

IN PEGGY'S COVE

MARY WEEKES

IN Peggy's Cove, the mind drifts willy-nilly into space that is measureless. A hundred years—two, three; all are one. Time has not changed the face of the great salt-bleached boulders that heave their cruel flanks into the sea, or tempered the in-racing tides that fling themselves in white rath into the saw-toothed reefs. Only the red-winking light in Peggy's Lighthouse is in the present.

It lies off the coast of Halifax, this bleak cove that bears the effeminate name of Peggy, and on fine days a calm that resembles the quiet that precedes the rumble of thunder is there. It is in the waves that caress, in a distraught way, the grey shelving ledges; in the misty skies; in the incurious and unafraid eyes of children of fisher-folk who open pasture gates to admit sight-seers to their rocky kingdom.

In Peggy's Cove the exploring sense discovers in the too subtle peace violence that is wily and tameless, for here in the fathomless waters, blue and tranquil beyond the angry surf, lurks treachery. Here the sobbing salt winds are voices of seamen gripped and beaten upon the sprawling ridges. Here white rocks range the outflung bars where sea-crows roost; ghosts of widowed women and orphaned children. Splintered spars, bound in seaweed, are in the black crevices; spars of full-rigged ships that split their gallant keels upon the submerged ledges.

In Peggy's Cove the subconscious mind will have its way, unbound by the legends that cling to the old scarred lighthouse, for the circumstances which gave the Cove its name are of no consequence. Peggy was the daughter of the keeper who trimmed her father's lamps and set their rosy beams against the wild Atlantic. Peggy was a sailor's sweetheart to whom at dawn the raging sea gave back her lover. Peggy was wife to a skipper whose vessel lay "snagged" upon the peak because she had failed to set her warning light aglow. Peggy was an evil crone in league with Satan to entrap those able seamen who had conquered the unprincipled rages of the fierce Nor-easters. Little matter is it now, who was Peggy! Peggy is a beacon, and by day and by night her warm light shines—vigil keeping with

those whose voices are in the wind and whose bones are upon the ocean floor. The glory of Peggy is forever!

In Peggy's Cove the disembodied mind is aware of the little homes of fishermen that are welded to the solid rock. Here live men who wrest a meagre living from the sea, the sea that is their theatre. They put out from shore in the teeth of gales, bartering their lives for slender catches. But when Peggy's rosy light warns them off the long low spurs, and they are past the savage headlands awash with silver water, they know a glory that lifts their chanteys in a wild hosannah.

There are mothers of men in Peggy's Cove. The ethereal mind cannot ignore their presence. They are breeders of seamen; calm women, and patient. Their wants are few. They mend the nets, and dry the fish, and coax out of barren region blades of green to keep alive their cows. And when news comes to them of their ship-wrecked men? It is the age-old story of the women of fishermen. Their breasts go dry and their eyes bitter. Yet still the surf-drenched rocks must be home to them; home midst woe and want, with the white spray cold upon their feet. The slow years will pass. But there will stay, set firmly against the in-racing tides, and the surf that laughs upon the reefs, the shining light of—Peggy.