

THE STRAW

"It's fine now," he said at last. "Shall we start out and find them? They couldn't run a yard in that; we shall catch them hanging round the Thorns pitying themselves."

"I would rather find my way home," she said, standing up. "I am awfully stiff, and I have lost my hat."

"Tie a handkerchief over your head," said Gay promptly. "Oh, mine is bigger than that. Will you have it? I'll get your hat if it hasn't blown into Lincolnshire. Are you stiff, really? Too stiff to ride?"

He stood considering her as she failed ignominiously in her effort to spring into the saddle, smiling rather piteously up at him, bruised by her tumble. And then he moved out into the field brandishing the red silk handkerchief he had shaken out to put on her head. The storm had passed as quickly as it came up, and although the wind rioted there was not one white feather in the air. Away on the right they heard a trotting of many horses and near at hand, like an echo, the solitary pattering of one.

"That is Tokenhouse," said Gay, pointing to a huge umbrella travelling on the other side of the hedge. "My lodger. He has a knack of turning up when he is wanted. He'll