



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

A Few Things For Certain

Somehow, a lot of things don't matter when you spend the afternoon in a hammock. I've been here in the mountains of western North Carolina for three days now, but only this afternoon was I able to unwind enough to do what I had dreamed of doing during all those weeks of planning this vacation — spend the afternoon in the hammock.

It has been good to leave this modern mad masquerade, where everybody lives in a strain trying to make everybody else think he is what he isn't, and spend the afternoon with a good book and a simple rope hammock stretched between two towering poplars near our little retreat cabin.

Autumn is almost gone. The first frost has been on the pumpkin and the fodder's in the shock. The woods are full of busy squirrels keyed up by the winey autumn air. It's possum-hunting time and acorns crunch underfoot when you walk through the woods. In the hammock I am concerned only with a single

red dogwood leaf clinging to the tip of a branch which is sometimes buffeted by the chill wind of coming winter. Will it fall? Will it resist and hang on? It's good to be concerned about things like this, rather than the multitude of things which have warped my mind and exhausted my body over the last months.

I believe it was Josh Billings who said, "I'd rather know a few things for certain than be sure of a lot of things that ain't so." Somehow, the "few things for certain" are more in focus when you are lying on your back in a hammock, hearing the rustle of the wind through the crisp brown leaves, watching the blue sky overhead, hearing the chirp of birds ready to leave for the southland, and thinking how good God is to put up with those of us who rush hither and yon trying to do his business — when his business was finished at Calvary so long ago.

Back home everybody is busy going nowhere in a hurry. I remember something I read last year by Newton Baker: "The effect of modern inventions has been to

immeasurably increase the difficulty of deliberation and contemplation about large and important issues."

Tonight we built a small campfire in the back yard, roasted marshmallows on sticks, and sat and talked and talked, and talked. It has been a long time since I sat and talked — almost as long since I lay in a hammock and read, and deliberated and prayed. It's good to take time from my urgent things to do the important things!

There is tonic in the air. The smell of burning leaves, the sound of the creek rippling over the rocks at the bottom of the hill, the soft chirp of crickets at night. I sometimes feel guilty when I take time to do nothing. Then I remember that a man cannot run well in the midst of it all unless, now and then, he runs away from it all.

Every man — every woman — needs to mix work and worship with a little hammock lying — and campfire sitting. For if he doesn't come apart and rest a while — he'll simply come apart.