

dically, and a little sob startled her husband.

"Why, Isabel! what can be the matter?"

"I am so sorry I have failed to make you happy. I could be happy anywhere with you; but it seems you care more for others than for me."

"It is not that at all, Isabel. I am sure we have been as happy as most people. I would do a great deal to make you happy."

After a reasonable length of time, during which she was supposed to be drying her tears, she very cautiously told him how she would like, if he was entirely willing, to have some of her friends to spend New Year's with her."

He very readily consented.

"You know, Isabel, I am always glad to see your friends here.

"Yes, but I had thought of having a party in the evening. You know we have had nothing of the sort since we were married."

His face clouded. He had a horror of that sort of entertainment. She noticed the half-frown, and proceeded at once to administer a judicious dose of flattery that bought him to terms; for Dr. Norton, like all men, was very susceptible to that sort of treatment.

Once afterward he mooted the question of having the girls home; but this time she got down right angry, and declared if he did bring them he should be sorry; and knowing her capabilities for making others miserable, he wisely concluded they might be happier if left.

During the week between Christmas and New Year's, George Staunton called at Riverside and enquired for Miss Norton.

"Is it Miss Helen ye're meaning?"

"Yes; is she at home?"

"Indeed no, she isn't; bad luck to them as wouldn't let her come."

"Has she not come from Montreal?"

"Never an inch, has she; and its meself that's that mad—but will ye be afther comin' in till see Mr. Harry?"

"What's this, Harry, about your sisters not being at home? I only know what Bridget told me, and she is not very clear."

"They have not been sent for, and are not to be, I understand. Papa has written

to them that they had better spend the holidays where they are."

"It will be a great disappointment to them both, I know; for when I last saw them they were in high glee over the prospect of coming home so soon. Isabel is at the bottom of this business."

"It was a disappointment to me. Home is not home without them."

Harry spoke a little bitterly.

"I shall see her ladyship, and try my influence with her;" and with flashing eyes George strode across the hall, and, meeting a servant, asked to see Mrs. Norton at once.

The servant bowed, and threw open a door, and George found himself face to face with his sister. She took no pains to conceal that she was not delighted to see him.

She merely said, "Well, sir?"

"So, Bell, you have been trying to cause a separation in this family, that was so happy before you came, have you?"

"Who has been to you with complaints?"

"No one; I enquired for Helen, and found she was not at home, and I knew very well whose work it was. Now, Bell, you and I know each other too well to make circumlocution necessary. I am going for those young ladies; and if you dare to make it unpleasant either for them or the rest of the family, you cross swords with a Staunton."

She was livid with rage, but George was the one person of whom she stood in awe. He knew more of her past life than she cared to have revealed, and he held her in check by this knowledge.

He left immediately, and she kept her own room the remainder of the day on pretence of having a headache. Perhaps it was no pretence, for such a fit of temper as she indulged in might possibly induce headache. Before night, however, she had concluded that it would be wisest to submit with the best grace she could, since there was no help for it.

It was New Year's evening that George Staunton drove up with Helen and Letty.

"Nellie, the house is all lighted," said Letty. "What do you suppose they are doing?"

"One of Bell's rows, I'll warrant," said