

THE STRAW

candle (Rafferty's providence had included, but smashed, a lantern) at last reached familiar landmarks—the stuffed wild beasts shot in India by Burkinshaw (who might now be lurking in his nightshirt to add him to that collection), and the grinning masks in the hall. Triumphantly he made his way into the smoking-room and unbarred a window, signalling to the others to stand ready; and then went hunting for Lady Sarah hanging in unapproachable haughtiness in the dining-room. His light flickered, throwing diabolical gleams across her painted face with its aristocratic grimness and its moustache—Lady Sarah had, in her time, been a witness to wilder work than this—as he hauled the picture down. It was heavier than he imagined, immense in its antique, gilded frame; but he was undisturbed at his work and lugged it across the hall into the smoking-room, lowering it to his fellow-conspirators down below.

“I say,” whispered Lord Robert, limping, but bursting with delight. “Just rummage a bit, will you, before you jump. Give the establishment a decently burgled air.”

“Right,” said Gay.

He went back into the hall, among the glaring eyes of the tigers. His candle, in-