

THE STRAW

ditch—and you hadn't time to think of breaking a collarbone. For the fox had been driven straight through the wood, and was keeping to that good line that means death or Coston Cover. He flashed over the hillside like a streak of lightning, ran down into the valley, put the brook between him and his pursuers, and slackening as he climbed the big pastures on the slope, was run into within two or three fields of triumph.

There were not many in it, and there had been great grief behind. Thirty minutes at that pace had weeded out all but the stoutest, had sprinkled the fields with stragglers.

Gay, who had been down twice, but for all that had struggled up, slid out of his saddle, and after looking his mare over, felt himself. His coat was slit up the back and his hat was a concertina.

"What a day!" he said.

"Splendid," chimed in another man, who was stanching a smarting scratch, and puffing like a grampus. "But it's all very fine riding on the top of the ground like this. Mud is more agreeable to the ribs."

Lord Robert was scanning the horizon for his second horse, having much too wisely ordered his man to hang about down-wind.