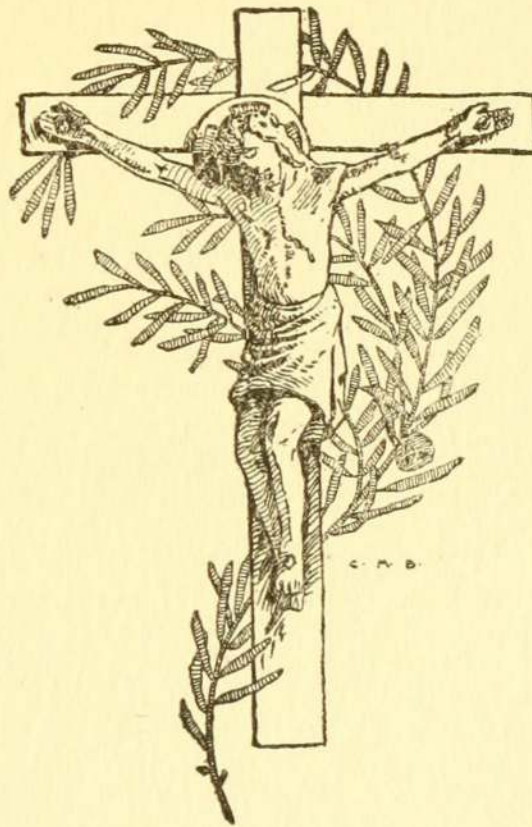


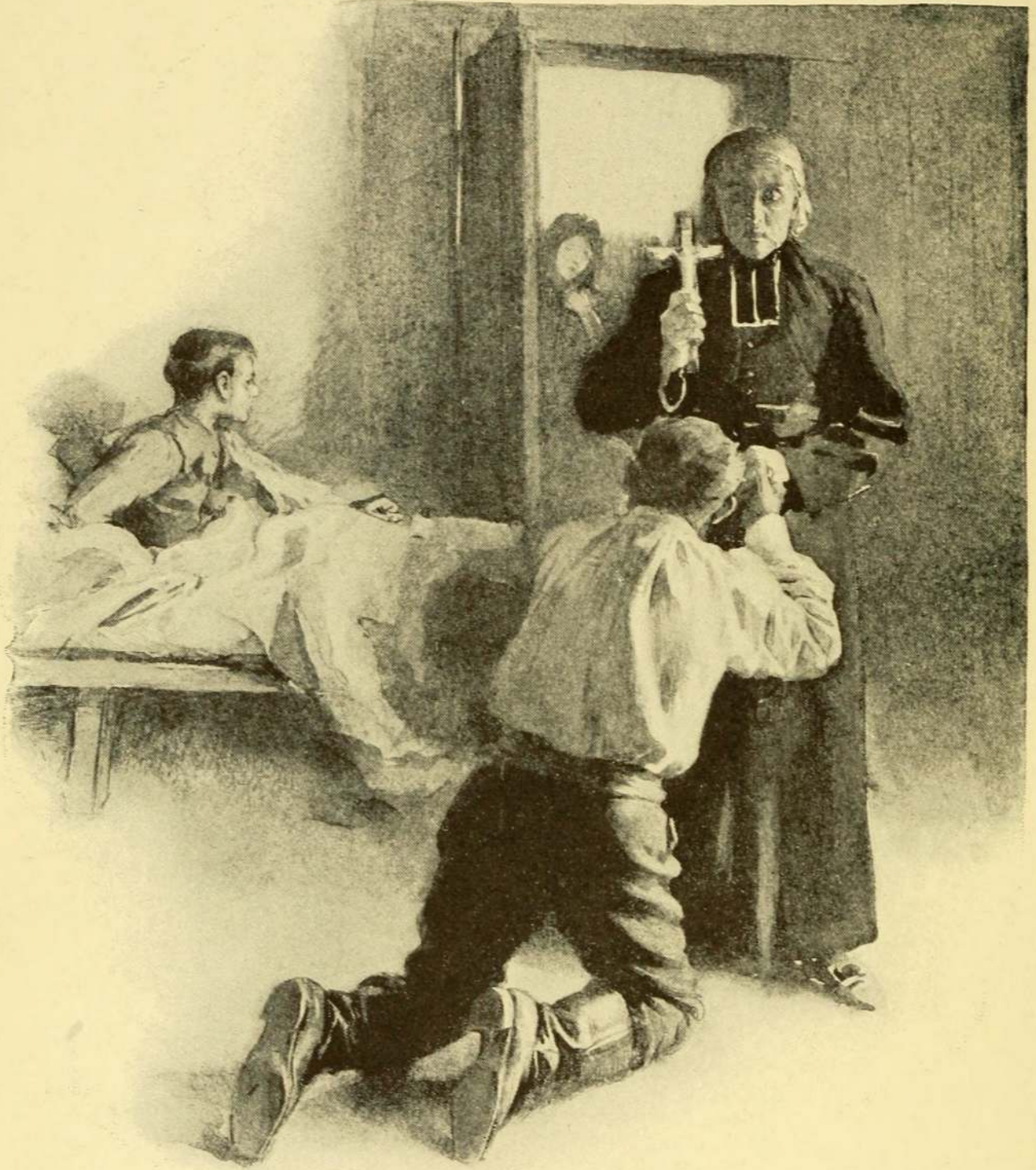


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The GOING of
THE WHITE SWAN







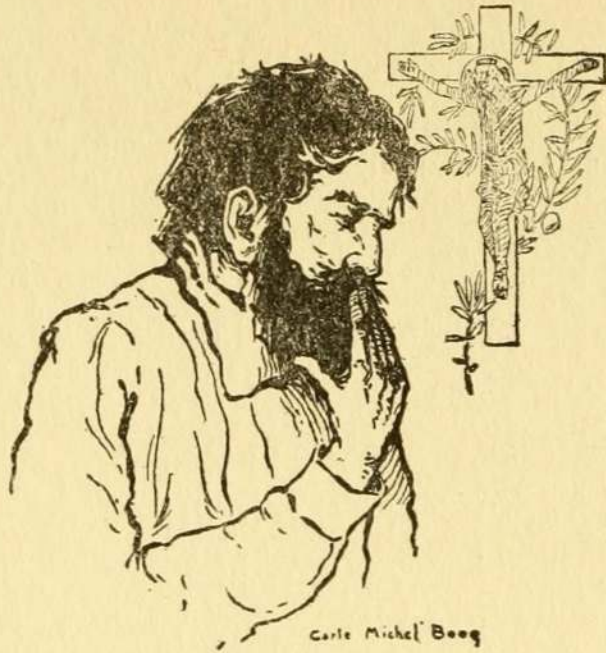
“ ‘No, no—this!’ the priest said.”

The GOING *of*
THE WHITE SWAN

BY
GILBERT PARKER



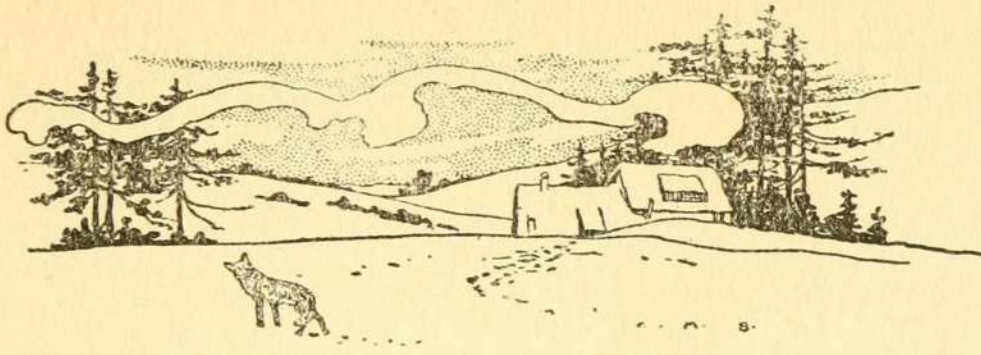
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THE GOING OF THE WHITE SWAN

I

WHY don't she come back,
father?"

The man shook his head, his hand fumbled with the wolfskin robe covering the child, and he made no reply.

"She'd come if she knew I was hurted, wouldn't she?"

The father nodded, and then turned restlessly toward the door, as though expecting some one. The

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look was troubled, and the pipe he held was not alight, though he made a pretense of smoking.

“Suppose the wildcat had got me, she’d be sorry when she comes, wouldn’t she?”

There was no reply yet, save by gesture, the language of primitive man; but the big body shivered a little, and the uncouth hand felt for a place in the bed where the lad’s knee made a lump under the robe. He felt the little heap tenderly, but the child winced.

“S-sh, but that hurts! This wolf-skin’s most too much on me, isn’t it, father?”

The man softly, yet awkwardly, lifted the robe, folded it back, and

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slowly uncovered the knee. The leg was worn away almost to skin and bone, but the knee itself was swollen with inflammation. He bathed it with some water, mixed with vinegar and herbs, then drew down the deer-skin shirt, and did the same with the child's shoulder. Both shoulder and knee bore the marks of teeth,—where a huge wild-cat had made havoc—and the body had long red scratches.

