

YOUR NEW LEISURE. . . AND HOW TO USE IT

By Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

The greatest invention of the twentieth century is universal leisure.

Don't talk to me about the automobile, the radio, the television, the computer, the jet plane, or even atomic power. The most wonderful discovery of our times is all the leisure that now belongs to all of us. The possibilities of the forty-hour week (and less!) are so vast that we haven't even begun to understand them. With all the time now released from labour, we can well be standing on the edge of a new and brighter age.

You'll notice that I say, "We can well be standing . . ."; I don't say that most of us are standing there.

For the fact is that most of us have our hands full of leisure and no slightest idea what to do with it.

The majority of inventions and discoveries are clearly marked with their purposes.

An automatic washing machine can be used only for laundry.

The Mazda electric bulb was quite obviously meant to light our darkness.

As for automobiles . . . after we have mastered a few simple gadgets, we ride off in all directions.

But leisure is like land, water and air. With leisure the important question remains: What are we going to do with it?

And on that decision rests an appallingly large amount of the happiness or misery of the coming ages. For now as always the ancient saying is true: "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." Or, to change that slightly: Some people go to hell during their leisure time. At school or at work they are too busy to get into mischief. It is when they are on their own that temptation wallops them from the rear and they go out seeking whom and what they may devour.

This Restful Age

Things have developed so fast where our leisure is concerned that we in the 1950's hardly realize what has taken place in the last half century, beginning with the years when I was a youngster.

Like the other youngsters on our block, I knew that I had a father. I felt the effects of him in the peaceful, comfortable life I led. But his actual existence I had to take largely on faith. He was gone in the morning, before we children were up for breakfast. He returned in the evening long after we had finished dinner. As I figure it now, he must have put in an eleven-hour day in a six-day week . . . and sixty-six working hours is a lot of working.

During the months of July and August, (high Summer,) with a prophetic wave to a more leisurely age, his firm closed at two o'clock in the afternoon on Saturdays. And on Sundays my father seemed to go into a state of partial collapse . . . and who can blame him? Not being a Catholic, he had no obligation to get up early enough for Mass; so it was ten or eleven before he appeared. And mother saw to it that nothing interfered with his morning's sleep, which was, I'm afraid, about the only taste of leisure he knew. For he put a large sector of what remained of Sunday into taking care of the chores—repairs, furnace, handy-man work—which as a house-holder he was obliged to assume.

When Men Slaved

Yet many a man in his day would have regarded my father as a member of the relatively restful class. Railroad men used to work on occasion a twenty-four day. They would be gone on a long run for a week or two at a time . . . and shoot off again almost immediately after their return home. We need not go back to the 1850s to see a world almost without leisure; long years after 1850 men worked from seven in the morning until eight at night, women worked a twelve-hour day, and children of six and younger went down into the mines or into the mills to work round the clock six and sometimes seven days a week.

As for farmers, their work was backbreaking, a matter of man, mule, and muscle, a daily round destructive of youth and often poisonous to beauty. Millet's "Man With the Hoe," a painting that brought about Edwin Markham's famous outburst in poetry, was typically illustrative of an age that worked without leisure and slaved without pause or thought of a

holiday. When the greater part of the world was Catholic, the Church provided leisure by her insistence on a multiplicity of holy days and holidays. With the power of the Church broken in the lines of industry, leisure disappeared from the world.

Over all this we can, in retrospect still grow indignantly wrathful.

Forgive me if I mention this wrath only in passing and hurry on to another aspect of the story of leisure.

For leisure came back to us with the labour unions, with modern labour-saving machinery, and with the rapid enslavement of steam, electricity, gasoline, water power, and recently the gigantic hidden forces of the atom.

We are on the verge of an era when by law no one will be permitted to work more than thirty hours a week. There is a very good chance that every week-end will be a three-day holiday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Women Too

Even the working day of the woman in the home has changed completely.

Anyone of my generation can recall the average Sunday dinner in the 1890s. Preparation for it started Saturday morning . . . and the final cleaning up was completed late Sunday afternoon. When the dinner had been consumed, dad was exhausted from having eaten it and mother from having prepared it.

Summer meant an endless routine in the kitchen: Fruits were preserved or beaten down to jellies; vegetables were stowed away in Mason jars; and even in the cities hams were smoked and bacons salted and meats preserved and packed away.

The mother in those days knew the labour of a wood stove or (it seemed almost a paradisaal substitute) of the coal bucket. She heated water patiently and perpetually on the back of the stove, which also probably held an eternally simmering pot of soup stock. She pumped water and carried it by hand. And the washboard was the accepted improved substitute for the rocks between which soiled linen used to be pounded to whiteness.

