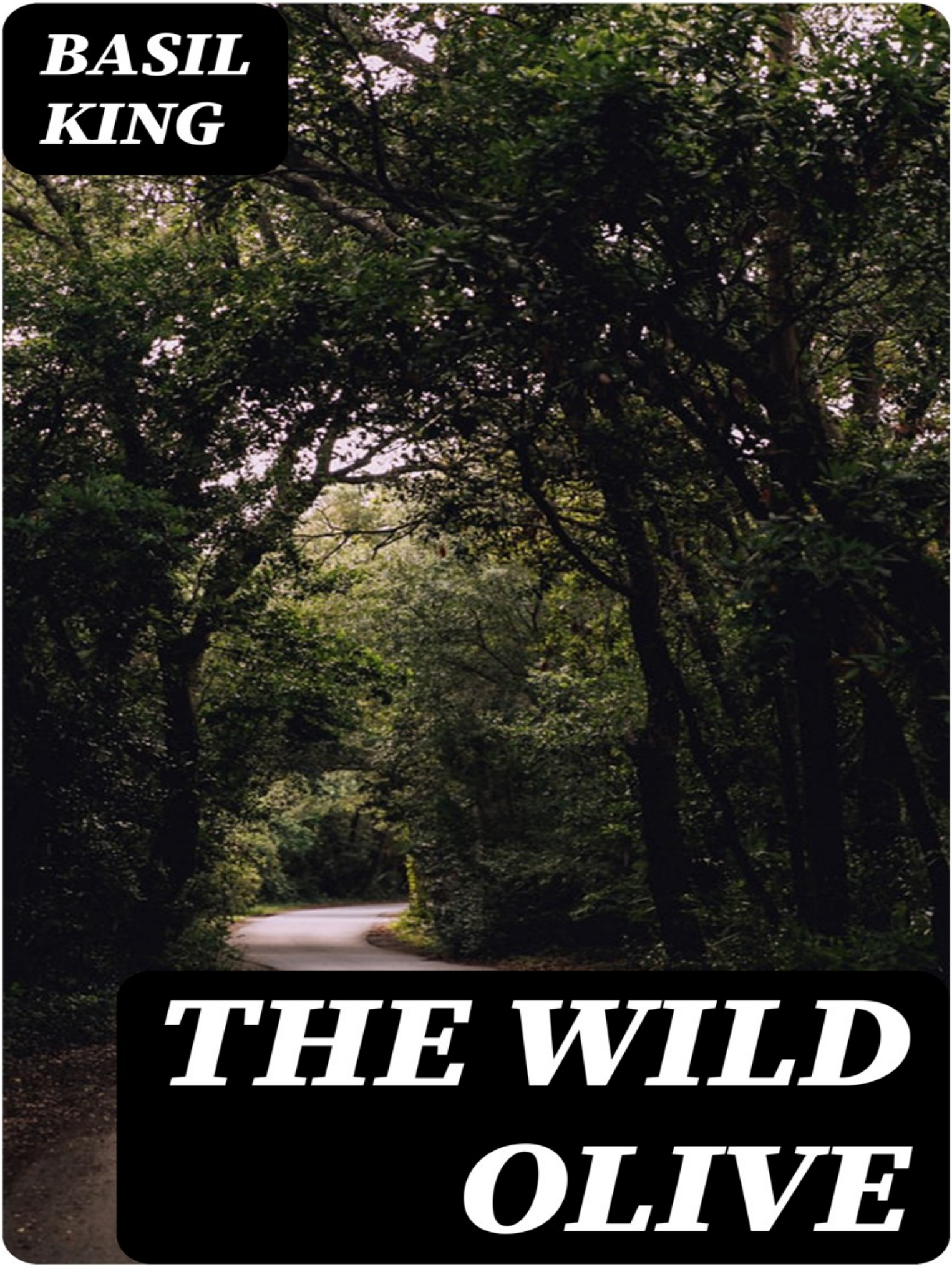
BASIL KING



THE WILD OLIVE

Basil King

The Wild Olive

A Novel

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Finding himself in the level wood-road, whose open aisle drew a long, straight streak across the sky, still luminous with the late-lingering Adirondack twilight, the tall young fugitive, hatless, coatless, and barefooted, paused a minute for reflection. As he paused, he listened; but all distinctiveness of sound was lost in the play of the wind, up hill and down dale, through chasm and over crag, in those uncounted leagues of forest. It was only a summer wind, soft and from the south; but its murmur had the sweep of the eternal breath, while, when it waxed in power, it rose like the swell of some great cosmic organ. Through the pines and in the underbrush it whispered and crackled and crashed, with a variety of effect strangely bewildering to the young man's city-nurtured senses. There were minutes when he felt that not only the four country constables whom he had escaped were about to burst upon him, but that weird armies of gnomes were ready to trample him down.

Out of the confusion of wood-noises, in which his unpractised ear could distinguish nothing, he waited for a repetition of the shots which a few hours ago had been the protest of his guards; but, none coming, he sped on again. He weighed the danger of running in the open against the opportunities for

speed, and decided in favor of the latter. Hitherto, in accordance with a woodcraft invented to meet the emergency, and entirely his own, he had avoided anything in the nature of a road or a pathway, in order to take advantage of the tracklessness which formed his obvious protection; but now he judged the moment come for putting actual space between his pursuers and himself. How near, or how far behind him, they might be he could not guess. If he had covered ground, they would have covered it too, since they were men born to the mountains, while he had been bred in towns. His hope lay in the possibility that in this wilderness he might be lost to their ken, as a mote is lost in the air—though he built something on the chance that, in sympathy with the feeling in his favor pervading the simpler population of the region, they had given negative connivance to his escape. These thoughts, far from stimulating a false confidence, urged him to greater speed.

And yet, even as he fled, he had a consciousness of abandoning something—perhaps of deserting something—which brought a strain of regret into this minute of desperate excitement. Without having had time to count the cost or reckon the result, he felt he was giving up the fight. He, or his counsel for him, had contested the ground with all the resourceful ingenuity known to the American legal practitioner. He was told that, in spite of the seeming finality of what had happened that morning, there were still loopholes through which the defence might be