Presently the man shook his head sorrowfully, and covered up the small disfigured frame again, but this time with a tanned skin of the caribou. The flames of the huge wood-fire dashed the walls and floor with a velvety red and black, and

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the large iron kettle, bought of the Company at Fort Sacramento, puffed out geysers of steam.

The place was a low hut with parchment windows and rough mud-mortar lumped between the logs. Skins hung along two sides, with bullet-holes and knife-holes showing: of the great gray wolf, the red puma, the bronze hill-lion, the beaver, the bear, and the sable; and in one corner was a huge pile of them. Bare of the usual comforts as the room was, it had a sort of refinement also, joined to an inexpressible loneliness, you could scarce have told how or why.

“Father,” said the boy, his face pinched with pain for a moment, “it

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hurts so, all over, every once in a while.”

His fingers caressed the leg just below the knee.

“Father,” he suddenly added, “what does it mean when you hear a bird sing in the middle of the night?”

The woodsman looked down anxiously into the boy’s face. “It hasn’t no meaning, Dominique. There ain’t such a thing on the Labrador Heights as a bird singin’ in the night. That’s only in warm countries where there’s nightingales. So —*bien sur!*”

The boy had a wise, dreamy, speculative look.

“Well, I guess it was a nightin-

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gale—it didn't sing like any I ever heard."

The look of nervousness deepened in the woodman's face. "What did it sing like, Dominique?"

