

my advice," I said slowly. "But there are reasons this evening. Your thoughts are not on the game."

"Really, Miss Gilmore! I am sorry if I have appeared preoccupied." He accompanied the apology with a graceful, deprecatory wave of his white hand. He was very proud of the whiteness of his hands and the grace of many of his gestures. He studied such things.

"I am not surprised," I said. "The solution of the mystery of those lost ducal jewels must naturally be disturbing."

His involuntary start was sufficiently energetic to shake the table on which the board was placed, and to disturb one or two of the pieces. He looked intently at me, and during the stare I put the pieces upon their squares with unnecessary deliberation. Then I lifted my eyes and returned his look with one equally intent.

Some of the family jewels of the Duke Ladislas of Kremnitz had been stolen a few days before, and the theft had completely baffled the officials of the Government from his Excellency, General von Erlanger, downwards. It had been kept absolutely secret, but—well, I had made it my business to know things.

"It has been a very awkward affair," I added, when he did not speak.

"Shall we resume our game, Miss Gilmore?" The tone was stiff. He intended me to understand that such matters were not for me to discuss.