

under a large sheep-owner, and entered upon a career of happiness and ever-increasing prosperity.

There we now may leave him while we inquire after the people of Little Bubbleton. Not many months after Edward's departure Master Catchpole was married to the Widow Barton. How it was brought about nobody knew, least of all the parties most concerned. But, as the worthy shoemaker remarked, "the most nat'ral thing in the world is natur'," and thus it happened by that strange legerdemain which all men understand and very few women can ever resist, that the widow's scruples were overcome, and she became Mrs. Catchpole. "*Now*," said Elijah, "I can *kip* me promise an' *look* after 'e." When teased about in the village he really quoted—for the first and only time in his life—one of the Proverbs of Solomon. "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing," he said, "as wise old Solomon *do* say. If you as 'aint got wives can laugh, I, as 'as got one, and a *good* 'un too, can laugh *sure-ly*; so thur's no harm done."

It grieves us to have now to chronicle that, which as truthful historians we must do, Master Catchpole's sombre prediction had been fulfilled, and that the young Squire had "turned out a bad 'un." The free use of wine at his father's table had led to the formation of intemperate habits; the free use of money supplied by an indulgent mother had led him into betting and gambling at school; and evil associations and unfortunate opportunities had completed what had been so ill begun. The evil fruit of all was that at twenty-one the young Squire was fairly launched on the road to ruin. His "coming of age" was a mad orgie. Far in the night he rose from the table, mounted his horse, rode him wildly up and down amid the lawns and flower-beds in front of the Hall, dashed him headlong into the glass of the conservatories, and then made a final leap into the moat that surrounded the house. Here he fell from his horse, was dragged out half dead, and amid silence and sorrow carried to his chamber. When sense and daylight returned his remorse and shame were such that he resolved to leave those whom he felt he dared not face again. He had oft sinned, repented, and been forgiven, but he would not go through that farce any more. Giving out among the servants, therefore, that he was going to the Shuffledown races, and knew not when he should return, he laid hold of all the money he could command, bade good-bye to his ancestral home, and became a rover over the face of the wide earth.

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