carried on. In the space of a few hours Fate had offered him the 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 bowlders. 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 lumber camps, whose friendly spiriting from bunk-house to bunk-house would baffle pursuit. Once he had gained even a few hours' security, he would be able to some extent to pick and choose his way.

He steered himself by the peak of Graytop, black against the last coral-tinted glow of the sunset, as a sailor steers by a star. There was further assurance that he was not losing himself or wandering in a circle, when from some chance outlook he ventured to glance backward and saw the pinnacle of Windy Mountain or the dome of the Pilot straight behind him. There lay the natural retreats of the lynx, the bear, and the outlaw like himself; and, as he fled farther from them, it was with the same frenzied instinct to return that the driven stag must feel toward the bed of fern from which he has been roused. But, for the minute, there was one imperative necessity—to go on—to go on anywhere, anyhow, so long as it took him far enough from the spot where masked men had loosed the handcuffs from his wrists and stray shots had come ringing after him. In his path there were lakelets, which he swam, and streams, which he forded. Over the low hills he scrambled through an undergrowth so dense that even the snake or the squirrel might have

avoided it, to find some easier way. Now and then, as he dragged himself up the more barren ascents, the loose soil gave way beneath his steps in miniature avalanches of stone and sand, over which he crept, clinging to tufts of grass or lightly rooted saplings, to rise at last with hands scratched and feet bleeding. Then, on again!--frantically, as the hare runs and as the crow flies, without swerving—on, with the sole aim of gaining time and covering distance!

He was not a native of the mountains. Though in the two years spent among them he had come to acknowledge 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 toward the north, and down over the brow of the plateau on which for a mile or two its evenness had been sustained. It was a new sign that it was tending toward some habitation. Half an hour ago he would have taken this to mean that he must dash into the forest again; but half an hour ago he had not been hungry. He did not say to himself that he would venture to any man's door and ask for bread. So far as he knew, he would never venture to any man's door again; nevertheless, he kept on, down-hill, and down-hill nearer and nearer the lake, and farther and farther from the mountain and the lairs of safety.