Need we make the obvious contrast of the kitchens then with the kitchens of today? Electric stoves and pressure cookers . . . refrigeration in its miraculous forms . . . pantries stocked with soups, jellies, the vegetables and fruits of the earth . . . electric washing machines—one for clothes and another for dishes . . . garbage-disposal plants connected with drains in sinks . . . a constant flow of hot water . . . soaps guaranteed to produce Aladdin-like lathers and to leave your hands smoother than do the most scientifically scented lotions.

Leisure for All Except . . .

Leisure will soon be the universal law.

Indeed the only way to dodge it will be to work for oneself, to be one's own boss.

Thanks largely to the inconsiderate timing of the thing called disease, doctors will probably be a long time discovering leisure. There are no machines for the correcting of examination papers or the grading of themes. (No; there are already several mechanical means for grading certain tests.) Mothers will still be burdened by the untimely demands of their children. And nuns will continue to do the work of three days between their rising at five o'clock and their retiring at nine o'clock.

Even the farmer knows today a measure of leisure that he hasn't quite caught up with. Mendel and Burbank have made possible new wonders in nature. Hen houses operate mechanically. Cows are milked by electricity. The tractor ploughs in one day the fields that once took a week or more of patient plodding. And modern fertilizer has taught the beets to leap, the corn to jump into the air, and fruit trees to bear fruit reminiscent of Eden.

Labour-saving to Leisure

It's amazing to see what we have done to cut labour.

Oxcart to 'surrey with the fringe on top' . . . to horse-cars to trolleys to the first of the automobiles . . . to self-starters . . . to push-button control of car windows.

From good soap and good bleaches to hand-wringers and galvanized washtubs and water heaters . . . to hand-operated laundries . . . to commercial laundries whose smartly-dressed drivers come up to our doors . . . to automatic home laundries . . . to the great god Bendix and Hoover and Simpson.

We push a button where once we pulled on a lever.

We spare our muscles and call on our machines.

Once we might have aspired to let George do it. But George doesn't have to do it any longer; he simply pulls the switch and General Electric takes over.

Schools of the Future

I am vastly interested in what the schools of the future will be like. The liberal-arts college will come into its inheritance.

There will be trade schools, no doubt of that. But there will also be schools of leisure.

No doubt we shall need highly specialized scientific schools to teach the construction and control of the elaborate equipment of a scientific future. But we shall need even more schools to teach us what to do during the long hours when the machines are churning away and the automatic factories are pouring forth their miraculous harvest of time and energy-saving gadgets.

Hitherto schools have been concerned perforce largely with teaching the boy and the girl how to earn a living.

The week has, remember, 168 hours.

In the future the school will be doing only one-third of its job if it does not teach the boy and the girl what to do when they are not earning a living.

Allowing one-third of that time for sleep and a few essentials of living, we have left 112 hours to occupy.

The present working week is by law 40 hours. That leaves us 72 hours.

So even at the present we have 72 hours a week to use pretty much as we please . . . meals, sports, movies or the theatre, family and friends, reading, just plain loafing.

Leisure Class

What a blessing former ages would have considered leisure like ours! In 72 hours a week almost anyone of us is capable of becoming great . . . developing to an amazing degree our physical or mental or emotional life . . . creating great works of art . . . learning to know, love, and imitate the great achievements of the ages . . . mastering world culture . . . becoming saints.

In the days before leisure was fairly universal, most civilizations were proud that they had developed—through supposedly the very crest of society—what was called (in capital letters) The Leisure Class.

In England it was the nobility and the landed gentry.

In Russia and in Germany it was the titled people.

In the Orient it was the rajahs, the petty princes, the men of ancestral wealth.

In the original conception of society The Leisure Class was not supposed to be an idle adornment. It was by no means a parasitic growth upon the national tree of life. "Nobility has its obligations," was the saying that went along with the whole idea of The Leisure Class.

The Leisure Class of a nation was supposed to have mastered the difficult and essential Art of Living. Members of The Leisure Class were expected to give an example of high manners and morals to their less fortunate countrymen, to establish and maintain ideals. They were asked to be masters of beautiful homes, to experiment with graceful cookery, to cultivate the arts and pay for the work of painters and poets and musicians. They were supposed to foster the culture of a country, to give their land and their age the highest expression of civilization.

