

Gentian Hill

GOUDGE ELIZABETH

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The Devonshire coast provides appropriate background for an enchanted tale of young love in the dark days when Buonaparte menaced the English coast. There's a fey quality to the telling, recalling vividly the Goudge of Island Magic and City of Bells rather than the Goudge of more recent writing. With flashbacks to the legend of the monk who haunted the hillside chapel dedicated to the sailors, and of the couple separated by the sea- and reunited by the sea, there's a tale of another young couple, Stella, a child living with foster parents, stalwart country stock, and Zachary, not very much her elder, who deserted the ship he loathed and the life he feared, and fought his fears until he won through to manhood. Theirs was an instant recognition of twin souls; the doctor who formed the link between them, and later the hermit-priest, running away from his own fears, both knew that here was something wholly apart from carnal passion, a recreation, perhaps, of the ancient tale. Stella had a mystical awareness which bridged the gaps of distance and time; Zachary rooted his mind and heart in the strength she was able to project to him, when his conscience drove him back to the sea and the war he hated. One forgives the intrusion of contrived situations, the intervention of the long arm of coincidence- and accepts, as did Stella and Zachary, the miracle of their oneness. The flavor of the Devonshire countryside is here-and much, too, of the horrors of the city slums and prisons, the holds of England's ships at sea, the brutality and injustice that was accepted as inevitable in a society where poverty and riches had no common meeting ground. A fairy tale sort of romance, charmingly told.--Kirkus Reviews



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