

## T H E   W I L D   O L I V E

She resolved on a bold step—the audacity of that perfect candor she had always taken as a guide.

“I don’t know that one could call it that,” she said, quietly.

He drew a quick inward breath, clenching his teeth, but keeping his fixed smile.

“But you don’t know that one couldn’t.”

“I can’t define what I felt at all.”

“It was just enough,” he pursued, in his bantering tone, “to keep you—looking for him back—as you told me—that day.”

She lifted her eyes in a swift glance of reproach.

“It was that—then.”

“But it’s more—now. Isn’t it?”

She met him squarely.

“I don’t think you’ve any right to ask.”

He laughed aloud, somewhat shrilly.

“That’s good!—considering we’re to be man and wife.”

“We’re to be man and wife on a very distinct understanding, to which I’m perfectly loyal. I mean to be loyal to it always—and to you. I shall give you everything you ever asked for. If there are some things—one thing in particular—out of my power to give you, I’ve said so from the first, and you’ve told me you could do without them. If what I can’t give you I’ve given to some one else—because—because—I couldn’t help it—that’s my secret, and I claim the right to guard it.”

They faced one another across the table piled with ornate silver. He had not lost his smile.

“You’ve the merit of being clear,” was his only comment.

“You force me to be clear,” she declared, with heightened color, “and a little angry. When you asked me to be your