"So it made you shiver. You wanted it to go on, and yet you didn't want it. It was pretty, but you felt as if something was going to snap inside of you."

"When did you hear it, my son?"

"Twice last night—and—and I guess it was Sunday the other time. I don't know, for there hasn't been no Sunday up here since mother went away—has there?"

"Mebbe not."

The veins were beating like live

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ords in the man's throat and at his temples.

"'Twas just the same as Father Corraine bein' here, when mother had Sunday, wasn't it?"

The man made no reply; but a gloom drew down his forehead, and his lips doubled in as though he endured physical pain. He got to his feet and paced the floor. For weeks he had listened to the same kind of talk from this wounded, and, as he thought, dying son, and he was getting less and less able to bear it. The boy at nine years of age was, in manner of speech, the merest child, but his thoughts were sometimes large and wise. The only white

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child within a compass of a hundred miles or so; the lonely life of the hills and plains, so austere in winter, so melted to a sober joy in summer; listening to the talk of his elders at camp-fires and on the hunting-trail, when, even as an infant almost, he was swung in a blanket from a tree or was packed in the torch-crane of a canoe; and more than all, the care of a good, loving—if passionate—little mother: all these had made him far wiser than his years. He had been hours upon hours each day alone with the birds, and squirrels, and wild animals, and something of the keen scent and instinct of the animal world had entered into his body and

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brain, so that he felt what he could not understand.

He saw that he had worried his father, and it troubled him. He thought of something.

“Daddy,” he said, “let me have it.”

A smile struggled for life in the hunter's face, as he turned to the wall and took down the skin of a silver fox. He held it on his palm for a moment, looking at it in an interested, satisfied way, then he brought it over and put it into the child's hands; and the smile now shaped itself, as he saw an eager pale face buried in the soft fur.

“Good! good!” he said involuntarily.

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“*Bon! bon!*” said the boy’s voice from the fur, in the language of his mother, who added a strain of Indian blood to her French ancestry.

The two sat there, the man half-kneeling on the low bed, and stroking the fur very gently. It could scarcely be thought that such pride should be spent on a little pelt, by a mere backwoodsman and his nine-year-old son. One has seen a woman fingering a splendid necklace, her eyes fascinated by the bunch of warm, deep jewels—a light not of mere vanity, or hunger, or avarice in her face—only the love of the beautiful thing. But this was an animal’s skin. Did they feel the

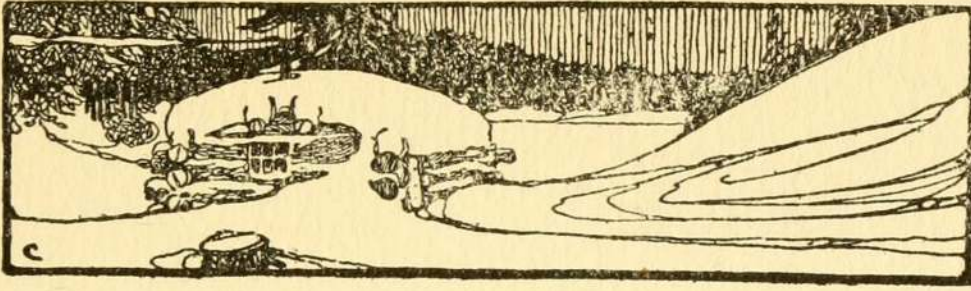
THE WHITE SWAN

animal underneath it yet, giving it beauty, life, glory?

The silver-fox skin is the prize of the north, and this one was of the boy's own harvesting. While his father was away he saw the fox creeping by the hut. The joy of the hunter seized him, and guided his eye over the sights of his father's rifle as he rested the barrel on the windowsill, and the animal was his! Now his finger ran into the hole made by the bullet, and he gave a little laugh of modest triumph. Minutes passed as they studied, felt, and admired the skin, the hunter proud of his son, the son alive with a primitive passion, which inflicts suffering to get the beautiful thing.

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Perhaps the tenderness as well as the wild passion of the animal gets into the hunter's blood, and tips his fingers at times with an exquisite kindness—as one has noted in a lion fondling her young, or in tigers as they sport upon the sands of the desert. This boy had seen his father shoot a splendid moose, and, as it lay dying, drop down and kiss it in the neck for sheer love of its handsomeness. Death is no insult. It is the law of the primitive world—war, and love in war.



II

THEY sat there for a long time, not speaking, each busy in his own way: the boy full of imaginings, strange, half-heathen, half-angelic feelings; the man roaming in that savage, romantic, superstitious atmosphere which belongs to the north, and to the north alone. At last the boy lay back on his pillow, his finger still in the bullet-hole of the pelt. His eyes closed, and he seemed about to fall asleep, but presently looked up and whis-

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pered: "I haven't said my prayers, have I?"

The father shook his head in a sort of rude confusion.

"I can pray out loud if I want to, can't I?"

"Of course, Dominique." The man shrank a little.

"I forget a good many times, but I know one all right, for I said it when the bird was singing. It isn't one out of the book Father Corrairie sent mother by Pretty Pierre; it's one she taught me out of her own head. P'r'aps I'd better say it."

"P'r'aps, if you want to." The voice was husky.

