

## THE STRAW

"Well, she was a gay old party in the century she lived in, and owing to faults of her own got into history. Burkinshaw's father swore by her as a tutelary deity, and carted her about with his family from place to place till they settled in Leicestershire, and some self-made person he wouldn't notice hired a man to write a book on county families, and show her up in all her original wickedness. It was a horrid shock to her pious descendants. But they had the last word."

"How?" she said, falling into his mood. His smile was contagious.

"Burkinshaw's parent posted off to a literary nephew he had disowned, and as the price of forgiveness got him to write a novel with plenty of local colour—and a murder that was committed in the enemy's Elizabethan mansion. There was an awful row when pilgrims began to haunt it, snapshotting at large, and plaguing the inhabitants to let them gloat over spots of blood. The thing got on their nerves, and they gave up and departed to Devonshire, leaving the Burkinshaws triumphant on the field of battle."

As he talked he was looking to the horses' girths, tightening her curb chain a link or two, examining her saddle.