

THE COMING OF THE LODGER 19

Bindle, unable longer to keep off the subject of the lodge. Mr. Hearty had married Mrs. Bindle's sister, and had become a prosperous greengrocer.

"'Earty like Alf! 'Old me, 'Orace!" cried Bindle.

"I meant Mr. Gupperduck," said Mrs. Bindle with dignity.

"Mr. Wot-a-duck!" Bindle cried, his interest too evident for concealment.

"Mr. Josiah Gupperduck," repeated Mrs. Bindle with unction. "That is his name."

Bindle whistled, a long low sound of joy and wonder. "Well, I'm damned!" he exclaimed.

"Don't you swear before me, Joseph Bindle," cried Mrs. Bindle angrily; "for I won't stand it."

"Gupperduck!" repeated Bindle with obvious enjoyment. "Sounds like a patent mackintosh."

"Oh! you may laugh," said Mrs. Bindle, drawing in her lips, "you may laugh; but he'll be company for me. He plays too." She could no longer restrain her desire to tell all she knew about Mr. Gupperduck.

"Is it the jew's 'arp, or the drum wot 'e plays?" enquired Bindle presently.

"It's neither," replied Mrs. Bindle, "it's the accordion."

Bindle groaned. Mentally he visualised Mr. Hearty's hymn-singing Sunday evenings, plus Mr. Gupperduck and his accordion.

"Well, well!" he remarked philosophically, "I suppose we're none of us perfect."