

## AND THE WILD WOMAN

### II

ONE day he resolved to set forth on a visit to the Saint of the Rock, who lived on the other side of the mountains. Travellers had brooght the Hermit report of this solitary, how he lived in holiness and austerity in a desert place among the hills, where snow lay all winter, and in summer the sun beat down cruelly. The Saint, it appeared, had vowed that he would withdraw from the world to a spot where there was neither shade nor water, lest he should be tempted to take his ease and think less continually upon his Maker: but wherever he went he found a spreading tree or a gushing fountain, till at last he climbed to the bare heights where nothing grows, and where the only water comes from the melting of the snow in spring. Here he found a tall rock rising from the ground, and in it he scooped a hollow with his own hands, labouring for five years and wearing his fingers to the bone. Then he seated himself in the hollow, which faced the west, so that in winter he should have small warmth of the sun and in summer be consumed by it; and there he had sat without moving for years beyond number.

The Hermit was greatly drawn by the tale of such austerities, which in his humility he did not dream of emulating, but desired, for his soul's good, to contemplate and praise; so one day he bound sandals to his feet, cut an alder staff from the stream, and set out to visit the Saint of the Rock.