

"There was more room in the world, certainly, when Eve had it to herself," said Estelle with a slight smile. "Well, tell me what you are going to do with this tremendous access of fortune that has come to you?"

He regarded her eagerly, fully alive to the opportunity offered by her question, yet a little afraid to grasp it.

He loved Estelle Rodney with the strong, fine passion of a man who, though thirty years of age, had never dissipated his gift of loving in philandering. A cramped and circumscribed youth, closely wedded to poverty of the most grinding kind, because the aspirations of his spirit were far ahead of his circumstances, had kept him austere and pure and singularly unspotted from the world.

He was the son of a small tradesman, and his mother, recognising in him undoubted gifts of a more versatile kind than fall to the lot of most men, had, in the face of much opposition, toiled and denied herself so that he might have the education fitted to his needs. Some years spent at the Polytechnic, where he was now the Art Master, had at least opened the door to the culture necessary for the maturing of his talents.

But what is culture?—rather a thing of the spirit, ingrained in the being, than acquired by meretricious polish. No word in the English language has been more completely wrenched from its true meaning, or is more persistently misunderstood.

Eugene Woods found in Estelle some strength and purpose perhaps lacking in himself. She inspired him to the highest endeavour—made him long to conquer the world for her sake. It was she who had encouraged him to write, some intuition assuring her that, though he was an excellent teacher of drawing, he might become a still more excellent writer of books.