

THE FRUIT OF THE TREE

the gymnasium which Bessy had intended to build at Lynbrook, and which she had been constrained to abandon owing to her husband's increased expenditure at the mills. But how was it possible that Amherst knew nothing of the original purpose of the plans, and by what mocking turn of events had a project devised in deliberate defiance of his wishes, and intended to declare his wife's open contempt for them, been transformed into a Utopian vision for the betterment of the Westmore operatives?

A wave of anger swept over Justine at this last derivative stroke of fate. It was grotesque and pitiable that a man like Amherst should create out of his regrets a being who had never existed, and then ascribe to her feelings and actions of which the real woman had again and again proved herself incapable!

Ah, no, Justine had suffered enough—but to have this imaginary Bessy called from the grave, dressed in a semblance of self-devotion and idealism, to see her petty impulses of vindictiveness disguised as the motions of a lofty spirit—it was as though her small malicious ghost had devised this way of punishing the wife who had taken her place!

Justine had suffered enough—suffered deliberately and unstintingly, paying the full price of her error, not seeking to evade its least consequence. But no sane judgment could ask her to sit quiet under this last hal-