

CHAPTER III

Impression III

Saturday Night

6-22-1914

Saturday night, the loneliest night of the week....

Saturday night, night, night....

Got a dime, pordner?

Hungry?

No eats all day.

Here's a quarter.

A quarter! His eyes light up as he gazes at the shiny thing. He turns it over and snaps it between his fⁿgers and then fondels it on his palm. A cloud overspreads his face. A quarter makes three beers and a dime.... What to do with the dime? He is no crumb. No coin-jingle in his pants. Ah, the solution, and he is happy again. One whiskey, one quarter. The whole quarter at one gulp.

Got a dime, pordner?

Hungry?

No, thirsty.

For his honesty this one is awarded two quarters.

He had his fill on the cheap stuff and came out and pewked the whole mess up. Fifty cents gone up in bilge.

Saturday night, the loneliest night, night, night....

He pewks and drinks, and pewks again, and pisses and.... He is happy. He is fulfilling nature's demands. He has no other call but physical. And he answers the call with eclat and elation of spirit, and with a splash. A happy sloth in his own slothfulness. Saturday night has no foreboding

for him. The world is a swamp and he is deliriously and deliciously mired in it.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, the world is marching on, and who gives a damn! Saturday night is the loneliest.... Whosays it's the loneliest?

In the grounds of the swank club the chauffeur is chilled to the bone, but he waits in the limosine. He waits, oh! It's Saturday night. He is numb sitting there, but he waits. Inside, all light and warmth and plush and silk, and scented smooth sweet silky skin. Inside, the auction to the highest bidder. Hush, hush, the master is waking, he is on the hunt, and his tread is soft as a tiger's paw. The carpeting is thick and plush. Everything is rose, red and brilliant, and the lights are red and brilliant; and the hearts are red and light and exultant. And the fat master sits on the fat red-plush divan, and she tiptoes to him. He is fat, and his wallet is fat and open. And she sits on his wide fat lap. And her little buttock does not fill the lap. And pudgy arms and hands encircle the lithe form, and she shudders. But they press further down into the swamp of his lap, and she sinks deeper, and she surrenders,

Cold and lonely outside; inside, the vicious circle of lasciviousness goes on. And the chauffeur waits!

Saturday night the loneliest night....

Hic, hic, pewk.... "A quarter, friend?"

"Why a quarter?"

"Four quarters make a dollar and eight make two."

Through the sodden stubbled face two gleaming eyes stare out in the semi-darkness of the reflected light from the saloon windows and the dancing lights from the sign above them. There is a delicacy in the face inspite of its temporary sodden puffiness. There is the despair of a hungering desire blended with doubt and fearⁱⁿ the eyes, as of one caught in

a trap and groping for a way out.

"Haven't you had enough?"

"None at all."

"What's that you were pewking?"

"Oh, that bilge! My stomach can't stomach it. None left inside me. Not used to it."

"Why do you want to drink more?"

"Who said I did?"

"No one forced you to drink the stuff."

"Forced myself."

"Why?"

A chorus of three boys were coming out of the saloon. High and tight, arm in arm, with the scourgings of alcohol vapors in them, they croaked hoarsely and defiantly of vaporous visions of gluttonous nudity and gluteus:

Oh, her with the titillating bounding breasts,
The full spread of rounded-buttocks heaves,
The lavish hips that beat you and hold you tight,
Oh, come to me, come to me in the deep dark night.

Oh, come to me, and we'll p--- wee, wee....
Come to me, fondle me, and I'll thee;
Come to me, come, and we'll f--, f--
Come to me, come, and we'll s--, s--.

"Damn them with that f-- f--! I can't bring myself to say it, though I say it a hundred times over in my head. Am I a hypocrite? Follow these, and about every third word will be that. And they know whereof they speak. They are young and... they have their dates, together or separate. This drinking and bawling is a primer, if primer they need, which I doubt. But I am neither young nor virile to attract the Saturday night broads. And with so much temptation around! Truculent and dry amidst free-running freshets, as on Sahara. The American, and world tragedy - for me. The fences they build around women! And the more they make them untouchable, the more they become untouchable through liaison with promiscuity and disease. The Messy Tragedy! But, ah, for those in the swank and gild - they

are the clean broads, a thousand perisshot. For me, the filth and disease. And you ask why I drown myself in that bilge? Yes, why? Why do they rape and kill? Kill and rape....? Breaking the chains makes them more furious, and they go out of all restraint. They haven't got the compulsions and stringencies I have. And there is your problem. Can it be solved? I don't know. I drink, thinking I would support my restraint with alcohol, sort of sink into forgetful slothfulness, especially on Saturday night when the sex-gush is at full flood. But the damn stuff doesn't stay long enough in my stomach to do any good... since I had to go on the cheap stuff. Those fellows get me, Saturday night gets me....

"Quarter, please."

"Now, wait, here's a ten."

"O, sir, I cannot even thank you, for it's not the real me begging for a handout, but the end symbol of a lost moment. A lost generation, a lost eternity, a wasted life! Have you ever seen a family go to pot? A family goes on happily, solidly. A tall tree, with sturdy roots digging deep into the rich compact soil; its branches wholesome, well nourished, bearing healthy fruit; the trunk robust, of great girth and full of sap. Then a mould, a blight, a rot sets in, and what was life and whole withers into scattered nothingness of decay - the ashes spread over the seven seas. What was once a home of light and cheery warmth is but a bleakness and a black void, where the desert sands blow in ruckles and furrows to cover the loneliness of the bones bleaching in the naked merciless sun. A full noonday sun is black to a family thus consumed, for there is no place on earth for them to hide from its fiery rays. The plague of our time!

"Tonight to me is to be the Saturday Night to abolish all Saturday nights - to be mercifully reborn unsullied and cleansed.

"And so I become chastened and free: a tribute to American youth. Where else can youth be so frivolous, yet so wholesome! Where else does youth play so hard, but also learns to work so hard! Where else is youth so richly endowed with the consciousness of joy for joy's sake, but yet

is aware of its heritage and its attributes! And where else is youth so bouyant in spirit and bodily vigor to hold the world in the palm of its hand!

"I have seen ^o b^oth, good and evil:"

Saturday night, when we danced you and I.

Saturday night, and he^aven and earth and hell!

Oh, Saturday night, loneliness when drowned in drink.

American of the Dilemma... the World Dilemma:

Let me live, please, let me live.

Can't, I love you.

Let me love you and live for you.

I can't, because I love you and you love me.

I always did, don't you know?

I know.

Then you'll let me live. I gave myself to our love.

Can't live for your own sake and mine.

But I want to live.... I want to!

No good.

You want to live?

Why should I with this thing in you? We'll kill IT and us. Then it'll be as before - like nothing at all. The last measure, for everything else ^{has} failed. It's the law of the land that says you must die, rather than helped to live.... And I die with you.

The lake and the moon over it. Beautiful!

Come, let's sit by the lake. The moon, look into the face of the moon.

The moon hangs high, and all is serene and peaceful.

Burr... burr... cold!

I baptize thee — in our blood.

I am afraid... I am choking.

Here, I am with you. Take my head.

I am afraid. Choke....

There is no fear in the moment of love - and death. And you are dying. I am with you, wherever death takes us. Close your eyes, dearest. The moon hangs high. It's falling. It's on us. I am with you, my darling. Don't be afraid. Choke a little more. I- I - am with you. And let the guilty ones die our death - a thousand - times - over....

And the moon is back in the heavens with the stars. And all is serene and peaceful as before.