

THE COMING OF THE LODGER 17

door, she threw back at Bindle the one word "Remember," pregnant with as much meaning as that uttered two and a half centuries before in Whitehall.

"Nippy on 'er feet is Mrs. B.," muttered Bindle admiringly, as he listened intently to the murmur of voices and the sound of footsteps in the passage. Presently the parlour-door closed and then—silence.

Bindle fidgeted about the kitchen. He was curious as to what was taking place in the parlour and, above all, what manner of man the prospective lodger would turn out to be. He picked up the evening paper, endeavouring to read what the Austrian Prime Minister thought of the prospects of peace, what Berlin thought of the Austrian Prime Minister, what the Kaiser thought of the Almighty, and what the Almighty was permitted to think of the Kaiser. But international politics and the War had lost their interest. Bindle was conscious that he was on the eve of a crisis in his home life.

"'Ow the injiarubber ostridge can a cove read when 'e ain't smokin'?" he muttered discontentedly as he paused to listen. He had detected a movement in the parlour.

Yes; the door had been opened. There was again the murmur of voices, steps along the passage and, finally, the sound of the outer-door closing. A moment later Mrs. Bindle entered.

Bindle looked up expectantly; but remembering that curiosity was the last thing calculated