

The Mayor's Tale

It's all balderdash and piffle, this talk of worker's reform. Can you imagine all these dirty and uneducated people having a vote? It's bad enough the idea that working men could get the vote, as if they were equal in intelligence to those of us born to lead. There are even whispers of women getting the vote! I mean, I love the fairer sex as much as anyone, some of them are pretty as a picture, but not one of them knows a thing about politics or the economy. They are all far too emotional to understand how the game must be played. Why, sometimes my daughters become quite agitated and unladylike when I discuss the matters of the day. I have to send them to the drawing room. Best keep politics between men of property and learning. Some of these workers want every idiot adult in the land to have a say in the running of our fine establishments, as if they could do better than us! Many don't even seem to be able to feed their children properly, and they want to blame me for that, I ask you! Their children run wild, thin and without shoes, sometimes begging for scraps. Mind you, the thinnest children make the best chimney sweeps. They can't get up the chimney properly when they're older or well fed. This morning one got stuck up there. Our whole house got smoked out, furniture ruined. We had to call for another sweep to climb up to boot the last one out. All very inconvenient. I was late to the fair. My dear wife Clementine's dress got sooty.

So, when later that day our beloved Goose fair was ruined by marauding masses who'd clearly forgotten their station in life, I was no mood for debate. My honoured position as mayor depends on the will of the great and the good of this fine city. Imagine if I had made landowners almost give away their food to the poor. If they are hungry, they should work more and allow their betters to enjoy their leisure time in peace. There was plenty of food available for those willing to pay the price. As always of course, I took my well-deserved share from the traders. My eldest boy, George, needs a new pony; broke the last one, fine strapping lad that he is. I choose to be a good provider to my family, unlike these waifs and strays that seem to blow in on every wind from all over the place looking for work then complaining about conditions and seeking higher wages. How dare they? Stuff and nonsense I say, they should be glad we give them what we do and that they have the chance to live here. Nottingham textiles and lace are adorning the best households in England. Anyone should feel fortunate to be part of that. But no. Instead these workers, low lives every one of them, choose only to make trouble and destroy this city's reputation.

Imagine how I felt when I was told they were rolling cheeses all about the place, breaking into warehouses and barges full of food, knocking over stalls and taking it all. I was furious and set on giving them a piece of my mind, but my darling Clemmy, gentle emotional soul but she is, suggested we could give some cheeses to be shared out. I thought this might subdue a few of the more deserving poor, but they acted like beasts, every one of them. Not grateful for our kind charity at all. A band of workers, including women and children had the cheek to shout about fair prices as they knocked me over by rolling one of the giant cheeses at me! Well, I brushed myself off and ordered the arrests be made. My officers caught some of the blighters rolling cheeses down Peck Lane and took them to a nearby coffeehouse. There we hoped to exact swift, sweet justice. They should surely be hung for such theft and for daring to attack the Mayor and the finer people of Nottingham and the shires. But rioters outside the coffeehouse were hammering at the walls and smashing up the pavements and breaking the windows until their fellow rioters were set free.

I couldn't have this. Law and social order must be upheld at all costs. I hurried back to my townhouse, the new hat I had bought for our lovely fair quite ruined by the mob outside. When home, after a reviving supper, and time with my brandy and pipe, I made my plans. Tomorrow, armed militia will come from Derby on horseback. They will stop the rioters from getting what they want. We must never have the reforms they ask for. First they will want food, and then they will want votes, and if we allow that, our way of life will be changed for ever. England would fall.