So in theory The Leisure Class were:

Great amateur sportsmen. The elaborate hunts of England were an expression of this amateur spirit.

Great connoisseurs of the arts. They saw to it that the geniuses were well paid. They patronized the products of these geniuses and collected and preserved for future generations the paintings and music and literature and sculpture and architecture that they commissioned.

Members of The Leisure Class set the correct style in dress.

They were asked to be models of good manners, of correct deportment, of high standards of thinking and living.

They contributed beautiful conversation to the enrichment of the language. They raised the art of cooking from the boiling pot to the chef's kitchen. They sifted and evaluated the nation's customs and retained for themselves and preserved for the future the most worth while. They commissioned tailors and seamstresses to design useful and ornamental garments that could then be copied by the less inventive, less artistic groups.

In a word they were supposed to keep civilization high, culture pure, and religion and patriotism lofty.

I should be the last to claim that all the members of The Leisure Class did all these things. But our museums are filled with the works of art, as our libraries are crammed with the great literature, produced for them and through them in all ages. For them was written, as our world has grown, the great philosophy through the ages.

The one point I want to bring out in all this discussion remains very simple:

Relatively speaking, we today are all members of The Leisure Class. What was once expected of a small group of chosen souls can now be demanded of all of us. We are the patrons of the arts, the consumers of the works of genius, the upholders of culture, the representatives of the highest civilization.

And we of The Leisure Class have a high responsibility for our leisure.

What Do You Do When You Do Nothing?

Just what are we all doing with the wonderful leisure that has been given to us? . . . those Saturdays off? . . . the two-weeks' (or is it four-weeks'?) vacation? . . . the hours between closing time (4.30 or 5) and the next morning (8.30 or 9)? . . . We are rushing like mad to get places, saving hours that once were spent in travelling short distances. What do we do when we come to where we rushed?

Once men made journeys on foot or horseback; it took a sturdy philosopher to do much thinking of any kind as he slugged along the muddy roads or was bounced on a rough saddle. What do we do in our Pullmans, our lounge cars, our roomettes, our streamlined coaches and capacious buses?

For a good part of the world the answer to these questions is alarmingly simple. What do they do with the new leisure? Nothing. In fact, they hardly know they have the leisure. Like the ancient ancestor of L'il Abner, sometimes they "set" and think, and sometimes they just "set." That kind of use of leisure is going to benefit the furniture manufacturers; more chairs will be worn out than ever before in history. But that is not what you would call a profitable use of leisure.

Modern trains are simply magnificent places where leisure can be used. You can read, write, catch up on correspondence, play cards skilfully, work scientific problems, learn a modern or an ancient language, study human nature, meet interesting people who know and do things that are strange or foreign to you.

What do the well-educated and usually fairly well-heeled people do who travel the railroads? Note the number of empty bottles left in club cars, the stale newspapers, cross-word puzzles, comic books, half-thumbed volumes of abridged novels or pocket editions, mountains of cigarette stubs, scraps of unfinished letters left behind . . . and you wonder about the value of leisure to them.

Leisure Has a Purpose

After His six days of creation, God rested for a day.

That divine holiday set a precedent for God's sons and daughters, a day on which to pause to think of God, to love Him and honour Him.

God was not exhausted by the labours of those magnificent six eras in which the heavens and the earth were carved out of chaos. Yet He knew that after our labours we would know exhaustion. So as if to set an example, He seemed to relax.

After the labours of the day, the week, the year, the lifetime, leisure comes as a time for relaxing.

The greatest contribution made by the radio to our language and to our customs was the word introduced by Amos and Andy: un-lax. Leisure was meant to be a time for un-laxing . . . a time when we untie the knots in our nerves, loosen the taut strings of our emotions, let the human motor idle for a while, sit back in our chairs, and give nature a chance to rebuild what the intensity, noise, worries, pressures, distortions, and real and synthetic excitements of modern living have worn away.

Leisure is the time when we take to heart the advice of the dear old negro mammy who told a too-energetic scion of the family: "Take it easy, son. Watch me. I never stands when I can sit; I never sits when I can lie down; when I lies down, I lies loose."

Competition for Leisure

If leisure were spent to rebuild the body, relax the nerves, release the emotional and spiritual strains that are part of modern living, there'd be fewer ulcers, fewer calls on the psychoanalysts, fewer breakdowns, and fewer bankruptcies.