The boy began:

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“O Bon Jésus, who died to save us from our sins, and to lead us to Thy country, where there is no cold, nor hunger, nor thirst, and where no one is afraid, listen to Thy child. . . . When the great winds and rains come down from the hills, do not let the floods drown us, nor the woods cover us, nor the snow-slide bury us, and do not let the prairie-fires burn us. Keep wild beasts from killing us in our sleep, and give us good hearts that we may not kill them in anger.”

His finger twisted involuntarily into the bullet-hole in the pelt, and he paused a moment.

“Keep us from getting lost, O Bon Jésus.”

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Again there was a pause, his eyes opened wide, and he said:

“Do you think mother’s lost, father?”

A heavy broken breath came from the father, and he replied haltingly: “Mebbe—mebbe so.”

Dominique’s eyes closed again. “I’ll make up some,” he said slowly: “And if mother’s lost, O Bon Jésus, bring her back again to us, for everything’s going wrong.”

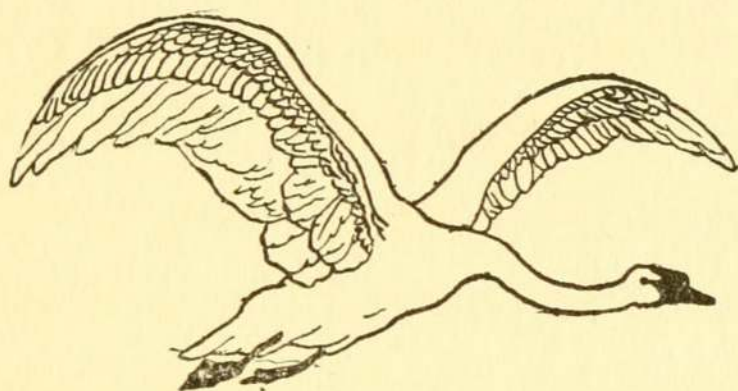
Again he paused, then went on with the prayer as it had been taught him.

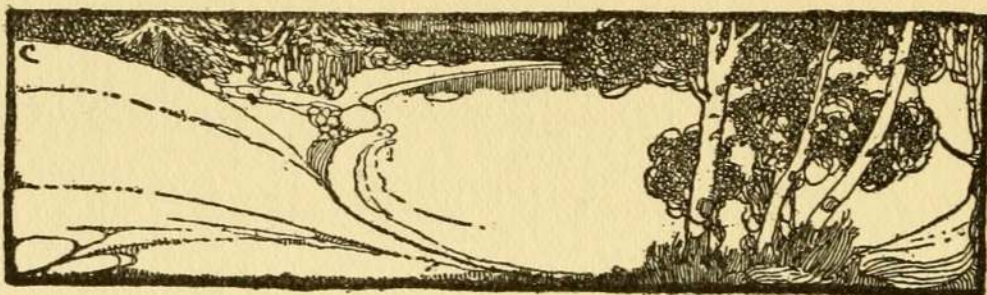
“Teach us to hear Thee whenever Thou callest, and to see Thee when Thou visitest us, and let the blessed Mary and all the saints speak often

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to Thee for us. O Christ, hear us.
Lord have mercy upon us. Christ,
have mercy upon us. Amen.”

Making the sign of the cross, he
lay back, and said: “I’ll go to sleep
now, I guess.”





III

THE man sat for a long time looking at the pale, shining face, at the blue veins showing painfully dark on the temples and forehead, at the firm little white hand, which was as brown as a butternut a few weeks before. The longer he sat, the deeper did his misery sink into his soul. His wife had gone he knew not where, his child was wasting to death, and he had for his sorrows no inner consolation. He had ever had that touch of mystical imagination inseparable from the

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far north, yet he had none of that religious belief which swallowed up natural awe and turned it to the refining of life, and to the advantage of a man's soul. Now it was forced in upon him that his child was wiser than himself; wiser and safer. His life had been spent in the wastes, with rough deeds and rugged habits, and a youth of hardship, danger, and almost savage endurance had given him a half-barbarian temperament, which could strike an angry blow at one moment and fondle to death at the next.

When he married sweet Lucette Barbond his religion reached little farther than a belief in the Scarlet Hunter of the Kimash Hills and

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those voices that could be heard calling in the night, till their time of sleep be past and they should rise and reconquer the north.

Not even Father Corraine, whose ways were like those of his Master, could ever bring him to a more definite faith. His wife had at first striven with him, mourning yet loving. Sometimes the savage in him had broken out over the little creature, merely because barbaric tyranny was in him—torture followed by the passionate kiss. But how was she philosopher enough to understand the cause!

