

"For several reasons; your mother and I want to have all our children with us at Christmas, both for our own sakes and poor Reggie's."

"That's not your only reason, papa."

"No, dear, I did not say it was. I would rather also for *your own* sakes that you should spend Christmas here."

Ernest stamped his foot impatiently.

Mr. Leslie looked grieved, he was sorry for the disappointment he was inflicting on his children, but more sorry to see the angry feelings it called forth.

None of them spoke for a few minutes, then Constance slipped her arm round his neck, and said most entreatingly. "Please, papa, let us go, just for this once."

"No, love, I cannot," he answered gravely.

"Oh, do," said Ernest, determined to make one more effort.

"I have said 'no,' my boy, do not press me any more, for I cannot change."