The word vacation is worth taking a good look at: It comes from the same root as vacuum. Vacation is a pleasantly empty time. We pour out and away the routines and pressures of our working world. We open the time wide and graciously and welcomingly to things not concerned with our ordinary living. But nature abhors a vacuum . . . and into a vacation can be poured a lot of lovely things—scenery, books, new friends or old, lands we've never seen, forms of living we have not known, animals and nature, things new and stimulatingly different.

Whether that vacation be the weekly Saturday and Sunday holiday, the two weeks of the worker, the two months of the student, the hours that come at the end of the laborious day, right now that vacation is being competed for in the most feverish fashion.

The advertising experts know that when we are not at work we are fair game for their wares. So they bombard our leisure with radio and television commercials, hem us in with billboards and the advertising literature on buses, trains trams and streetcars, assault us from the pages of newspapers and magazines, and pack around us the roster of our favourite football club or cricket team.

Women at home, in their kitchens and their living rooms, have found an incredible leisure. The television and radio has filled their calm mornings with the heartaches and nervous throbs that throw listeners into a lather only a few degrees less bubbly than the lather of the advertised soap manufactured by the sponsors of the programmes. The radio and now TV reach back into the fields of "corn," the library started by Joe Miller, the familiar album of familiar tunes sung by familiar voices to advertise familiar detergents or breakfast cereals or alcohol or cigarettes or gum or motor-cars and to blast the family peace with the clatter of Silver's hoofs, the machine-guns of the police bearing down on gangland, the screams of the victim of the mystery yarn, and the voice of the announcer presenting the participant on the quiz programme with the Queen Mary, the Golden Gate Bridge, enough gum to tax the jaws of a dinosaur, and Long Island Sound.

Leisure Killers

The murderers and scanty attire of the lurid comic books alarm me much less than does a less noticed characteristic. (Observation assures me anyhow that far more so-called adults than children buy and read the comic books.) What I find so intolerably offensive in the garish nonsense of the comic books is that they are not humorous, not even slightly in touch with life . . . and yet they seize and kill hours of precious leisure that might so profitably be spent with a great book, a creative hobby, pleasant friends, or wholesome recreation. The Killer kills irreplaceable time. The Shadow throws his darkness over bright hours of leisure. Superman is fathering a race of 'inframen', his readers and slack-mouthed admirers. The Spider weaves a dirty, constricting web about the minds and the emotions that slip slovenly into his grip.

The Sunday papers are gigantic sedatives offered for that precious day of relaxation and contemplation. In all honesty many a Sunday paper might rightly be called The Sunday Chloroform or simply Ether. The editors, knowing that you will have pleasant hours of do-nothing on Sunday, ram into those Sunday hours a mass of wood pulp that chronicles the

unimportant, records the unnecessary, and—after perhaps eight pages of information, news, and opinion—proceeds to expand, illustrate, comment on, repeat in roto and colour press, blow up to Gargantuan proportions the trivial, the topical, the transient, and the tempting.

Autos That Stand Still

The automobile was invented as a means to take us places fast.

Many an auto would get just as far if it were jacked up on blocks and, with the passengers inside, the wheels allowed to spin.

For many an auto going 50 miles an hour is going no place in particular.

Blessed is the automobile that takes the city-bound prisoner to the delights of the country, carries the fisherman to his trout stream, or the family to a picnic in the woods,

Blessed is the car that whisks the art-lover all the faster to the museum, or makes it possible for the book-lover to bring home a tonneau full of important books, or takes the basketball team to the court.

But automobiles can be terrible time killers.

They can make leisure hours seem filled with speed, can create for the passengers the illusion that they are going places . . . while the occupants of the auto see nothing and get only whiffs of air tainted with ethyl and the steam from cement roads.

Chesterton, who knew the value of leisure and used every second of it with zestful delight, once said that he would much prefer to sit in a meadow and watch the motors fly past than see from a motor the meadows fly past. If you use your car or your friend's car to aerate your lungs, to bring you close to the golden harvests, or to take you to the banks of a leisurely rolling river, splendid! If you get into a car and ride just because you don't know what else to do with your time, you're in a bad way . . . even if your riding is on a swift and flowing highway.

Alexander Woolcott was once hired (not too scrupulously) to be photographed reading in the back seat of a new-model car. He is the only man I ever knew or heard of who claimed he could read in an automobile. Personally, I can't—and I can read in almost anything along the road, the rails, the waters, or the skyways. Nor can you write in an auto. You can worry in an auto, but I doubt that you can think there. And I've yet to recall a conversation on rubber tyres that was not jerky, disconnected, and characterized by as much leisure and flow as the actual passage of the car itself down a stop-light lined avenue.

