

### The One Disinterested Gift An Easter Story By Amelia Wright

One spring day, the Saturday before Easter Sunday, a boy of fifteen trudged along a road with a little bundle containing his clothing stopped under a tree to eat a bite of luncheon he carried in his pocket. While he was there a girl a year or two younger than he came along and said to him:

"You look very tired. Have you come far?"

"I have walked all the way from L. since 4 o'clock this morning. I am going to the city and must reach it before night."

"What are you going there for?"

"To begin to make myself independent. I am a half orphan with a step-mother. She has made me so disagreeable for me at home that I can stay there no longer."

"Have you any friends in the city to help you?"

"No."

"Any money to use till you get a start?"

"No."

"What will you do for food and for a place to sleep?"

"As for food, I will go hungry; as for a place to sleep, I hear there are benches in the parks."

A great pity welled up into the girl's eyes. Presently she unlaced her pocket and uncovered a crisp five dollar bill. She looked at it longingly, then extended it to the boy. "Take this," she said. "My uncle gave it to me for a birthday present. I am thirteen years old today."

"What were you going to do with it?"

"I was going to buy a sweater. All the girls have sweaters, and I have long wanted one. But you will need it far more than I. It may keep you till you get a position."

The offer of this money was the only sacrifice the boy had ever experienced. Thus far whatever had been given him had come from those whose duty it was to protect him, but everything he had received had come grudgingly.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Laura."

"Laura Maryweather."

"And you think me so despicable as to take from you your birthday gift? Nothing would induce me to do so. I am going to the city to make my fortune. I have learned the value of money by hard knocks, and I shall take more such lessons. I shall make people pay me for what they get out of me, and I shall work, work, work, and save, save, save, until I am rich. But I will do it all myself. I will be held to no one."

"What are you going to do with your money when you get it?"

"Spend it? Well, one thing I will do with it—I will hold it up to glitter before the eyes of those who have desired me those things a boy desires, and I will make them feel how easy it would be to make them happy, but I won't."

The girl looked at him through a pair of eyes that grew big with wonder, mingled with which was an expression of reproach. Finally she said:

"Aren't you a queer boy?"

"Yes."

"Well, I suppose I am queer since you say so. Others have told me that, but I would not believe them. Well, I must get on. Goodby."

"Aren't you going to thank me for offering you my birthday gift?"

"No. Thanks are empty words."

"Well, you have taught me a lesson in courage and independence, for which I thank you very much."

The boy turned away from her with out another word. She watched until he had passed out of sight, then said to herself:

"That's the queerest boy I ever saw in my life."

After that she went on to the village and bought a sweater.

And what did the boy say of the girl as he drew away from her? "That girl is the biggest fool I ever met."

Twenty years passed. Laura Maryweather in a worldly point of view fulfilled the boy's opinion of her. She gave first to others, second to herself. As to economy, she never knew what it meant. The day came when she passed beyond her father's and mother's care and was obliged to take care of herself, being compelled to work very hard. She was always giving away things she needed herself, taking no forethought for her future and spending what money she devoted to her own use without much wisdom. She was the personification of improvidence.

When she was twenty-five she married a man named Spellmeyer, who had no better head for getting on in the world than herself. Several children were born to her, then her husband died and left her with just what she had when he married her—nothing.

Another five years passed, during which her children were growing older and needing more and more every year. Then she broke down in both health and mind.

One morning the postman left a letter for her containing a check for \$20 signed with a name she had never heard before. She opened it. The letter said that on Thursday before Easter there was to be an auction sale of household furniture in the city. "Attend the sale and bid on a cake of maple sugar." The check bore date of several months before, and the envelope looked a little faded. The recipient was puzzled beyond measure. There was nothing to eat in the house and she was furnished with \$25 with which to buy a cake of maple sugar probably not worth a dollar. She spent the money for necessities.

One trait common with us all, curiosity, led her to attend the sale. She tried to borrow a dollar to take with her to buy the maple sugar, but though she applied to those indebted to her, no one could spare the amount at the time, so she went with but a few cents in her pocket.

