

THE STRAW

unlucky trail of ivy had torn loose with him, launching him backwards. He collapsed into a bed of wallflowers and sat nursing his knee.

"I've lamed myself," he said lamentably. "Up with you, Gay. Rafferty's too solid. Never mind the spoons, but carry off Lady Sarah. You can't miss her. She hangs in the dining-room."

Gay swung himself to the sill of the unfastened window, and thrusting his arm in, with a wrench and a pull was inside. Treading light he plunged, with an odd mixture of recklessness and caution, into the unknown risks of the dead silent house.

This darkness was close and warm, unlike that outside, and the hush was alive. He caught himself wondering what ghosts were likely to rise up in it and hinder him, and there awoke in him an altogether reprehensible joy in the situation. He felt the exhilaration of the highwayman and the poacher, and his spirit danced, caught up in the spell of lawlessness.

The place was an irregular barrack, rather confusing to a marauder, the kitchen end of it shut off by interminable passages from other regions; but more by luck than knowledge he turned into the right one and lighting a