The Movies Compete

I can enjoy the motion pictures immensely, and I regard a motion picture as one of the most satisfying forms of entertainment that human ingenuity ever invented.

Yet I pick my pictures as carefully as I should pick a tie were I a layman, or a meal were I a diner out, or a book—as I do when I go to a library. I regard with amazement the type of supposedly educated person who when he pays his money at a box office hardly knows what the picture is going to be or who the star or the director is.

A good motion picture can be a high dramatic experience. It can be a lesson in history, custom, national characteristics, character, the classics. It can expand your horizons immeasurably. It can give you that breadth of emotional experience that comes with all forms of good fiction.

And a motion picture can be the most awful waste of time. . . . Escapism is the term we use for it.

At the end of some motion pictures there remains the confused impression of cars rushing, and people pouring drinks, and cigarettes being lighted and never finished, and somebody being killed by somebody else for some reason never made really clear, and detectives coming backstage while a line of chorus girls dance the same dance they have danced since the "Broadway Melody of 1930," and cowboys riding . . . riding . . . riding (or was it mountain marines? or the Texas Rangers?), and a blonde heroine who looks like all other blonde heroines, and a hero who solves all problems—international, national, financial, moral, ethical, or social—by socking the villain with a fake punch to the jaw.

All right—if you like it for relaxation. But it is a terrible competitor for that precious leisure time that God, science, and a modern age have given you.

What Is Leisure?

Yet leisure is really one of the most remarkable tests of what you really are.

What you do during your leisure hours is really- the test of your education.

I'm not thinking now of formal education. I know formally educated people who are lost when they find themselves on their own.

(By the way, I should like to recall here that in a recent discussion on what a cultured and educated man really is, this explanation was offered: A really educated person is one who, left in a library with no gadgets around—no radio, no toys, no typewriter, no 'phone, no fountain pen, no deck of cards—can settle down and know an enjoyable hour.)

So what you do with your leisure can be a real give-away.

A dullard crawls into the most comfortable convenient spot and goes to sleep.

The man with the empty mind fidgets around and looks vaguely for something, anything to do.

The man with nothing to say dashes about seeking someone to say it to.

The man with emotions and no particular intellect picks up a book and if there isn't a murder in the first chapter, he tosses it aside as not worth reading.

Prisoners clapped into solitary confinement have gone mad looking at blank walls. Cervantes could use the leisure thrust upon him to write "Don Quixote."

In other words leisure can be the most delightful liberty to do all the things we have always wanted to do . . . and it can be a form of water torture, the minutes dripping and dropping upon empty heads. Leisure can be the wide-flung horizon . . . or the deep cell under the main prison.

Make Your Test

I suggest that you make a little study of what you do in your leisure hours; you may gain from it a new knowledge of yourself.

Does the quiet of a room so appal you that, left for a few minutes alone with your thoughts (or lack of them), you have to switch on a radio or pick up a 'phone and call someone, it doesn't matter whom?

Do you end a journey with a feeling of frustration? Or have you along the way drunk in new scenery? caught glimpses of new and interesting towns? read a book you didn't get a chance to read at home? made the acquaintance of a man who wanted to tell you (and you encouraged him to tell you) of the intricacies of the modern wheat market?

When the family are all out for an evening, do you breathe a sigh of relief and head straight for the blessed opportunity to pursue your hobby . . . listen to a symphony orchestra or that new and different popular orchestra whose terrific arranger does such strange things with the instrumentation? grab that book that you know should be read without interruption? pursue your favourite game of solitaire? enter your darkroom and close the door against all but the joy of images appearing on film? find the New Testament and walk with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as they in turn walk with the Master? Or do you . . . ?

Well, what do you do?

The Time to Grow Great

My beloved master of novices once made an observation that impressed me so deeply that I have never had a chance to forget it. He remarked that into the Society of Jesus came a group of young men who were carefully selected, men of somewhat better than just average education and capacities, men zealous and generous and bent on serving God well. Yet, he said, after 20 years there will be the widest range of octaves among them . . . the saint and the sluggard . . . the scholar and the man of small learning . . . the specialist who knows just everything about one subject and the smatterer who

knows a little—and that not accurately—about a lot of important and unimportant things.

And, he continued, the differences among these men can be put down largely to what each one did and does with his leisure. “There will be those differences among you too,” he assured us. “How wise you are if you learn to use your leisure and use it well? Cram your leisure time with interests. Learn to seize as a special gift any moment that falls into your hands. It is during your leisure that you become great or lapse into mental, spiritual, and emotional decay.”

