

THE STRAW

rudely altered, but in the main it was still an ancient manor, its ruggedness marred by the long French windows now fast shuttered, that had been knocked in the walls on the garden side. Lord Robert went up to these with the gliding tread of a wild Indian and tried the fastenings with an impatient rattle.

"I'll get into this house," he said, "if I have to go down the chimney."

"There's no hurry," said Rafferty, cocking his eye at the leaded diamond panes near the roof. "With the whole staff footing it at this ball at Burrough, and old Burkinshaw snoring in his upper chamber, we can go canny. Anybody staying in the house?"

"Not that I know of," said Lord Robert carelessly. "At least, no men. Stop that young fool cackling! He'll spoil it all."

The youngest of the party, Lord Robert's cousin, subsided, stuffing his handkerchief into his mouth as Gay, who had been stalking possibilities, came back grinning. Sure enough the pantry window was on the latch.

"Magnificent!" said Lord Robert. "I'll have the post of danger. Give me a leg up, will you? What the dickens——! Oh, I say, that's too bad."

He was scrambling up like a cat, and an