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Atkinson, James Augustus (1832-1911)

Merry Andrew o' Manchester:

A Drollerie (1884)

[3]

SCENE I. ON A ROAD

Folk co' me "Merry Andrew", but aw'm noan o' yer Andrews. My feyther's name wur Ben Brierley, and my mother's name wur Betty Bramford, afore she we my feyther, an' then aw reckon hoo wur co'd Betty Brierley, but aw wur kissent Joe--nay, it wur Joseph--Joseph Brierley, but aw wur aulus co'd Joe. When aw wur a lad, aw wur one o' em ut's fond o' a marlock. Aw wur aulus to summat; aye, an' mony a trick aw played, an' mony a laugh aw raised. Aw wur down reet merry, an' so they geet o' co'in me "Merry Joe", an' after a bit they changed Joe into Andrew, an' co'd me "Merry

Salamanca Corpus: Merry Andrew o' Manchester (1884)

Andrew". A' th' folks knows Merry Andrew, an' he's nobbut a foo', an aw'm nowt if aw'm not a foo'--

A foo' I wur, an' a foo' I be,
If aw'm not a foo', whot mun I be?
That's plain as a pikestaff, dun yo' see?
Merry Andrew sings reet merrillee.

Eh, but it's dull bout pal to crack a joke wi'! Who goes there? It savours o' Pat, th' joiner. Pat!--aw'm poor at names--Pat O' Brien. Hoo's comin' this road! What's hoo gapin' at? Moon's up yonder. Hoo's moonin'! Mebbe hoo's got a sweetheart ut wants fotchin' whoam! Mebbe hoo's axin' th' mon i' th' moon to send her down. Aw'll gi' him a fresh job, summat down here on th' grownd. Aw shall have no need to say owt. This 'ere fut o' mine'll settle his equilibrium

(As Pat passes, he is tripped up, and falls)

PAT. Och! me bones! me bones! Where am I? Wasn't I just admirin' that swate beautiful moon, and now I ain't kissing me mother airth. But how did I get myself here? *(Rises)* It must have been some rascal of a stone that's thripped me up. If I can find it I'll just give it a good kick for its pains. Och! me bones!

[4]

M.A. Why, is it thou, Pat O' Brien? Thou'rt weak in thi sank's or mebbe thou'st too mich in thi yed for to look whear thou'rt gooin'? What's up wi' thi?

PAT. None of your foolin', Merry Andrew; I'm not in a mood for it, and I'm a native of Ould Oireland, and me monkey's up, and I'm just in a nice sort of a timper, and if I can't find the rascal of a stone that thripped me up, it's like enough I may just set on your highness.

M.A. Thou mun tak' it quietly, Pat; thou munna mak' sich a din owre it. Arto hurt?

PAT. Och! me bones! me bones! Shure and if me kneecap ain't out o' jint.

M.A. Sit thi down, Pat; sit thi down. Gi' me howd o' thi leg, I'll put it reet, mon. *(Pulls his leg)*

Salamanca Corpus: Merry Andrew o' Manchester (1884)

PAT. Murthur! Murthur! shure an' you're not pulling me leg off altogether. Och! me thigh! Lave me alone, ye'll murthur me! If ye don't lave me alone I'll lay me shillelah about ye, I will. Where's me shillelah?

M.A. It's yonder, but afore aw gi' it thee thou mun promise thou willno' lay it about mi back.

(Gets shillelah and pokes Pat with it)

Come now! ston' up and lean upo' me, and let's move on. I'm clemmed. Hasto had thi baggin? Come whoam wi' me. Eh! but who's yon? I yer somebody. It'ull be two chaps, by their takkin'. We'n ston still, and mak'um gi' up their brass.

PAT. Shure, but we're not highwaymen; we shall be transported, Isn't it fourteen year for highway robbery?

M.A. Nawe, Pat; it's only a marlock o' Merry Andrew's. We'en gi' em back their brass at after.

PAT. Shure and I'll brandish me shillelah. I'll thrash them if they don't hand out their purses.

M.A. Eh! but I mun hide me clooas. Here, Pat, help me on wi' this 'ere cloak.

(Throws a white sheet round him)

This'll scare'em. They'll say it's a boggart ut fleyed 'em. A' reet.

