

20 THE BEWILDERED BENEDICT

us with one of his funny stories," and I signed to the man who gardens.

He came at once, greeted me respectfully, and Sophonisba's uncle with the briefest and slightest of acknowledgements. Then he leaned on his spade and waited.

"You must work very hard to keep the garden in such beautiful order," said Sophonisba's uncle graciously.

Angus gave him a swift glance, "Dunno," he said laconically.

"Even in California the gardens fall short of this," went on Percy Kearness.

"Ump! California!" returned Angus, took up his spade, and fell to digging with increased violence.

I was disappointed. I could not feel Angus had done himself justice. I had almost to apologise for him, "Of course he is rather abrupt and laconic," I explained, "and perhaps a trifle insular. He objects to foreign places and to foreigners. Perhaps you noticed how he said California?"

"I did, but it doesn't matter. We all have our pet prejudices. Mine are ugly women and gratings. I don't know why, I'm sure."

He sank into the most comfortable drawing-room chair and drew off his smart light gloves, "Comfort at last for weary bones," he said, "try sitting on woods and planks for a change—as we have to do out West at times." Then he held out his hands towards us, and they were gnarled and horny with broken nails, the hand of one who had toiled early and late. Undoubtedly Sophonisba's uncle had worked hard for his millions.

"On and off, some twenty years' hard labour have gone to the making of them," he explained, laughing