She found that a man supposed to be wealthy had died and left no will, so far as had thus far been discovered. He had left instructions that his household effects be sold at auction and all his relatives be hidden to the sale. An army of these persons were there, believing that a legacy would be contained in some of the articles sold. As soon as the auctioneer mounted on a stand a spirited bidding commenced on everything that was hollow. Crickery, knives and forks that could not be used to conceal a treasure went for nothing. Mrs. Spellmeyer regretted that she had spent her \$25, for she could have bought lots of things she wanted, for a song. But sofas, bureaus and desks with locked drawers brought fabulous prices. As soon as an article was knocked down to a bidder it was torn to pieces in the hope of finding a sum of money, stocks, bonds or jewelry.

Finally some kitchen stores were put up and among other things a cake of maple sugar. Mrs. Spellmeyer by this time began to suspect that the deceased had intended to favor her, but she could scrape together only 7 cents of the money provided to secure the sugar. She made the first bid on it, she made on anything, and this attracting attention, the cake was soon up to \$10, so she lost it.

Meanwhile there was a smashing and a tearing to pieces of all sorts of articles as fast as they were bought.

The sale was over without any large sum being discovered, though those who had made purchases were still pulling to pieces what they had bought. One old lady who had bought a bed had ripped the ticking off the mattress and was throwing the contents aside as a ship throws the waves from her bow. A man who had purchased an iron box (locked and no key) was drilling a hole in it with a view to inserting an explosive and blowing it open. A boy was chopping to piece a bureau the drawers of which could not be removed in any other way. A young girl added to the din by trying to blow bank bills out of a cornet's piston. At the moment some one stove in the head of a drum.

The auctioneer, standing on the platform with a bit of paper in his hand, rapped with his gavel. When he had secured attention he began to speak.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the intention of the deceased in ordering this sale has been discovered. One of the articles sold, a cake of maple sugar, was broken apart and this paper found within: 'I give and bequeath all my property, real and personal, to Laura Spellmeyer, nee Maryweather.'

There was a hush for a moment, followed by a howl of disappointed rage. The auctioneer rapped and cried above the din. "Is Laura Spellmeyer present?"

The widow, not knowing whether she was on her heels or her head, stood up and said she was the party called for. A sleek looking gentleman advanced toward her and stated that he had been the deceased's attorney and had had the care of the property. He had forwarded to her the mysterious letter she had received. It had been left with him by the testator some time before his death.

A crowd gathered round the widow composed mostly of those who had expected little or nothing, to congratulate her. To their questions as to her connection to the deceased she replied that she had never heard of him, whereupon the attorney said that the testator had told him the reason for willing his property as he did.

In all his life he had received but one offer of purely disinterested kindness. When journeying to the city a penniless boy he had met a girl who offered him a five dollar bill she had just received for a birthday gift. That girl he made his heir.

Mrs. Spellmeyer tried to remember the incident, but failed. It had occurred many years before, when she was a child, and it had passed out of her memory.

She was receiving congratulations, her face wreathed in smiles, when the lawyer asked her if she knew how much money she had inherited.

"La sakes," she exclaimed, "I never thought of that!"

"Guess."

"A thousand dollars."

"A thousand dollars. It's more than a million."

"Oh, my goodness gracious! I wonder how I came to deserve such treatment of my heavenly father."

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these ye did it unto the King."

In the collection plate in Mrs. Maryweather's congregation the next day was an Easter offering of \$100,000 for a new church and another \$100,000 for an endowment. This was only the beginning of the widow's gifts. She seemed to take as much pleasure in scattering her money as the man from whom she inherited it had taken in hoarding it. The only smart thing she ever said was in this connection:

"The Lord needs two people to dispense benefactions—the one to get money together, another to scatter it."

### The Wives of Pine Flat A New Version of an Old Roman Legend By F. A. MITCHEL

There were two settlements among the Nevada silver mines in which from the first was a rivalry. These were the Quartz Gulch and the Pine Flat people. Both were a bad lot. The Quartz Gulchers had one good man among them, while the Pine Flaters were all bad. The good man at Quartz Gulch wasn't good because he was naturally inclined that way, but because he owned property in the Gulch that he would like to make valuable, and he was prevented from doing so by the reputation of the town. No one would invest money there, no one would even come there to investigate.

