

## When I was young

by Amos Arthus Holmes

When I was 4 years old the responsibilities that I carried were awesome.

I was no bigger than a buttercup and yet I saved my mother's life a million times. My stubby legs would carry me across the meadow...like the wind...and I would climb the withered apple tree. And shading my eyes from the blistering sun, I saw upon the horizon...a dozen pirate ships. And on those ships were brawny men whose cutlasses gleamed evil in the sun and whose sinister intentions were all too plain.

Tiny warrior that I was, a magnificent knight with sacred vows, I rushed to save my mother. Down the tree and across the meadow and bursting into our kitchen. Past the kitchen stove cherry-red with warmth...through the smells of home-baked bread...until at last I clutched my mother's knee. And there I told her, in strong, bold voice, about the pirates.

She would turn ghostly pale until I assured her that the pirates, or all the bad things in this world, would never pass my protective arm. And late at night, feigning sleep, I lay with my eyes just barely open. My eager fingers stole stealthily beneath my pillow to fondle the tooth I had, with great courage, pulled that afternoon.

Very soon...through that door (or through the wall) the tooth fairy would come, radiant bright and beautiful beyond description. The fairy would take my tooth and in its place she would leave a shiny penny...or a pinch of gold dust...or a rainbow.

And in the morning, clutching the fairy's gift (it was a shiny penny), I would run to my mother and say...breathlessly...Mama...I saw her. I saw the fairy. She was dressed all in white and upon her head she wore a crown of brilliant gems.

And after breakfast I raced, once again, down the trodden path to the withered apple tree. And shading my eyes from blistering sun...I saw...upon the horizon...a dragon. Monstrously huge with great streaks of fire exploding from its nostrils. And once again I would run across the meadow to warn my mothers. For she was very precious to me.

Ah, the pictures that I painted...when I was young.

Behind the house, in green profusion, a gigantic forest grew. A magic place with soft, damp moss and flowery vines that climbed the highest oak. Warm with its singing birds and friendly in its solitude. Except that I knew...in my young mind...that lurking behind the graceful willow...was a marauding band of Indians. I saw them, plainly, their evil faces slashed with vermilion. I would have cringed, if I had been a lesser man, at the sight of wicked spear and deadly tomahawk. Often, not daring to breathe, I watched them perform their weird and frightening dances. I



knew that if those savages made one charge across that meadow they would most certainly kill my mother. And so I ran, like a deer, across the fields to warn her. And my mother always rewarded me with a hug, a most sincere thank you, and a piece of gingerbread with icing as thick as a mountain.

Ah! The adventures that I knew...when I was young.

And now my hair is tinged with gray. The hourglass of my life has only a sprinkle of golden sand that will so swiftly run its course. The pirates no longer use the cove behind the house and the Indians have disappeared. But each day, each single day, my mind flies back over the years to all the good that I have known, to all the girls that I have kissed, and to all the people that I have loved.

Ah! How blessed are my memories. Now that I am old.