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Mrs. Brotherton's Adventure

(Continued from page 8.)

Fisher, her maid, came in abruptly with something more than concern on her face.

"Well, Fisher, what is it now?"

"Oh, ma'am," the maid asked breathlessly, "have you got the jewellery? I can't find it anywhere."

Mrs. Brotherton started up, now thoroughly alarmed.

"The jewellery? You put it away in the case, Fisher?"

"Yes, ma'am, certainly I did last night. But now the case has gone."

"Gone!" Mrs. Brotherton rushed from the room and tore upstairs followed by Fisher. A feverish search in the bedroom only served to confirm the terrible suspicion that her five-and-thirty thousand pounds' worth of jewellery had been made away with. Utterly overwhelmed, poor Mrs. Brotherton sank prostrate on the sofa.

"Oh, what does it all mean?" she moaned. "What horrible trick is this? I can't have been robbed by these people; it must be a practical joke."

"I hope it may be, ma'am," Fisher responded in no very reassuring tone.

Mrs. Brotherton was far too practical a woman to indulge in lamentations when action was called for. In a few seconds she had risen and, accompanied by Fisher, was making a search through the house. Little but empty rooms rewarded her investigation; no one was in the house save the deaf caretaker. In spite of all, however, the lady clung to the hope that things were not so bad as they looked, that a satisfactory explanation would be forthcoming.

But one thing was certain; they could not stay there, so Fisher quickly packed the trunks and went down to the village to get a conveyance to the station.

"You had better say nothing about what has happened," her mistress warned her, "we don't want to look foolish, and I daresay it will turn out to be some absurd mistake."

She said this now without much conviction, for as time went on the chance of a happy explanation seemed to grow much more remote.

THE village fly arrived, and Mrs. Brotherton set out for the station with very different feelings from those with which she had traversed the same road the night before. But she was now less concerned at the idea of a social fiasco, than at the loss of her jewellery. If she had been robbed she must lose no time in setting the London police on the scent.

Arrived at the railway, the first person whom, to her great surprise, she saw on the platform was Lord Finchampton.

His surprise even exceeded her own.

"My dear Mrs. Brotherton," he exclaimed as he greeted her. "I'm so glad to see you so quickly recovered. And delighted you have lost no time in coming to us. But why didn't you send word. Not expecting you so early, there is nothing to meet you."

"I thought," Mrs. Brotherton blurted out in her bewilderment, "I came down to Hallaton last evening."

Lord Finchampton stared at her as though doubting her sanity. "You came to Hallaton last evening?" he repeated in wonder.

"I thought I did," the lady said with an embarrassing laugh, "and that you were laid up, Lord Finchampton."

"Laid up? Never better in my life," he answered her heartily. "I don't understand."

"I am only just beginning to understand the trick that has been played me," Mrs. Brotherton said, as the position became plain to her in all its hideous knavery. "Then you didn't wire me to come by the 3.45 to Rustwick station?"

"Certainly not," Lord Finchampton assured her. "You wired putting off your arrival on account of illness."

Mrs. Brotherton laughed in bitterness of spirit. "Did I? You haven't had Lord and Lady Slinfold, Sir Hubert Wichelo and Lady Wichelo, Mr.



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