

Country philosopher

Wayward Child

by Amos Arthur Holmes

My daughter came to me last week complaining about her son.

"Daddy," she said, "I can't seem to do a thing with Robert. He is constantly getting into trouble. He isn't a bad boy, but he seems to create giant disasters out of the most ordinary things."

"Ethel," I said, "Robert is an extraordinary young man. After all, he is the grandson of Amos Arthur Holmes. What you need is the right combination of love and discipline. You must utilize common sense and leadership if you wish better things for Robert."

"Daddy," sighed my daughter, "I have tried everything. I have reasoned with him, punished him, and still he does these mischievous things that are causing me instant insanity."

"What kind of things?"

"Well," replied my daughter, "last week he wore one of my brassiers to school. He filled the brassier with two coconuts and when he got to school he applied for admission into the girl's Glee Club."

"What happened?"

"He was sent home from school."

This was serious. Nothing really criminal or malevolent about Robert's actions, but someone had to show him that practical jokes were sometimes not very amusing. He had to realize that one must think before taking action.

"Ethel," I said, "let me have Robert for one week. I will fill him with logic and I guarantee that I can rid him of these illogical impulses."

When I got Robert home with me I sat him down and we talked. I told him that his conduct was causing a great deal of alarm and that he was capable of far better things. I impressed upon him the fact that premeditation could eliminate those spur-of-the-moment actions that were getting him into trouble. I could tell by his eyes that he understood my message and would try awfully hard to please me.

Two hours later he called me out to the garden and showed me the scarecrow he had just built. He had nailed two poles together in the form of a cross and he had driven one end of a pole into the ground. Covering his sturdy structure was my brand new

suit. The one I had just recently paid \$200 for.

"CRIPES!" I screamed. "WHY HAVE YOU USED MY NEW SUIT?"

"I didn't premeditate," replied Robert.

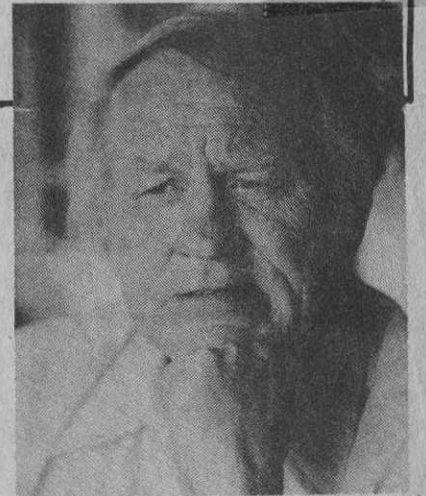
"And why," I bellowed, "would you put up a scarecrow when I haven't even plowed the garden yet?"

"It was a spur-of-the-moment thing," replied Robert.

I wanted to cry. I sat down with Robert and I patiently explained how wrong it was to use my new suit. Tears started falling from his eyes and he put his arms around me. "Grammy" he said, "I'm awfully sorry about what happened. I wanted to do something nice for you, something that would please you, and I've made you unhappy. I'm so very sorry."

Seeing a twelve-year-old boy in such misery caused a sadness to fill my heart. Robert wasn't a bad boy. Unlucky, maybe, but not bad. Mischievous, certainly, but not bad.

To help remove his misery I said to him, "Robert, I want you to go out to the barn. My cow is out there and she hasn't been eating good lately. She is



quite empty and I want you to fill her."

Robert was all excited. He jumped up and ran to the barn. At last he could do something that would please me. Twenty minutes later he came into the kitchen, and I said, "Well, did you fill the cow?"

A look of horror crossed his face, and he said, "What did you say?"

"Did you fill the cow?" I repeated.

Robert started crying. He looked at me and tears were streaming down his face. He sobbed, "Gosh Grammy, I thought you said KILL the cow."