

At last we've come to that utopia where we can do ourselves a lot

AN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD boy, who ordinarily enjoys school and play, sat quietly at the window one Sunday afternoon. Suddenly his mother interrupted his reverie with a sharp, discordant, "Don't just sit there, Billy. Do something!"

This cry—"Do something!"—is the injunction not only of one mother but of our entire civilization. For although most of us are prepared to take our work seriously, we are not equally ready to take our play playfully. Nor are we ready to accept leisure as an equal partner with work in the overall pattern of living.

Yet in this pattern, work and leisure go hand-in-hand. The very epitome of leisure, for instance, is sleep. And without renewing and refreshing yourself with sleep, you cannot work the next day. Nor is sleep mere idleness. During these hours much goes on within, and problems that have gone unsolved by day are often solved in sleep.

So, too, is it with waking leisure, which, if it is true leisure, becomes a time of refreshment, of renewal, and of the fruition of ideas begun and struggled over in work.

Just having free time, however, does not assure your leisure any more than a doctor can assure peace of mind by giving a patient a tranquilizer. Though we can prescribe leisure time, we cannot prescribe leisure. Though we recommend a vacation or a weekend, we cannot keep that vacation from being vacant or that weekend from being lost.

Only you yourself can do that. And you can do it best by trying to avoid these seven deadly sins against true leisure.

Sin One—Compulsive Competition

This sin comes when you're all set for that wonderful weekend of complete relaxation. Perhaps you plan to improve your canasta, your bridge, your swimming, or your golf. Whatever it is, you are ready for a little competition in the spirit of play and good fellowship. Playfully, you are prepared to vie with friends in: "Who can do this or that the best?" or "Who can run the fastest?" or "Who can climb the highest?"

Suddenly, however, you find that you are trying too intensely to break 100 on the golf course. Your nerves have become taut, your feelings anxious. Unhealthily, you have exchanged a natural inclination to improve and express yourself for a compulsive need to prove yourself.

Competition to prove yourself is a betrayal of the very spirit of true leisure. For once you show

in your play that you must prove something about yourself, you betray chinks in the armor of your confidence. And while competition in the spirit of play is a wise, insight-giving restorative, competition to prove yourself completely violates and destroys true leisure.

Sin Two—The Search for Status and Approval

You may be the sort of person who lives for the approval of others. Instead of being "I"-minded, you are "they"-minded so that your whole life is devoted to what "they" think about you and what "they" say about you.

If you are a "they"-minded person, you will not only want other persons to like you and to be popular—as we all do, more or less—but you will also feel that they must like you and that you must be popular at all costs! Then, too, being "they"-minded, you will be ambitious. Your goals, however, will not be set because you want to do better but only because you feel that you ought to. As Ogden Nash puts this universal dilemma, "Modern man is suffering from hardening of the outerities."

Under such compulsion, a person subordinates all his leisure time, as well as all his working time, to the aggrandizement of some external authority. His life consists solely of rendering unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, or else in rebelling against Caesar. But having no ears for his own inner self, he is inwardly dead.

His cure lies in freeing himself from the tyranny of the *shoulds* and the domination of the *oughts*. The cure also lies in relaxing his compulsive drives so that he can at last find himself. But to find himself he must first open his heart and mind to intuitions and inspirations both from without and from within.

Sin Three—The Loss of Play for Play's Sake

You'll have to plead guilty to this sin when you find that you pervert a walk in the woods into a means of keeping your waistline down; a game of golf into a business conference; or an hour in the hammock into a conference about annuities, retirement plans, or even the need for a new lawn mower or the like.

Accepting play for play's sake in the spirit of true leisure, you will find that a walk in the woods, a game of golf, or a swing in the hammock should

be ends in themselves—as free from intruding seriousness as a session of Congress should be from throwing of confetti.

To find your true leisure, accept play for play's sake. But doing so, recognize that you can have a healthy mind in a healthy body only if you will let yourself loll for lolling's sake, contemplate beauty for beauty's sake, art for art's sake and, most important, life for life's sake.

Sin Four—Underrating Contemplation

If you are one of the doers of the world and have no use for the thinkers, this sin applies to you. It also applies to you if you run from meditation as from a pang of conscience.

True leisure can, in fact, take place only when you allow yourself the freedom of meditation. At such times, in the words of Van Dyke, "The spiritual unbidden and unconscious rise up through the common." For, when you are willing to relax and to let come what will, you have the opportunity to come face to face with yourself.

You have to be willing to live some of your life in your inner world. You will find that you will have to rediscover in yourself the child who can respond with fresh vision to the world without and within. Discovering "thine own self" and the child you are, you will bring to your life beauty, the capacity for marveling, and an inner activity that will enrich your existence.

Sin Five—Denial of Creativity

Are you perhaps abusing your leisure by committing this fifth sin—this denial of creativity, which, in a sense, is the result of the four preceding sins? Your answer is important, for whatever your work, it requires at least a little of the creativity that only leisure can foster.

The plain truth is that the sudden grasp, the ecstasy of being able to say, "Oh, now I've got it," occurs not during moments of striving to get it, but rather when you have relaxed your efforts. So, too, does high achievement take place with seeming spontaneity.

Archimedes was in his bathtub, Newton under the apple tree when they acquired sudden and profound insights into work that had been absorbing them for years. Poincaré experienced his moment of revelation and made his most profound mathematical discovery when he was stepping onto a streetcar.

Yes, both from my work with patients and from



the 7 deadly sins