

Mary Alcock, “The Air Balloon”

Description

MARY ALCOCK

“The Air Balloon”

No more of Phaeton let poets tell,
I care not where he drove nor where he fell;
No more I’ll wish for fam’d Aurora’s car,
To drive me forth, high as the morning star;
In Air Balloon to distant realms I go, Â 5
And leave the gazing multitude below.”

No more I’ll hear of Venus and her doves,
Nor Cupid flying with the little loves;
Nor would I now in Juno’s chariot ride
In princely pomp, with peacock by my side; Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 10
In higher state, in Air Balloon I go,
I’ll have the gods and goddesses to know.

No more in oriental language fair
I’ll read of Genii wafting through the air;
Nor longer will I seek (by Persian wrought) Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 15
A carpet, to transport me by a thought;
Enough for me in Air Balloon to go,
And leave th’inquiring multitude below.

No more of Pegasus (unruly steed)
To reach Parnassus’ Mount, shall I have need; Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 20
Nor will I now the Muses favour court,
To shew me Pindus’ Hill, their chief resort;
To these fair realms in Air Balloon I go,
And leave the grov’ling multitude below.

No more shall Fancy now (betwitching fair!) Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 25
Erect me castles, floating in the air;
Such vague, such feeble structures I despise,
I’ll kick them down as I ascend the skies;
For higher far in Air Balloon I go,
And leave the wond’ring multitude below. Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 30

No longer, now, at distance need I try

To trace each planet with perspective eye;
Nor longer wish, with fairies from afar,
To slide me gently down on falling star;
For up or down with equal ease I steer, Â 35
And view with naked eye the splendid sphere.

Alas poor Newton! late for learning famâ€™d,
Nor more shall thy researches eâ€™mer be namâ€™d;
For greater Newtons now each day shall soar,
High up to Heaven, and new worlds explore; Â 40
Since swift, in Air Balloons, aloft we go,
And leave the stupid multitude below.

No more the terrors of the deep I fear;
Alike to me, if friend be far or near;
This sea-girt isle I distant leave behind, Â 45
Visit each kingdom and survey mankind;
For now with ease in Air Balloon I ride,
No more compellâ€™d to wait for wind or tide.

Hail, happy lovers! late by distance curst,
(Of all the worldly tortures sure the worst)Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â
Â 50
No more condemnâ€™d an absence to deplore,
And, sighing, breathe your vows from shore to shore;
For through the air, swift in Balloons ye roll,
âœAnd waft yourselves from India to the pole.âœ

In vain may party rage assail mine ear;Â
Â 55
If war or peace, alike Iâ€™m free from care;
Should plague or pestilence infect the land,
The purest regions are at my command;
Where safe from harm, in Air Balloon I go,
And leave the sickly multitude below. Â 60

No more of judge or jury will I hear,
The laws of land extend not to the air;
Nor bailiff now my spirits can affright,
For up I mount, and soon am out of sight;
Thus, screenâ€™d from justice, in Balloon I go, Â 65
And leave thâ€™ insolvent multitude below.

How few the worldly evils now I dread,
No more confinâ€™d this narrow earth to tread;
Should fire, or water, spread destruction drear,
Or earthquake shake this sublunary sphere, Â 70
In Air Balloon to distant realms I fly,

And leave the creeping world to sink and die.

NOTES:

1 *Phaeton* Sun God of Greek myth whom Zeus struck down after nearly scorching the Earth (*Britannica*).

3 *Aurora* Personification of dawn in Roman mythology (*Britannica*).

6 A translated line from Virgil, probably sourced from the title page of a popular periodical, *The Adventurer* (1788), "On vent'rous wing in quest of praise I go./And leave the gazing multitude below."

7 *Venus* Roman goddess of love and beauty (*Britannica*).

8 *Cupid* Roman god of love who used arrows to inspire passion and love (*Britannica*).

9 *Juno* Roman goddess of birth and marriage (*Britannica*).

14 *Genii* Plural of "Genius," guardian spirits (*Britannica*).

15 *wrought* "Created" (*QED*).

19 *Pegasus* Winged horse of Greek mythology (*OED*).

20 *Parnassus* Mount Mythical source of literary, esp. poetic inspiration (*QED*).

21 *Muses* "The nine goddesses regarded as presiding over and inspiring learning and the arts" (*QED*).

22 *Pindus* Hill Principal mountain range of mainland Greece (*Britannica*).

37 *Newton* Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), English mathematician, physicist, astronomer, and theologian (*Britannica*).

45 *sea-girt isle* England and Scotland.

54 A slight variation of Alexander Pope's (1688-1744) line from *Eloisa and Abelard* (1717), "And waft a sigh from *Indus* to the *Pole*" (l.58).

57 *pestilence* "A fatal epidemic" (*QED*).

63 *bailiff* "An officer of justice" (*QED*).

70 *sublunary* "Earthly; terrestrial" (*QED*).

SOURCE: *Poems, &c. &c.* (London, 1799) pp. 107-11. [Google Books]

Edited by Hailey Franzese