What he said—more or less in those words—made, as I said, a profound impression on me.

It has taken the years to let me know how right he was . . . and how right he still is.

Free Choice

When you are at work or in class at school, you move under the impulse of someone else. Even a salesman finds his time dominated by the hours during which buyers will see him and customers are pliable. One’s time in a lecture hall is determined largely by the professor on the rostrum.

Hence it is that though one learns all the essentials of medicine in a medical school and manages to earn a living on one’s job, one becomes a great specialist in one’s leisure time or a golfer in the low eighties . . . or an artistic photographer . . . or a delightful conversationalist.

If You Use Your Leisure

If you use your leisure correctly, a lot of things can happen. . . .

You can go back to your regular work in life enormously improved physically.

You can actually do your life’s work much better because of the well-spent hours off.

Your health will be much improved, since your leisure has really been a period of recreation (a word, by the way, the pronunciation of which serves to hide its real meaning: re-creation).

You can come to know your family with a new intimacy and your friends with a new affection.

You can develop a hobby or even a career that will make you a richer person socially and perhaps financially.

You can have that zestful fun which adds so much savour to living.

You can spend time with the greatest men and women who ever lived, sharing their experiences, becoming partner to their dreams, listening while they communicate to you their great thoughts and their ennobling emotions.

You come very close to God and His saints.

Make Your Leisure Different

According to the old principle that no physician questions and that no psychologist doubts: A change is a rest.

So for the filling of leisure time it is smart to pick the sort of thing that is as much a change as possible from one’s routine way of earning a living. We all laugh at the postman who on his holidays goes for a walk, the busman who during his vacation takes a bus trip, the sailor who on shore leave rows a boat in Central Park. They are standard comic characters simply because during their holidays they continue to do what they do throughout the year for a living; instead of making a change, they revert on a holiday to the same kind of activity that earns them a living.

The brilliant scientist does well to make a hobby of his violin.

A man who must spend the entire day talking to people does well to shut himself away in a darkroom now and again and emerge with perhaps a fine photograph of a landscape.

An accountant is wise if his hobby is wood-working.

A woman who all day long works in an office with men may find it a real relief to do something distinctly feminine-like tapestry work.

If a man leads a sedentary life, all day long sits at a desk and interviews clients of his bank, anything is good for him that takes him out into the open air and makes him use his nearly atrophied legs.

On the other hand a construction engineer, all day long on his feet, should know the peace of a library or the joys of coin or stamp collecting.

Physical for Mental and Vice Versa

A well-rounded man is one who is developing all his faculties.

The same is true these days of a highly developed and well-integrated woman.

That is why a truck-driver who all day long hauls furniture up to top-flight apartments doesn't need to take up weight-lifting in his leisure. (His well-developed muscles may, however, make weight lifting a tempting hobby; instead of carrying tables to complaining patrons, he can lift chunks of iron for the admiration of bystanders.)

A physician who has to touch with gentle hands the ills of others may find, as do three doctors of my friendship, great relaxation chopping wood one afternoon a week on their jointly owned farm.

Poets like to take their turns as chefs.

And every chef is probably the author of a piece of orchestral music . . . a poem. . . .

The simple principle, easily illustrated, is to do in your leisure time the sort of thing you don't get a chance to do when you are working. If you live by your biceps, use your leisure to exercise the muscle called your brain. If all day long you listen to the rivetter on a construction job, be soothed at night by the classic records you have been collecting. If you are copyreader for a publishing house, at night you might roll the heavy balls down a bowling alley.

In recent times we have been delighted with the primitive pictures produced by a professional pugilist . . . and what we remember most about Gene Tunney the boxer, is that his hobby, after he had finished chopping down an opponent, was Shakespeare. On the other hand a professor of English may need most the use of a good handball court . . . and a publisher can well turn to his kennel of pups.

One's Family and Friends

Life was hard when men and women could spend few of their waking hours together and members of the family met only as they passed one another going to and coming from work. The working classes envied the leisure classes their family life and wished that there were some working-class equivalent for the clubs and societies of the leisured.

Time was, under the fierce crush of industrialism, when a man trudged home in the evening so exhausted that family life was impossible . . . and the one spot available to him for a bit of friendliness was the neighbourhood saloon. As for the woman, she worked from dawn until midnight . . . and fell into bed too exhausted to do other than remember her husband and children fitfully in her final gasp of prayer.

There is nowadays no excuse for family disunion for reasons like those.

