

THE STRAW

had turned when all eyes were gazing to track his line beyond, zigzagged rapidly, and darting in again had spun up the ride in the middle of the cover and shot out across the road on the top, now deserted. It must have been music to him to hear the galloping hundreds thundering down to the bottom on either side. But a whip, lurking on the watch, called the hounds on to him and they took up his line, and flashed right through, over the road, skimming the plough like birds, turning right-handed and swooping over the further hillside fringed by its line of ragged thorn-trees.

The field, circling round the spinney, gathered again and came after like an army, keeping down the turf and cramming into the heavy bit of lane in the dip that excused three fences. Climbing the hill they scattered, suddenly hidden in whirling snow.

For two or three minutes the squall that had caught them darkened the earth. Hounds were inaudible, invisible to the brave who, winking fast, by instinct kept blindly on. And then magically it cleared and Freeby Wood loomed in the distance, black beyond the glistening stretches of grey-green grass.

"Hallelujah!" shouted Gay, pulling out his