

6 THE BEWILDERED BENEDICT

any relation of yours," I said. "Very pleasant, I'm sure, having relations coming and going."

"More pleasant havin' 'em goin'," retorted Sophonisba; "specially when it's great-aunt Susans an' sister-in-law Pansys, an' they won't!"

I coloured. Perhaps Pansy, my brother James' wife, most excellent and sensible woman as she is, is rather a crumpled rose-leaf in my life. She can never forget that she brought me up, and more or less owned me, old bachelor that I was, up to some forty years, when my peerless and wonderful Sophonisba rescued me from the dragon—if I may use such a metaphor—and brought me incredible happiness.

"It sounds most inhospitable," I owned, "but I am always glad when they go, and you and I are left alone. They wrest you away, Sophonisba, as if they were doing me a favour."

"Oh, they think it a true kindness an' a relief," she said, smiling; "they can't believe you are the dear blind thing you are. I can't always believe it myself. I must own it's the only time I am really fond of relations—when they wave 'good-bye' out of the train."

I laughed.

"You see," she said in her dear, inconsequent way, "not feelin' properly married makes it so much nicer. If we'd gone on a honeymoon like other people you'd have come back a regular husband, an' everythin' would have been different. As it is I never think of you as a husband at all. I just think of you as the dearest man in the world I happen to be livin' with. It may be improper, but it's nice. Promise you'll never become a regular husband. I couldn't bear it."

I promised.

"We don't want his millions," she went on, returning to her uncle, "but the girls do. There aren't