

THE COMING OF THE LODGER 21

sunshine, as cheerful as an expectant relative at the death-bedside of wealth. He was unthinkable, unforgettable, unejectable, living on all men for all time.

Nations rose and declined, kings came and went, emperors soared and fell; but the lodger stayed on.

Bindle looked forward to the coming of Mr. Gupperduck with keen interest. Since the evening of his call, Mrs. Bindle had become uncommunicative.

"Wot's 'e do?" Bindle had enquired.

"He's engaged upon the Lord's work," she had replied, and proved unamenable to all further interrogation.

On the Monday Bindle was home from work early, only to be informed that Mr. Gupperduck would not arrive until eight o'clock.

"Now you just be careful what you say, Bindle," Mrs. Bindle had admonished him as she busied herself with innumerable saucepans upon the stove.

"Don't you be nervous, Mrs. B.," he reassured her, sniffing the savoury air with keen anticipation, "there ain't nothink wrong with my conversation once I gets goin'. Wot about drink?" he demanded as he unhooked from the dresser the blue and white jug with the crimson butterfly just beneath the spout.

"He's temperance," replied Mrs. Bindle with unction.