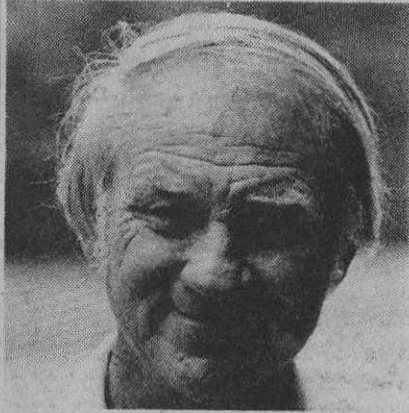


Country Philosopher

All you have to do is squeak



AMOS ARTHUR HOLMES

I am a deliquescent personality who is constantly searching for one tiny claim to fame. While other men boast of bulging biceps, I cower behind my shirt in dismal insecurity. While other men write the great novel, or sing the sweetest aria, I stroke a most behemoth inferiority complex.

The sad part of this condition is that I'm really not all that below average. In fact, I excel in certain areas. I am a good musician, a passable writer, and I do excellent hog' calls and bird imitations. I have perfected the LaGrange Technique of Love Making that is, of course, the ultimate along those lines, and I do unbelievably fine things with finger paints.

And still, I consider myself less than nothing.

Yesterday I stood looking out my window at a teenager trying to maneuver a hoola-hoop around her waist. All of her friends had tried, and failed, and I wanted so desperately to run out and show them how it was

done. I even went so far as to get my hoola-hoop down from the wall. But then this frightful insecurity took over and I crawled beneath the living room rug.

I so admire those men who have absolute faith in themselves. Being skilled, or intelligent, or talented, has nothing to do with it. Everything is accomplished simply by this colossal disregard for defeat. This force (some call it nerve) will allow a man to put his best foot forward when he has no best foot.

I am insecure with women, and that insecurity stems from factual things like baldness, bad teeth, lack of physique, and rickets. And yet I have seen men with worse baldness, bad teeth, lack of physique, and rickets...go up to strange women, smile, and say, "Baby, how would you like the chance to dance with me?" The women, naturally, refuse to dance with this grotesque personality, but just think of the glorious nerve that propelled his action. And a million women can turn this man down and nothing will alter (in his mind) the fact that he is irresistible.

I have absolutely no confidence in myself. Last week I started a night class at our local college. At the end of the class, the teacher said, "Mr. Holmes, would you prepare tonight and report to us tomorrow on gametocyte." The other students jumped up and down, screaming

"HOW COME I DIDN'T GET AN EASY ONE?" and "YOU ARE PAMPERING HIM JUST BECAUSE HE IS OLD."

Walking home that night I didn't feel pampered nor did I think the assignment all that easy. Gametocyte? It could be a type of coal, like bituminous or anthracite. It could be that small bone in the human body that floats to the left of the pancreas. I hurried home and got out my dictionary. GAMETOCYTE: PARENT CELL WHICH UNDERGOES MEIOSIS AND PRODUCES GAMETES.

Facetiously, I said to myself that nearly everyone has undergone meiosis, and although I have never produced gametes myself, I was quite sure my wife had done it many times. Actually, I knew that I would never be able to face that class, never own up to my stupidity, and I immediately quit school for the tenth time in my life.

I was asked to speak, recently, to a group of neighbors who had been my friends for years. I got up on that stage and looked out over all those kind, smiling faces. I had my speech all prepared but I couldn't open my mouth. I stood there silently for ten minutes until Mrs. Snedley noticed I was wetting my pants and she came and led me back to the cloakroom.

All it takes to overcome this insecurity is to drum up the strength to

take one giant step forward. Defeat, just one time, this hesitating cowardice, and the cloak of insecurity will fall from your shoulders forever. To illustrate this truth I would like to present a true story. An actual occurrence that shows so clearly the fragile veneer of inferiority.

There was a cricket and a mouse living in a split-level on Main street. The mouse thought himself lower than a mouse. And that is an extremely low opinion of one's self. The cricket tried to instill, within the mouse, a new outlook.

"Look," said the cricket, "Just keep repeating to yourself that you are powerful."

"No" whined the mouse, "I ain't the least bit powerful."

The cricket threw up his hands. "Look" he said, "See that big woman in the kitchen? She must weight three hundred pounds and you could scare her to death."

"She'd kill me" cried the mouse.

"For gracious sake" moaned the cricket, "try it. Run in and stop at her feet. Look up at her and give the loudest squeak you are capable of giving. Now, go on."

And the mouse, trembling, took that one giant step forward. He ran into the kitchen, stood at the feet of the three hundred pound woman, and squeaked. The large woman looked down, her eyes became glassy, and she fell heavily to the floor in a dead faint. The mouse ran back through the hole in the wall where the cricket grabbed him up in his arms.

"You see" cried the cricket, "You ARE powerful."

"Well I'll be damed" said the mouse.