When she fled from their hut one bitter day, as he roared some wild words at her, it was because her

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nerves had all been shaken from threatened death by wild beasts, (of this he did not know) and his violence drove her mad. She had run out of the house, and on, and on, and on—and she had never come back. That was weeks ago, and there had been no word nor sign of her since. The man was now busy with it all, in a slow, cumbrous way. A nature more to be touched by things seen than by things told, his mind was being awakened in a massive kind of fashion. He was viewing this crisis of his life as one sees a human face in the wide searching light of a great fire. He was restless, but he held himself still by a strong effort, not wishing to disturb

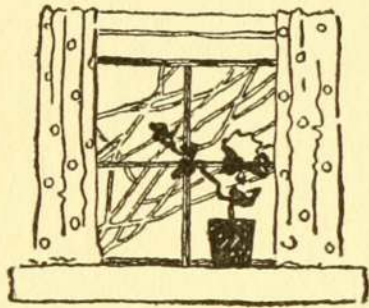
THE GOING OF

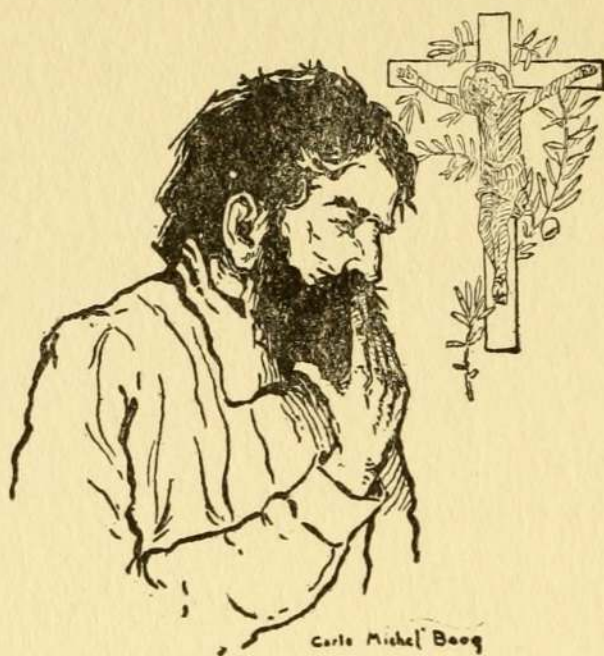
the little sleeper. His eyes seemed to retreat farther and farther back under his shaggy brows.

The great logs in the chimney burned brilliantly, and a brass crucifix over the child's head now and again reflected soft little flashes of light. This caught the hunter's eye. Presently there grew up in him a vague kind of hope that, somehow, this symbol would bring him luck—that was the way he put it to himself. He had felt this—and something more—when Dominique prayed. Somehow, Dominique's prayer was the only one he had ever heard that had gone home to him, had opened up the big sluices of his nature, and let the light of God flood

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in. No, there was another: the one Lucette made on the day that they were married, when a wonderful timid reverence played through his hungry love for her.





IV

HOURS passed. All at once, without any other motion or gesture, the boy's eyes opened wide with a strange, intense look.

"Father," he said slowly, and in a kind of dream, "when you hear a sweet horn blow at night, is it the Scarlet Hunter calling?"

"P'r'aps. Why, Dominique?"

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He made up his mind to humor the boy, though it gave him strange aching forebodings. He had seen grown men and women with these fancies—and they had died.

“I heard one blowing just now, and the sounds seemed to wave over my head. P'r'aps he's calling some one that's lost.”

“Mebbe.”

“And I heard a voice singing—it wasn't a bird to-night.”

“There was no voice, Dominique.”

“Yes, yes.” There was something fine in the grave, courteous certainty of the lad. “I waked, and you were sitting there thinking, and I shut my eyes again, and I heard

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the voice. I remember the tune and the words.”

“What were the words?” In spite of himself the hunter felt awed.

“I’ve heard mother sing them, or something most like them:

“‘Why does the fire no longer burn?

(I am so lonely.)

Why does the tent-door swing outward?

(I have no home.)

Oh, let me breathe hard in your face!

(I am so lonely.)

Oh, why do you shut your eyes to me?

(I have no home.)’”

The boy paused.

“Was that all, Dominique?”

“No, not all.”

“‘Let us make friends with the stars;

(I am so lonely.)

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Give me your hand, I will hold it.

(I have no home.)

Let us go hunting together.

(I am so lonely.)

We will sleep at God's camp to-night.

(I have no home.)' "

Dominique did not sing, but recited the words with a sort of chanting inflection.

"What does it mean when you hear a voice like that, father?"

"I don't know. Who told—your mother—the song?"

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose she just made them up—she and God. . . . There! There it is again? Don't you hear it—don't you hear it, daddy?"

"No, Dominique, it's only the kettle singing."

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“A kettle isn’t a voice. Daddy—”
He paused a little, then went on, hesitatingly: “I saw a white swan fly through the door over your shoulder when you came in to-night.”

“No, no, Dominique, it was a flurry of snow blowing over my shoulder.”

“But it looked at me with two shining eyes.”

“That was two stars shining through the door, my son.”

“How could there be snow flying and stars shining, too, father?”

“It was just drift-snow on a light wind, but the stars were shining above, Dominique.”

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The man's voice was anxious and unconvincing, his eyes had a hungry, haunted look. The legend of the White Swan had to do with the passing of a human soul. The Swan had come in—would it go out alone? He touched the boy's hand—it was hot with fever; he felt the pulse—it ran high; he watched the face—it had a glowing light. Something stirred within him, and passed like a wave to the farthest course of his being. Through his misery he had touched the garment of the Master of Souls. As though a voice said to him there, "*Some one hath touched me,*" he got to his feet, and, with a sudden blind humility, lit two

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candles, and placed them on a shelf in a corner before a porcelain figure of the Virgin, as he had seen his wife do. Then he picked a small handful of fresh spruce twigs from a branch over the chimney, and laid them beside the candles. After a short pause he came slowly to the head of the boy's bed. Very solemnly he touched the foot of the Christ on the cross with the tips of his fingers, and brought them to his lips with an indescribable reverence. After a moment, standing with eyes fixed on the face of the crucified figure, he said, in a shaking voice:

“Pardon, bon Jésus! Sauves mon enfant! Ne me laissez pas seul!”

