

"A jolly good joke!" he roared. "A jolly good joke! I knew there must have been some mistake." And so there was, but the poor little devil had to pay for it at Algiers.

What good then was Italy to us after such journeys as these? We walked back home to lunch that morning, Dandy forlorn, I with the taste of envy still lingering in my mind.

How can I explain? Life has never reached me. No woman has ever come to me in trouble—and that is part of life; no man has ever told the story of a love affair to me in the whole course of my existence. Whenever a man sees me he slaps me on the back; whenever I meet a woman whom I know, she pats Dandy on the back instead. And to suggest Italy for such a disease as that!

A night or two later, I strolled into a restaurant where occasionally I sup alone. The young man and the young woman go there. Corks fly out of bottles and laughter flies after them. Sometimes there I can imagine I have never seen forty, and when I assure myself that I am forty-three, it seems nothing—nothing at all. The waters of Lethe are in the very finger-bowls on their tables, though often indeed, as I have rubbed it on my lips, it seems I have tasted the waters of Marah. That night after supper, I sat in the lounge outside, taking my coffee. At the other end of the settee I had chosen sat a woman of twenty-eight, listening patiently to the egotism of a boy of twenty-six. Here and there she placed a word with cunning