

THE STRAW

And now, sitting on a bundle of hay in this dark mud hovel, being taken care of by a man with whom comradeship had begun so strangely, and who stood guarding the entrance in his tattered scarlet coat, like a soldier defending her from the blast, she was happy—and not surprised. Idly she wondered what her cousin had in her mind when she had pointed him out at the meet, with a sniff that was half impatient and half indulgent.

“That’s Jimmy Gay,” she had said. “A dear, but impracticable. Quite impracticable. I’ve washed my hands of him.”

But he was the hero—or should she not say the villain?—of Judy’s one adventure.

“I’ll send your pearls by registered post,” he said. “Commonplace, but safer than keeping them in my pocket till I find a chance of handing them to you. Though I live within a stone’s-throw. I can watch your windows twinkling from my own. Poor old Burkinshaw will get his ancestor back all right; we are bad, but we are comparatively honest; we don’t pawn our booty. You know why he makes a fetish of Lady Sarah?”

“No,” she said. The squall was passing; already the world that had been blotted out was less invisible, whirling still.