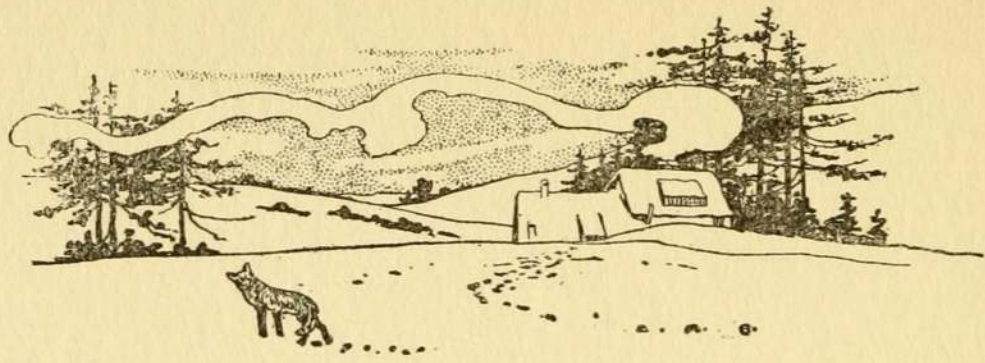
The boy looked up with eyes

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again grown unnaturally heavy, and
said:

“Amen! . . . *Bon Jésus!* . . . *En-
core! Encore, mon père!*”





V

THE boy slept. The father stood still by the bed for a time, but at last slowly turned and went toward the fire.

Outside, two figures were approaching the hut—a man and a woman; yet at first glance the man might easily have been taken for a woman, because of his clean-shaven face, of the long black robe which he wore, and because his hair fell loose on his shoulders.

“Have patience, my daughter,”

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said the man. "Do not enter till I call you. But stand close to the door, if you will, and hear all."

So saying he raised his hand as in a kind of benediction, passed to the door, and, after tapping very softly, opened it, entered, and closed it behind him—not so quickly, however, but that the woman caught a glimpse of the father and the boy. In her eyes there was the divine look of motherhood.

"Peace be to this house!" said the man gently, as he stepped forward from the door.

The father, startled, turned shrinkingly on him, as though he had seen a spirit.

"*M'sieu' le curé!*" he said in

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French, with an accent much poorer than that of the priest, or even of his own son. He had learned French from his wife; he himself was English.

The priest's quick eye had taken in the lighted candles at the little shrine, even as he saw the painfully changed aspect of the man.

"The wife and child, Bagot?" he asked, looking round. "Ah, the boy!" he added, and going toward the bed, continued, presently, in a low voice: "Dominique is ill?"

Bagot nodded, and then answered: "A wildcat and then fever, Father Corraine."

The priest felt the boy's pulse softly, then with a close personal

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look he spoke hardly above his breath, yet distinctly, too:

“Your wife, Bagot?”

“She is not here, m’sieu’.” The voice was low and gloomy.

“Where is she, Bagot?”

“I do not know, m’sieu’.”

“When did you see her last?”

“Four weeks ago, m’sieu’.”

“That was September, this is October—winter. On the ranches they let their cattle loose upon the plains in winter, knowing not where they go, yet looking for them to return in the spring. But a woman—a woman and a wife—is different. . . . Bagot, you have been a rough, hard man, and you have been a stranger to your God, but I thought

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you loved your wife and child!"

The hunter's hands clenched, and a wicked light flashed up into his eyes; but the calm, benignant gaze of the other cooled the tempest in his veins. The priest sat down on the couch where the child lay, and took the fevered hand in his own.

"Stay where you are, Bagot, just there where you are, and tell me what your trouble is, and why your wife is not here. . . . Say all honestly—by the name of the Christ!" he added, lifting up an iron crucifix that hung on his breast.

Bagot sat down on a bench near the fireplace, the light playing on his bronzed, powerful face, his eyes shining beneath his heavy brows like

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two coals. After a moment he began:

“I don’t know how it started. I’d lost a lot of pelts—stolen they were, down on the Child o’ Sin River. Well, she was hasty and nervous, like as not—she always was brisker and more sudden than I am. I—I laid my powder-horn and whiskey-flash—up there!”

He pointed to the little shrine of the Virgin, where now his candles were burning. The priest’s grave eyes did not change expression at all, but looked out wisely, as though he understood everything before it was told.

Bagot continued: “I didn’t notice it, but she had put some flowers

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there. She said something with an edge, her face all snapping angry, threw the things down, and called me a heathen and a wicked heretic—and I don't say now but she'd a right to do it. But I let out then, for them stolen pelts was rasping me on the raw. I said something pretty rough, and made as if I was goin' to break her in two—just fetched up my hands, and went like this!—”

With a singular simplicity he made a wild gesture with his hands, and an animal-like snarl came from his throat. Then he looked at the priest with the honest intensity of a boy.

“Yes, that was what you *did*—

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what was it you *said* which was 'pretty rough'?"

There was a slight hesitation, then came the reply:

"I said there was enough powder spilt on the floor to kill all the priests in heaven."

