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## Country Philosopher

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# Mad Dogs And Englishmen

by Amos Arthur Holmes

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You can add to the list of mental deficients, who go out into the noonday sun without a hat, the name of Amos Arthur Holmes.

I did go out into the noonday sun without a hat and the physical results of that expedition were disastrous. I know the force of the sun, I am fairly familiar with its harmful effects, and I am aware that the protective matting of hair on top of my head is nonexistent. So I really don't know what made me perform this stupidity. I am not as smart as an Englishman, but I have sworn-to testimony that I am brighter than a mad dog. I'm even smarter than a dog who isn't mad at anybody.

I imagine it was a combination of things. My futility in growing a healthy garden, my taste for fresh vegetables, and the knowledge that insects and bugs have destroyed me for the past ten years.

At any rate. . . I was sitting on my porch looking across the road at my garden. This smashing blow of accomplishment assaulted me. I have never seen a garden so luxurious. So dressed in the potential of future bounty. Cucumber vines that meandered for miles. Squash plants that looked like banana trees. Corn that hindered the eagle's flight.

When I looked at this agricultural

miracle I had different emotions but the most vibrant emotion was one of shock. I have fiddled with the soil, and laid out my rows, for the past ten years. I have handled (without a whimper) great globs of cow manure. I have stroked madly with a hoe until I developed curvature of the spine. I have tended and watered and cultivated and prayed.

And the only thing I have ever reaped is failure.

You cannot fault my desire. Or my physical effort. Or my knowledge. The thing that defeats me is the remarkable attraction my gardens have had for insects. Not ordinary, run-of-the-mill insects. Not your common bean beetle or potato bug or cut worm or aphid. I could handle these with a simple application of insecticide.

The insects attracted to my garden are exotic, rare, and certainly not native to America. There is the ugly Spanish Bigmouth Moth that gulps entire tomato plants without chewing. The Terrorist Worm from Uganda who will eat a field of string beans while passionately hating the taste of string beans. And, of course, the French Root Sucking Beetle whose unnatural desires have been the subject of numerous scientific seminars.

One year my garden was invaded by the dreaded CRUNCHBUG. This mid-eastern insect weighs over sixteen pounds and is often referred to as an animal. It has (just to the right of its esophagus) a simple but efficient vacuum system. The CRUNCHBUG flies over a garden, turns on its vacuum system, and entire fields of corn are sucked into its stomach.

Three years ago the notorious Brazilian Fire Ants made a really remarkable journey (by boat) to Baltimore and then overland to my garden. In just twenty seconds they had eaten every green thing in my garden plus a visiting Seventh Day Adventist who had (I thought somewhat miraculously) just forecast the ending of the world.

Then there was the BIG BOSOMED ELEPHANT MOTH. What an ugly, fearsome-looking monstrosity. Three huge eyes that rotate constantly. Jagged, yellowish teeth that protrude and snap. The BIG BOSOMED ELEPHANT MOTH doesn't bother your garden. It just sits beneath one of your tomato plants and affects your nerves.

You people are now beating your heads on the kitchen table asking why my garden was not destroyed this year. Why it was filled with green, growing things. Well, it's because the

agricultural center sent me a new insecticide. Formulated and prepared to kill off exotic and rare insects. And insects are apparently aware that I am in possession of this deadly potion because my garden has been pest free.

But yesterday I looked across at my garden. . . and there. . . RIGHT AMONGST MY SQUASH. . . was the infamous PERUVIAN KISSING WORM. I dashed out in the noonday sun (without my hat) and I prepared my new insecticide. Eight pounds of insecticide to four hundred quarts of water. And all the time I was mixing, the sun was thundering down upon my head. I added the solid to the water and sweat poured from my brow. I stirred and stirred and tiny lights began to sparkle before my eyes. It grew hotter and hotter and my head felt like a pancake griddle. Then, bending to pick up my sprayer, I collapsed from sunstroke.

As I lay in my yard I saw a Crunchbug devour my corn. The Peruvian Kissing Worm was stuffing my squash into a large burlap bag. And coming up the road. . . just starting to run. . . was an army of fire ants.

And just before I passed out I thought of the old saying that tells us we will reap what we sow.

And I thought the premise, in my case, somewhat erroneous.