In fact, it is the misuse of leisure, not the lack of it, that separates husbands and wives, parents and their children.

A family that can develop together the leisure-time activity of music is a happy family. I think of the Trapp family, who have done so well for themselves—and for others—in recent years. It is interesting to note how music, especially financially profitable music, runs in families: The Crosbys, the Dorseys, the Andrews sisters, the Pickens, the King and the Mullens sisters. (I hope they are blood and not merely press-agented sisters. I know the Mullens are really sisters.)

The family orchestra can do a lot to pull a family together.

Group singing is rising in popularity.

Movies for the Family

Since I suggested earlier in this pamphlet the value of well-chosen motion pictures, I can now suggest the family's going to see the good films together. Every rather large city these days has the smaller theatre where foreign pictures are shown, the art pictures made with small budgets by the better directors, the films based on great novels or famous plays. Since the theatre as a centre is expensive and often out of geographic reach, families can well use the better motion-picture theatres as places of recreational union and cultural-entertainment development.

I have known families to whom home movies have been a real source of pleasure and enjoyment. One wise mother of my admiration, as soon as her children could walk, started to organize them into her own production unit. Regularly and later with their aid on the story, she worked out, casted, and photographed a series of charming films. The children played

important parts in all of them, as did her husband, who is also an excellent photographer. As they grew older, the children added to the films their friends and associates. And the film library that has developed from this is, not just a series of blank faces and waving hands and the back of little Willie walking away from the camera, but carefully planned stories which are, in addition to their being amusing and clever, a vivid record of the growth and maturing of the entire family.

Family Skills

Over leisure-time activities a family can become closely knit and delightfully acquainted.

Cards are a great family sport. Family tournaments of the more skilful games give the children in a family a real power of concentration and a skill and judgement that play important parts in the whole of their lives.

Many families have installed in their homes rumpus rooms simply as places for the families' leisure-time activities. And I know fathers who, themselves interested in tools, have installed fine benches and electrical shops where their boys learn to use their hands and work co-operatively.

One good friend of mine started a railroad system in his basement when the first boy was old enough to be interested. He and his sons now have a magnificent model railroad; it was built section by section, each year added trackage and rolling stock contributing to the education of the youngsters and the delight of the neighbourhood.

Social Life Is Important

Few things are more important to modern happiness and success than is the art of getting along with people. Dale Carnegie netted himself a very sizeable fortune by telling people "How to Win Friends and Influence People." Elsa Maxwell became an international figure simply because she had developed the knack of showing people how to put on an entertaining party and have a good time.

Around social life is built up a large section of our nation's advance.

Men join unions or take part in professional associations because in company with others they can exercise pressure, make gains, improve their standing—accomplish what they could not conceivably do alone.

And women have followed men's lead in every line.

A certain amount of leisure devoted to an active part in clubs and societies is an amazingly fine investment: One learns to talk, to meet strangers, to co-operate on projects, to formulate programmes, to live in miniature the democratic life that is our national characteristic.

Anyone has time these days to take on work in church organizations and societies—to the good of his own soul and the advancement of God's work.

Fraternal and other social groups—from the neighbourhood bridge club to the great federations of labour, the Medical Association, the bar associations—depend for their existence upon the freely given services of their members; but those groups give back generously along every conceivable line to those who give a section of their leisure.

I regret that this pamphlet doesn't allow for a listing of the exciting hobbies that challenge the modern man and woman, the growing boy and girl after the day's work is done.

There are the collector's hobbies . . . stamps, coins, buttons, china, miniatures along a dozen lines, prints and pictures, inexpensive figurines, dolls, programmes, menus of famous or obscure restaurants, volume 1, number 1 of magazines, clippings on sports or historic subjects, photographs of interesting people, signatures and autographs, postcards. . . . The list is interminable, and the hobbies need not be expensive.

I think of the artistic hobbies . . . photography, the modern development in amateur painting and clay and soap modelling, albums of great pictures done in inexpensive reproductions, costume plates of the ages and the nations . . . and on and on.

There are the constructive skills . . . wood-working and wood carving, electrical work on radio and television, upholstering, the various needle-crafts, gardening in all its limitless forms (I knew one chap who made a speciality of cactus plants and did extremely well with them), amateur work in architecture, model designing of any kind.

Sheer Fun

Anyone who finds fun in leisure activity is doing himself a service and making fuller and richer his personality.

