

4 THE BEWILDERED BENEDICT

She took up the letter to see what next, and became absorbed. "Why, he's actually started," she exclaimed. "Now I call that really friendly of him! Such a nice companion for you an' all. He'll be here in a few hours. Really, it's positively too sweet of him for words! I hope he will make quite a long stay!"

"But," I began, startled, "a man of such reputation——"

"Darlin', don't be fussy an' old-maidish because the poor dear was a little high-spirited in his youth, and got blamed for simply everythin'. After all, boys will be boys, specially when they're brought up religiously. He's been all over the world an' made millions, an' isn't married. Was there ever anythin' so providential? An' to let us have first go, with relations all scrappin' to have him in the sickenin' way they do go on when there's money an' pickin's! If the poor dear had returned a beggar do you think they would have welcomed him, overlooked the past? Catch 'em at it—that's all!"

"But, my darling girl——"

"Of course he's repented an' all that," she interrupted hastily; "one does when one gets on in the world an' elderly an' that. Besides, he was well brought up. We must make his declinin' years happy, poor old man. Won't the relations look silly when the will is read? Of course it's all for the girls. We don't want anythin', thank goodness!"

Sophonisba, the most unworldly of mortals, is continually worrying over the impecunious position of her family. If only she would allow me to become responsible! . . . but she says a man's responsibilities are those of his own household.

"I will see to the girls——" I began.