

Country Philosopher

Reflections

BY AMOS ARTHUR HOLMES



Yesterday I walked through an autumn forest. The colorful leaves so soon would die but in their death an eternal life. And here, amongst those things of nature, my heart began to fill...and in this solitude so quiet and still...I reviewed the life that I had spent, and asked myself, "Would you have changed one single thing?"

I would not have changed the mother I had. Smiling face and tender hands that loved me past the goblins and germs and the tearful things that made me cry. And I thought how surely I would die...if her warm, protective arms were not for me. She took me to school that very first day and carried my book...and her look...so happy and pleasant...that it partly erased the fear I felt. I can remember when I was six years old and fever wracked my sweaty brow...and she touched my forehead with a towel...gently...and I smiled through childish pain. Dear God...in all my years...right from the start...she was the one who healed my sorrow...and carressed my heart. She was the warm, deep spirit that gave me joy. She was the melody of a song and the twinkle of the stars and the babbling of a brook. And she was love.

I would not have changed the father I had. That dour, stern countenance was simply a facade. A false necessity that hid his kindness. His unrelenting discipline gave me fear...and my rear...red and swollen.. a testimony to his wrath. But how sweet the flow of blissfulness when he patted my head...or knelt beside my bed...to guide me through my prayers. As I grew older I doubted his thinking...and his drinking was a source of youthful concern. It was only when he died and lay there cold that I thoroughly understood his warmth. And each year in the summer heat...I travel to a small cemetery in Virginia...and lay at his feet...one small rose.. There in the stillness of that lonely garden I thank him tenderly for touching my life.

I would not have changed the wife I have. I can remember the bliss of each tiny kiss, the smoldering passions, the gentle smile. How many eggs has that dear girl fried? How many stupidities has she ignored? She has kept me from feeling my failures. She has kept me from being bored. And still, after thirty years of togetherness, I feel that glorious excitement when she enters a room. Each sacrifice she has made on my behalf stays constantly fresh within

my thinking. She is good and dear to me...and dear God...without her love...where would I be? Where would I be?

I would not have changed my love for God. How utterly empty my life would have been if through some tragic philosophy I had denied His existence. Endeavoring to please my Heavenly Father has made me a better person. When my life is dreary with painful things...it's knowing that He is there...it's when my mind is sick with doubt...that I can turn to Him in prayer. I believe so strenuously that God is love and if I cannot love Him who gave me this treasure...am I capable of love at all?

I would not have changed the friends I've known. The familiar faces, the clasp of a hand, or the cheerful solace of their companionship. They have brightened every facet of my existence and set afire the embers of my need. The helping hand...in time of woe...the gentle caring...that they bestow. There would be a vast desolation to this life if our lives never knew the fulfillment of having friends. These dear people, tuned to our good and adjusting to our failures, add one more element of love to brighten our path.

I would not have changed those things of nature. The rainbows that I have seen...painting the sky in magnificent color...or the sunsets that stir the spirit of my appreciation. A touch of moonlight...the sun so bright...the tiny stars...that fill the night. The enchanting plumage of a bird or the grandeur of a waterfall. How eternally pleasant the morning dew or the trees that stand in stately grace. The hoot of the owl...the rooster crow...to plant a seed...to watch it grow. I have stood on top of mountains and felt awe at the vista laid gently before my eyes. I have stopped along a wooded path and...cupping my hands...drank the nectar from cold, clear spring. I have eaten wild blackberries...I have harvested the grain...I have frolicked through the snow...and walked through the rain. And each beautiful thing that I have encountered stays warm and rich within my heart.

Yesterday I walked through an autumn forest. I thought of my life and I wondered if deep inside I would have preferred things to have been different.

And I decided that with the love I know...and the songs I sing...

I would be so grossly ignorant...if I wished to change one single thing.