

Laurence Whyte, "The Inchantment. A Tale"

Description

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 *Fâ'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 wandâ??ring *Jew*.
 Quoth he, â??youâ??re not mistaken in the *Man*,
 He did, some Years ago, look thin and wan,
 By too long fasting, watching, Midnight Prayâ??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 heâ??s grown Young, â??tis well you see him thrive,
 But to St. *Fâ??s*, pray what will you give,
 â??Tis true weâ??re glad to see you plump and full, 45
 But how can you, from *Kids*, or *Goats* get *Wool*,
 â??Tis strange that you shouâ??d wander from your Road,
 Who has been usâ??d so long to beg abroad,
 If on that Errand now you come to crave,
 Instead of Pence, weâ??ll give you what we have, 50
 And though we cannot fill a Sack or Sieve,
 Our *flour* in handfuls thus we freely give.â?•
 The Elder they attackâ??d in front and rear,
 The poor young *Novice* comes in for his Share,
 Both were half choakâ??d and blinded in the strife, 55
 The coal black Wig was powderâ??d to the Life.
 No *Millers* whiter, all from Head to Toe,
 Nor did they know which way to turn or go;
 Amazâ??d a while, and mute as any Post,
 They stood like *Statues*, gastly as a *Ghost*, 60
 When they recoverâ??d from that silent Trance,
Paul shook his Headâ??â??I have it all at once!
 â??Tis all *Inchantment*,â??-all we see are *Fairies*,
 Or else they couâ??d not not play such wild Fegaries,
 There! there! you see the little *Fairy Queen*, 65
 With golden Locks, her Gown and Mantle green,
 Dressâ??d in her *Silks*â??-a Vengeance light upon her,
 The rest you see, are Nymphs, her Maids of Honour,
 Dressâ??d up with *Ribbons* all so prim and gay,
Satan avoid!â??-then touch them not I say, 70
 We must not handle any *Fairy Treasure*,
 Lest we incur St. *Fâ??s* his Displeasure,
 For punishment he sufferâ??d us to stray,
 And left those *Imps* to cross us in our Way,
 Too sure I am, theyâ??re not of human kind, 75
 That couâ??d by Magick Powder strike us blind.â?•
 At length they groapâ??d, and scramblâ??d from the Door,
 Leaving behind,â??their *Blessings* to be sure,
 The Nymphs pursuâ??d and *drudgâ??d* them in their Flight,
 And were so kind tâ??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 blessâ??d themselves, and thrice each other blest, 85
 And each, with lifted Eyes, *thrice* knockâ??d his Breast.
 Quoth *Paul*, â??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, â??twas all a dream or Fancy,
 Then by this Handâ??-Iâ??ll swear â??twas Necromancy,
 â??Tis *Satanâ??s* Work,â??-all Sorcery indeed!
 From his Illusions let us fly with Speed.â??•
 No yellow Dragoon from the *Boyn* couâ??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,
 Whateâ??er was added, nothing was diminishâ??d,
 For evâ??ry *Tale* that travels is replenishâ??d. 100
 To whom the Guâ??n, laughing in his Sleeve,
 â??You donâ??t belong to *Adam* nor to *Eâ??*-,
 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 *Domâ??kâ??s* *Livrâ??y* here you shall not stay,
 Go forth to *Bâ??street*, without more Delay,
 Not stand one Flash of *Powder*, without Ball,
 You and that *Novice* have disgracâ??d us all; 110
 As for the *Tale* which you relate *re vera*,
 â??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 governâ??d by the Moon,
 They seldom thrive, but often are undone,
 Sure some unlucky *Planet* rulâ??d this Day, 125
 Causâ??d you to wander, and to run astray,
 What Spirit drove you to those *Fairy* dances,
 To change your *Habit* and forsake St. *Fâ??s*â??•
 What brought you there unless you were besotted,
 â??Twas well you were not *picklâ??d*, *bonâ??d* or *potted*; 130

I wish they had *anatomizâ??d* you there,
 To string you up, as *Geese* and *Wood-Cocks* are;
 Sure in your *Looks*, they couâ??d not be mistaken,
Old Carron was not fit for *Brawn*, or *Bacon*,
 You couâ??d not bear being *sousâ??d*, or well preservâ??d, 135
 To be *dissected*, *collarâ??d* up, or *carvâ??d*;
 What can we say, when we sum up the whole,
 They couâ??d make nothing of you, *Fish* or *Fowl*;
 For in the *Battle* you made no resistance,
 And in your *Flight* you hardly savâ??d your *Distance*, 140
 Then to conclude, we may with Reason say,
 Youâ??re neither fit to fight or run away,
 Now, to your *Cells* retire, to fast and pray.

NOTES:

Epigraph â??My mind inclines me to tell of bodies changed into new forms;â?• the opening lines of Ovidâ??s *Metamorphoses*.

7 Spleen â??To regard with anger;â?• *Gall* â??Bitternessâ?• (OED).

8 Humours â??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 personâ?• (OED).

13 propitious â??Gracious; merciful, lenientâ?• (OED).

15 Mendicant â??A member of any of the Christian religious orders whose members originally lived solely on almsâ?• (OED).

31 Fâ??r Friar.

33 shotten Herring Figurative for â??a person who is exhausted by sickness or destitute of strength or resourcesâ?• (OED).

35 Mollotto â??Mulatto; a person with one white and one black parentâ?• (OED).

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

64 Fegaries Pranks (OED).

79 drudgâ??d Repressed (OED).

84 Grey to white â??Qui Color ater erat nunc est contrarius atroâ?• [Authorâ??s note; â??What once was black, is now the oppositeâ?• (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 2, line 541).] Franciscan robes were grey or brown.

87 Quoth Paul â??Heu fuge crudeles terrasâ?• [Authorâ??s note; â??O flee this cruel landâ?• (Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book 3, line 46).]

92 Necromancy â??Sorcery, witchcraftâ?• (OED).

95 *No yellow Dragoon from the Boyne couâ??d run* A â??dragoonâ?• was â??a species of cavalry soldierâ?• that also fought on foot in this period (*OED*). More generally, Whyte appears to be referencing the cowardice of James IIâ??s Irish soldiers during the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, many of whom deserted after the order to retreat.

101 *Guâ??-n* Likely the guardsman of the â??Convent Gateâ?• (l. 97).

102 *Eâ??- Eve*.

104 *Cordelier* â??A Franciscan friarâ?|so called from the knotted cord which they wear round the waistâ?• (*OED*).

107 *Domâ??kâ??s Livrâ??y* Dominican robes, which were white.

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

111 *re vera* â??In truth.â?•

112 *Chimera* â??A mere wild fancy; an unfounded conceptionâ?• (*OED*).

114 *Tittle* â??Any minute pointâ?• (*OED*).

117 *Deceptio Visus* â??Deceptive vision.â?•

129 *besotted* â??Mentally or morally stupidâ?• (*OED*).

131 *anatomizâ??d* Dissected (*OED*).

134 *Brawn* â??The flesh of the boarâ?• (*OED*).

135 *sousâ??d* â??To prepare or preserve meatâ?|by steeping in some kind of pickle, esp. one made with vinegar or other tart liquorâ?• (*OED*).

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

Edited by Casey Ingham