

## CHAPTER II

### A CHESS OPENING

**I**F your Excellency makes that move I must mate in three moves."

His Excellency's long white fingers were fluttering indecisively above the bishop and were about to close upon it, when I was guilty of so presumptuous a breach of etiquette as to warn him.

He was appropriately shocked. He fidgeted, frowned at me, and then smiled. It was one of those indulgent smiles with which a great man is wont to favour a young woman in his employment.

"Really, I don't think so," he replied; and having been warned by one whose counsel he could not condescend to rank very high, he did what most men would do under the circumstances. He made the move out of doggedness.

I smiled, taking care that he should see it.

The mate was perfectly apparent, but I was in no hurry to move. I had much more in view just then than the mere winning of the game. The time had arrived when I thought the Minister and I ought to come to an understanding.

"Your Excellency does not set enough store by