A fire suddenly shot up into Father Corraine's face, and his lips tightened for an instant, but presently he was as before, and he said:

"How that will face you one day, Bagot! Go on. What else?"

Sweat began to break out on Bagot's face, and he spoke as though he were carrying a heavy weight on his shoulders, low and brokenly.

"Then I said, 'And if virgins has

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it so fine, why didn't you stay one?' ”

“Blasphemer!” said the priest in a stern, reproachful voice, his face turning a little pale, and he brought the crucifix to his lips. “To the mother of your child—shame! What more?”

“She threw up her hands to her ears with a wild cry, ran out of the house, down the hills, and away. I went to the door and watched her as long as I could see her, and waited for her to come back—but she never did. I've hunted and hunted, but I can't find her.” Then, with a sudden thought, “Do you know anything of her, m'sieu'?”

The priest appeared not to hear

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the question. Turning for a moment toward the boy, who now was in a deep sleep, he looked at him intently. Presently he spoke.

“Ever since I married you and Lucette Barbond you have stood in the way of her duty, Bagot. How well I remember that first day when you knelt before me! Was ever so sweet and good a girl—with her golden eyes and the look of summer in her face, and her heart all pure! Nothing had spoiled her—you cannot spoil such women—God is in their hearts. But you, what have you cared? One day you would fondle her, and the next you were a savage—and she, so gentle, so gentle all the time. Then, for her

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religion and the faith of her child—she has fought for it, prayed for it, suffered for it. You thought you had no need of religion, for you had so much happiness, which you did not deserve—that was it. But she—with all a woman suffers, how can she bear life—and man—without God? No, it is not possible. And you thought you and your few superstitions were enough for her.—Ah, poor fool! She should worship you! So selfish, so small, for a man who knows in his heart how great God is. You did not love her.”

“By the Heaven above, yes!” said Bagot, half starting to his feet.

“Ah, ‘by the Heaven above,’ no! nor the child. For true love is un-

THE WHITE SWAN

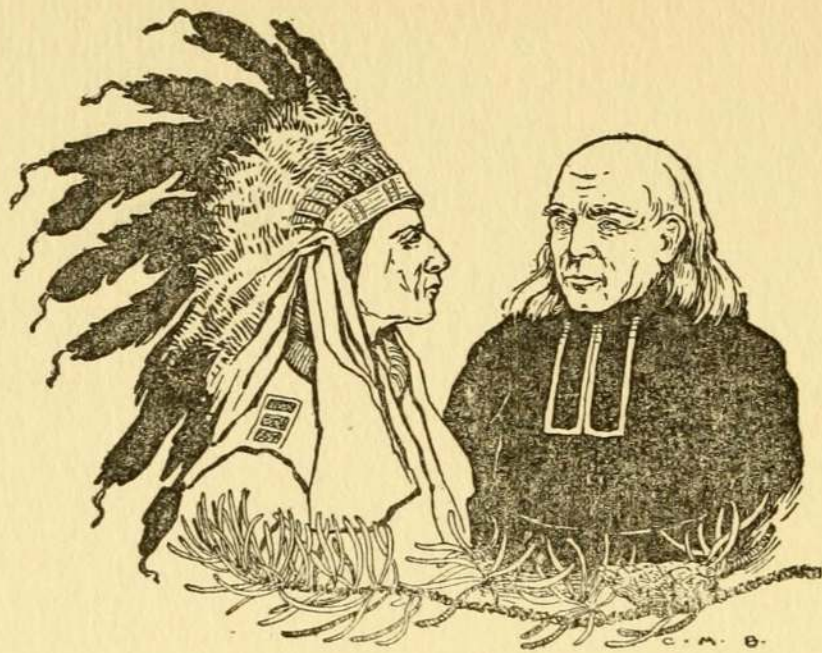
selfish and patient, and where it is the stronger, it cares for the weaker; but it was your wife who was unselfish, patient, and cared for you. Every time she said an *ave* she thought of you, and her every thanks to God had you therein. They know you well in heaven, Bagot—through your wife. Did you ever pray—ever since I married you to her?”

“Yes.”

“When?”

“An hour or so ago.”

Once again the priest's eyes glanced towards the lighted candles.



VI

PRESENTLY he said: "You asked me if I had heard anything of your wife. Listen, and be patient while you listen. . . . Three weeks ago I was camping on the Sundust Plains, over against the Young Sky River. In the morning, as I was lighting a fire outside my tent, my young Cree Indian with me, I saw coming over the crest of

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a landwave, from the very lips of the sunrise, as it were, a band of Indians. I could not quite make them out. I hoisted my little flag on the tent, and they hurried on to me. I did not know the tribe—they had come from near Hudson's Bay. They spoke Chinook, and I could understand them. Well, as they came near, I saw that they had a woman with them."

Bagot leaned forward, his body strained, every muscle tense. "A woman!" he said, as if breathing gave him sorrow—"my wife?"

"Your wife."

"Quick! Quick! Go on—oh, go on, m'sieu'—good father."

"She fell at my feet, begging

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me to save her. . . . I waved her off."

The sweat dropped from Bagot's forehead, a low growl broke from him, and he made such a motion as a lion might make at its prey.

"You wouldn't—wouldn't save her—you coward!" He ground the words out.

