

CHAPTER IV

A WAVE of heat broke from the pillar-stove and spread through the shop, strewing the heavier smells like a wrack behind it. And through it all, with every swing of the great mahogany doors, there stole into his young senses a something delicious and disturbing, faintly discernible as the Spring.

He thrust his work from him, tilted back his chair at a dangerous angle, and began reviewing his engagements for the coming Bank Holiday.

He was only three and twenty, and at three and twenty an infinite measure of life can be pressed into the great three days. He saw in fancy the procession of the hours, the flight of the dreams, of all the gorgeous intellectual pageants that move through the pages of *Saturnalia*. For in ninety-two Savage Keith Rickman was a little poet about town, a cockney poet, the poet not only of neo-classic drama, but of green suburban Saturday noons, and flaming Saturday nights, and of a great many things besides. He had made his plans long beforehand, and was prepared to consign to instant perdition the person or thing that should interfere with them. Good Friday morning, an hour's cycling before breakfast in Regent's Park, by way of pumping some air into his lungs; then, ten hours at least of high Parnassian leisure, of dalliance in Academic shades; he saw himself wooing some reluctant classic, or, far more likely, flirting with his own capricious and bewildering muse. (In a world of prose it is only by such divine snatches that poets are made.) Friday evening, dinner at his club, the Junior Journalists'. Saturday morning, recovery from dinner at the Junior Journalists'. Saturday afternoon, to Hampstead or the Hippodrome with Flossie Walker, the little clerk,