

trition for unavoidable bad behaviour. "And you shall just go straight back to her."

Illness abides no man's pleasure; social reform, like Felix's conversion, may be postponed to a more convenient season. But Herrick assured her ladyship that, as the invalid was already better and would probably be quite restored by a sleep, there was really no reason for missing an address to which he had looked forward with ardent expectation.

"Quite sure?" she beamed, her good-humour entirely restored.

"Quite sure," he replied.

"Very well then," she said. "We may as well proceed."

A minute later she rose amid the most flattering manifestations of popularity. She had reached one of her purplest purple patches, and in graphic reportorial phrase "held her audience spell-bound," when of a sudden the door opened with an erratic jerk, and Mrs. Herrick, swaying by the handle, grinned upon the assembly. Lady Stapleton stopped, a half-uttered word on her tongue, and all held their breath in a dead and awful silence.

"Sho shorry for being late," said Mrs. Herrick thickly, grinning yet more amiably. "Sho very shorry."

With a gasp of astonishment and alarm Lady Stapleton retreated, and sank panting into a chair. Mrs. Herrick, dropping the support of the door-handle, lurched forward in pursuit, her hand held out as in greeting. Being belated, she seemed doubly intent on discharging her duty as hostess.

Recovering from his momentary stupor of horror, Herrick was by her side at a bound. "You are not well, my love," he said in a ghastly voice, seizing