

Now it is of no importance to you what my employment was or how I lost it. Neither are you deeply interested in that sea upon which I spend my days, and which is to bear me away from you to-morrow. You come of inland stock, and the sea-coast of Bohemia, a coast of fairy lights and magic casements, is more in your way. But I know without asking that you will be eager to hear about the falling in love. Indeed this is the point of the story.

The point is that an average young Englishman, as I was then, may quite possibly live and prosper and die, without ever getting to know anything about love at all! I told you this once, and you observed "My God! Impossible." And you added thoughtfully: "The Englishwomen—perhaps it is their fault." Well, it may be their fault, or the fault of their climate, which washes the vitality out of one, or of their religion, which does not encourage emotional adventure to any notable degree. The point is that the average young Englishman is more easily fooled about love than about anything else in the world. He accepts almost any substitute offered to him in an attractive package. I know this because I was an average young Englishman and I was extensively fooled about love. The whole social fabric of English life is engaged in manufacturing spurious counterfeits of the genuine article. And I fell, as we say in