PAT. Shure, it'll all claire.

M.A. How'd thi din, Pat, an' say nowt--the'r' comin'.

(Jonas Green and Stephen Rudd approach)

JONAS. It's getting dark, Stephen; mind where you are stepping.

[5]

STEPHEN. The fog's thickening, and if it thickens much more we shall not know which turn to take.

(Pat and Merry Andrew give a yell) (Pat seizes Jonas)

PAT. Now then, stand and deliver, or I'll bate the brains out o' yer greasy pate!

(M.A. pursues Jonas, who runs for his life)

Salamanca Corpus: Merry Andrew o' Manchester (1884)

JONAS. There is a boggart after me; help! help!

(Merry Andrew catches him)

Let me go! Let me go!

M.A. Gi' up thi brass, or aw'll tak' th' life out o' thi carcass an' fry it; gi' up thi brass, mon!

JONAS. I've only some coppers on me--there they are--let me go.

M.A. Nobbut coppers! we'n see--come on to thi pal.

PAT. Bring him within rache o' mi shillelah! I'll aise his pockets.

M.A. We'll let yer boath goo when you'rn paid up.

JONAS. Why, if it isn't Merry Andrew's voice, I'm in a dream!

M.A. Aye, an' thou savours o' Jonas Green. How arto, Jonas? It wur on'y a marlock, owd mate. I couldna know it wur thee. Who's Pat getten howd on?

STEPHEN. It's me--Stephen Rudd.

PAT. Shure, it's Staphen. Shakes hands, Staphen, me boy!

M.A. Come, Jonas; come, Stephen, yo hanno etten ought to-neet. Come whoam wi' Pat an' me an' we'n have us baggin together. Yo' mun a' three look round yo' a bit, nigh on an hour, while th' meat's cookin'. Aw'm for goin' ahead, an' gettin' a' ready.

JONAS. I'm willing.

STEPHEN. So am I.

PAT. Shure, then, we'll jist jine ourselves ina row; Jonas on me right an' Staphen on me left, Pat in the middle. And now by our lave we'll be off.

(Pat leads them off)

M.A. Baggin! aye, if ther's summat to ait; but ther's nowt. Aw'm rout brade and bacon; ther's nowt to sup--nayther tay nor ale, nor ginger-pop. Where's th' brass? *(Feels each pocket and says "Nowt")* Merry Andrew o' Manchester! thou mun fit sum brass or some baggin somewheer. Nawe, foo', tap thi yed and draw out this wits. Merry Andrew allus maks a road for hissel', and hoo'll male one to-neet, yo'll see.

SCENE II. JACOB SOLOMON'S HOUSE

JACOB. Money! Money! I've worked hard for money. I've lived for money. I've learnt how to get money, and, what's better, I've learned how to keep money. No one knows how much money Jacob Solomon's worth. He does not know himself. He has more than he will ever want, but he wants to have still more. Money makes money, and when you have got money, and don't spend it, money makes itself. They call me "usurer" and "money-lender". I expect good interest, and I get it--I lend on any security of whatever value, whether it be worth thousands of pounds or only a few pence. I'm an old man, and I've seen a good deal of mankind. Almost all of them like money! Some will do anything to clutch hold of it: they have no scruples. I've had a stiff fight of it with some; but I'm an old hand and I can tackle them sharper than they can me. You'd be surprised at the low mean dodges some of them are up to! The tales they tell--catch me, indeed! not they. Catch a weasel asleep! I'm always awake! My business requires it. It would be rutinaion if any one could overreach me. No! no! Jacob Solomon knows what he is about. The big clock's striking eight. Why don't that idel girl come and see me after supper? She has no idea of time. Some people haven't. They are invariably behind. Rachel! Rachel! She must have gone out; as likely as not she's chattering to the next door neighbour. I often wonder what women have to talk over. The pace Rachel's tongue goes! There's the back door shutting. I thought so. She's just come in--been out, as I suspected. Rachel! Rachel!

RACHEL. Yes, sir; I'm coming--(*enters*)--what is it, sir?

JACOB. Late, as usual; no preparations for my supper.

RACHEL. Please, sir, I have only been at the back, speaking to Sarah that lives next door.

JACOB. Talking nonsense, I daresay.

