

22 THE BEWILDERED BENEDICT

"I like Uncle P-P-Percy," announced Edward Junior, "he's f-f-fat and f-f-funny."

"And gives us shilluns," added Billium slowly.

Percy Kearness came down in an old, but well-cut, dinner jacket, and I was gratified that a man who could afford the best of everything, should so heartily enjoy the fare we put before him, and be so appreciative of the swift movements of Jane.

"I never saw such an appetite," said Sophonisba afterwards to me, "I suppose it comes of goin' to Klondyke."

After dinner he seemed suddenly to forget our very existence. He muttered something about "exercise," and proceeded to pace the room,—or rather a small square of the room,—wheeling mechanically backwards and forwards. Suddenly he saw us looking at him, and sat down with a high shrill laugh. "there I go again," he exclaimed, and he seemed really annoyed with himself, "the most absent-minded beggar in the world! Hanged if I didn't fancy myself back on board my yacht in rough weather, having to make the most of my own private saloon. I'm very keen on exercise, taken it regularly for years. Fat runs in the family, you see, ha, ha!"

"Sophonisba," I said quickly, "is merely plump. I hate scraggy women."

"Well that's what I'm trying to avoid," he said, "getting plump."

"How did you find out about me?" asked Sophonisba, "we thought you were dead."

"Ah that's a queer story, fact is ever stranger than fiction. I had just made my second fortune,—I lost the first, you know,—and I happened to pick up a friend's newspaper, and saw it was the 'Hilltown Chronicle.' You bet I read it all through, the home