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## Country Philosopher

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# War is hell

by Amos Arthur Holmes



World War II gave me many things. It gave me a chance to travel, to feel the mystery of foreign culture, and to increase my knowledge of earth and man.

My first stop, during my overseas excursion, was in New Guinea. It is hard to describe the pain or beauty of that remote island. Every single day, for months, it simply poured buckets of rain. When the skies were not torn by the hand of some inebriated Greek god, the sun singed and fried and cooked the human body to a turn. The jungles were alive with sight and sound, and eerie and dark and damp. Your eye would catch the rich plumage of an unknown bird, or watch the dew sparkle on a beautiful, fragile blossom; and your breathing stopped as a wonderfully large snake lay motionless in your path.

I stopped at Manila, in the Philippines, and briefly befriended a young girl whose left eye had been destroyed by the swift jab of a Japanese bayonet. I saw the exquisite Spanish architecture, the ruins, the hunger, and the charming gratitude of a suffering people.

Japan was enchanting. I saw the snow capped glory of Fujiyama and I walked through gardens unbelievably beautiful. I saw young women, embarrassed, hide friendly smiles behind tiny hands. I ate seaweed, and octopus, and saw desolation and destruction unimaginable. I saw little taxi cabs propelled by charcoal and farm land where every single inch of space was under cultivation. I drank sake as if it were Coca-Cola and regretted my inquisitiveness. I visited Japanese homes and drank seas and oceans of strange tasting teas. I stood overlooking Yokahama harbor and saw tiny, quaint, native vessels sail majestically among huge battle ships and cruisers. I saw a people, conquered, with a strange unemotional acceptance. Where one expected defiance, he encountered

friendship. Where one looked for hate, he was confronted by love.

It was in Japan that I encountered the most dangerous situation of my entire overseas trip. It simply scared the hell out of me. Mind you, I had had enemy bullets whiz past my ears. I had heard the mad, insane whistle of falling bombs and been shaken by thunderous explosions. I had endured dreadful weather conditions and had removed black widow spiders from my bed and scorpions from my shoes. And none of these things...not one of these things...shook me up as much as that one experience in Japan.

I had gone to the railroad station in Tokyo and while standing in that busy place I received a most urgent call from Mother Nature. I walked into the bathroom and was surprised to find no cubicles. In fact, there wasn't any privacy at all. Privacy and bathrooms have always been synonymous with me, but in Rome we do as the Romans do.

I was managing quite well when I heard the peal of feminine laughter. I followed this sound in silent anguish and terrible apprehension. And as I sat there, looking small and insecure, six young ladies entered the bathroom. Those young ladies looked at me, stared at me, giggled at me, and worst of all...THEY JOINED ME.

I guess the use of the same bathroom by both sexes is an everyday occurrence in Japan, but it is quite extraordinary to a shy little country boy. I made a few rapid adjustments and got the hell out of that bathroom.

At least this occurrence prompted the United States government to present me with the only medal I received during the entire war. When I was discharged, at the end of hostilities, I was awarded the Congressional Medal of Constipation.

You see...you have a real hero in your midst.