Suddenly, at a turning, when he was not expecting it, the wood-road emerged into a rough clearing.

Once more he stopped to reflect and take his bearings. It had grown so dark that there was little danger in doing so; though, as he peered into the gloom, his nerves were still taut with the expectation of shot or capture from behind. Straining his eyes, he made out a few acres that had been cleared for their timber, after which Nature had been allowed to take her own way again, in unruly growths of saplings, tangles of wild vines, and clumps of magenta fireweed.

Without quite knowing why he did so, he crept down the slope, feeling his way among the stumps, and stooping low, lest his white shirt, wet and clinging limply to his body, might betray him to some keen-eyed marksman. Presently one of the old root-hedges, common to the countryside, barred his path —a queer, twisted line of long, gray tentacles that had once sucked sustenance from the soil, but now reached up idly into a barren element, where the wild grape was covering their grotesque nakedness with masses of kindly beauty. Below him he saw lights shining clearly like the planets, or faintly like the mere star-dust of the sky, while between the two degrees of brightness he knew there must lie the bosom of the lake. He had come to the little fringe of towns that clings to the borders of Champlain, here with the Adirondacks behind him, and there with the mountains of Vermont, but keeping close to the great, safe waterway, as though distrusting the ruggedness of both.

It was a moment at which to renew his alarm in this proximity to human dwellings. Like the tiger that has ventured beyond the edge of the jungle, he must slink back at the sight of fire. He turned himself slowly, looking up the heights from which he had come down, as they rolled behind him, mysterious and hostile, in the growing darkness. Even the sky, from which it seemed impossible for the daylight ever to depart, now had an angry red glare in it.

He took a step or two toward the forest, and paused again, still staring upward. Where was he going? Where *could* he go? The question presented itself with an odd pertinence that drew his set, beardless lips into a kind of smile. When he had first made his rush outward the one thing that seemed to him essential was to be free; but now he was forced to ask himself: For what purpose? Of what use was it to be as free as wind if he was to be as homeless? It was not merely that he was homeless for the moment; that was nothing; the overwhelming reflection was that he, Norrie Ford, could never have a home at all—that there was scarcely a spot within the borders of civilized mankind where the law would not hunt him out.

This view of his situation was so apparent and yet so new that it held him stock-still, gazing into space. He was free—but free only to crawl back into the jungle and lie down in it, like a wild beast.

"But I'm not a wild beast," he protested, inwardly. "I'm a man—with human rights. By God, I'll never let

them go!"

He wheeled round again, toward the lower lands and the lake. The lights glowed more brightly as the darkness deepened, each lamp shining from some little nest, where men and women were busied with the small tasks and interests that made life. This was liberty! This was what he had a claim upon! All his instincts were civilized, domestic. He would not go back to the forest, to herd with wild nature, when he had a right to lie down among his kind. He had slept in the open hundreds of times; but it had been from choice. There had been pleasure then, in waking to the smell of balsam and opening his eyes upon the stars. But to do the same thing from compulsion, because men had closed up their ranks and ejected him from their midst, was an outrage he would not accept. In the darkness his head went up, while his eyes burned with a fire more intense than that of any of the mild beacons from the towns below, as he strode back to the old root-hedge and leaped it.

He felt the imprudence, not to say the uselessness, of the movement, as he made it; and yet he kept on, finding himself in a field in which cows and horses were startled from their munching by his footstep. It was another degree nearer to the organized life in which he was entitled to a place. Shielded by a shrubbery of sleeping goldenrod, he stole down the slope, making his way to the lane along which the beasts went out to pasture and came home. Following the trail, he passed a meadow, a

potato-field, and a patch of Indian corn, till the scent of flowers told him he was coming on a garden. A minute later, low, velvety domes of clipped yew rose in the foreground, and he knew himself to be in touch with the civilization that clung, like a hardy vine, to the coves and promontories of the lake, while its tendrils withered as soon as they were flung up toward the mountains. Only a few steps more, and, between the yews, he saw the light streaming from the open doors and windows of a house.

