

Country philosopher

With open eyes

by Amos Arthur Holmes



Some weeks ago I sat in my backyard. The sun had disappeared behind the huge oak trees across the road and there was a chill to the air that told of the coming of autumn. The leaves were still green but soon the magic of nature would paint them gold and yellow and orange. My mind leaped ahead and I had visions of frost and pumpkins and cold apple cider.

I watched a pair of cardinals flitting about beneath the weigelia bushes beside the house, the female looking drab beside the rich, colorful plumage of her mate. Of all the birds in the fields and woods those cardinals were my favorites. They had a companionship, a friendship, a bountiful aura of caring for one another that made their existence beautiful. It was as if they knew that love was a blessing given not just to man but to every living thing.

A young, gray squirrel, filled with exuberance, raced across the lawn and up a tree. He stopped, tail swishing, and looked at me in friendly inquisitiveness, and then, in youthful zest, climbed to the highest branches in search of the tasty succulent acorn.

I looked across the road and saw my garden, wilted and forlorn now except for the marigolds and asters which refused to die. Those few months ago I had planted tiny seeds in the warm earth and watched as small sprouts turned miraculously into lush plants. The corn, proud and tall, and the melons lying fat and

juicy. I had cultivated and weeded in the hot sun and my perspiration had cleansed both heart and soul. My mind could still picture the yellow squash, the slender green beans. I smiled as I remembered the day I parted the tomato plant and saw the turtle, looking guilty, with the half eaten tomato as testimony to his pilfering.

I heard the merry, tinkling laugh of my granddaughter as that tiny bit of heaven came running around the corner of the house. When she saw me, she scrambled into my lap and I told her about the cardinals and the squirrel.

An old woman came slowly down the road carrying her basket of apples. Each evening she made this pilgrimage and each evening she distributed amongst her neighbors the plump, red jewels from her orchard. I was stirred by this generosity and I thought of the magnificent benefits we receive from having good neighbors.

I got up from my chair and walked around to the front of the house. The waters of Breton Bay lay still and peaceful and the setting sun added colossal colors to the blue placid water.

"Amos, come to dinner."

I thought of the people now gathered in my dining room. My wife, whose love was brighter and warmer than the fire in the hearth, would be adding last touches to her table. My daughters, whose affection and humor made my days

glorious and good. The grandchildren filling the house with laughter and youth.

I thought of the table simply laden with delicious food; the brown, juicy roast covered with potatoes and carrots, the smooth brown, spicy gravy whose aroma swelled the appetite to bursting, the cucumbers and onions in vinegar, the dish of hot biscuits, the apple pie and hot steaming coffee.

I stood there and reviewed the blessing in my life. I thought of the grand things of nature that God had given us in His merciful caring. The towering mountains, the vast, rolling oceans, the trees and flowers, the birds and animals. I thought of laughter and love, the birth of a child, the serenity of friendship. I thought of all those things that make life challenging and worthwhile.

And as I turned to enter my house I thought of those people, those thousands upon thousands of people, who believe that God is dead.

And I could have cried at their blindness.