

## THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

Justine did not hear his first words. She was looking up at him, trying to see him with the eyes of the crowd, and wondering what manner of man he would have seemed to her if she had known as little as they did of his inner history.

He held himself straight, the heavy locks thrown back from his forehead, one hand resting on the table beside him, the other grasping a folded blue-print which the architect of the building had just advanced to give him. As he stood there, Justine recalled her first sight of him in the Hope Hospital, five years earlier—was it only five years? They had dealt deep strokes to his face, hollowing the eye-sockets, accentuating the strong modelling of nose and chin, fixing the lines between the brows; but every touch had a meaning—it was not the languid hand of time which had remade his features, but the sharp chisel of thought and action.

She roused herself suddenly to the consciousness of what he was saying.

“For the idea of this building—of a building dedicated to the recreation of Westmore—is not new in my mind; but while it remained there as a mere idea, it had already, without my knowledge, taken definite shape in the thoughts of the owner of Westmore.”

There was a slight drop in his voice as he designated Bessy, and he waited a moment before continuing: “It was not till after the death of my first wife that I learned