

## Laurence Whyte, "The Inchantment. A Tale"

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LAURENCE WHYTE

### "The Inchantment. A Tale"

*In nova sert animus mutatas dicere Formas  
Corpora.*

Ovid.

'Tis thine, *O Muse!* to sing or set a Song,  
To spin a *Tale*, to make it short or long,  
To give a Flow of Thoughts, with Numbers sweet,  
That Sense and Metre in each stanza meet,  
And from the Chaos of Imaginations, 5  
To range Ideas in their proper stations.  
Lo! here is *Matter* void of Spleen or Gall,  
With all the *Humours*, innocent as *Paul*,  
Who by his *Stars*, alas! was used so scurvy,  
To be enchanted and turned topsy turvy, 10  
Who, metamorphos'd, flew away astonish'd;  
Then stood corrected, lectur'd, and admonish'd,  
Be thou, *O Muse!* propitious to our *Tale*,  
To help us out, when Wit and Humour fail.  
Two *Mendicants* of late, with open Palms, 15  
Came to a *Pastry school* to seek for Alms;  
The *Elder* was a *Graduate* in the Trade,  
The *Younger* was as bashful as a Maid,  
But strong enough to bear a heavy *Sack*,  
To lift and toss it on his humble Back; 20  
Was sent abroad a *Novice* with his Brother,  
For they must learn the Trade from one another.  
The Elder on the threshold fixt his Toes,  
And thus harangu'd the *Ladies* thro' the *Nose!*  
"Can you afford us *Flour, Meal, or Paste*, 25  
Which you so often throw away and waste,  
The welfare of your *Souls* be your Concern,  
And *Charity's* a *Lesson* you shou'd learn."  
*Bless us, O Lord!* Quoth they, pray who is that,  
That comes to beg, new clad, so sleek and fat? 30  
For by his *Voice* it shou'd be F---r *Paul*,  
Not he indeed says one, no not at all,

For he's a shotten Herring, thin and meagre,  
The next degree in Colour to a *Neagre*,  
Or something like it, of *Mollotto Hue*, 35  
Down right *Egyptian*, or a wand'ring *Jew*.  
Quoth he, "you're not mistaken in the *Man*,  
He did, some Years ago, look thin and wan,  
By too long fasting, watching, Midnight Pray'rs,  
By *Pilgrimage*, and *Study*, many Years; 40  
Old Age at length got him a writ of Ease,  
From these hard Duties, in declining Days,  
Now he's grown Young, 'tis well you see him thrive,  
But to St. *F---s*, pray what will you give,  
'Tis true we're glad to see you plump and full, 45  
But how can you, from *Kids*, or *Goats* get *Wool*,  
'Tis strange that you shou'd wander from your Road,  
Who has been us'd so long to beg abroad,  
If on that Errand now you come to crave,  
Instead of Pence, we'll give you what we have, 50  
And though we cannot fill a Sack or Sieve,  
Our *flour* in handfuls thus we freely give."  
The Elder they attack'd in front and rear,  
The poor young *Novice* comes in for his Share,  
Both were half choak'd and blinded in the strife, 55  
The coal black Wig was powder'd to the Life.  
No *Millers* whiter, all from Head to Toe,  
Nor did they know which way to turn or go;  
Amaz'd a while, and mute as any Post,  
They stood like *Statues*, gastly as a *Ghost*, 60  
When they recover'd from that silent Trance,  
*Paul* shook his Head--"I have it all at once!  
'Tis all *Inchantment*,----all we see are *Fairies*,  
Or else they cou'd not not play such wild Fegaries,  
There! there! you see the little *Fairy Queen*, 65  
With golden Locks, her Gown and Mantle green,  
Dress'd in her *Silks*----a Vengeance light upon her,  
The rest you see, are Nymphs, her Maids of Honour,  
Dress'd up with *Ribbons* all so prim and gay,  
*Satan* avoid!----then touch them not I say, 70  
We must not handle any *Fairy Treasure*,  
Lest we incur St. *F----s* his Displeasure,  
For punishment he suffer'd us to stray,  
And left those *Imps* to cross us in our Way,  
Too sure I am, they're not of human kind, 75  
That cou'd by Magick Powder strike us blind."  
At length they groap'd, and scrambl'd from the Door,  
Leaving behind,---their *Blessings* to be sure,

