AMERICAN LEISURE

In the last generation there has been a decrease in the average working day of about three hours. This decrease promises to grow for a number of reasons. One reason, particularly, is due to what we economists call technological unemployment; whereby the machine, the time-study, the great merger, are moving down upon the industrial structure and displacing working men and women at an unprecedented rate.

It is quite obvious that the only long-term solution for a situation like this—whereby we can produce the necessary food, shelter, and clothing in less and less time—is that the hours of labor should also follow the curve of the technical arts and that men should work less time. The use of leisure, accordingly, becomes increasingly important.

We see much of America's leisure devoted, not to first-hand participation, but to second-hand, or third-hand participation. A recent study has been made, by Mr. Lehman and Mr. Witty, of 13,000 school children in Kansas, children both rural and urban. They included boys and girls from ten to sixteen years of age. Altogether some 200 forms of play and recreation were listed. The children engaged in over 200 different sorts of things, but among the twelve most frequent were: reading the funny papers, motoring (which means at that age, of course, that somebody else drives you around), going to the movies, watching sports, listening to the radio, playing the phonograph. Six of the twelve most frequent forms were mechanized, were impossible to engage in without machines. And I call this particularly to your attention: the most frequent forms for both boys and girls at all ages was reading the funny papers.

We have here in the whole country something in the order of thirty million radio listeners a night. Fifty million people pass weekly through the gaudy doors of our moving picture palaces. Thirty-five million copies of tabloids and newspapers are distributed every day, and fifteen million copies of the popular magazines make their rounds every month. Our pleasure motoring bill runs to the astounding total of five billion dollars a year.

Our whole bill for recreation (play, very broadly defined) I have calculated at twenty-one billion dollars, which is about one-quarter of the national income.

The battle is on between people who know something about the essential values of life, and the high-pressure fraternity who want to pack leisure full of jumping-jacks. On one side, you have participating forms—mountain climbing, camping, gardening, naturizing, sun-bathing, swimming, amateur acting, and books, good books.

On the other side, you have second and third-hand forms; clicking turnstiles, Roman-stadia, burning up the roads, Hollywood, jazz, Coney Island, comic strips, wood-pulp confessions, and books, bad books—compounding the stresses and strains of our day-by-day work to a large extent.

In the field of commercial and mechanized goods, there are a number of very amusing and interesting things to do. We
do not want to abolish this whole twenty-one billions of turnover. It is a case of selection, of proper balance, of not letting the high-pressure fraternity rush us, force us too hard.

Here in the United States we are like children with new toys, and must go through a period of picking them to pieces, of examining them, of admiring them. In the end we are coming out on the right side, but it is going to be a long struggle. We are up against twenty-one billions of dollars devoted to commercializing and mechanizing our leisure time.—Stuart Chase, New York City Labor Bureau, in the Pittsburgh School Bulletin.

THE READING TABLE


In scope this book covers the history of the world, not only from the early beginnings of mankind to the present, but also from China and Japan in the East to America in the West. Well-organized, it gives a straightforward, clear story of man in his political and social development. An especially interesting feature is the part dealing with the foundations of present-day civilization, which is based on five great revolutions: (1) the American Revolution, (2) The Intellectual Revolution, (3) The French Revolution, (4) the Latin-American Revolution, and (5) The Industrial Revolution. There is a chapter on each.

The book is exceptionally well-written; the language is adapted to secondary school use, but holds one's interest from beginning to end. The book contains a wealth of beautiful pictures and illustrations properly placed, and many clear-cut page maps. It is well bound, and makes a good appearance.

For both teacher's and pupils' benefit at the end of each chapter are found certain study helps and questions, the questions for the most part being simple fact questions covering the important facts in the chapter. There is also a short selected bibliography.

This should be a very teachable book; it is the best yet published for secondary school use covering this field.

J. N. McL.


This is a revision and enlargement of Dr. Wayland's splendid book of the same title published some years ago. The only noteworthy defects of the original edition have been remedied by adding a full index and by devoting less space to military activities. The author, however, has not been contented with merely correcting defects. The illustrations and maps have been considerably improved in average quality and greatly expanded in numbers, thus making the book an exceptionally attractive pictorial survey of three and a quarter centuries of Virginia history. No part of the state is disregarded and no significant phase of the development of the commonwealth is neglected. The reader is given a clear view of the economic, social, political, and general cultural progress of the people of Virginia from early colonial days down to the present. He is also made to see the commendable rôle played by Virginians in literature and in supplying national leadership in politics and other fields of activity. Throughout the book Dr. Wayland has maintained consistently a high level of historical accuracy, an unswerving attitude of fairness, a keen sense of proportion, and a simple and readable style. The value of this generally wholesome state history is further enhanced by the useful helps for teachers and pupils inserted at the close of each chapter. The book is written primarily for the use of fifth grade pupils in the Virginia schools and is admirably adapted to this purpose. Adults, however, will find it interesting and instructive.

O. F. F.