

enthusiastic on the subject of his department. 'Now it seems to me that what's needed most is for the fellows who do the actual work to get into touch with the men who handle the nation's money and show 'em what's being done for the nation's good with that money. If you were a friend of Senator and Mrs. Brown there's every likelihood that one worker could get the needs of the department before the Senator.'

Here Billy smote his broad chest vigorously.

Mrs. Billy sat still, with the open letter in her hands, and listened attentively. As she looked at Billy a curious little smile hovered about her red, curved lips; in her big dark eyes was an expression of love, and Mrs. Brown there's every likelihood knew well that her in-laws, in asking her to come with them, were not thinking particularly of the good of the Forest Service. Her in-laws were fond of Mrs. Billy, and were determined to draw her socially nearer to Dupont Circle.

'Where Billy's salary would never support us,' Mrs. Billy said to herself. 'And live within that salary we shall! Nor shall I pay 40 dollars a week for the doubtful chance of becoming a friend of the wife of a man who has a voice in congressional committees and miss a payment on this house! Not much!'

But of all that she said not a word aloud. Her news was a sufficient bomb in itself. 'Billy, Cousin Becky has invited herself to spend the summer with me here.' She held up the letter.

Billy sat down on the couch so hard that he bounced. 'The dickens she has! Cousin Becky! I thought she was wedded to Haverly, Pennsylvania, winter and summer. You write her that your summer is otherwise spoken for.'

Mrs. Billy looked straight at Billy. 'You know that I can't, dear. It's the first time she has ever asked anything of me in all my life—and, Billy, you know that I wouldn't be here if it were not for Cousin Becky.'

Billy knew, and his eyes wavered; then he rumbled his hair savagely; then he groaned. Cousin Becky had brought Mrs. Billy up as far as three feet and ten years. And it had been a struggle, for Mrs. Billy had been a frail child.

The next morning, however, Billy had a bright idea. 'Why not take her to Maine with you? She can afford it and she'd like to go. Tell her that Washington is insufferably hot in summer, and—'

Mrs. Billy shook her head. 'That wouldn't do, Billy. Cousin Becky would never fit into a 40 dollar-a-week hotel. Ask your mother.'

After an interview with his relatives, Billy saw clearly that Mrs. Billy was right.

'What!' his sister Belle ejaculated. 'Her Cousin Becky! She has the most impossible manners of any one I ever saw. Why must she appear and spoil our plans?'

But appear she did. She arrived in the middle of June, when the thermometer had shot up to a hundred in the shade. It hung there while the in-laws were languidly preparing to leave for the Maine coast. She arrived the day after Congress had adjourned, and Senator Brown had made a speech on the wastefulness of the management of the Forest Service. An hour before she arrived at the Union Station Billy left it, departing westward for his summer's work in the national forest preserves of Wyoming. She carried a telescope bag strapped together with wool twine; she at once asked Mrs. Billy to point out to her a real live chief justice!

Mrs. Billy, on whose cheeks were still glistening the tears caused by Billy's departure, laughed and clung half hysterically to her straight, sharp-eyed, tireless cousin. 'The Supreme Court has adjourned, Cousin Becky, and the justices have scattered.'

Cousin Becky set the bag down in the pathway of a stream of hurrying travellers. 'And Congress?' she demanded, with her bonnet hunched over one ear.

'Adjourned yesterday.'

'And the President?' Cousin Becky's voice soared.

Mrs. Billy tugged at the corded bag. 'He leaves to-morrow for his summer home, the papers say.'

Cousin Becky thumped her bonnet vindictively, and sent it over the other ear; then, as she swooped down on her bag, she hurled one last question: 'Do the stores have bargain days in summer?'

'Oh, any number of them!' cried Mrs. Billy eagerly. 'Friday is always bargain day, and to-morrow is Friday!'

'Then,' said Cousin Becky, setting out at a rapid pace, 'let's get home and rested as soon as we can. Next to seeing people who amount to something, I like bargain hunting. I haven't bought anything for a year, just looking forward to being here this summer.'

Mrs. Billy's heart sank as she thought of the heat and the crowded stores on bargain day; but she thought also of the first ten years of her life, and did not falter.

A hot June faded into July. The in-laws invaded Stuyvesant Place, and shook hands with the impossible-mannered Cousin Becky. They also kissed Mrs. Billy good-bye, and remarked with peculiar emphasis that Senator Thomas Brown and his wife were already on the Maine coast. Mrs. Billy looked guilty, and Cousin Becky abruptly asked whether Senator Brown had towed hair and was cross-eyed. The in-laws hastened to inform her that his hair was a mixture of brown and grey, and that his eyes were not crossed.

'I should admire to see a real live Senator,' she announced in a loud voice, Cousin Becky, being slightly deaf, was determined to hear at least one voice distinctly, and that was her own.

The in-laws departed, shuddering, 'Such awful manners!' murmured Belle, as they climbed into her automobile. 'It's a shame that Billy allowed such a person to interfere with our plans to promote his wife socially!'

The following day the in-laws departed with much baggage for Maine. As they travelled north in the intense heat, a cold wave hastened south to meet them. It struck the coast of Maine, and sent people shivering indoors. It reached New York, and millions breathed in relief. It continued south, and made bargain hunting delightful to Cousin Becky and tolerable to Mrs. Billy. And having come, the cold wave, to everyone's surprise, remained.

On July 20th Mrs. Billy received a letter from her in-laws, imploring her to go to their closed houses and send them their winter wraps. On August 1st the elder Mrs. Keenan sent a request for her furs, and on the first Friday in the month Cousin Becky decided to include a coat among her day's bargains.

'I declare,' she exclaimed from the bay window, where she sat scanning the advertisements in the daily papers, 'I never saw such weather in all my born days! It seems just made for us. I've got round this capital comfortably and seen all there is to see, I guess, except the men who do things. I should admire to see some real live—'

Here she came to a sudden stop, for her eye had caught a news item sandwiched between a notice of patent leather belts reduced in price to forty-nine cents, and another of shoes sold at a dollar less than the original price.

'Huh!' she commented as she read. 'Came back to Washington to get warm, did he? Can't stand the rigors of a Maine summer! Bathed once in the ocean, and hasn't been able to speak out loud since! Huh! Now I wonder did he ever have a tow head and squint eyes!'

She glanced thoughtfully at Mrs. Billy, who was clearing away the breakfast dishes. Once she opened her lips to ask a question, and closed them again with a chuckle. 'Some things are best done first and talked about afterward!' she muttered. 'But I should admire to see—' She rose, and set her straight, strong old figure down in front of the desk. The following afternoon Mrs. Billy invited her cousin to take a long electric car ride up the Potomac to the Cabin John Bridge, and to her surprise met with a refusal. Cousin Becky, it seemed, wished to stay at home that afternoon. She did not even want to read; instead, she sat silently in the bay window and watched the broad, short street.