The Nymphs pursu'd and *drudg'd* them in their Flight,  
 And were so kind *t'escorte* them out of Sight, 80  
 They sent them off well roasted, and well basted,  
 When all their Ammunition was quite wasted,  
 When they beheld each other in his Plight,  
 And saw their Colour change from *Grey* to *white*,  
 They bless'd themselves, and thrice each other blest, 85  
 And each, with lifted Eyes, *thrice* knock'd his Breast.  
 Quoth *Paul*, "I tremble lest that where we stand  
 Is still within the Bounds of *Fairy Land*,  
 Our Friends at home will scarce believe this Story,  
 But must allow it was our *Purgatory*, 90  
 If they should say, 'twas all a dream or Fancy,  
 Then by this Hand----I'll swear 'twas Necromancy,  
 'Tis *Satan's* Work,----all Sorcery indeed!  
 From his Illusions let us fly with Speed."  
 No yellow Dragoon from the *Boyn* cou'd run, 95  
 So fast as these two *Mendicants* have done,  
 Until they got within the Convent Gate,  
 And all their strange *Adventures* did relate,  
 Whate'er was added, nothing was diminish'd,  
 For ev'ry *Tale* that travels is replenish'd. 100  
 To whom the Gu---n, laughing in his Sleeve,  
 "You don't belong to *Adam* nor to E----,  
 Can you expect to have admittance here,  
 This is no *Colour* for a *Cordelier*,  
 Now by that *Hand*, you on your Body bear, 105  
 (That favourite *Oath* which you so often swear,)  
 In *Dom---k's* Livr'y here you shall not stay,  
 Go forth to *B---street*, without more Delay,  
 Not stand one Flash of *Powder*, without Ball,  
 You and that *Novice* have disgrac'd us all; 110  
 As for the *Tale* which you relate *re vera*,  
 'Tis all extracted from your own *Chimera*,  
 I hope it varies from the Truth a little,  
 But sure I am, it has not lost one Tittle.  
 Too long indeed to be exactly true, 115  
 If so it is the better still for you;  
 There are such Things we call *Deceptio Visus*,  
 That doth sometimes deceive us, and surprize us,  
 Our *Senses* never are to be our Guide,  
 While *Faith* and *Reason* over them preside, 120  
 And if I must with you *philosophize*,  
 We are not always to believe our Eyes;  
 Some Men we find are govern'd by the Moon,  
 They seldom thrive, but often are undone,

Sure some unlucky *Planet* rul'd this Day, 125  
Caus'd you to wander, and to run astray,  
What Spirit drove you to those *Fairy* dances,  
To change your *Habit* and forsake *St. F---s*?"  
What brought you there unless you were besotted,  
'Twas well you were not *pickl'd, bon'd or potted*; 130  
I wish they had *anatomiz'd* you there,  
To string you up, as *Geese* and *Wood-Cocks* are;  
Sure in your *Looks*, they cou'd not be mistaken,  
*Old Carron* was not fit for *Brawn*, or *Bacon*,  
You cou'd not bear being *sous'd*, or well preserv'd, 135  
To be *dissected, collar'd* up, or *carv'd*;  
What can we say, when we sum up the whole,  
They cou'd make nothing of you, *Fish* or *Fowl*;  
For in the *Battle* you made no resistance,  
And in your *Flight* you hardly sav'd your *Distance*, 140  
Then to conclude, we may with Reason say,  
You're neither fit to fight or run away,  
Now, to your *Cells* retire, to fast and pray.

#### NOTES:

**Epigraph** "My mind inclines me to tell of bodies changed into new forms;" the opening lines of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

**7 Spleen** "To regard with anger;" *Gall* "Bitterness" (*OED*).

**8 Humours** "In ancient and medieval physiology and medicine: any of four fluids of the body (blood, phlegm, choler, and so-called melancholy or black bile) believed to determine, by their relative proportions and conditions, the state of health and the temperament of a person" (*OED*).

**13 propitious** "Gracious; merciful, lenient" (*OED*).

**15 Mendicant** "A member of any of the Christian religious orders whose members originally lived solely on alms" (*OED*).

**31 F--r** Friar.

**33 shotten Herring** Figurative for "a person who is exhausted by sickness or destitute of strength or resources" (*OED*).

**35 Mollotto** "Mulatto; a person with one white and one black parent" (*OED*).

**44 St. F---s** Francis of Assisi (1181 or 82-1226); Franciscans were mendicants, dependent on alms.

**64 Fegaries** Pranks (*OED*).

**79** *drudg'd* Repressed (*OED*).

**84** *Grey to white* "Qui Color ater erat nunc est contrarius atro" [Author's note; "What once was black, is now the opposite" (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 2, line 541).] Franciscan robes were grey or brown.

**87** *Quoth Paul* "Heu fuge crudeles terras" [Author's note; "O flee this cruel land" (Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book 3, line 46).]

**92** *Necromancy* "Sorcery, witchcraft" (*OED*).

**95** *No yellow Dragoon from the Boyne cou'd run* A "dragoon" was "a species of cavalry soldier" that also fought on foot in this period (*OED*). More generally, Whyte appears to be referencing the cowardice of James II's Irish soldiers during the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, many of whom deserted after the order to retreat.

**101** *Gu----n* Likely the guardsman of the "Convent Gate" (l. 97).

**102** *E----* Eve.

**104** *Cordelier* "A Franciscan friar...so called from the knotted cord which they wear round the waist" (*OED*).

**107** *Dom--k's Livr'y* Dominican robes, which were white.

**108** *B---street* Bridge St. The Dominicans had a "chapel on the east side of Bridge St." in Dublin during this period (Nuala Burke, "A Hidden Church?: The Structure of Catholic Dublin in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. 32 (1974), p. 82).

**111** *re vera* "In truth."

**112** *Chimera* "A mere wild fancy; an unfounded conception" (*OED*).

**114** *Tittle* "Any minute point" (*OED*).

**117** *Deceptio Visus* "Deceptive vision."

**129** *besotted* "Mentally or morally stupid" (*OED*).

**131** *anatomiz'd* Dissected (*OED*).

**134** *Brawn* "The flesh of the boar" (*OED*).

**135** *sous'd* "To prepare or preserve meat...by steeping in some kind of pickle, esp. one made with vinegar or other tart liquor" (*OED*).

**SOURCE:** *Original Poems on Various Subjects, Second Edition (Dublin, 1742), pp. 170-75. [Google Books]*

*Edited by Casey Ingham*

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