the Floor

In which we are introduced to the location and inhabitants of Hell

by [Paul Martin Freeman](#) (June 2023)



An Angel Leading a Soul into Hell, follower of Hieronymus Bosch, 1450–1516

'Twas on the 192 at Tottenham Hale,
It happened not so many years ago,
A certain Mr George Arbuthnot Dale
Experienced a bout of vertigo.

While standing on the lower deck as usual
He thought he saw a face inside the floor.
Though others present claimed he'd been delusional
The truth of this account he fiercely swore.

The face had stared at him in abject sorrow,
Revealing an infinity of pain.
The bus's floor indeed it seemed was hollow,
And this was Hell he'd steadfastly maintain.

He'd looked behind the face and seen a stairway
Which seemed to spiral endlessly below.
The stairway acted like a kind of causeway
And all around he saw a sulphurous glow.

As far as he could see the way descended
To ever deeper realms of hellish fire.
And on and on it went and never ended:
A world compressed in space and yet entire.

And as he looked he saw there other creatures:
Some human, others of a different kind.
And these he saw possessed quite different features
The which he'd never seen among mankind.

They seemed to look at him with quiet interest
As though examining an alien being.
And these were Hell's inhabitants he witnessed
And spirits of the damned that he was seeing.

Then one appeared to move in his direction
And proffer him a friendly scaly hand.
It seemed to offer kindness and affection,
Inviting him to try this hidden land.

But just as quickly then the vision vanished,
And George Arbuthnot Dale now saw no more.
He woke distraught, all joy forever banished,
And lay a broken figure on the floor.

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Paul Freeman is an art dealer in London. The poems are from *The Bus Poems: A Tale of the Devil*, currently in preparation. His book, *A Chocolate Box Menagerie*, is published by New English Review Press and is available [here](#).

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