

"In a bad way? You don't know, can't know, in what a bad way I have been for years and years," replied Arthur. "I am like the prodigal I used to read about when I was a little boy. Only I am worse off than him. I have stayed away so long that my earthly father is dead, and if I have a Father in heaven I know nothing about Him."

"But I do," said Edward. "I have found Him, or rather He has found me. I can't tell you how thankful I am that the good Spirit has led you to speak thus, Mister Arthur; this is what I have been praying and waiting for for days. I am ignorant by the side of you, but I *can* show the way to your Father. Speak to Him yourself, Mister Arthur. Go to Him, that was what the prodigal did. Go to Him in prayer through Christ, and He will receive you."

But we need not prolong the story. The young missionary came on his periodical visit soon after the above conversation took place, a visit which was greatly blessed to Arthur Hardnut; and with God's blessing upon earnest prayer and wise counsel the young Squire came, as the young woodman came before him, in lowly penitence to that Saviour who knows neither squire nor woodman, as such, but is rich unto all that call upon Him in truth. He came not in vain.

What was to be done in the future was now the all-engrossing question. Arthur felt there was but one course open to him—namely, to return to his native home, to comfort his widowed mother, and to redeem his lost character and misspent moments past by a new life. But Edward desired to stay in the land of his adoption. His mother was provided for, and his past life had no special power to allure him back. But Arthur was obstinate. "No," he said, "I cannot leave you behind. I want somebody to confirm me in that which is good, and who can do that so well as the friend of my boyhood? Besides, the Home Farm is waiting a tenant, and that is just the place for you. There we can be neighbours again, you on the Farm and I in the Hall; you as the best farmer in the parish, and I the best Squire in all the country-side, as I humbly pray God I may be. And if you don't go back, Edward, what will become of pretty Susan? Ah! I remember all about it."

"I'm afraid *that's* all over," replied Edward; but he arranged to go back. Ere long the two companions sailed. "What became of the rabbit?" asked Arthur, one day. "Oh, while we fought the rabbit ran away," said Edward. "Wise rabbit," replied Arthur, "wisest of the three. How often do men fight for that which is gone ere the battle ends!"

On Christmas-eve, in the year of our Lord 1850, Little Bubbleton was mightily astir! Bells pealed, bonfires blazed, and all rejoiced save the "Bull" and the "Bear," who were doing a bad trade.

"A fine 'ome-comin' this is," growled the "Bear, "they've gone an' made the young Squire teetotal among 'em, an' the orders is as nobody is to be treated with any drink."