

THE COMING OF THE LODGER 23

versationally, quite forgetful that it had rained continuously since early morning.

"Pleasant!" interrogated Mr. Gupperduck.

Bindle suddenly remembered. "For the ducks, I mean," he said; then with inspiration added, "not for Gupperducks."

"Bindle!" admonished Mrs. Bindle. "You forget yourself."

"Oh, don't mind me, Mr. G.," said Bindle; "there ain't no real 'arm in me."

Bindle proceeded to put "an 'ead on the beer." This he did by pouring it into the glass from a distance of fully a yard and with astonishing accuracy. Catching Mr. Gupperduck's eye, he winked.

"Can't get an 'ead like that on lemonade," he remarked cheerfully.

The atmosphere was constrained. Mr. Gupperduck was tired and hungry, Bindle was hungry without being tired, and Mrs. Bindle was grimly prepared for the worst.

"Well, 'ere's long legs to the baby!" cried Bindle, raising his glass and drinking thirstily.

Mrs. Bindle cast a swift glance at Mr. Gupperduck, who gazed at Bindle wonderingly over the top of the spoon he was raising to his mouth.

The meal continued in silence. Bindle was hypnotised by Mr. Gupperduck's ears. They stood out from each side of his head like sign-boards, as if determined that nothing should escape them.