
Country Philosopher



Arthur Amos Holmes

Growing old entails many unpleasant adventures. Dentures that almost fit and glasses that almost allow you to see. Arthritis and varicose veins, rheumatism, and the catastrophe of having a bladder that overactivates itself at three in the morning. This constant deterioration of mind and body would conquer the human spirit if God had not blessed the aged with a most precious gift.

Memories.

Sometimes, when man's inhumanity to man shadows my heart with sadness, sometimes when I hear the multitudes crying softly in deep despair, sometimes when children plead to me from distant countries to ease their hunger, it is then I close my eyes to the present and escape into the sanctuary of my memories.

I remember, when I was six years old, lying in my parent's bed listening to the trains as they came into the Union Station. I lay there in great agony because earlier I had dropped an old car battery on my toe and the

toe was bloated and festering and excruciatingly painful. My father took a penknife and dug a hole in my toenail while my mother held my head against her bosom. And to this day... to this very day... I can remember the look of pride upon my father's face when he finished the operation. Because, you see, I hadn't cried one single tear.

I can remember, during my youth, when communications were almost primitive. If something of great happened, the newspapers would get out an extra paper. Small boys would come down our street at three o'clock in the morning, yelling, "EXTRA. EXTRA, PAY-PUH. GET YOUR EXTRA PAY-PUH." My father would put on his robe and go to purchase one of the newspapers while the entire family huddled at the top of the stairs. Presently my father would reappear and say something like, "Will Rogers was killed in an airplane crash." Our curiosity satisfied, we would stagger back to our beds.

I went to visit my Aunt's farm when I was seven years old. In honor of this adventure my father bought me a small pellet gun. As soon as I arrived on the farm I hurried down to the orchard. I climbed up into an old apple tree and waited with great patience for the appearance of some

The Springtime of my life

wild and ferocious beast. My disappointment, mounting with each passing minute because the orchard was still and discouragingly peaceful. And then I saw, poking along amongst the tall grass, a most dangerous species. That chicken was huge. She was pecking here, and scratching there, and totally unaware that Frank Buck was raising his pellet gun. I could describe to you the feeling of accomplishment I had as my pellet killed that chicken. I picked up the dead bird and went running to the farmhouse, screaming, "AUNT ANNIE...COME QUICK...I DONE KILLED A CHICKEN." And Aunt Annie just beat the living hell out of me.

I can remember visiting another farm and my chubby, little legs sped me toward the old root cellar. I opened the wooden door and went down dirt steps into a cool and musty room where vast treasurers lay piled to the ceiling. Apples and potatoes, turnips and walnuts, and jams and jellies and pickled peaches. But the magic drew me to this damp palace was the two barrels that were enclosures for the most delicious pickles I had ever tasted. Plump and firm, swimming in their salty brine, and almost sinful in the pleasure they gave.

I can remember the little park one

block from my house that the entire family would visit on hot summer nights to hear the band concerts. While the cymbals crashed and the drums rolled and the trumpets blared, I would chase fireflies. And later, I would fall asleep with my head nestled in my mother's lap and when the concert was over my father would pick me up and carry me home.

I can remember the first parties I ever attended and the terrible pain of suspense as we played Spin the Bottle. With one end of the bottle pointed at me and the other end pointing to the precious little girl that lived next door, I would lean across the circle and touch my lips to hers. The other contestants would laugh and clap and I would sit entranced at the delicious flavor that lingered on my lips. Ah! What delectable happiness could be more enchanting than those first sweet, innocent kisses?

Now, when my time upon this earth is limited, my mind slips so easily into the past. Visions of double-decker ice cream cones and candied apples and bags of buttered popcorn dissipates the tragedy of man's folly and selfishness. And when dreary things get me down I pause to drink the rich, good treasurers of my memories.

And that, my dears, is the pause that refreshes.
