

A GIFT

And What It Brought

By F. A. MITCHEL

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"Mother," said Edith Maynard, a girl of sixteen and just entering the age of romance. "I wish you would tell me a love story. Tell me one that really happened."

"Very well, dear. I know one that happened right in the family. I'll tell you about it. One summer day a little girl—we'll call her Emma, though that wasn't her real name—was about to go to the store of the village in which she lived to buy a dress. Her birthday was soon to come round, and her father had given her a five dollar gold piece to buy the dress for her birthday present. The day was hot, and she took care to keep under the shade of the trees that lined the road. Presently she came upon a boy—he looked to be about fifteen—lying asleep in the grass under one of the trees.

"Emma stopped to look at him. He was a handsome lad, slender and tall for his age, with a profusion of black curly hair tumbled over his forehead. His shirt was open at the neck, exposing his throat. His whole figure was relaxed as only can occur in slumber.

"But even in sleep his face was troubled. His clothes had evidently been good when new, but they were now shabby. Emma wondered who he was and what troubled him. There is something very winning about a sleeper. Perhaps it is that relaxation I have spoken of—that nonresistance which is so endearing in innocent children. At any rate, Emma, as she stood looking down at him, took him right into her heart.

"She would like to do something for him to take that troubled look off his face and replace it with a smile. It occurred to her to drop her gold piece into his fattened straw hat that lay beside him, then stand off and watch his expression when he awoke and saw it lying there shining in the sunlight flickering through the trees. But if she did this she must go without her dress. She involuntarily clutched the half eagle in a tighter grip. Again she pictured the boy awakening and his pleasure at seeing the coin in his hat. And thus she wavered till her sympathy and the pleasure of giving pleasure triumphed, and she dropped her gold piece into the hat. Then she climbed the fence beside the road and hid in some tall wheat which was nearly ready to be harvested.

"She waited nearly half an hour, not daring to take her eyes off the boy for an instant, fearing she would miss that first look of surprise she was giving treasure to see. At last he stretched himself, rubbed his eyes with his fists and sat up. He seemed to be trying to nerve himself to get up and go on, but was too tired to do so. Presently, with a sigh, he reached for his hat and saw the half eagle.

"It is questionable which would have been more delightful to a third person, the look of surprise of the boy or the expression of the little girl hidden in the wheat, clasping her hands over her breast as if to still the beating of her little heart, her eyes beaming with pleasure and expectancy.

"His eyes were fixed on the coin for a moment, then he began to look about him for the donor. Emma enjoyed it all immensely for awhile, then she began to think about what she should do. Would she make herself known or remain in hiding and let the boy go away with her treasure without knowing who had given it to him? If she took the former course he would return the gold piece. If she took the latter she would have given away her birthday present to one who could not even know her as the giver of it.

"But Emma was not a girl to go this far in doing a kindness and turn back. She kept very still, watching the boy, and it seemed as if she could read his thoughts. She fancied him saying, holding the coin in his hand and looking at it, 'I'm going to invest this money and work and save and make a fortune out of it.' Then, standing on his feet after looking all about him, he put the coin in his pocket and reluctantly went on.

"A great many years passed."

"How many years, mother?"

"Let me see. Emma had grown to be twenty-five years old, and she was about twelve when she gave away her birthday present. That means thirteen years.

"One day she heard that a man had offered to build a social clubhouse and give it to the town. The reason he offered it was that when a poor boy on his way to the city to look for a situation he had gone to sleep on the outskirts of the village and some one had dropped a five dollar gold piece into his hat. He had made lucky investments with the money, and it had grown from \$5 to \$20,000. But more than this, it had given him hope and courage, and he had succeeded in other directions. He wished to return the gift with interest, and, not knowing the donor, would give it to the town.

"Well, Emma met this man and became very much interested in him and he in her. One day when they were together—

"I know the end of the story," interrupted Edith. "He was the boy to whom Emma had given the half eagle."

"That isn't all there is to it," replied the mother.

"What else is there?"

"He was father and I am Emma."

It Is Easy to Float.

Floating means reclining on the water. So long as one's body is straightened out and the head is thrown well back in the water the arms and legs will take care of themselves. One has nothing to do but maintain a straight back and submerge the head to the ears. In this position one cannot help but float. It is a physical impossibility for the body to float so long as this position is maintained. But the minute you raise your head out of the water or bend the body or draw up the knees down you go.—Outing.

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