

Mary Alcock, "Instructions, Supposed to be Written in Paris, for the Mob in England"

Description

MARY ALCOCK

"Instructions, Supposed to be Written in Paris, for the Mob in England"

Of Liberty, Reform, and Rights I sing,
Freedom I mean, without or Church or King;
Freedom to seize and keep whatever I can,
And boldly claim my right The Rights of Man:
Such is the blessed liberty in vogue, 5
The envied liberty to be a rogue;
The right to pay no taxes, tithes, or dues;
The liberty to do whatever I chuse;
The right to take by violence and strife
My neighbour's goods, and, if I please, his life; 10
The liberty to raise a mob or riot,
For spoil and plunder never were got by quiet;
The right to level and reform the great;
The liberty to overturn the state;
The right to break through all the nation's laws, 15
And boldly dare to take rebellion's cause:
Let all be equal, every man my brother;
Why one have property, and not another?
Why suffer titles to give awe and fear?
There shall not long remain one British peer; 20
Nor shall the criminal appalled stand
Before the mighty judges of the land;
Nor judge, nor jury shall there longer be,
Nor any jail, but every prisoner free;
All law abolished, and with sword in hand 25
We'll seize the property of all the land,
Then hail to Liberty, Reform, and Riot!
Adieu Contentment, Safety, Peace, and Quiet!

NOTES:

1 *Liberty* Article 4 of "The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen" defined "liberty" as "being able to do anything that does not harm others;" *Reform* "The action or process of making changes in an institution, organization, or aspect of social or political life, so as to remove errors, abuses, or other hindrances to proper performance" (*OED*).

4 *Rights of Man* The guiding document of the French Revolution was "The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen" (1789). Alcock may also be thinking of Thomas Paine's two-part book, *The Rights of Man*

(1791/2), written in support of the French Revolution.

5 *vogue* â??Popularity; general acceptance or currencyâ?• (OED).

6 *rogue* â??A dishonest, unprincipled personâ?• (OED).

7 *tithes* â??A tenth of annual produce or earnings, taken as a tax (originally in kind) for the support of the church and clergy;â?|now chiefly *historical*â?• (OED).

12 *plunder* â??The action of plundering or taking something as spoil in time of war or civil disorderâ?• (OED).

17 *equal* Article 6 of â??The Declarationâ?• stipulated that â??all citizens were equal before the law and were to have the right to participate in legislation directly or indirectlyâ?• (Britannica).

20 *peer* â??A member of a rank of hereditary nobility in Britainâ?• (OED).

SOURCE: *Poems, & c. &c. By the Late Mrs. Mary Alcock* (London, 1799), pp. 48-49. [Google Books]

Edited by Nadine French