

"Always," said Mr. Hearty.

"Hmmm!" snorted Mr. Dixon. He glared down the length of the table as if the guests comprised a new species.

Alice repeated her question about the lemonade and lime-juice.

"I should be sick if I drank it," said Mr. Dixon crossly. "I'll have a cup of tea."

"'E's like me, mum," said Bindle to Mrs. Dixon who was greatly distressed at the occurrence, "'e likes 'is glass of beer and ain't none the worse for it."

Mrs. Dixon smiled understandingly.

The meal continued, gloomily silent, or with whispered conversations, as if the guests were afraid of hearing their own voices.

Bindle turned to Mrs. Hearty. "Look 'ere, Martha!" he cried. "We ain't a very cheer-o crowd, are we? Ain't you got none of them naughty stories o' yours to tell jest to make us laugh."

Mrs. Hearty was in the act of conveying a piece of chicken to her mouth. The chicken and fork dropped back to the plate with a jangle, and she leaned back in her chair, heaving and wheezing with laughter.

"Look 'ere, sir!" said Bindle, addressing Mr. Sopley, who temporarily withdrew his eyes from the ceiling. "I 'ad a little argument with a cove the other day, as to where this 'ere was to be found. I said it's from the Bible, 'e says it's from *The Pink 'Un*."