RACHEL. No, sir, we wasn't. For one thing, Sarah was telling me of a prank someone has played on her master.

JACOB. Let me hear it; but see about the supper first. What is there?

RACHEL. I've got a nice bit of meat in the house. I was

[7]

going to boil it, and then there'll be some good broth for to-morrow. I'll put it on at once. (*Gets saucepan*)

JACOB. You can lay the cloth, and tell me your story. What's happened?

RACHEL. Sarah says last night her master came in to his tea, and left his trap with the pony standing at the door. When he went out he jumped into the trap, and found the pony's head where his tail should be. Someone has fastened him in the shafts tail foremost. Sarah said her master did look shamefaced. There was quite a crowd grinning at him.

JACOB. A very silly joke, Rachel. It must have been that Jackanapes Merry Andrew of Manchester.

RACHEL. No one saw it done, and Sarah thinks it was someone that has a spite against her master.

JACOB. I don't think so. I expect it was only tomfoolery. You can go now, and finish you other work.

(*Knock. Enter Merry Andrew*)

M.A. How's the world wi' yo', Mesthur Solomon?

JACOB. Good evening! I am well. What has induced you to honour me with your presence?

M.A. I've co'd to see if there's onythink I might do for thee, Mesthur Solomon?

JACOB. Fooling is not much in my line, Merry Andrew. How can I serve you?

M.A. Weel, yo' know how to get brass, an' aw thow't yo'd mebbe gi' me a wrinkle or two. Toimes is bad, an' aw could do wi' summat to ait, an' summat i' my pouch.

JACOB. I'm not the man for giving--I don't believe in it. I lend on safe security.

M.A. Aw wouldna ax yo' to gi' me owt. Nay, Merry Andrew o' Manchester aren't no beggar.

JACOB. I suppose you mean your fooling don't pay, and you want me to put you in the way of gaining a livelihood. I doubt if you are fit for anything.

Salamanca Corpus: Merry Andrew o' Manchester (1884)

M.A. Yo're wrung theer, Mesthur Solomon; aw con do owt. Aw'm noan th' foo' folk tak' me for.

JACOB. I'm glad to hear it. You may call again to-morrow. It's late now, and I must have my supper and go to bed.

M.A. Didsto ax me to have summat to ait; aw'd loike to.

[8]

Bu' aw've or three pals ut's comin' to have their baggin wi' me. Aw reckon that'll be th' meat on't fire. It's bilin' o'er; shall I set it deawn o'th' hob?

JACOB. Yes, if you please; it will save me the trouble of getting up out of my chair. Thank you, it will be all right on the hob.

M.A. Aye, it's aw reet now. It won't bile o'er no more; it's safe enou'. Good neet to yo', Mesthur Solomon!

JACOB. Good night! Where can that girl have gone?

M.A. This meat ull be gradely. Aw'll tak' it whoam, pon an' a'. Oh, aw'm nobbut a foo'.

SCENE III. MERRY ANDREW'S HOUSE

(Boy Thomas cleaning knives)

THOMAS. Them's clean enough; he'll be in to his supper soon. I hope he'll not forget to bring something to eat. There's not a mouthful in the place. *(Makes a face and laughs)* I'm practising--that's how he does it. His trade would suit me--nice easy job--only got to be sharp at your tongue and be always smiling or grinning *(makes faces and laughs)*, that's the ticket *(Enter M.A. with saucepan, sets it down, throws himself on a chair, and bursts out laughing)*.

Salamanca Corpus: Merry Andrew o' Manchester (1884)

M.A. Tummus, aw'm fit to crack mi sides wi' laffin'. See yon pon wi' meat in it! Yon's owd Jacob Solomon's, aw've carried off. There's nowt else for Jonas Green an' Stephen Rudd to ait. They'n be comin' to their baggin here. Arto clemmed, lad?

THOMAS. I were just saying there was not a mouthful in the place.

M.A. Nawe, Tummus, gi' me a dish for th' meat an' a basin for th' soup; that's reet. Nawe then, lad, tak' howd o' yon pon an' scrub o'th' owd black off, an' mak' it a' reet.

THOMAS. This hasn't been scrubbed for many a day. I'll soon have it so as Mr. Solomon would not know it again.

