

With that she moved off, deliberate and stately as an ancient flag-ship under full sail, the rest following meekly like inferior members of a fleet. But as she was stepping into her carriage, which had been hastily summoned, Herrick ran out white-faced and distraught to apologise again. It was in his heart, it was almost on his tongue, to implore her, as she had pity for the unfortunate, not to speak of what she had seen. But shame and a sense of futility withheld him. What end would such a request serve? The deed was done; the scandal was already on the wind, and would presently be on every tongue in Lumley Beacon and on tongues far beyond.

He was in such a tumult that he scarcely heard the well-bred words addressed to him or saw the hand held out with perfect composure and steadiness.

"Goodbye," Lady Stapleton was saying in her most soothing manner. "I hope dear Mrs. Herrick will soon be herself again, quite herself." She leaned towards him, whispering confidentially, "I have asked the reporters to say nothing whatever of our meeting."

She meant to put him at ease; in reality the effect was as if she poured liquid fire into his veins. Yet his response was as commonplace as if he endured no torture, or were merely taking leave of some casual visitor.

"You are very kind," he said, and then, as if he could think of nothing else: "Won't you give us your address another time, Lady Stapleton?"

"Another time," she smiled, as one smiles on a child who is being humoured. "And you are not to vex yourself, remember. Goodbye, goodbye."

She went off nodding and beaming blandly, and as in a nightmare he turned to such of the others as were not yet gone. When he had shaken hands with