The priest raised his palm against the other's violence. "Hush! . . . She drew away, saying that God and man had deserted her. . . . We had breakfast, the chief and I. Afterwards, when the chief had eaten much and was in good humor, I asked him where he had got the woman. He said that he had found her on the plains—she had lost

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her way. I told him then that I wanted to buy her. He said to me. 'What does a priest want of a woman?' I said that I wished to give her back to her husband. He said that he had found her, and she was his, and that he would marry her when they reached the great camp of the tribe. I was patient. It would not do to make him angry. I wrote down on a piece of bark the things that I would give him for her: an order on the Company at Fort o' Sin for shot, blankets and beads. He said no."

The priest paused. Bagot's face was all swimming with sweat, his body was rigid, but the veins of his neck knotted and twisted.

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“For the love of God go on!” he said hoarsely.

“Yes, for the love of God. I have no money, I am poor, but the Company will always honor my orders, for I pay sometimes by the help of *le bon Jésus*. Well, I added some things to the list: a saddle, a rifle, and some flannel. But no, he would not. Once more I put many things down. It was a big bill—it would keep me poor for five years. To save your wife, John Bagot, you who drove her from your door, blaspheming and railing at such as I. . . . I offered the things, and told him that was all I could give. After a little he shook his head, and said that he must have the

THE WHITE SWAN

woman for his wife. I did not know what to add. I said, 'She is white, and the white people will never rest till they have killed you all, if you do this thing. The Company will track you down.' Then he said, 'The whites must catch me and fight me before they kill me.' . . . What was there to do?"

Bagot came near to the priest, bending over him savagely:

"You let her stay with them—you, with hands like a man!"

"Hush," was the calm, reproving answer. "I was one man, they were twenty."

"Where was your God to help you, then?"

THE GOING OF

“Her God and mine was with me.”

Bagot's eyes blazed. “Why didn't you offer rum—rum? They'd have done it for that—one—five—ten kegs of rum!”

He swayed to and fro in his excitement, yet their voices hardly rose above a hoarse whisper all the time.

“You forget,” answered the priest, “that it is against the law, and that as a priest of my order I am vowed to give no rum to an Indian.”

“A vow! A vow! Son of God! what is a vow beside a woman—my wife?”

His misery and his rage were pitiful to see.

THE WHITE SWAN

“Perjure my soul! Offer rum! Break my vow in the face of the enemies of God’s Church! What have you done for me that I should do this for you, John Bagot?”

“Coward!” was the man’s despairing cry, with a sudden threatening movement. “Christ himself would have broke a vow to save her.”

The grave, kind eyes of the priest met the other’s fierce gaze, and quieted the wild storm that was about to break.

“Who am I that I should teach my Master?” he said, solemnly. “What would you give Christ, Bagot, if He had saved her to you?”

The man shook with grief, and tears rushed from his eyes, so sud-

THE GOING OF

denly and fully had a new emotion passed through him.

“Give—give!” he cried, “I would give twenty years of my life!”

The figure of the priest stretched up with gentle grandeur. Holding out the iron crucifix, he said: “On your knees and swear it, John Bagot!”

There was something inspiring, commanding, in the voice and manner, and Bagot, with a new hope rushing through his veins, knelt and repeated his words.

The priest turned to the door, and called, “Madame Lucette!”

The boy, hearing, waked, and sat up in bed suddenly.

THE WHITE SWAN

“Mother! mother!” he cried, as the door flew open.

The mother came to her husband's arms, laughing and weeping, and an instant afterwards was pouring out her love and anxiety over her child.

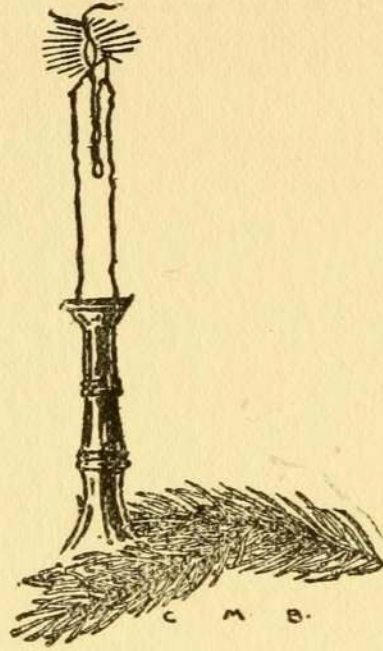
Father Corraine now faced the man, and with a soft exaltation of voice and manner said:

“John Bagot, in the name of Christ, I demand twenty years of your life—of love and obedience of God. I broke my vow; I perjured my soul; I bought your wife with ten kegs of rum.”

The tall hunter dropped again to his knees, and caught the priest's hand to kiss it.

THE WHITE SWAN

“No, no—this!” the priest said,
and laid his iron crucifix against the
other’s lips.





VII

DOMINIQUE'S voice came clearly through the room:

“Mother, I saw the white swan fly away through the door when you came in.”

“My dear, my dear,” she said, “there was no white swan.” But she clasped the boy to her breast protectingly, and whispered an *ave*.

THE WHITE SWAN

“Peace be to this house,” said the voice of the priest.

And there was peace—for the child lived, and the man has loved, and has kept his vow, even unto this day.

For the visions of the boy, who can know the divers ways in which God speaks to the children of men!

(1)

THE END



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