



REDUCED ONE-HALF.

SHE—"Can you not let me have this for less than a dollar a yard?"
HE—"Fifty cents less if you only take half a yard."—*N.Y. Truth.*

the cop, and off he goes, leaving the millionaire feeling cheap enough to go out into a vacant lot and kick himself. When I go off and try the game on some one else, till I find somebody that's scared enough to give up without taking no chances. What you think of it? Big scheme, ain't it? I must get down there and get to work right away afore any one is onto the snap." And the Fakir departed.

MR. BEETLEWACKER'S CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

CHRISTMAS with all its horrors is on us again. It's an infernal nuisance. Got to make a lot of presents. If there is anything I do hate it is this business of making Christmas presents. Not that I grudge the money—not at all—I don't think my worst enemy would say I'm that kind of a man. If I could plank down a ten dollar bill, or even double that amount, and be done with it, I'd do it gladly. But it's the ordeal of making selections, of getting something to suit everybody that knocks me cold. It's an awful business, but I suppose I've got to go through it. Well, there's nothing like facing difficulties manfully, the worst of trouble comes to an end, even a Christmas shopping expedition. May as well pitch in at once and get it over. Oh Lor!

To begin with, there's Aunt Jagworthy. What on earth am I to get her? Prayer book? No, I gave her one last year. Paper cutter? um—that don't seem exactly the thing. Might give her a book of some sort. She never reads, but that makes no difference. Hard to know how to suit the old lady. Mustn't make the same kind of a break that brother Joe did last year when in a moment of desperation he bought her a patent corkscrew. I really believe she's never forgiven him, and is

likely to leave him out of her will in consequence. Why on earth can't a fellow send her a couple of dollars in cash, and tell her to buy something to suit herself? But it wouldn't do I suppose, she'd probably think that worse than the corkscrew.

Here we are at the store. No, thank you. Don't want anything in particular. Just want to take a look round. Isn't so easy to look round for the crowd. Why do people leave buying Christmas presents till a day or two before Christmas. Wish I'd thought of getting my stock in before.

Oh, now here's a nice photograph album. But it's marked \$4. Plenty of cheap ones, but they look too paltry. Anyway I don't think she'd care about a photograph album, she's got a good one already. What on earth is there that would make her a decent present, and not cost too much? Ah, here's a fan, the very thing, a pretty, handsome affair, too. Only 50 cents! Pshaw, that won't do, too cheap altogether!

Would she like a work-box I wonder? There seem to be quite a lot of them so I suppose they are the thing for presents. But it don't seem to fill the bill somehow. All women must have workboxes. Or a brooch, how would a brooch do? I just wish when I saw her last she'd have given me a hint of what she did want.

Half an hour gone already and nothing bought, and the storekeeper looking at me in a nervous kind of way as though I came in to steal things. Brooch, yes, that'll do. Three dollars, eh? More than I expected to pay for a single present, but I'm down for something in the old lady's will, and anyway it'll be cheaper than fool away any more time. Thank Heaven she's provided for, and that's off my mind!

Now what shall I get for sister Jemina? Inkstand? escritoire? no, that's too dear. Purse? Don't think she'd care about a purse. She did give me a hint that she'd like a muff, but that's out of sight. Got to be something cheap, say \$1.50 at the outside. Elegant pair of fancy scissors for \$1.25, that's the thing. But, no, Jemina wouldn't take 'em, got the old superstition that a present like that cuts love. Lamp? Awkward to carry. Probably break it before I got there.

Ha! Elegantly bound copies of Byron, Shelley, Keats, The Khan, Burns, Cockin, and the other poets. What's the matter with one of those? Let me see, though she must have 'em all or nearly all, and she wouldn't thank me for a duplicate. It would be just like her to say, "Oh, George, you know I've got so-and-so's works, why didn't you bring me something else?" Make a fellow feel like a fool. I don't think a book would please her as well as something useful as well as ornamental. Oh, this Christmas shopping is just a holy terror.

Hang it all, what is there that she would like! No use putting it that way after all. What is it that I can give her that'll let me out? Here's a seventy-five cent purse. That goes, I guess she's always losing or wearing out her purses—most women are. Now she's off the list.

Ah, but that's only a beginning, there's all John's kids to be provided for, I take dinner there Christmas and must bring 'em something. Let me see there's five of 'em in all stages. Can't go over a couple of dollars for the lot. Mustn't give one more expensive present than the others or they'll fight over it. How'd it do to get five dolls all exactly alike. I forgot, two of the lot are boys, and boys don't care about dolls, at least they didn't used to when I was a kid. Rocking horse? Too dear. Wooden monkey on a stick? Too cheap. Besides I don't think Tom, the oldest boy, would care about a