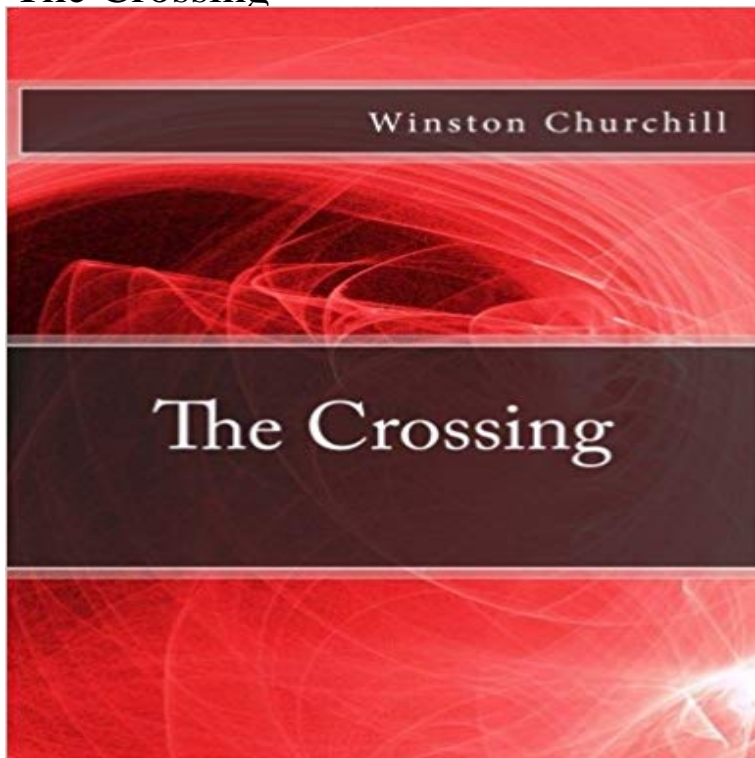


The Crossing



The Crossing By Winston Churchill 1904 American Bestseller. I was born under the Blue Ridge, and under that side which is blue in the evening light, in a wild land of game and forest and rushing waters. There, on the borders of a creek that runs into the Yadkin River, in a cabin that was chinked with red mud, I came into the world a subject of King George the Third, in that part of his realm known as the province of North Carolina. The cabin reeked of corn-pone and bacon, and the odor of pelts. It had two shakedown, on one of which I slept under a bearskin. A rough stone chimney was reared outside, and the fireplace was as long as my father was tall. There was a crane in it, and a bake kettle; and over it great buckhorns held my fathers rifle when it was not in use. On other horns hung jerked bears meat and venison hams, and gourds for drinking cups, and bags of seed, and my fathers best hunting shirt; also, in a neglected corner, several articles of womans attire from pegs. These once belonged to my mother. Among them was a gown of silk, of a fine, faded pattern, over which I was wont to speculate. The women at the Cross-Roads, twelve miles away, were dressed in coarse butternut wool and huge sunbonnets. But when I questioned my father on these matters he would give me no answers. My father washow shall I say what he was? To this day I can only surmise many things of him. He was a Scotchman born, and I know now that he had a slight Scotch accent. At the time of which I write, my early childhood, he was a frontiersman and hunter. I can see him now, with his hunting shirt and leggings and moccasins; his powder horn, engraved with wondrous scenes; his bullet pouch and tomahawk and hunting knife. He was a tall, lean man with a strange, sad face. And he talked little save when he drank too many horns, as they were called in that country. These lapses of my fathers were a perpetual source of wonder to

me, and, I must say, of delight. They occurred only when a passing traveler who hit his fancy chanced that way, or, what was almost as rare, a neighbor. Many a winter night I have lain awake under the skins, listening to a flow of language that held me spellbound, though I understood scarce a word of it. Virtuous and vicious every man must be, Few in the extreme, but all in a degree. The chance neighbor or traveller was no less struck with wonder. And many the time have I heard the query, at the Cross-Roads and elsewhere, Whar Alec Trimble got his larnin? The truth is, my father was an object of suspicion to the frontiersmen. Even as a child I knew this, and resented it. He had brought me up in solitude, and I was old for my age, learned in some things far beyond my years, and ignorant of others I should have known. I loved the man passionately. In the long winter evenings, when the howl of wolves and painters rose as the wind lulled, he taught me to read from the Bible and the Pilgrims Progress. I can see his long, slim fingers on the page. They seemed but ill fitted for the life he led.

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