

## T H E   W I L D   O L I V E

choice between two courses, neither of them fertile in promises of success. The one was long and tedious, with a possibility of ultimate justification; the other short and speedy, with the accepted imputation of guilt. He had chosen the latter—instinctively and on the spur of the moment; and while he might have repeated at leisure the decision he had made in haste, he knew even now that he was leaving the ways and means of proving his innocence behind him. The perception came, not as the result of a process of thought, but as a regretful, scarcely detected sensation.

He had dashed at first into the broken country, hilly rather than mountainous, which from the shores of Lake Champlain gradually gathers strength, as it rolls inland, to toss up the crests of the Adirondacks. Here, burying himself in the woods, he skirted the unkempt farms, whose cottage lights, just beginning to burn, served him as signals to keep farther off. When forced to cross one of the sterile fields, he crawled low, blotting himself out among the boulders. At times a patch of tall, tasselled Indian corn, interlaced with wandering pumpkin vines, gave him cover, till he regained the shelter of the vast Appalachian mother-forest, which, after climbing Cumberlands, Alleghanies, Catskills, and Adirondacks, here clambers down, in long reaches of ash and maple, juniper and pine, toward the lowlands of the north.

As far as he had yet been able to formulate a plan of flight, it was to seek his safety among the hills. The necessity of the instant was driving him toward the open country and the lake, but he hoped to double soon upon his tracks, finding his way back to the lumher camps, whose friendly spiriting from bunk-house to bunk-house would