

led her to speak of matters which necessitated her going to that hiding-place, and interested her until she forgot that I had eyes in my head, so that, in searching for something else, she let me see the jewels themselves."

"Could you get them back?" he asked, eagerly. I drew myself up and answered very coldly.

"I have failed to make your Excellency understand me or my motives, I fear. I could do so, of course, if I were also—a thief!"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Gilmore," he exclaimed quickly, adding with a touch of malice: "But you so interested me that I forgot who you were."

"It was only an experiment on my part; and so far successful that I won the Countess' confidence and she has pressed me to go to her."

"You didn't refer her to me for your credentials, I suppose?" he said, his eyes lighting with sly enjoyment.

"She asked for no credentials."

"Do you mean that you talked her into wanting you so badly as to take you into her house without knowing anything about you?"

"May I remind your Excellency that I was honoured by even your confidence in giving me my present position without any credentials."

He threw up his hands.

"You have made me forget that in the excellent discretion with which you have since justified