

He tried not to appear surprised, but the effort was a failure.

"I have been entertaining a somewhat dangerous young woman in my house, it seems," he said.

"It was ridiculously easy, of course."

"Perhaps you will explain it to me."

"A conjuror does not usually give away his methods, your Excellency. But I will tell this one. Feeling confident that Count Karl had stolen the jewels, and that his object would only be to give them to the Countess, I had only to gain access to her house to find them. I found a pretext therefore, and went to her, and—but you can probably guess the rest."

"Indeed, I cannot."

It was my turn now to indulge in a smile of superiority.

"I am surprised; but I will make it plainer. I succeeded in interesting her so that she kept me in the house some hours. I was able to amuse her; and when I had discovered where she kept her chief treasures, the rest was easy."

"You looked for yourself?"

"You do me less than justice. I am not so crude and inartistic in my methods. She showed them to me herself."

"Miss Gilmore!" Disbelief of the statement cried aloud in his exclamation.

"Why not say outright that you find that impossible of credence? Yet it is true. I mean that I