

A DOWNING STREET SENSATION 41

When Bindle had drained to the last drop his second pewter, his mind was made up.

"Number 110, Downing Street," he muttered. "White dresses an' coloured sashes. That's it. Well, Joe Bindle, you can't save the bloomin' British Empire from destruction; but you can save the Prime Minister from 'avin' 'is afternoon nap spoilt, leastwise you can try.

"I'm a-goin' for a little stroll, Tippy," he remarked, as he walked towards the door. "Back in ten minutes. If you gets lonely, order another pint an' put it down to me."

"Right-o! mate," replied Tippitt.

Bindle walked along Wimbledon High Street and turned into an oil-shop.

"D'you keep lamp black?" he enquired of the young woman behind the counter.

"Yes," she replied. "How much do you want, we sell it in packets?"

"Let's 'ave a look at a packet," said Bindle.

When he had examined it, he ordered two more.

"Startin' a minstrel troupe," he confided to the young woman.

"But you want burnt cork," she said practically; "lamp black's greasy. You'll never get it off."

"That's jest why I want it," remarked Bindle with a grin.

The young woman looked at him curiously and, when he had purchased a pea-puffer as well, she decided that he was a harmless lunatic; but