

## **Mully of Mounttown**

Séamus Cannon

'Mully of Mounttown' tells the story of a 'tug of love' over a favourite cow living in Monkstown in the early eighteenth century!

William King was born in London, and in 1702 moved to Ireland, where he was made Judge of the Admiralty. King found a friend in Anthony Upton, one of the High Court judges, who lived in Mounttown, 'near Dublin', where King frequently stayed. Both men were severely criticised by their political opponents for neglecting their official duties: it was said that they had no thought but to live out their days in rural retirement. King published a number of books on topics as diverse as the history of heresy and the art of cooking, as well as a number of satirical and humorous pieces of which Mully of Mounttown is an example. It was inspired by Mully 'a cow, sprung from a beauteous race' and a favourite of his friend judge Upton. Some attribute an allegorical meaning to the poem but this is discounted by others.

The poem evokes a very pastoral Mounttown in which the wealthy ate extremely well, with all manner of fruit and vegetables as well as Westphalian ham and 'Belgick beef'. There is reference to the brewing of beer and the consumption of Bordeaux. The poem recounts what can only be described as a tug of love between Robin of Darbyshire, 'a sullen Churlish Thief' who 'Had all his Mind plac'd upon Mully's Beef' and Peggy, 'the Nymph of Mounttown' who cherished Mully. Daniel 'a sprightly swain' also appears at Peggy's side as does the 'sly' Terrence. A veil is drawn over the ending which suggests that Robin got his wicked way (with Mully of course!).

*Mounttown! Thou sweet Retreat from Dublin Cares,  
Be famous for thy Apples and thy Pears;  
For Turnips, Carrots, Lettuce, Beans and Pease;  
For Peggy's Butter, and for Peggy's Cheese.  
May Clouds of Pigeons round about thee fly,  
But condescend sometimes to make a Pye.  
May fat Geese gaggle with melodious Voice,  
And ne'er want Gooseberries or Apple-sauce:  
Ducks in thy Ponds, and Chickens in thy Pens,  
And be thy Turkeys Numerous as thy Hens:  
May thy black Pigs lie warm in little Sty,  
And have no Thought to grieve them till they dye.  
Mounttown! The Muses most delicious Theam  
Oh! may thy Codlins ever swim in Cream:  
Thy Rasp- and Straw-berries in Bourdeaux drown  
To add a redder Tincture to their own:  
Thy White-Wine, Sugar, Milk, together Club  
To make that gentle Viand Syllabub.  
Thy Tarts to Tarts, Cheese cakes to Cheese-cakes join  
To spoil the Relish of the flowing Wine.  
But to the fading Palate bring Relief  
By thy West-phalian Ham, or Belgick Beef;*

*And to compleat thy Blessings, in a word,  
May still thy Soil be Generous as its Lord.*

*II.*

*Oh Peggy, Peggy, when thou go'st to Brew,  
Consider well what you're about to do;  
Be very Wise, very sedately think  
That what you are about to make is Drink:  
Consider who must drink that Drink, and then,  
What 'tis to have the Praise of Honest Men:  
For surely Peggy, while that Drink does last,  
'Tis Peggy will be Toasted or Disgrac'd.  
Then if thy Ale in Glass thou wouldst confine,  
To make its sparkling Rays in Beauty shine,  
Let thy clean Bottle be entirely dry,  
Least a white Substance to the Surface fly,  
And floating there, disturb the curious Eye.  
But this great Maxim must be understood,  
Be sure, nay very sure, thy Cork be Good.  
Then future Ages shall of Peggy tell,  
That Nymph that Brew'd and Bottled Ale so well.*

*III.*

*How fleet is Air! How many Things have Breath  
Which in a Moment, they resign to Death;  
Depriv'd of Light, and all their happiest State,  
Not by their Fault, but some o'er-ruling Fate!  
Altho' fair Flowers, that justly might invite,  
Are Crop't, nay torn away for Man's Delight;  
Yet still those Flowers, Alas! can make no Moan,  
Nor has Narcissus now a Power to Groan.  
But all those things which breath in different Frame,  
By tye of Common Breaths, Man's Pity claim.  
A Gentle Lamb has Rhetorick to plead,  
And when she sees the Butcher's Knife decree'd  
Her Voice intreats him not to make her Bleed;  
But Cruel Gains and Luxury of Taste,  
With Pride, still lays Man's Fellow-Mortals waste:  
What Earth and Waters breed, or Air inspires,  
Man for his Palate fits by Torturing Fires.*

*MULLY a Cow sprung from a Beauteous Race  
With spreading Front, did Mountown's Pastures grace.  
Gentle she was, and with a gentle Stream,  
Each Morn and Night gave Milk that equal'd Cream.  
Offending None, of None she stood in Dread,  
Much less of Persons which she daily Fed:  
But Innocence cannot it self Defend  
'Gainst treacherous Arts, veil'd with the Name of Friend.*

*ROBIN of Darby-shire, whose Temper shocks  
The Constitution of his Native Rocks,  
Born in a Place, which if it once be nam'd  
Wou'd make a blushing Modesty asham'd:  
He with Indulgence kindly did appear  
To make poor Mully his peculiar Care,  
But inwardly this sullen Churlish Thief  
Had all his Mind plac'd upon Mully's Beef;  
His Fancy fed on her, and thus hee'd Cry  
Mully as sure as I'm Alive you Dye;  
'Tis a brave Cow, O Sirs when Christmas comes,  
These Shins shall make the Porridge grac'd with Plumbs,  
Then midst our Cups, whilst we profusely Dine  
This Blade shall enter deep in Mully's Chine,  
What Ribs, what Rumps, what Bak'd, Boil'd, Stew'd and Roast?  
There shan't one single Tripe of her be lost.*

*When Peggy, Nymph of Mountown, heard these sounds,  
She Griev'd to hear of Mully's future Wounds,  
What Crime, says she, has gentle Mully done?  
Witness the Rising and the Setting Sun,  
That knows what Milk she constantly would give,  
Let that Quench Robin's Rage, and Mully Live.*

*Daniel a sprightly Swain that used to slash  
The Vigorous Steeds that drew his Lord's Calash  
To Peggy's Side inclin'd, for 'twas well known  
How well he lov'd those Cattel of his own.*

*Then Terence spoke, Oraculous and sly,  
He'd neither grant the Question or deny;  
Pleading for Milk, his Thoughts were on Mince-Pye;  
But all his Arguments so dubious were  
That Mully thence had neither Hopes nor Fear.*

*You've spoke, says Robin, but now let me tell ye  
'Tis not fair spoken Words that fill the Belly;  
Pudding and Beef I Love and cannot stoop  
To recommend your Bonny Clapper Soop;  
You say she's Innocent, but what of that,  
'Tis more than Crime sufficient that she's Fat,  
And that which is prevailing in this Case  
Is, there's another Cow to fill her place.  
And granting Mully to have Milk in store  
Yet still this other Cow will give us more  
She Dies — stop here my Muse, forbear the rest,  
And veil that Grief which cannot be exprest.*