Pete Wilkins, this so-called good man of Quartz Gulch, sat down one day for a job of thinking with a view to finding some way to better the morals of his fellow citizens. He considered the feasibility of shutting off their liquor supply, or corraling all the weapons in the settlement under lock and key, of inducing an evangelist to come among them and impregnate them with religious principles. It didn't seem to Mr. Wilkins that any of these plans were feasible.

At last Wilkins got down to the fourth and last of refinement—woman. If he could only get some respectable women in the camp he believed they would act as a palliative upon the men and eventually bring about a better state of morals. The first difficulty was to find the women, the second to get them to the Gulch and the third to keep them there long enough to penetrate the outside coating of villainy and get a hold on the men's better nature. He didn't mind the disappointment the women would experience in expecting to secure husbands and homes, but he didn't like to be put in for a failure.

It occurred to him to interest the men in his project. There would be no difficulty in securing their approval of bringing in the women. The trouble would be to induce them to behave in such a fashion as to induce their more delicate partners to remain. He called a meeting of the citizens and thus addressed them:

"Pards, I been thinkin' o' some way o' gittin' the better o' them galoots down on the flat, and I think I've got the nail square on the head. I'm going to send for a carload o' the best looking and most respectable women to be found in the east to be sent out here to beautify the town."

There was a yell of approbation, and the orator continued:

"What we want is decent homes and you can't make a home without a woman in it. All I'm afraid of is that if we induce good women to come in and start homes for us you fellows'll screw 'em away."

Cries of "We won't! Try us! Bring 'em on and see!"

A collection was taken up and a sufficient sum was raised for the purpose. The scheme was popular both because of the coming of the fair sex and toppling the inhabitants of Pine Flat. Pete Wilkins was appointed a committee of one to carry out the project and another opened up a correspondence with a society called the Helping Hand in an eastern city, and arrangements for a first shipment of young women who needed homes were made. If they reported favorably on their reception and the prospects before them another shipment was to follow.

The probability is that all would have worked well had it not been that certain citizens of the town were so put out with pride at their prospective outdoing of Pine Flat that they must needs crow over their rivals before their chickens were hatched. When it was learned by those of the Flat that the Gulchers were going to have a cargo of women sent out from the east there was a feeling among the latter that something must be done. Various propositions were made to see this innovation and go their rival one better, but they were either impracticable or absurd. One stupid churl suggested that they send for a cargo of monkeys, another that a number of wax figures in the show windows of city stores be bought up and placed in the windows of the shanties, suggesting the presence of a housekeeper.

One suggestion was received with a howl of delight. Aaron Skinner, who before going to the bad had taught school, this spoke to a crowd of his fellow citizens who were debating the question:

"It seems to me, he said, 'that by blabbin' the Gulchers have given us an advantage over 'em. What we want to do is first to lay our plan and then shoot any one of our number who sees heading for the Gulch, so that he can't give 'em away. There was once a lot of fellows who started a town they named Rome. Not far off was another town, the people of which were called Sabines. The Romans were so bad off for want of women as the Gulchers, but the Sabines had plenty of 'em. The Romans invited the Sabines with their wives and daughters to a blowout, and at a signal the Romans picked up the women and ran 'em off. Now, what I propose is to go out and shoot them girls that's coming to the Gulchers before they get to the end of the journey and run 'em in here."

### The Cyclone Cure A Case Requiring a Severe Medicine By CLARISSA MACKIE

"I'll never give in," declared Jeremiah Butterfield grimly.

"And I'll never give in," affirmed his wife Eva just as grimly.

"You are obstinate as a mule," snarled Jeremiah.

"And you are ugly as sin," retorted Eva.

"We might as well give up this cat and dog life."

"I for one would be glad to experience a peaceful existence."

