

**NATHAN BARLOW:
SKETCHES IN THE RETIRED
LIFE OF A LANCASHIRE
BUTCHER. IN VERSE**

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Nathan Barlow: Sketches in the Retired Life of a Lancashire Butcher. In Verse by Austin Doherty

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AUSTIN DOHERTY

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SKETCHES IN THE RETIRED LIFE OF A
LANCASHIRE BUTCHER.

In Verse.

BY

AUSTIN DOHERTY,



JOHN HEYWOOD,
DEANSGATE AND RIDGEFIELD, MANCHESTER;
AND 11, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS,
LONDON.
1884.

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I.—THE PROJECT.

THE "cuts" were sold, the rougher pieces put
In brine for keeping, and the shop was shut ;
The buxom daughter Jane, with active zeal,
Had cleared the table of the evening meal,
Drawn down the blinds and lit the gas—'twas dusk—
Upon her bosom pinned a sprig of musk,
Slipped through the shop, where, at the half-shut door,
She flirted with the son of neighbour Moore ;
The son went out to tend the horse and dog,
And Nathan Barlow mixed his evening grog.
The butcher's face, now with repletion flushed,
Betrayed a smile as he the sugar crushed,
As if some thought, while trifling with his spoon,
Was taking shape, and would be uttered soon.
His portly dame, who read the moral law,
Sat facing Nathan, and these symptoms saw.
Now Nathan, seeing eagerness intense,
Was wont to thwart it and begin to fence ;

So, taught by failures past, she did not try
 To force his speech by questions, blunt or sly,
 But, with assumed indifference, waited till
 His words should from his working thoughts distil,
 And drop into her ears refined and hot,
 For thus the essence of his mind she got.

“Aw’m thinkin’, Harriet, now,” at length he said,
 “‘At as our Sam’el’s likely soon t’ be wed,
 An’ as they’ll want a whoam, an’ th’ whoam a prop,
 It wouldno be amiss to give ‘em th’ shop.
 We’n warked for moore nor thirty ‘ear, my lass,
 An’ saved i’ th’ time a stiffish lump o’ brass,
 An’ when we’n gan him th’ shop, an’ thowt o’ Jane,
 There’ll plenty still for thee an’ me remain.
 Aw’m not so good i’ woint nor keen o’ seet,
 Nor hafe so lect an’ sprightly o’ my feet,
 As what aw have bin, wench. An’ th’ same by thee ;
 Theau’rt not so lectsome as theau used to be.
 Theau’s gather’d flesh ‘at fills a bigger gown ;
 When dinner’s o’er theau likes to lay thee down ;
 Theau sits at back o’ th’ counter takkin’ pay,
 Bu’ ca’s for someb’dy else when ow’t’s to weigh ;
 Theau spakes o’ fulness both i’ th’ yed an’ feet,
 An’ cannot do wi’ sittin’ up at neet.
 We’re yet i’ th’ middlin’ way ; bur if we stop
 I’ th’ smook an’ crowd o’ th’ town, an’ stick to th’ shop,
 We’st sink an’ sink, an’ goo fro’ bad to wur,
 Just th’ same as plants ‘at hannot gradely air.
 But th’ breeze o’ th’ fielts, an’ th’ smell o’ th’ herbs, an’ ease,
 Met set us up like shiftin’ sickly trees.

We'll goo to th' country, lass, afore we're killed ;
Aw'll buy a bit o' freehowld land, an' build.
We'll have a place for t' entertain our frien's,
An' keep a cow an' pig, an' tothree hens."
Then, peering o'er his specs with furtive eye,
He added gravely, but with twinkle sly,
"Aw'll tak' a pew i' th' church, an' buy a grave,
An' try t' remember aw've a sowl to save."

"It's time you did," the butcher's wife replied.
"You have a soul—to save or lose," she sighed.
"Your past offences, Nathan, dear, are great ;
I've rarely known you strictly just in weight."

"When Sam an' Jane were youngsters, and theau said
They needed physic when they went to bed,
Theau sweeten'd th' powders out o' th' traycle pot,
An' geet 'em down bout ownin' what they'd got.
Now, folk 'at's owd han just as sweet a tooth
For language as for traycle i' their youth,
An' moral physic for a mind 'at's gross
Gooes down far asier if yo flavour th' dose.
When trade were slack, my lass, an' prices low,
We'd hard work t' live an' pay us road an' o',
Theau sees, if aw'd bin givin' bumpin' weight,
Aw'd ne'er ha' kep' my books an' payments straight.
Aw've allus heerd, on th' strength o' th' parson's word,
'At what we give to th' poor we lend to th' Lord ;
An' if one wants a loan i' th' need he sends,
An' taks fro' th' poor, it mun be th' Lord 'at lends.
An' so, theau sees, my wench, aw've done no worse
Nor just that bargain wi' the Lord reverse.

Aw've borrowed nowt aw didno need, aw'm sure,
An' now aw'm ready t' pay both Lord an' th' poor."

" Ah, but with prices high, and business good,
You stinted weight as often as you could."

" Ay, becos th' better th' shop were med to pay,
A' th' moore i' th' end there'd be for t' give away.
Alms covers multitudes o' sins, it's said,
An' theau's bin givin' sin we'n bin i' th' trade ;
An' as we're wed, an' one i' flesh—(dost see?)
What theau gan, aw gan, just as mich as thee.
How mich aw've gan mysel' aw couldno tell,
Bu' th' poor's had mony a bit aw couldno sell."

" Ah, Nathan ! you have been too worldly wise ;
To holier wisdom you will never rise.
They that give only what they cannot use,
And call that charity, the term abuse."

" Why, lass, for t' carry that their raysonin' out,
A mon mun give his dinner, an' goo bout ;
Bur aw'm for no sich nonsense, an' aw'm sure
Theau'd ne'er do nowt o' t' sort thyself—that's moore.
Theau likes thy dinner waarm, i' th' reg'lar way,
An' th' scraps 'at's left theau gives another day.
Wi' folk 'at's strugglin', lass, it's nobbut sense,
I' coverin' sin, to try an' save expense.
Economy's a virtue, so they say,
An' every virtue owt to have it day ;
An' them 'at's frugal while they th' meean earn
Con then afford t' gi' charity it turn.
Th' one virtue links to th' other, like a chain ;
Bu' th' poor an' wasteful allus poor remain.