

T H E W I L D O L I V E

their charm, it was only as a man learns to love an alien mistress, whose alternating moods of savagery and softness hold him with a spell of which he is half afraid. More than any one suspected or he could have explained, his reckless life had been the rebellion of his man-trained, urban instinct against the domination of this supreme earth-force, to which he was of no more value than a falling leaf or a dissolving cloud. Even now, as he flung himself on the forest's protection, it was not with the solace of the son returning to the mother; it was rather as a man might take refuge from a lion in a mammoth cavern, where the darkness only conceals dangers.

After the struggle with crude nature the smooth, grass-carpeted wagon-track brought him more than a physical sense of comfort. It not only made his flight swift and easy, but it had been marked out by man, for man's purposes and to meet man's need. It was the result of a human intelligence; it led to a human goal. It was possible that it might lead even him into touch with human sympathies. With the thought, he became conscious all at once that he was famished and fatigued. Up to the present he had been as little aware of a body as a spirit on its way between two worlds. It had ached and sweated and bled; but he had not noticed it. The electric fluid could not have seemed more tireless or iron more insensate. But now, when the hardship was somewhat relaxed, he was forced back on the perception that he was faint and hungry. His speed slackened; his shoulders sagged; the long second wind, which had lasted so well, began to shorten. For the first time it occurred to him to wonder how long his strength would hold out.

It was then that he noticed a deflection of the wood-road