The result of this mutual disagreement was that the Butterfields separated and went to live at opposite ends of Blusterville, in the cyclone belt. Jeremiah took as his share of their mutual possessions all the farm implements and stock and the wornout furniture of the house, while Eva Butterfield was content with the rest of the household furniture and the fat carriage horse and a little phaeton.

Jeremiah went to farming, for it was the only thing he knew how to do, and his wife opened a summer boarding house because she could cook better than anybody within ten miles of Little Villa, as she called her new home.

Because Jeremiah stuck to his farming he marketed his crops promptly and placed money in the bank every month. He soon became prosperous, but he was not happy. Every time he walked over his broad acres and saw the tilled land and the green growing crops and the comfortable green painted farmhouse, with the red painted barns and outbuildings, he tried to feel proud and satisfied, but he only succeeded in suppressing a pang of sorrow at the thought that he had parted from Eva, whom he really loved after all.

As for Eva, her house was filled each summer with city people, who praised her cooking and said that nowhere in the world had they tasted such delicious homemade bread and biscuits, such light cake, such toothsome apple pies and doughnuts. Mrs. Butterfield would nod her brown head in acknowledgment of their compliments, and that was all, for she cared not a whit for the praise of any man or woman save that of her husband, Jeremiah, from whom she had voluntarily parted herself forever—so she said.

"For I'll never give in," she said obstinately, though her heart ached every time she made an apple pie, and she vaguely wondered what sort of food the Widow Bentley was serving Jeremiah in her capacity of housekeeper for the lone farmer.

"I'll not give in," was Jeremiah's slogan, and he meant it. Although fine wrinkles gathered about his eyes and the hair on his temples became gray, it often happens in cases of this sort, he stepped to and settled their difficulties in the strangest sort of way.

"Working up to a storm," wheezed the Widow Bentley one afternoon as she met Jeremiah in the front piazza when he came up from the fields. She was big and ponderous and of a violent temper that brooked no contradiction even in matters of small importance, and Jeremiah Butterfield had learned that the easiest way to get along with his housekeeper was to acquiesce in everything she had to say.

"Yes, yes," he said pleasantly, fixing a doubtful eye on the clear pale blue of the sky and the glorious orange and crimson of the sunset.

"I feel it coming in my bones," wheezed Mrs. Bentley once more, sinking heavily into a rocking chair. "It looks clear enough now, but mark my words, we'll have trouble before to-morrow night."

"I guess you're right, Mrs. Bentley," agreed Jeremiah pleasantly. "We might as well get snugged up for a storm. I find you're a pretty good weather prophet."

Mrs. Bentley nodded her head sagely. "It's to be the kind that makes you glad you've got a good cyclone cellar," she said significantly.

"Cyclone?" repeated Jeremiah incredulously. "This isn't cyclone weather."

The Widow Bentley's brow darkened, and she arose and shook her white apron at an encroaching hen.

"I wasn't born and raised in the cyclone belt without knowing something about cyclones," she said, with dignity, and departed for the kitchen, where she could be heard preparing the evening meal to the accompaniment of clattering crockery and rattling pans.

"I've gone and put my foot in it now," mused Jeremiah as he fed his horses for the night. "I expect the widow will see to it that I can't eat any supper tonight. I'll bet you everything will be either too salty or too sweet. That's the widow's way, and I wish I'd known it before I engaged her. It's easier hiring a housekeeper than it is getting rid of one. Cyclone weather! Huh!"

It had been an oppressive day, and the setting of the sun brought some relief to the overheated earth. Now light, fleecy clouds showed high in the heavens, and over in the northwest a low rim of black clouds bordered the horizon.

"I don't know but what the widow was right after all," admitted Jeremiah Butterfield as he went in to supper, and he told Mrs. Bentley this, but it was too late. Although the housekeeper smiled triumphantly, the

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supper was eloquent of her displeasure. The butter beans were too salty, and the biscuits had received an overdose of saleratus and were consequently bitter. The apple sauce was sickly sweet and flavored with cinnamon when Jeremiah preferred nutmeg. But he ate what he could of the meal and said nothing, then went out to the porch to smoke his pipe, and so he fell to thinking about Eva, his wife, and to wonder if she missed him as he missed her and to think of the happy days before they had disagreed.

