

**THE
COMMERCIALIZATI
ON OF LEISURE**

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The Commercialization of Leisure by James Peyton Sizer

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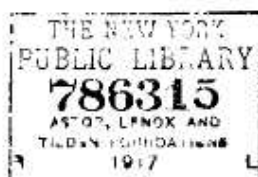
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TO MY FATHER

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**THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF
LEISURE**

The Commercialization of Leisure

DESIRE FOR LEISURE

LEISURE is the chief end of life. You may moralize about the dignity of labor; you may get so into the habit of work that, like Dr. Manette in *A Tale of Two Cities*, you can not stop; but in the mind of every normal person there lies the hope of leisure. Some of our ancestors saw from bitter experience that life, for them, held no hope; that they were doomed to continuous drudgery in the face of such fearful odds as hunger, cold, and disease; and that leisure could come only after death. Struggling humanity has everywhere erected for itself a castle in the air, a place of repose, where the tired soul can remain throughout the ages undisturbed by the necessity of labor. The Elysian Fields, the Happy Hunting Ground, Walhalla, all present leisure and relief from work and hardships.

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Never was a doctrine more welcome than that of a Christian Heaven coming to the tired peasant. Even Puritanism, coming at a time when wars, enclosures, and industrial changes were making the life of the peasant unbearable presented a cheerful picture of promise.

FORMER WAYS OF USING LEISURE

Every people has had a leisure class. And every people has had a typical way of using its leisure. Let us see how a few nations have used this valuable asset and how it has influenced their civilization.

1. GREEK: In ancient Greece, every free boy was encouraged to take part in amateur contests of all kinds. His school work was merely another form of athletics or contest. The games were a part of the religion and patriotism of the people. In all the games there was a place for all kinds of achievements. Here the runner tried his speed and the wrestler his skill, the discus-thrower his strength and the jumper his agility. Here were contests in oratory; here the musicians contended for the olive wreath; here the young playwright

displayed the first fruits of his genius and the philosophers expounded their precepts. There was no false exaggeration or professionalism. A contestant could win the prize only once in each kind of contest. But on the other hand there was too much system to allow much spontaneity. Exercise in music, athletics, and mental training were all consciously planned with a view to making a complete citizen. All the exercises of a boy were prescribed by a pedagogue; he was never allowed to seek his own amusement, and without this privilege there could be no real play.

The Greek revelled in the drama, music, oratory, poetry, and politics, and could indulge himself in any of these for a very low price. The theatre was generally owned by the city, and on certain days the people were admitted free. Recreation in Greece was cheap, of a high order, always amateur, and well regulated, and it never became sensuous. We think of Greek civilization as being of that same type, lofty, beautiful, clean, spiritual and wholesome, until contaminated by outlanders.

But this beautiful structure of leisure was