M.A. Nawe, Tummus, look yo, thou mun tak' yon pon to owd Jacob Solomon's; thou mun say "Aw've brout this pon, an' mesthur wants to borrow two groats on it. It's a foine pon,

[9]

worth ten groats, an' thou must ax th' owd mon for a bill o' his hont, dun yo see? Aw mun have his writin' to show hoo's had th' pon."

THOMAS. What shall I do with the two groats?

M.A. Dunno be so quick, lad; aw'm comin' to that. We'en no brade, an' nowt to sup. Thou mun fotch a loaf from Hulme's, and thou mun co' at Burgess's and get four bottles o' botanic beer--breet-star beverage.

THOMAS. Botanic beer! what for? Mr Green and Mr Rudd will not drink it. They'll expect Barber's stout or Robert's sparkling ale.

M.A. Aw know that. But I dunno care what they'n expect. Jonas and Stephen's allus suppin'. Aw'll tache 'em ther's summut else to sup. Ther's nowt better nor botanic beer; it warms th' inside. It doesna fuddle. Aw'm none o' yer fuddlers.

THOMAS. I'm sure you laugh enough, and make everyone else laugh.

M.A. As for that, aw couldna keep up mi pranks, if I wur fuddlet. When th' drink's goan in, then th' wit's goan out. Tummus, dusto know if ther's any owd beer bottles i'th house?

THOMAS. There are some old bottles labelled Bass's Fine Ale.

Salamanca Corpus: Merry Andrew o' Manchester (1884)

M.A. That's the sort, Tummus. Wesh some on'em 'an fill'em up wi' botanic beer, an' cork'em, and set'em on't table. Get agate, lad, and be sharp black.

THOMAS. I'll not be long.

M.A. An aw'll wesh me.

SCENE IV. JACOB IN AN ARMCHAIR

JACOB. I think I must have been having a nap; it must be long past supper-time. Rachel! Rachel! Where can that girl be!--(*Knock*)--There's someone knocking. I shall have to go to the door myself. Who's there?

THOMAS. It's me, sir.

JACOB. Who are you?

THOMAS. Me, sir

[10]

JACOB. Who's me?

THOMAS. Myself, sir; Thomas.

JACOB. Thomas who?

THOMAS. Thomas Sharples, sir.

(Jacob opens door)

JACOB. Come in, youngster. What is your errand?

THOMAS. I've a message for Mr Jacob Solomon. A gentleman wants to borrow four groats.

JACOB. I never lend money except on good security.

THOMAS. He's sent a good saucepan. He says it's worth ten or twelve groats, and he would be glad to borrow four groats on it.

JACOB. Too much! too much! not worth it. I'll lend him two groats.

THOMAS. Won't you split the difference, and say three groats?

Salamanca Corpus: Merry Andrew o' Manchester (1884)

JACOB. You are sharp boy. I never split the difference. I give what a thing's worth, and two groats is the sum.

THOMAS. Then I must take that. (*Aside*: Good job I asked him for four; if I had asked him for two, he would onlu have given me one). The gentleman said he hoped you would take great care of the saucepan, as he might want it back sometime. It's a rare string one--well made.

JACOB. Very well, I'll put it aside for a month and not let it be used. If he don't claim it by then, I shall not undertake to keep it any longer.

THOMAS. That'll do. Please will you give me a note of hand?

JACOB. What?

THOMAS. A note of hand. A bill to show the gentleman that you have received the saucepan. He'll want something to prove you have had it. He's a very particular gentleman.

JACOB. He seems so. Here are the two groats, and here is the bill. Now you can go.

THOMAS. I'll be off in a jiffy.

JACOB. Remarkably sharp boy that; I should like to have him about the place. Rachel! Rachel! Rachel! (*Enter Rachel*)

RACHEL. Yes, sir.

JACOB. When am I to have my supper? Where have you been?

[11]

RACHEL. I only went, sir, to tell Sarah it must be Merry Andrew that played that trick with her master's pony.

JACOB. It has taken you an hour, at least, to give that information. You have been gossiping about something else. Was anyone else with you?

RACHEL. No, sir. Only Sarah and me.

JACOB. Lucky for you I have been asleep. Make haste with the supper.