It was such a house as, during the two years he had spent up in the high timber-lands, he had caught sight of only on the rare occasions when he came within the precincts of a town—a house whose outward aspect, even at night, suggested something of taste, means, and social position for its occupants. Slipping nearer still, he saw curtains fluttering in the breeze of the August evening, and Virginia creeper dropping in heavily massed garlands from the roof of a columned veranda. A French window was open to the floor, and within, he could see vaguely, people were seated.

The scene was simple enough, but to the fugitive it had a kind of sacredness. It was like a glimpse into the heaven he has lost caught by a fallen angel. For the moment he forgot his hunger and weakness, in this feast for the heart and eyes. It was with something of the pleasure of recognizing long-absent faces that he traced the line of a sofa against the wall, and stated to himself that there was a row of

prints hanging above it. There had been no such details as these to note in his cell, nor yet in the courtroom which for months had constituted his only change of outlook Insensibly to himself, he crept nearer, drawn by the sheer spell of gazing.

Finding a gate leading into the garden, he opened it softly, leaving it so, in order to secure his retreat. From the shelter of one of the rounded yew-trees he could make his observations more at ease. He perceived now that the house stood on a terrace, and turned the garden front, its more secluded aspect, in his direction. The high hedges, common in these lakeside villages, screened it from the road; while the open French window threw a shaft of brightness down the yew-tree walk, casting the rest of the garden into gloom.

To Norrie Ford, peeping furtively from behind one of the domes of clipped foliage, there was exasperation in the fact that his new position gave him no glimpse of the people in the room. His hunger to see them became for the minute more insistent than that for food. They represented that human society from which he had waked one morning to find himself cut off, as a rock is cut off by seismic convulsion from the mainland of which it has formed a part. It was in a sort of effort to span the gulf separating him from his own past that he peered now into this room, whose inmates were only passing the hours between the evening meal and bedtime. That

people could sit tranquilly reading books or playing games filled him with a kind of wonder.

When he considered it safe he slipped along to what he hoped would prove a better point of view, but, finding it no more advantageous, he darted to still another. The light lured him as it might lure an insect of the night, till presently he stood on the very steps of the terrace. He knew the danger of his situation, but he could not bring himself to turn and steal away till he had fixed the picture of that cheerful interior firmly on his memory. The risk was great, but the glimpse of life was worth it.

With powers of observation quickened by his plight, he noted that the home was just such a one as that from which he had sprung—one where old engravings hung on the walls, while books filled the shelves, and papers and periodicals strewed the tables. The furnishings spoke of comfort and a modest dignity. Obliquely in his line of vision he could see two children, seated at a table and poring over a picture-book The boy, a manly urchin, might have been fourteen, the girl a year or two younger. Her curls fell over the hand and arm supporting her cheek, so that Ford could only guess at the blue eyes concealed behind them. Now and then the boy turned a page before she was ready, whereupon followed pretty cries of protestation. It was perhaps this mimic quarrel that called forth a remark from some one sitting within the shadow.

"Evie dear, it's time to go to bed. Billy, I don't believe they let you stay up as late as this at home."

"Oh yes, they do," came Billy's answer, given with sturdy assurance. "I often stay up till nine."

"Well, it's half past now; so you'd both better come and say good-night."

With one foot resting on the turf and the other raised to the first step of the terrace, as he stood with folded arms, Ford watched the little scene, in which the children closed their book, pushed back their chairs, and crossed the room to say good-night to the two who were seated in the shadow. The boy came first, with hands thrust into his trousers pockets in a kind of grave nonchalance. The little girl fluttered along behind, but broke her journey across the room by stepping into the opening of the long window and looking out into the night. Ford stood breathless and motionless, expecting her to see him and cry out. But she turned away and danced again into the shadow, after which he saw her no more. The silence that fell within the room told him that the elders were left alone.

Stealthily, like a thief, Ford crept up the steps and over the turf of the terrace. The rising of the wind at that minute drowned all sound of his movements, so that he was tempted right on to the veranda, where a coarse matting deadened his tread. He dared not hold himself upright on this dangerous ground, but, crouching low, he was blotted from sight, while he himself could see what passed within. He would only,

he said, look once more into kindly human faces and steal away as he came.

