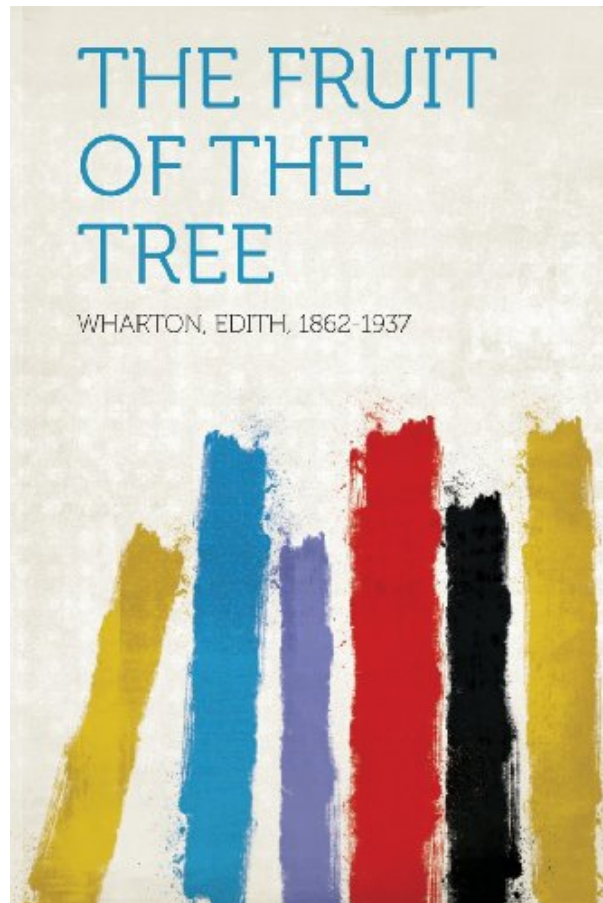


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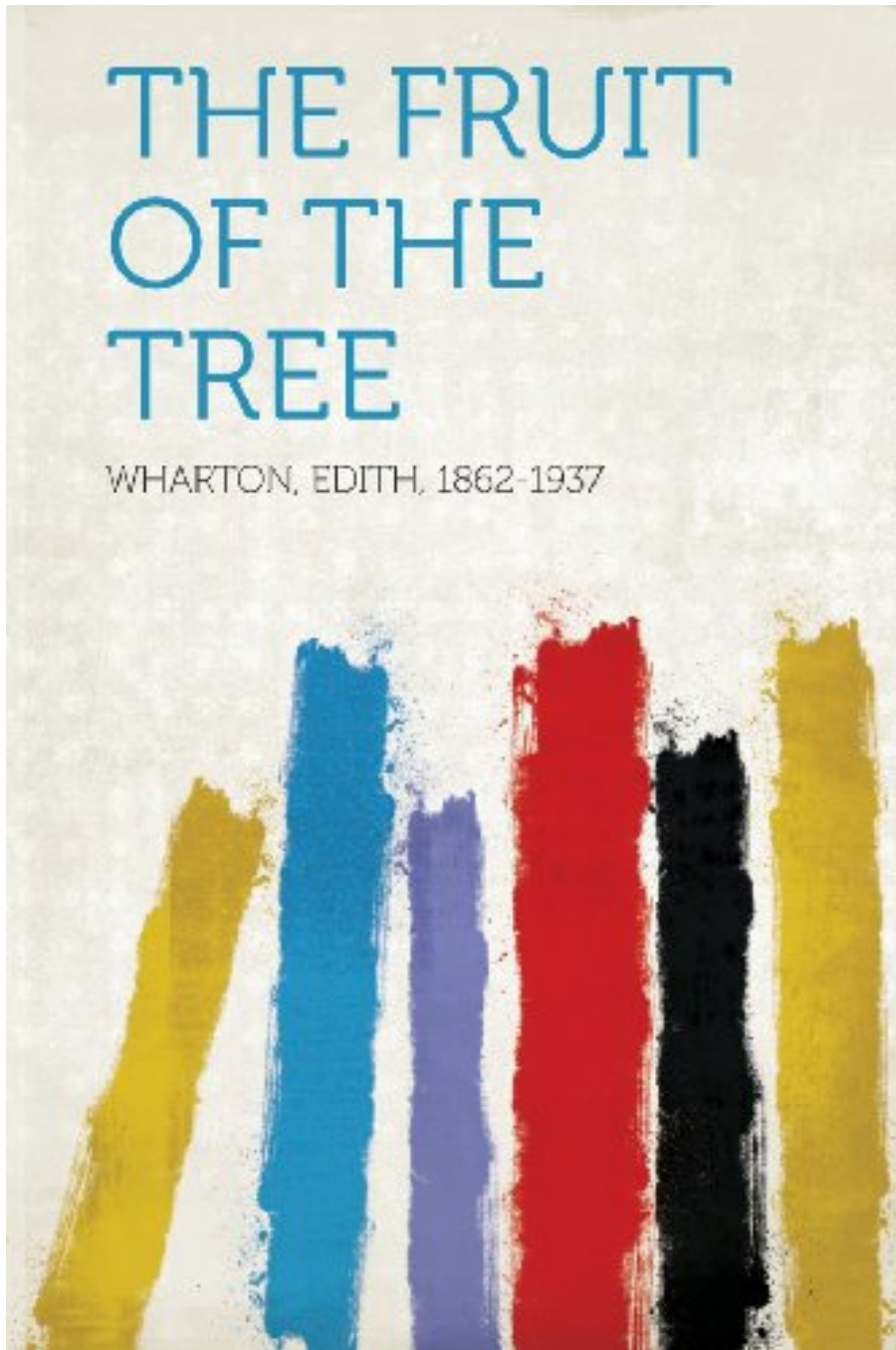