RACHEL. Oh dear! What's become of the meat? I left it on the fire to boil!

Salamanca Corpus: Merry Andrew o' Manchester (1884)

JACOB. And forgot all about it. I'll make you remember--I'll give you such a beating as you never had before--you good for nothing, you.

RACHEL. Please, sir, where have you put it?

JACOB. How dare you ask me such a question! I've not touched it, girl!

RACHEL. Someone has, then, for it's gone. Who's been here?

JACOB. That comes of your stopping out chattering. A lad came in just now, but he has not removed it, I kept my eye on him all the time.

RACHEL. Well, someone's moved it.

JACOB. I remember now. It was boiling over, and Merry Andrew asked if he should lift in on the hob, and I said he might.

RACHEL. But it ain't on the hob; what can he have done with it? I expect he has carried off pan and meat and all. He's played you a game now, sir.--(*Laughing*)--It's just one of his larks.

JACOB. Nonsense, girl, should not I have seen him? How could he carry off a big saucepan like that?

RACHEL. He has cunning ways of doing things, and, what's more, he has done you out of your supper to-night, sir, and I shall have to go short too; but it's no matter for once. How Sarah will laugh when I tell her! May I just run and tell her, sir?

JACOB (*in great anger*). No, certainly not; it's outrageous. I'll not endure such behaviour. I remember Merry Andrew said he had some friends to supper or he would have had some with me. Cool hands he is! If he has not walked off with my

[12]

meat to entertain his friends. Rachel, fetch my topcoat and hat, I'll go straight to Merry Andrew. Get your bonnet and shawl, you shall come with me. We shall catch them at supper, and I'll shame them, see if I don't; it's too bad. These practical jokes are more than I can tolerate. I'll not be made a fool of. Come along!

SCENE V. MERRY ANDREW, PAT, JONAS, AND STEPHEN AT SUPPER

Salamanca Corpus: *Merry Andrew o' Manchester* (1884)

JONAS. This is prime beef. Andrew, I never tasted finer.

STEPHEN. It's tender and juicy, and slips down your throat.

M.A. Oh! ay! it does no' tak' so mich chewin'. Hasto ever chew'd at a sloice o' leather?

JONAS. I've eaten meat as tough as leather; the cooking's a deal to do with it.

M.A. Aye, an' th' ca'aw too. Thomas, wheer's taters?

THOMAS. There's plenty of meat and bread on the table. I had no orders to provide potatoes.

M.A. We mun have summat to sup. Is thi throttle dry, Pat?

PAT. Well, shure, I wad like jist a drap to wet me whistle.

M.A. We'n some ginger pop and mebbe a sup o' beer.

(Thomas puts ginger beer and Bass's bottles on the table)

M.A. Help yoursels; aw'm one o' them as drinks Adam's ale.

PAT. This is Bass's bitter beer; that's rare stuff, though it's not equal to our Guinness'. If I'd a small corkscrew this bothersome cork would soon be out o'th' mouth o'th' bottle.

THOMAS. Let me draw it. *(Fill Pat's glass)*

JONAS. Here, I'll have a glass.

STEPHEN. I'm for trying the pop.

M.A. I'm for wayter. Ther's nowt as good as wayter. Now, we'n all served. Yon beer's no' bottlet long; it's rayther fresh.

JONAS. It's thick; it wants settling.

PAT. Och! it's bitter--it's none so bad for an English brew. Ould Oireland's the place for foine liquor.

[13]

STEPHEN *(aside to M.A.)* That's not Bass. I see what it is. Botanic beer.

M.A. *(aside to Stephen)*. It be yerb beer for sure *(laughing)*.

JONAS. Give us a song, Andrew.

M.A. A sung! What wilto have?

Salamanca Corpus: Merry Andrew o' Manchester (1884)

STEPHEN. We'll have "Bobbin, the Cobler"

PAT. Ef ye'd give me the choice, I'd jist loike a thrifle of a love ditty about yer own swaitheart, Andrew.

M.A. Dun yo' mean Matty, or Jenny, or Nanny, or Kattuy, or Betty. They be a' gradely wenches.

PAT. Shure, if ye ain't a deceyver, Andrew.

M.A. Aw'm not o'th' sort. Lasses all know Merry Andrew. Aw sing'em songs an' gi' 'em their own names.