Some kinds of fun can be sheer waste. Often what goes by the name of fun can be cruel and purposeless. *Some so-called fun can take people where they should not go, into atmospheres tainted and poisoned and among associates who work deep and lasting harm. There is no need for diagrams, directories, lists, and names to make more obvious something so obvious as this.*

But when fun releases wholesome laughter, exercises cramped lungs, makes one re-discover unused muscles, causes one to become completely absorbed in a tense drama played on an amateur stage or in an amateur contest played out on a field, it is likely to be good and to do good.

Leisure for Athletics

Fortunately and to the good of our souls and bodies we are an athletic nation. We have adapted our own form of football, borrow from other lands everything from billiards to bowling, from fencing to skiing and figure skating.

Australians (nor most of the English-speaking world) do not need to be encouraged to watch sports. The newspapers and the radio sports-casters—and now television—make us a nation of sports-watchers. I have always dreaded a time when we should be content only to watch, when our greatest contribution to the game might become only a cheer for a player or a razz for the referee. It is then that sport will become a great leisure killer.

But participation in amateur sports is a grand use of leisure.

Every Australian boy and girl, no matter what their age, (indeed, every reader of English,) should aspire to some skill in some sport. The modern rush to the tennis courts is encouraging. The fact that sports have their place in the basement of the church, in the school, in the city hall is much to the advantage of the nation's health.

Meet the World's Great

On the shelves of our libraries are the stories of the world's greatest men and women.

But they are not mere stories; those men and women in history and biography live for us again. They speak to us in the words they left behind.

In a thousand volumes and on the walls of museums are the great art masterpieces that were bequeathed to a grateful world by the great painters of ages past—and of our own age.

The recording machines have made it possible for Bach and Beethoven, Foster and Gershwin, the composers of past ages, and the men and women who struggle with new musical forms today, to translate for us the throbbings of their hearts and the distilled essence of their minds and emotions.

So because we know how life can be enriched by association with the world's greatest, I need hardly do more than suggest the importance of . . .

Reading during one's leisure time. . . .

Listening to great music, which comes to us now by air and through our own permanent radiograms and recordings. . . .

Courses given in almost all schools for people whose school days are formally over but who now come back, not under compulsion, but out of a desire to study and learn. . . .

The study and discussion groups that have grown to such enormous importance in our country. . . .

Conversation that brings us close to a knowledge and understanding of our immediate associates. . . .

A thousand modern mediums that bring us in touch with the great and wise of the day—everything from the feature article to the commentator's broadcast, from the lecture platform and the modern book to the extension courses of the great university. . . .

The great literature and great music and the history of the past that put within our reach the great men and women of the past, to the enrichment of our souls and the joy of fuller living. . . . **Time for God**

Need I point out that for a completely rounded leisure there must be time for God?

No one these days can say that he or she has not time for an annual retreat—time spent with God in quiet and peace, in the scrutiny of one's own soul, in the formulating of a programme by which one can live the richer and the more useful life.

The liturgical movement is designed to co-ordinate all the aspects of our leisure with a full participation in the life of Christ and His Church.

The Church offers a warm and stimulating choice of devotions to anyone who cares to hear the heartbeat of the Saviour and know the intercessory power of the saints.

The library of Catholic authorship is constantly expanding, in number, power, grandeur, inspiration, and the exquisite and convincing presentation of truth and beauty.

Men and women who once rushed through life now have time to sit or kneel and give their minds to mental prayer and their hearts and imaginations to that adult form of prayerful life that is compounded of contemplation and meditation.

God must love the increase of our leisure, for surely it gives us the opportunity to come and rest awhile with Him, to sit at His feet with John and the Magdalen, to draw from His example and His teachings the examples we need for our conduct and the programme we need for the fullest life.

Use That Leisure

You and I can be grateful that we live in an age of relative leisure.

We can look forward to more and more leisure—unless the coming of another great war sets back the hands of the time clock and makes us once more serfs and slaves.

The right use of leisure can simply alter a life. Badly-used leisure makes drunks, prodigals, and wastrels. Out of well-used leisure come cultured and cultivated men and women.

Leisure is the lovely time for conversation with our friends and prayer to God.

It is the opportunity to turn freely to those undeveloped gifts that are deep inside us, gifts waiting for release and development.

It is our chance for soul expansion and physical development and emotional clarification.

During leisure we may meet the greatest, listen to the best, read the wisest, follow the most adventuresome, and compass the world.

In leisure we may become saintly scholars and scholarly saints.

More simply: We can become charming persons whom it is a pleasure to meet, a joy to know. We can become a delight to ourselves and to our associates.
