

no right to try to guide me in this matter. You know no more about it than my mother. You've had no experience. You've never let yourself go about a woman in your life. Lord of Heaven, man, you have never begun to know what it means!"

Oh, dear me! Here was a situation as old as the return of the Prodigal or the desertion of the trusting village maiden, or any other cliché in the melodrama of real life. "You are making a fool of yourself," says Mentor. "Ah," shrieks Telemachus, "but you never loved! You don't know what love is."

I looked at him whimsically.

"Don't I?"

My thoughts sped back down the years to a garden in France. Her name was Clothilde. We met in a manner outrageous to Gallic propriety, as I used to climb over the garden wall to the peril of my epidermis. We loved. We were parted by stern parents—not mine—and Clothilde was packed off to the good Sisters who had previously had care of her education. Now she is fat and happy, and the wife of a banker and the mother of children.

But the romance was sad and bad and mad enough while it lasted; and when Clothilde was (figuratively) dragged from my arms I cursed and swore and out-Heroded Herod, played Termagant, and summoned the heavens to fall down and crush me miserable beneath their weight. And then her brother challenged me to fight a duel, whereupon, as the most worshipped of all She's had not received a ha'porth of harm at my hands, I called him a silly ass and threatened to break his head if he interfered any more in my legitimate despair. I smile at it now; but it was real at two-and-twenty—as real, I take it, as Dale's consuming passion for the lady of the circus.

There was also, I remembered, a certain—— But