

EMPTY HOURS

Although regular work is man's greatest blessing — for the worst material misfortune of life is to be out of work — we really know nothing of the personality of individuals during their working hours, any more than we can understand their abilities and ideals when they are asleep. For during the majority of working hours, the inner man is asleep.

If you enter a factory and see a vast room filled with busy men clad in overalls, you cannot even guess at the real nature of each individual. If you enter a bank, and see the white collar brigade deeply engaged in neat penmanship, you might for a moment imagine from the similarity of their tasks that they resemble one another; but of course you know the facts are quite otherwise. If you wish to know anything concerning the personality or inner nature of these persons, you must see them outside of office hours.

The moment the day's work is over and the worker is free, where does he go? What is his conception of a good time? What use does he make leisure? For, except in the rare instances of creative work, it is leisure alone that reveals or betrays the man.

I will go further. The use of leisure eventually determines the fate of an entire community, or of an entire nation. The Roman Empire was destroyed, first, by too much leisure, second, by the wrong use of it. In the United States nearly everybody works; and it often happens that the richest individuals work the hardest. Almost any wealthy young man would be somewhat ashamed to admit that he had no occupation, that he was doing nothing. Perhaps we carry this social requirement too far; but at all events it is better than general idleness.

It is dangerous to make prophecies, for in history it is so often the unexpected that happens. But the signs of the times seem certainly to indicate the coming of more leisure. Factory hours used to be ten or twelve hours a day. Now the average working day is eight hours; and it is highly probable that during the next decade the average work day will be six hours, with Saturday and Sunday entirely free. If, by education and increase of refinement, American men and women will make a profitable use of this leisure, the coming generations will be more civilized and more happy than at any previous period in history.

The real business of life is Life. Food, clothing and shelter are not life — they are the means of life. With many laborers the daily work is not life: it is once more the means of life. Men and women live in their minds. If leisure means laziness, if leisure means only bodily pleasures, if leisure means only attendance at games and sentimental motion pictures, the mind stagnates.

The radio may be a means of education and of elevation, or it may be destructive to the intelligence of its owner and a cause of insanity to his neighbors. Do you listen to Walter Damrosch or to slush?

The motion pictures, well chosen, may be a source of delight and instruction combined; but the motion picture *habit* is a bad habit. The automobile is a servant more efficient than the genii in the Arabian Nights; but it can also accelerate the already too swift pace down the primrose path that leads to the everlasting bonfire.

Fortunately there is an almost universal desire for education; and people are beginning to see that true education is neither easy nor swift, but means resolute application of mental energy over a long period of time. The public libraries are an enormous factor in modern civilization.

It is often said that every person should have a hobby. I say that every person should have some definite avocation, the mastery of something, whether it be the tools of a carpenter or the language of a foreign coun-

try. It is astounding what some men accomplish in their leisure. John Stuart Mill was a clerk in the East India Office. He became one of the world's leading authorities on political economy.

Not every person in the world can become such a personage. But every person can become a personality. The happiest people are those who think the most interesting thoughts. Interesting thoughts can live only

in cultivated minds. Those who decide to use leisure as a means of mental development, who love good music, good books, good pictures, good plays at the theater, good company, good conversation — what are they? They are the happiest people in the world; they are not only happy in themselves, they are the cause of happiness in others. — *By William Lyon Phelps, condensed from The Delineator, May, 1930.*

THE ADMIRABLE JEWS

They are an ancient people, a famous people, an enduring people, and a people who in the end have generally attained their objects. I hope Parliament may endure forever, and sometimes I think it will; but I cannot help remembering that the Jews have outlived Assyrian kings, Egyptian Pharaohs, Roman Caesars, and Arabian Caliphs. — *Benjamin Disraeli*