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WHARTON, EDITH, 1862-1937



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## Review

"...a good literary soap opera." -- Library Journal

## About the Author

Edith Wharton (1862-1937), American novelist and short-story writer, was born in New York City. Strongly influenced by Henry James, she is best known for her subtle and superbly crafted studies of the tragedies and ironies in the lives of members of middle-class and aristocratic New York society in the nineteenth century. She was educated in New York and Europe, and married Edward Wharton, a Boston banker, in 1885. When her husband became mentally ill, she cared for him until 1913, when she settled permanently in France and divorced him. Among her best and most characteristic works are *The House of Mirth* (1905) and *The Age of Innocence* (1920), for which she received a Pulitzer prize.

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13 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Not your average Wharton novel, but well worth reading!

By A Customer

I'm not sure why two positive reviews, including one that appears to be a piece of advertising for something called "Republica Publishing," show up with no stars. At any rate, this is one of Wharton's most interesting novels, although it doesn't have the symmetrical structure of *THE HOUSE OF MIRTH* and *THE AGE OF INNOCENCE*. If you're interested in a different work by Edith Wharton, one that involves industrialism, professions for women, euthanasia, divorce, and a host of interesting events, try *THE FRUIT OF THE TREE*.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Justine is a very appealing character

By Joan Sutton

I thoroughly enjoyed this excellent novel. Wharton has created two flawed yet admirable characters - the

young doctor Amherst and the virtuous nurse Justine. It wrung my heart out. But then all Wharton's novels do that to me. She is such an excellent writer that she brings you into her world more effectively than a movie. Her books are all very difficult to lay aside and stay with you long after reading them. I downloaded her complete works onto my Kindle for 99 cents! Never were pennies more effectively spent.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Unsuccessful experiment with a socko last section

By Catholic book friend

I am on a Wharton rampage at the moment, tearing through less-known works that I had never even heard of until recently. As far as I know, this is the only one of her novels that deals head-on with industrial labor-management problems. It concerns a factory in a depressing small town: the oppressive conditions of its workers, the unjust wealth and ease it creates for its owners and their hanger-ons, and what happens when a determined reformer sets out to change the way the factory is run. Wharton portrays these issues through the story of the reformer's troubled relationships with two women, the rich young widow who owns the mills and a nurse, a childhood friend of the widow's who must now earn her way in the world. The nurse is the novel's real protagonist.

Unlike other writers who tackle class conflicts, e.g., Balzac or Eliot, Wharton makes the sketchiest possible effort to depict the workers themselves. She sticks to the milieu she knows, the world of upper-class drawing rooms, although as usual she reveals them to be full of secret social and economic tensions. Unfortunately, Wharton's distance from her chosen subject-matter--we are not even told what the factory and mills produce (some kind of cloth, apparently, as there is talk of carding-machines)--distances the reader from it as well. We learn much more about the thwarted desires of the do-gooder than about the desires of the human beings whom he proposes to help. As a result, both his motives and his plans are rather suspect in a way that I am not sure Wharton intended. The novel itself becomes abstract and dull and the characters don't come to life. I found myself feeling sympathetic toward those who resist the reformer, especially his first wife (the widow), whom he expects to hand him her mills and money to manage, to reduce her lifestyle, to rent out one of her properties, etc.

The marriage fails almost as soon as it begins along with the reformer's plans. Wharton then has to devise a way for the reformer to achieve his goals while also finding him a more suitable helpmeet. Wharton does not like divorce, so the wife must die. This plot requirement leads to the only really interesting part of the book. Previous reviewers have already explained how Wharton pulls the plot off. I will just add that the last part of the book unexpectedly rises nearly to the level of Wharton's great novels as we follow the twists and turns of the heroine's moral life as she slowly, agonizingly comes to terms with the repercussions of a well-intentioned but unlawful act of mercy. But the reformer, now her husband, finally achieves his dreams without having to undergo a comparable moral awakening. The book ends, like so many Wharton novels, on a chilling note of female suffering and injustice. Read it for the last section.

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