

THE STRAW

you. Hounds moving off, are they? Mind you come. It's a bit of a secret, but some of us are getting up a kind of a presentation."

He shortened his reins and dropped his profoundly sympathetic tone for a moment.

"You treat your ancestors most disrespectfully, do you know?" he fired over his shoulder. "The back of her's thick with cobwebs."

Squeezing through the gate he was cut off by the press of riders closing in on all sides, clattering through the village, praying all for a stout fox in Melton Spinney and no dismal halt at the bleak top corner, huddling near the inadequate shelter of that one bit of untrimmed hedge.

And the hunting gods were kind. Before the tail of the long procession had passed the farm on the rise, there was a cry at the cover, a noise of thudding hoofs—the imprudent charging down to the brook, too hasty to pause and listen before splashing through the ford, and deceived by that old trick of the spinney foxes who, making a false start, begin their real journey in the opposite direction to that in which their prelude has misguided half the pursuit.

This one had let himself be seen dashing out at the bottom to within a yard of the brook,