

of my happy innocent boyhood and all that! There was your wedding to the owner of Moss End, your photographs and all that, no end of a set-out. The more I looked at your picture, my dear Soapy, the prouder I felt of my niece. 'It takes brains to do the trick,' I said to myself, 'and my little niece takes after her uncle, it seems.' I resolved the very minute I had made my pile, I should turn up and share it, and see if little Soapy couldn't help me to make the dibs fly. As luck would have it, my second fortune went the way of the first a few weeks later, and I had to start all over again, and postpone my visit for a year or so! But I'm here all right now, and the fortune too, though I left that in charge of my secretary *pro tem*—not the chap that did a guy with the first lot, a brother of his. I simply couldn't wait. England, home and beauty called me, and beauty never calls in vain where Percy Kearness is concerned." He laughed long and loudly. "I seem to have struck the garden of Eden before the advent of the snake, and previous to the apple incident. Isn't there a saying to the effect that once woman gave man the apple, but now she only gives him the pip?"

"Oh uncle how delicious!" cried Sophonisba, laughing as if she had not heard it before. It was one of Angus' oldest stories.

"Some people find it dull without the snake," mused Sophonisba's uncle, "then they import him, and when trouble comes of it, blame the snake. So like human nature!"

"You are such a philosopher, uncle," said Sophonisba admiringly.

"Well I try to be, my dear, I try to be, but I can't say that I've always found it easy. The top dog has all the philosophy, you know; the under-dog gets none."