He could perceive now that the lady who had spoken was an invalid reclining in a long chair, lightly covered with a rug. A fragile, dainty little creature, her laces, trinkets, and rings revealed her as one clinging to the elegancies of another phase of life, though Fate had sent her to live, and perhaps to die, here on the edge of the wilderness. He made the same observation with regard to the man who sat with his back to the window. He was in informal evening dress—a circumstance that, in this land of more or less primitive simplicity, spoke of a sense of exile. He was slight and middle-aged, and though his face was hidden, Ford received the impression of having seen him already, but from another point of view. His habit of using a magnifying-glass as, with some difficulty, he read a newspaper in the light of a green-shaded lamp, seemed to Ford especially familiar, though more pressing thoughts kept him from trying to remember where and when he had seen some one do the same thing within the recent past.

As he crouched by the window watching them, it came into his mind that they were just the sort of people of whom he had least need to be afraid. The sordid tragedy up in the mountains had probably interested them little, and in any case they could not as yet have heard of his escape. If he broke in on them and demanded food, they would give it to him

as to some common desperado, and be glad to let him go. If there was any one to inspire terror, it was he, with his height, and youth, and wildness of aspect. He was thinking out the most natural method of playing some small comedy of violence, when suddenly the man threw down the paper with a sigh. On the instant the lady spoke, as though she had been awaiting her cue.

"I don't see why you should feel so about it," she said, making an effort to control a cough. "You must have foreseen something of this sort when you took up the law."

The answer reached Ford's ears only as a murmur, but he guessed its import from the response.

"True," she returned, when he had spoken, "to foresee possibilities is one thing, and to meet them is another; but the anticipation does something to nerve one for the necessity when it comes."

Again there was a murmur in which Ford could distinguish nothing, but again her reply told him what it meant.

"The right and the wrong, as I understand it," she went on, "is something with which you have nothing to do. Your part is to administer the law, not to judge of how it works."

Once more Ford was unable to catch what was said in reply, but once more the lady's speech enlightened him.

"That's the worst of it? Possibly; but it's also the best of it; for since it relieves you of responsibility

it's foolish for you to feel remorse."

What was the motive of these remarks? Ford found himself possessed of a strange curiosity to know. He pressed as closely as he dared to the open door, but for the moment nothing more was said. In the silence that followed he began again to wonder how he could best make his demand for food, when a sound from behind startled him. It was the sound which, among all others, caused him the wildest alarm—that of a human footstep. His next movement came from the same blind impulse that sends a hunted fox to take refuge in a church—eager only for the instant's safety. He had sprung to his feet, cleared the threshold, and leaped into the room, before the reflection came to him that, if he was caught, he must at least be caught game. Wheeling round toward the window-door through which he had entered, he stood defiantly, awaiting his pursuers, and heedless of the astonished eyes fixed upon him. It was not till some seconds had gone by, and he realized that he was not followed, that he glanced about the room. When he did so it was to ignore the woman, in order to concentrate all his gaze on the little, iron-gray man who, still seated, stared at him, with lips parted. In his own turn, Norrie Ford was dumb and wide-eyed in amazement It was a long minute before either spoke.

"You?"

"You?"

The monosyllable came simultaneously from each. The little woman got to her feet in alarm. There was inquiry as well as terror in her face—inquiry to which her husband felt prompted to respond.

"This is the man," he said, in a voice of forced calmness, "whom—whom—we've been talking about."

"Not the man—you—?"

"Yes," he nodded, "the man I—I—sentenced to death—this morning."

II

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"Evie!"

Mrs. Wayne went to the door, but on Ford's assurance that her child had nothing to fear from him, she paused with her hand on the knob to look in curiosity at this wild young man, whose doom lent him a kind of fascination. Again, for a minute, all three were silent in the excess of their surprise. Wayne himself sat rigid, gazing up at the new-comer with strained eyes blurred with partial blindness. Though slightly built and delicate, he was not physically timid; and as the seconds went by he was able to form an idea as to what had happened. He himself, in view of the tumultuous sympathy displayed by hunters and lumber-jacks with the man who passed for their boon companion, had advised Ford's removal from the pretty toy prison of the county-town to the stronger one at Plattsville. It was clear that the prisoner had been helped to escape, either before the change had been effected or while it was taking place. There was nothing surprising in that; the astonishing thing was that the fugitive should have found his way to this house above all others. Mrs. Wayne seemed to think so too, for it was she who spoke first, in a tone which she tried to make peremptory, in spite of its tremor of fear.

