

"Ah! dear me, how sad!" she sighed. "How very sad!"

"Extremely sad!" chimed in a chorus of a round score.

"Very dreadful!" said Lady Stapleton, with sudden emphasis. "And to think she was once a protégée of mine. When I knew her she was really a nice girl, and one would have thought that marrying into the Church was at least a safe course, quite safe. I wonder what old Sam Kippen will say to it all? He's her father, you know—a man as strong as Gibraltar in his own conceit. But this bomb will shake him up—assuredly this bomb will make him rock on his foundations. Talk of a dynamite explosion!"

"And Sir Theodore will be horribly shocked too," observed one who knew the family relations.

"Oh! I'm not so sure of that," returned Lady Stapleton, who, as Sir Theodore's wife, spoke with full and particular knowledge. "Sir Theodore's feelings are not, of course, engaged like Mr. Kippen's. Then he is a man, my dear, and men take other people's troubles philosophically, as a rule. That's where they have the advantage over us poor women. Their feelings are well covered up; ours lie open, as the saying is, to every breath of heaven, and consequently," pursued Lady Stapleton, as wisely as the blue-stocking of Sheba, "are liable to be chafed and ruffled by such an affair as this. But, of course, Sir Theodore will be sorry about Gracie Kippen. Though he never knew much of her personally, he is very closely associated with her father at the bank, you know. Ah! dear me, dear me!"

Lady Stapleton sighed again, and the dolorous gust, being promptly reinforced by the others out of regard and sympathy, souged round the room as dismally as a November wind.