

heaven ; but with—er—er—the Almighty's blessing it may be a linking of hands of two of—er—God's creatures as they pass down the—er—er—valley of the shadow of death to eternal and lasting salvation." Mr. Sopley paused.

" 'Ere, I say, sir," broke in Bindle. " Cheer up, this ain't a funeral."

There were murmurs of " Hussssssssh ! " Mrs. Hearty began to cry quietly. Mr. Hearty appeared portentously solemn, Mrs. Bindle looked almost cheerful.

" We see two young people," resumed Mr. Sopley, having apparently renewed his store of ideas from a further contemplation of the ceiling, " on the threshold of life, with all its disappointments and temptations, all its sin and misery, all its fears and misgivings. We know that—we know—we have evidence of——" Mr. Sopley lost the thread of his discourse, and once more returned to his contemplation of Mr. Hearty's ceiling. Bindle beat his fist on the table ; but was silenced by a " Hussssssssh " from several of the guests.

" Marriages," continued Mr. Sopley, " marriages are made in heaven——"

" I knew you was goin' to say that, sir," broke in Bindle cheerfully. " 'Ere, stop it ! " he yelled, stooping down to rub his shin. " Who's a-kickin' me under the table ? " he fixed a suspicious eye upon a winter-worn spinster in a vieux rose satin blouse sitting opposite.