

*Scottish Poetry Selection - Absent-minded Andra*

*There are many advantages (so we're told) of being older and more mature, but there is a downside - and forgetfulness is certainly one aspect. But we can always have a wry smile at the absent-mindedness of others - such as "Andra" in this poem. The author of this poem is only given as "Meg" - in an old copy of "Scots Story Recitations" where this piece was found in the Scottish Poetry Library.*

**Absent-minded Andra**

Men are but bairns at the best,  
And need close watchin' ever.  
Andra's nae better than the rest,  
As often I discover.  
What aggravates me most o' a',  
Is he's sae absent-minded;  
For mony a thing he lays awa',  
Sae safe he canna' find it.

Oft in the mornin' roond he creeps,  
Seekin' his stud, puir soul;  
Although a spare ane he aye keeps  
It's in some hidie-hole.  
For gettin' things mislaid, indeed,  
My Andra's sic a chiel;  
I'm certain he would lose his heid  
If 'twasna fixed on weel.

Things reached a crisis, I declare,  
Wi' him last Friday nicht;  
In fact, he gae me sic a scare,  
Even noo I'm hardly richt.  
On Fridays he aye gets his pay,  
And, as a rule we go  
Tae visit mither doon the way  
Or tae a picter show.

Andra was late o' comin' in,  
"What's keepit ye?" I cried.  
"I stood a while there bletherin'  
Wi' a chap," he replied.  
"Puir lad, he hasna got a job;  
Been on the dole awhile;  
So I just lent him a bit bob,  
Tae help him ower the stile."

"It's like ye," I said, "but mak' haste,  
You've stood wi' him ower lang,  
And I have little time tae waste,  
I've messages tae gang.  
If you gie me your pay I'll rin,  
The shops by noo are shuttin',  
See that you're cleaned when I come in,  
And dressed tae the last button."

Andra rose tae his feet and tried  
His pockets, ane by ane.  
"I canna find my pay," he cried,  
"I wonder whaur it's gane.  
Dash it a', Meg, I put it here  
Beside my pocket-book,  
But noo, my pooch is toom - that's queer,  
Just come, my lass, and look."

"You've lost your pay," I cried aghast,  
For I was sair distressed.  
"In some fly pooch you've put it past,  
Come, let me try your vest."  
But though wa searched wi' anxious care,  
Nae pound notes could we find,  
"They're safe," said Andra, "that I'll swear,  
But where, I canna mind."

"This coves the cuddy," I declared,  
"I meant tae lay away  
As much this week as could be spared  
For a comin' holiday.  
What did ye gie that man ye saw?  
No' your hale pay, I hope?"  
"A bob," said Andra, "maybe twa,  
But no' my envelope."

I couldna help it, doon I sat  
Completely overpowered;  
And raged and stormed, and grat and grat,  
While Andra glumched and glowered.  
"Ye needna cairry on like that,"  
Said he tae me at last;  
"The money's safe, I'll bet ma hat,  
I ken I put it past."

Tae his tobacco-pooch he gaed  
Tae get his briar filled;  
Then waved something abune his heid,  
"My pey bag's here!" he yelled.  
I felt my brain begin to swim,  
And shaky grew my knees;  
"Andra," I said, as I kissed him,  
"You'll gie me he'rt disease."

***Meaning of unusual words:***

bairns=children

aye=always

sic a chiel=such a child

bletherin'=talk idly

gang=go

toom=empty

cowes the cuddy=beats the donkey (takes the biscuit)

A bob=a shilling (now 5 new pence)

grat=cried

glumched=grumbled, looked sour