

**ANDREA AND
OTHER POEMS**

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Andrea and Other Poems by Gascoigne Mackie

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BY
GASCOIGNE MACKIE
AUTHOR OF
'CHARMIDES,' 'THE MAN OF KERIOTH,' 'SHORT POEMS,'
ETC.

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199622

To
E. WEBSTER, Esq.,
FELLOW OF WADHAM COLLEGE, OXFORD.

My dear Erwin,

Ten years ago, when this poem was begun at Sars, I used to say (half-jestingly) that I must dedicate it to your father—and he, in kindness, expressed a willingness that I should do so. To-day I shrink from inscribing to his memory so slight a tale. Will you, then, accept it for his sake?—as an acknowledgment of my reverence and gratitude—and may it serve to recall to your mind, in leisure hours, something of the beauty and the peace of scenes once so familiar and dear to us both.

Yours most sincerely,

GASCOIGNE MACKIE.

*Hordle, Hants,
May, 1908.*

ANDREA.

THRICE from a neighbouring garth the crested bird
Had blown his clarion to the fading stars
When from her bed the peasant stiffly rose
And crossed herself and donned her gaberdine;
Groping, she brushed her hand along the wall
To find, upon an alcove in the wall
Blackened with smoke, the implements of fire.
A feeble warmth still glimmered on the hearth
When she descended, and her flickering lamp
Flung a gaunt shadow as, with low-bent brow,
Upon her knees, she raked the smouldering dust;
With shrivelled bracken and a few dry twigs
She coaxed a trembling flame: then stirr'd herself
To stave starvation off another day.
Above her, from the low-beamed ceiling, hung
No chine or salted carcase; but a cheese,
Bored through its rounded middle, by a rush
Drooped dangling, and some cobs of yellow maize.
Rubbing the seeds off with her withered thumbs
Over a wooden bowl, and pounding them,
The woman took her pitcher to the well.

The sun had not yet risen when she stood
 Beside the bubbling well, and bent her back
 Plunging the sobbing pitcher in the pool.
 Cold blew the mountain air, th' autumnal heights
 Were cloaked in mist: and e'en her untaught mind
 Felt the supremacy of Nature, felt
 Her own mortality; but tyrannous habit
 Soon fortified itself, and on her face
 Indifference,—the index of decay,—
 Resumed its mastery, and she mused no more.
 Now, when the meal was served, she called her son
 (Widow and son—the rest were past recall—)
 "Hasten, my boy, for soon it will be day;
 The doves are flying southwards; rise and eat."

For when the birds fly south at autumn-tide
 They catch the dove in nets. Seven giant nets
 Hoisted by pulleys, high as elms, they stretch
 Across a clearing in the wooded col,
 And boys with flags along the neighbouring heights
 Stationed on platforms in the loftiest trees
 Wave when the dove is sighted; and a man,
 As they draw near the meshes, from his perch

Flings up a wooden kestrel, and the birds
Swoop, and are taken in the entangling nets.

And—for the gray-winged host with wistful eye
Move in the dewy hush of earliest dawn—
The boy must rise betimes, and take his flag
And trudge far up the rough white mountain-track
And climb his eyrie, ere the blush of dawn
Blanch to broad day. Up rose the crimson sun :
Across the bay he rose, and flashed his beams
From cape to cape ; and all the smouldering woods
Burned ; and the dying bracken on the hills
Burned like a sea of fire above the sea.

And when her boy had gone, Andrea prayed :
“ God sends the dove—we know not whence they
 come,
But year by year they pass the selfsame way ;
A thousand years they have not changed their
 course—
The dove remembers, and shall God forget ? ”

Turning, she bent her steps toward the byre