"What did you come here for?"

Ford looked at her for the first time—in a blankness not without a dull element of pleasure. It was at least two or three years since he had seen anything so dainty—not, in fact, since his own mother died. At all times his mind worked slowly, so that he found nothing to reply till she repeated her question with a show of increased severity.

"I came here for protection," he said then.

His hesitation and bewildered air imparted assurance to his still astonished hosts.

"Isn't it an odd place in which to look for that?" Wayne asked, in an excitement, he strove to subdue.

The question was the stimulus Ford needed in order to get his wits into play.

"No," he replied, slowly; "I've a right to protection from the man who sentenced me to death for a crime of which he knows me innocent."

Wayne concealed a start by smoothing the newspaper over his crossed knees, but he was unable to keep a shade of thickness out of his voice as he answered:

"You had a fair trial. You were found guilty. You have had the benefit of all the resources allowed by the law. You have no right to say I know you to be innocent."

Wholly spent, Ford dropped into a chair from which one of the children had risen. With his arm hanging limply over the back he sat staring haggardly at the judge, as though finding nothing to say.

"I have a right to read any man's mind," he muttered, after a long pause, "when it's as transparent as yours. No one had any doubt as to your convictions—after your charge."

"That has nothing to do with it. If I charged in your favor, it was because I wanted you to have the benefit of every possible plea. When those pleas were found insufficient by a jury of your peers—"

Ford emitted a sound that might have been a laugh, had there been mirth in it.

"A jury of my peers! A lot of thick-headed country tradesmen, prejudiced against me from the start because I'd sometimes kicked up a row in their town! They weren't my peers any more than they were yours!"

"The law assumes all men to be equal—"

"Just as it assumes all men to be intelligent—only they're not. The law is a very fine theory. The chief thing to be, said against it is that five times out of ten it leaves human nature out of account. I'm condemned to death, not because I killed a man, but because you lawyers won't admit that your theory doesn't work."

He began to speak more easily, with the energy born of his desperate situation and his sense of wrong. He sat up straighter; the air of dejection with which he had sunk to the chair slipped from him; his gray eyes, of the kind called "honest," shot out glances of protest. The elder man found himself once more struggling against the wave of sympathy which

at times in the court-room had been almost too strong for him. He was forced to intrench himself mentally within the system he served before bracing himself to reply.

"I can't keep you from having your opinion—"

"Nor can I save you from having yours. Look at me, judge!" He was bolt upright now, throwing his arms wide with a gesture in which there was more appeal than indignation "Look at me! I'm a strong, healthy-bodied, healthy-minded fellow of twenty-four; but I'm drenched to the skin, I'm half naked, I'm nearly dead with hunger, I'm an outlaw for life—and you're responsible for it all."

It was Wayne's turn for protest, and though he winced, he spoke sharply.

"I had my duty to perform—"

"Good God, man, don't sit there and call that thing your duty! You're something more than a wheel in a machine. You were a human being before you were a judge. With your convictions you should have come down from the bench and washed your hands of the whole affair. The very action would have given me a chance—"

"You mustn't speak like that to my husband," Mrs. Wayne broke in, indignantly, from the doorway. "If you only knew what he has suffered on your account —"

"Is it anything like what I've suffered on his?"

"I dare say it's worse. He has scarcely slept or eaten since he knew he would have to pass that

dreadful sen—"

"Come! come!" Wayne exclaimed, in the impatient tone of a man who puts an end to a useless discussion. "We can't spend time on this subject any longer. I'm not on my defence—"

"You *are* on your defence," Ford declared, instantly. "Even your wife puts you there. We're not in a courtroom as we were this morning. Circumstantial evidence means nothing to us in this isolated house, where you're no longer the judge, as I'm no longer the prisoner. We're just two naked human beings, stripped of everything but their inborn rights—and I claim mine."