It was a sultry night, and the morning was thunderous and threatening. The cattle hung about the gate to the pasture and refused to eat. Even the chickens seemed to feel some impending calamity in the air, for they hid in corners, and some of them went to roost as the day grew dark. Jeremiah went in and out of the house several times, and each time he passed through the hall he noticed that Mrs. Bentley was neglecting the housework to attend to the safety of her own effects. Once when she was struggling down the stairs with a huge feather bed in her arms he came to her assistance and carried the burden down to the cellar and from there to that deep subcellar which had been prepared for cases of emergency.

The cyclone cellar was a small apartment, cemented all over, and now it was crowded with the possessions of Jeremiah Butterfield's housekeeper. Her feather bed was the crowning eminence, of a small mountain of chairs piled with clothing and boxes. A birdcage with its little occupant hopping cheerily within stood on a chair, together with a young rubber plant which Mrs. Bentley was coaxing to maturity. A lantern hung from a hook in one corner.

"You going to come down here before dinner?" asked Jeremiah in a matter of fact way.

"It'll be time enough when the cyclone strikes," said the widow courageously. "I hope you'll have sense enough to let the cattle take care of themselves and come down here, too."

"I got to look out for my stock," said Jeremiah stolidly.

Once or twice he looked at the barometer and saw that it was falling rapidly. Then the wind came light at first and steadily increasing in velocity until it might have registered ten miles an hour. Matters looked serious enough. Mrs. Bentley had retired to the cyclone cellar and pulled the trap-door down after her.

Jeremiah stood outside watching for the funnel shaped cloud that was to come out of the northwest. If that really going to have a cyclone, he housed all his horses and cattle and hoped that the path of destruction might not be laid in line of his house and barn. His standing crop he expected to lose and was resigned.

A clattering whirl overhead brought his gaze to the revolving blades of the tall windmill back of his barn. He had meant to lock the blades so that the approaching storm would meet with resistance there. His water tanks were overflowing now and the mill must not be permitted to run any longer. There was only one thing to do. Jeremiah hastened to the room under the tower and moved the lever that locked the blades of the big circular fan. But something was the matter, and he went outside and looked. One of the blades had broken loose and in falling had so jammed the lever bar that there was nothing to control the big fan unless one released the broken blade and so give the lever an opportunity to do its duty.

In a price Jeremiah was climbing the narrow iron ladder that led to the platform under the whirling fan. For the moment he had forgotten the coming storm, nor had he seen the funnel shaped cloud whirling down upon him. Just as he reached the platform the wind hurled itself upon the structure. Something snapped in the descending disturbance that followed. Jeremiah knew that it was part of the windmill and that he was also clinging to it by main strength as they were sucked into the center of the circular windstorm and borne along at a velocity of forty miles an hour. The atmosphere was filled with debris of every sort. Jeremiah was conscious that his horse kept pace with him for awhile as he was swept along on the platform, much as was the Arabian prince who days of old traveled through space on a magic carpet.

Something large and dark sent him a stunning blow just as he was sent to the outer edge of the low traveling storm center, and so it happened that he fell to earth on a great mound of soft hay. What became of the cyclone he never knew. When he recovered consciousness his wife, Eva, was bending over him and crying because she thought he was dead.

"Where am I?" demanded Jeremiah, sitting up and looking around at the cloudless sky and then down at the haystack on which he sat. When he saw his wife he really thought he had died and gone to heaven.

Then Eva told to his incredulous ears how the cyclone had brushed the edge of her property and that the house was unroofed and the hay he was sitting on and which had undoubtedly saved his life had come from her own vanished barn. The fat carriage horse was dead and her chickens had disappeared from Little Villa.

"We will have to begin all over again, Eva," said Jeremiah firmly. "We can sell the two places and buy one in California. I'm sure the Widow Bentley would like to buy Little Villa, and maybe if she stays in the cyclone belt long enough she'll get caught in one and lose her bad temper."

"The cyclone cured us, didn't it, Jerry?" whispered Eva as she fixed her husband's gray hairs.