

Come here, Warner"—to the parlour-maid who was hovering near the door—"and tell me all about it."

Warner was nearly as agitated as her mistress, but managed to state that the previous evening Miss Julia had wished them all her usual cheery "good night," had locked up the house, and gone to bed.

When Warner took up the hot water the next morning no Miss Park was in the room—the bed had not been slept in. Her little tin trunk, her umbrella, her neat ulster which always hung behind the door, had all disappeared. The mistress's bunch of keys lay on the dressing-table.

"We must have her back," cried the old lady. "There is no one in the whole world like her. I can't believe she's so unkind and cruel as to leave us of her own free will like this. Some horrid man is at the bottom of it, and has led her astray. Do go to the police station, George, and try and learn something about the poor dear."

The old lady was so hysterical that George went to the dining-room to fetch her some brandy. He was immediately struck by the bare look of the sideboard. Seizing the brandy bottle he hastened back.

"Why have you removed the silver from the sideboard?" he demanded of his mother-in-law.

But the old lady sat wringing her hands and crying out for Julia.

A violent pull at the bell brought down Warner, and Susan also appeared from below stairs.

"Where's all the silver gone from the dining-room?" he asked, harshly.

The two women stared at him in astonishment. He walked across the dining-room, and, flinging open the door, pointed to the sideboard.

"Lord-a-mercy!" shrieked Warner. "All the silver's gone!"

"Where's the key of the strong room?"

Warner handed him the bunch, but there was no need to use the key—the door was open, the room was empty, empty as on the day it was when the workmen showed it with pride as finished.

George stuck his hands in his pockets and said a few bad words.

"But the jewel-case," gasped his wife, pressing her hands to her heart. "It was also kept—here!"

"Gone," said her husband, shortly. "Gone with the silver and Miss Park!"

Go and tell your mother I am going to inquire of the police for her precious lady companion. And take some brandy, my dear Minnie, this shock is enough to kill you."

A police constable and inspector returned with him. They took some depositions from Warner and questioned Mrs Sherrington, who was very angry and indignant at dear Julia's flight being connected with the disappearance of the valuables. A detective from Scotland Yard had been wired for and soon arrived on the scene. He listened to the son-in-law's account, glanced at the bare sideboard, just peeped in the strong room, and smiled grimly.

"It's thoroughly well planned and carried out," he said. "No one but a very clever fellow could have been so successful and made such a good clearance. You know, sir," touching George confidentially on the shoulder, "that we've had our eye on No. 15, Colman square ever since Alderman Sherrington bought those emeralds. He was cautioned by our chief against keeping them in his own house, for a certain gang of burglars are always on the track of famous well known jewels. Just give me a description, please, of this lady companion of yours, whom you expect was an accomplice. Well, now, let me see," taking out a note book. "You think her height is about 5 ft. 6 in.; with boots on, nearly 5 ft 7 in. Yes, a very pleasant face, always smiling—that's it. You see, sir, when nature gives us such beautiful, regular teeth as Miss Julia Park has, she provides a smiling mouth to show them off. You hadn't come to her teeth, you say? No, but it's all down in my book, and the nice blue eyes too; likewise the good, honest expression that you could trust her with anything. Those are your words, sir, I think, and those very words are all written in my book," closing it with a bang. "The description tallies exactly. And that's he!" with a triumphant smile. "That's the cleverest, cutest burglar as ever broke open a safe, and he's been your mother's lady companion!"

He threw back his head with a loud guffaw.

"You'll excuse me, sir, but the idea of Light-fingered Jack—as we call him on our books—dressed up in a curly wig as a girl is really too much for my gravity."

When Miss Park's sex and real calling