

3 THE BEWILDERED BENEDICT

Sophonisba looked at me oddly, and choked over her coffee. "You've hit it exactly!" she spluttered; "but that was Uncle Abimelech. One expects things to happen to people called Abimelech. Thank goodness Edward the Second and Billium won't want to be clergymen an' missionaries an' things!"

"Then your Uncle Abimelech was a missionary? He converted the heathen?"

"Dunno about convertin'," returned Sophonisba in a matter-of-fact tone; "they ate him before he'd time to get started—— If you don't want that last slice of bacon I believe I could manage it."

"How dreadful!" I gasped, helping her to the bacon.

"Why?" she asked, astonished, and added philosophically, "If people go about askin' for trouble they mostly get it. Leave the heathen alone an' he'll leave you alone; that's sense, isn't it? Besides, you can't expect to keep your relations for always, an' it can't be helped, anyway, so one may as well make the best of it. Then he used to give us prayer-books on our birthdays, an' read us 'passages,' an' said the heathen abroad were nothin' to the heathen at home——meanin' us kids. He was the most disappointin' relation we ever had, which is sayin' somethin'! I expect he disappointed the heathen too——there wasn't much on him. This egg seems all white."

"Still——" I began.

"As long as things don't happen to you, why fuss?" asked Sophonisba, cracking another egg. "As long as we're happy, what's the odds?"

She beamed at me, and I beamed back again. Everybody knows that my lovely young wife and I are ideally happy.

"Relations mostly deserve it," she went on. "It