

I made the first move toward the mate and then said—

"Chess is a very tell-tale game, your Excellency. The theft occurred seven days ago, and for six of them you have been so preoccupied that I have won every game. To-night you have been alternately smiling and depressed; it is an easy inference, therefore, that the solution of the mystery is even more troublesome than the mystery itself. In point of fact, I was sure it would be."

Instead of studying his move, he began to fidget again; and presently looked across the board at me with another of his condescending, patronizing smiles.

"The loss you may have heard spoken of, but you cannot know anything more. What, pray, do you think the solution is?" It never entered his clever head that I could possibly know anything about it.

"I think you have been an unconscionable time in discovering what was palpably obvious from the outset."

He frowned. He liked this reply no better than I intended. Then the frown changed to a sneer, masked with a bantering smile, but all the same unmistakable.

"It is a serious matter for our Government to fall under your censure, Miss Gilmore."

"I don't think it is more stupid than other Governments," I retorted with intentional flippancy.