

8 THE BEWILDERED BENEDICT

couple in the world. Oh dear, Edward the Second has emptied the honey-jar on to his plate! What spirit the child has!" She took the honey away however and rapped our eldest son's knuckles. She has confessed to me that her one horror is, not that our boys shall grow up to be wastrels, but that they shall take after her father, grandfather, and Uncle Abimelech, and "be too good to be nice," as she expresses it. I do not think there is much danger.

"Of course they might take after Uncle Percy," she now observed thoughtfully. "I mean, of course, after he's repented and become a millionaire."

"I prefer that they should take after you, dearest," I said firmly.

"Well, I suppose it can't be helped," was all she said.

Sophonisba undervalues herself to an absurd extent. One would think she was neither beautiful, clever, nor accomplished, to hear her.

"And then there's your training," I said. "How can they help growing up remarkable?"

"It's wonderful what people do help," she said.

Her training is as original as herself, and I feel sure it is bound to answer. She believes in "making the punishment fit the crime," and really it does seem rather effective. When Edward the Second was discovered stealing strawberry-jam, Sophonisba did not take the great jar away from him. Far from it. She stood over him till he had eaten the lot. The unhappy child was exceedingly ill, and will not look at strawberry-jam to this day.

Then there was the incident of Billium and the cat. Billium, in attempting to pluck the cat, did not, I feel sure, understand that the cat was not finding the pastime equally amusing, but he understood something