

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **John Hookham Frere**

**- poems -**

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## **The Friend of Humanity, and the Knife-Grinder**

FRIEND OF HUMANITY.

"Needy Knife-grinder! whether are you going?  
Rough is the road, your wheel is out of order--  
Bleak blows the Blast;--your hat has got a hole in't,  
So have your breeches!

"Weary Knife-grinder! little think the proud ones  
Who in their coaches roll along the turnpike-  
-road, what hard work 'tis crying all day, 'Knives and  
'Scissars to grind O!"

"Tell me Knife-grinder, how came you to grind knives?  
Did some rich man tyrannically use you?  
Was it the squire? or parson of the parish;  
Or the attorney?"

"Was it the squire, for killing of his game? or  
Covetous parson, for his tithes distraining?  
Or roguish lawyer, made you lose your little  
All in a lawsuit?"

"(Have you not read the Rights of Man, by Tom Paine?)  
Drops of compassion tremble on my eyelids,  
Ready to fall, as soon as you have told your  
Pitiful story."

KNIFE-GRINDER.

"Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, Sir,  
Only last night a-drinking at the Chequers,  
This poor old hat and breeches, as you see, were  
Torn in a scuffle.

"Constables came up for to take me into  
Custody; they took me before the justice;  
Justice Oldmixon put me in the parish-  
stocks for a vagrant.

"I should be glad to drink your Honor's health in  
A pot of beer, if you will give me sixpence;  
But for my part, I never love to meddle  
With Politics, Sir."

FRIEND OF HUMANITY.

"I give thee sixpence! I will see thee damn'd first--  
Wretch! whom no sense of wrongs can rouse to vengeance--  
Sordid, unfeeling, reprobate, degraded,  
Spiritless outcast!"

Kicks the Knife-grinder, overturns his wheel, and exit in a transport of Republican enthusiasm and universal philanthropy.

John Hookham Frere