

THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

sought her out in New York, that his remaining at Westmore, which had once been contingent on her leaving him, now depended on her willingness to return and take up their former life.

She accepted the last condition as she had accepted the other, pledged to the perpetual expiation of an act for which, in the abstract, she still refused to hold herself to blame. But life is not a matter of abstract principles, but a succession of pitiful compromises with fate, of concessions to old tradition, old beliefs, old charities and frailties. That was what her act had taught her—that was the word of the gods to the mortal who had laid a hand on their bolts. And she had humbled herself to accept the lesson, seeing human relations at last as a tangled and deep-rooted growth, a dark forest through which the idealist cannot cut his straight path without hearing at each stroke the cry of the severed branch: "*Why woundest thou me?*"

The lawns leading up to the house were already sprinkled with holiday-makers, while along the avenue came the rolling of wheels, the throb of motor-ears; and Justine, with Cicely beside her, stood in the wide hall to receive the incoming throng, in which Hanaford society was indiscriminately mingled with the operatives in their Sunday best.

While his wife welcomed the new arrivals, Amherst,