I like Matty, Katty, an' Nan,
sich gradely wenches they a' be:
I like Betty, Sally, an' Fan,
But Jenny Waugh's the lass for me.

I like dark e'en 'at speer yo' throu'
Wi' smiles 'at fill yo'r heart wi' glee;
I've got agate o' coortin' now,
For Jenny Waugh's the lass for me.

I'll ax her soon, if hoo's a mind,
An' if hoo has, then we'en get wed;
There's nowt else for it, I con see,
For Jenny Waugh has tuend mi yed.

STEPHEN. Now, Pat, it's your turn.

PAT. Boys, would ye thank a cracked tay-kittle for a song?

(Knock. Thomas goes to the door and opens it)

JACOB SOLOMON. Is Mr Andrew in? I know he is. I want to see him directly.

M.A. Yon's Jacob Solomon, Tummas! Aw cannot see anyone to-neet.

JACOB. I insist on seeing Mr Andrew--*(Enters with Rachel)*--I am sorry to interrupt you, and still more sorry to bring a charge against you in the presence of your friends. I have reason to believe that when you left my house this evening, you carried off with you a saucepan, conatining some meat. It could not have been an accident. Can you explain yourself?

Salamanca Corpus: Merry Andrew o' Manchester (1884)

PAT. Shure, I be surprized at a gintleman intering another gintleman's house and spakin' in sich an arrowgant an' vindictive tone.

RACHEL. Please, sir, here are the remains of the beef that was boiling in the saucepan.

PAT. An' indad, be that the only paice of beef in the world?

JACOB. HAVe the kindness not to interefere.

PAT. Och, shure, and I shill interefere, av I plase; I shill stick up for me friends. Where's me shillelah? I'll sittle ye.

JONAS. Now, Pat, keep yourself cool, man.

(Pat advances with his shillelah)

STEPHEN *(Pulling him back)*. Be quiet, Pat. You can't strike an old man.

RACHEL *(Getting in front of Jacob)*. You are a pack of thieves and murderers. I tell you that's our meat on the table.

M.A. Aw'll explain a' if yo' winno' mak' sich a din. Mesthur Solomon axed me to poo th' pon on th' hob, an' I thowt I'd just borrow th' pon, an' a'. So I brout it whoam, an' I kep' th' meat to ate--for it wur a' billin' awa' on th' fire, bo' I sent back th' pon.

RACHEL. No pan's come back to our house.

THOMAS. Yes there was, I took it myself, and I delievered it to Mr Solomon myself, and I got his note of hand.

RACHEL. You are the youngster that came and borrowed two groats? I see now.

THOMAS. I am.

M.A. It's no safe nawe to deal wi' folks beawt writings. Ev aw hadna Mesthur Solomon's own hont to show, hoo'd hav' charged me wi' stealin' yon pon *(Produces note of hand)*

RACHEL. Did you have the saucepan, sir?

JACOB. That youngster brought a saucepan and I advanced him two groats on it. I did not know it was ours, and I put it away in the cupboard.

M.A. Theer, ye see; it's a' safe int' cubbort, an' th' meat's theer--what's left on it--an' th' rest we've etten *(All laugh)*

JACOB.. You deserve to be summoned before the magistrates. You'll pay up the cost of the beef, and repay my two groats, or you'll be in trouble.

PAT. Shure, and what may the cost o'the beef be?

RACHEL. Eight groats.

[15]

PAT. Och, wal I'll pay that for me friend, shure, and I'll be pleased to.

JONAS. And Stephen and I will pay the two groats.

STEPHEN. Willingly, and now it's all straight again.

M.A. Ay, it's a' reet nawe, Mesthur Solomon, yo' known me this mony a day. Gi me thi hont (*Shakes hands*). It wur nobbut a marlock. Aw'm Merry Andrew. I conno' help foolin'. Aw'm nobbut a foo'!

A foo' I am, an' a foo' I be,
If aw'm not a foo', whot mun I be?
That's plain as a pikestaff, dun yo' see?
Merry Andrew sings reet merrillee.

That's plain as a pikestaff, we a' see,
An' we a' con sing reet merrillee,
Ay, we a' con sing reet merrillee.