"Well—what are they?"

"They're simple enough. I claim the right to have something to eat, and to go my way without being molested—or betrayed. You'll admit I'm not asking much."

"You may have the food," Mrs. Wayne said, in a tone not without compassion. "I'll go and get it."

For a minute or two there was no sound but that of her cough, as she sped down a passage. Before speaking, Wayne passed his hand across his brow as though in an effort to clear his mental vision.

"No; you don't seem to be asking much. But, as a matter of fact, you're demanding my pledge to my country. I undertook to administer its laws—"

Ford sprang up.

"You've done it," he cried, "and I'm the result! You've administered the law right up to its hilt, and

your duty as a judge is performed. Surely you're free now to think of yourself as a man and to treat me as one."

"I might do that, and still think you a man dangerous to leave at large."

"But do you?"

"That's my affair. Whatever your opinion of the courts that have judged your case, I must accept their verdict."

"In your official capacity—yes; but not here, as host to the poor dog who comes under your roof for shelter. My rights are sacred. Even the wild Arab—"

He paused abruptly. Over Wayne's shoulder, through the window still open to the terrace, he saw a figure cross the darkness. Could his pursuers be waiting outside for their chance to spring on him? A perceptible fraction of a second went by before he told himself he must have been mistaken.

"Even the wild Arab would think them so," he concluded, his glance shifting rapidly between the judge and the window open behind him.

"But I'm not a wild Arab," Wayne replied. "My first duty is toward my country and its organized society."

"I don't think so. Your first duty is toward the man you know you've sentenced wrongly. Fate has shown you an unusual mercy in giving you a chance to help him."

"I can be sorry for the sentence and yet feel that I could not have acted otherwise."

"Then what are you going to do now?"

"What would you expect me to do but hand you back to justice?"

"How?"

There was a suggestion of physical disdain in the tone of the laconic question, as well as in the look he fixed on the neat, middle-aged man doing his best to be cool and collected Wayne glanced over his shoulder toward the telephone on the wall. Norrie Ford understood and spoke quickly:

"Yes; you could ring up the police at Greenport, but I could strangle you before you crossed the floor."

"So you could; but would you? If you did, should you be any better off? Should you be as well off as you are now? As it is, there is a possibility of a miscarriage of justice, of which one day you may get the benefit. There would be no such possibility then. You would be tracked down within forty-eight hours."

"Oh, you needn't argue; I've no intention—" Once more he paused. The same shadow had flitted across the dark space outside, this time with a distinct flutter of a white dress. He could only think it was some one getting help together; and while he went on to finish his sentence in words, all his subconscious faculties were at work, seeking an escape from the trap in which he was taken.

"I've no intention of doing violence unless I'm driven to it—"

"But if you are driven to it—?"

"I've a right to defend myself. Organized society, as you call it, has put me where it has no further

claim upon me. I must fight against it single-handed—and I'll do it. I shall spare neither man nor woman—nor *woman*"—he raised his voice so as to be heard outside—"who stands in my way."

He threw back his head and looked defiantly out into the night. As if in response to this challenge a tall, white figure suddenly emerged from the darkness and stood plainly before him.

It was a girl, whose movements were curiously quick and silent, as she beckoned to him, over the head of the judge, who sat with his back toward her.

"Then all the more reason why society should protect itself against you," Wayne began again; but Ford was no longer listening. His attention was wholly fixed on the girl, who continued to beckon noiselessly, fluttering for an instant close to the threshold of the room, then withdrawing suddenly to the very edge of the terrace, waving a white scarf in token that he should follow her. She had repeated her action again and again, beckoning with renewed insistence, before he understood and made up his mind.

"I don't say that I refuse to help you," Wayne was saying. "My sympathy with you is very sincere. If I can get your sentence commuted—In fact, a reprieve is almost certain—"

With a dash as lithe and sudden as that which had brought him in, Ford was out on the terrace, following the white dress and the waving scarf which were already disappearing down the yew-tree walk.