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VOICE

RESPONSIBILITY
INTEGRITY
FREEDOM

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"Freedom consists in the ability to choose or refuse
one thing at a time."

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Freedom

There have probably been more high-flown phrases used, and more cant and hypocrisy demonstrated, in regard to the idea of human freedom, than in regard to any other idea. Now, whatever conditions may appertain to a person's physical, mental or moral ability to choose wisely or to make a 'Christian' choice—these are the subjective determinants of choice—he has not the objective means to exercise freedom except he can choose or refuse *one thing at a time*. He cannot choose unless he has power to refuse what he does not want, and he cannot refuse what he does not want unless he has the power to choose what he does want. At the head of this paper is a quotation, which has been there since the publication of the first number. It is incompletely quoted. One person pointed out the error when the first number appeared, and no one has done so since, although the quotation is familiar to practically every reader of this paper. From this issue the quotation will read correctly as "Freedom consists in the ability to choose or refuse one thing at a time."

Professor Daniel-Rops writing under the heading "Towards a Truly Christian Society" says: "... speaking simply as a son of the Church I think that Christian teaching presupposes here a very definite organisation which I might characterise thus: a regime that is wholly directed to the human. I feel very deeply that if the human person is to be truly free, the whole system of economy must be directed in the interest of man. Yes, the aim of an economic regime is not to increase production for production's sake, nor to increase capital; nor is it to give special advantages to this or that trade union. Its aim should be to make it possible for man to dwell on this earth at ease, in harmony and brotherhood; in the language of the economist, that means a *consumer's regime*."

The determination of Financiers, Socialists and Planners is that the overall policy of our economy shall be 'Full Employment.' This may be called an employers' or an employees' regime, but it is not a consumer's regime.

A consumer's regime is one in which the *sole* determinant of what is produced is what each and every consumer is financially empowered to say over the counter; and this means that primarily a consumer is *empowered*, which is to say *empayed*. It is axiomatic that in a genuine consumers' regime such happenings as Trade Depressions or *accumulated* debts are an impossibility, for the simple reason that in accordance with periodic national balance sheets of production and consumption the consumers *automatically* receive the power to purchase *all* that is produced, and is still adequately empowered to purchase when his labour is not required (which is not to say when it is refused when it is required).

A consumer's regime is one where the consumer is empowered with freedom to choose; because he is financially independent he can determine where and under what conditions he will work. And, because he is financially independent, he is a free man, and will remain free—so long as he does not abuse his freedom. If he does, natural law will automatically ensure that he loses it.

Man was not given free-will so that it should be taken away by men: that is one instance of a disservice to Him "whose service is perfect freedom." And the reward is not freedom.

Enemies of Leisure

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland possesses the means of material abundance. The fact of this potential abundance of goods is beyond dispute; witness the efforts to find customers, to create artificial demand, hire purchase schemes, the monstrous growth of a bureaucracy that is almost wholly parasitic, the frantic search for markets overseas, the colossal waste of effort and material on armaments, monopoly restrictions of output, and a hundred other similar symptoms. All these "problems" have one common denominator, insufficient money in the pockets of consumers. The latter are forced by the present financial policy to contribute "work," useful or injurious to the welfare of people, before being allowed to gain access to the existing or potential wealth. The people have been brain washed to believe that this "work" is the only possible means to share in the abundance. Who are the policy makers?

A wonderful industrial organisation backed by the capital productive assets accumulated over centuries, such as we possess, constitutes a heritage which, properly used, could give all of us such leisure as we desire. Some of us can do with more leisure than others. Almost all of us are incapable of idleness except for such short spells as we need to recuperate mind and body from the daily grind. As has frequently been pointed out, leisure is not the same

as idleness. Leisure is the ability to do what you like, when you like, without financial penalty. It is a fundamental characteristic of man, more highly developed in some races than in others, that he uses the time he has free from toil to try and progress, spiritually, mentally, or materially. Had it not been for this urge to know more, to create, to be better, to live more easily or more abundantly, *homo* could not be called *sapiens*. The creative urge in the widest sense of the phrase has been responsible for the fantastic accumulation of productive capacity we possess and for what little progress we have made spiritually. Looked at from the point of view of the individual, it is unlikely that any person would refuse leisure if it were offered unconditionally. Not only is leisure or a large measure of it a possibility for every man and woman in this country, it is fervently desired and striven for by almost all. Competent engineers have stated that to maintain the present standard of living it would be necessary for every man to work for only ten years of his life. The years of work now put in by men and women over and above this is sheer waste of effort. To all intents and purposes the productive problem is solved. (What did you say? No, exchanging an unsaleable product for the produce of another country merely renders the latter or some other product unsaleable.) From every point of view leisure is a state of affairs one would think would be introduced as a policy particularly when one considers that a start in this direction could have been made very many years ago. But who are the policy makers?

Just as there is no doubt about the potential wealth we could enjoy in leisure, so there is no doubt about the conscious and organised policy to prevent us from getting that leisure. The situation now is quite serious enough. When in 10, 20, or 30 years' time the present industrial machine increases its productive capacity several times over by using Automation and Atomic Power, the capacity of industry to grant us all leisure will have increased in the same proportion. Unless the distributive system, *i.e.*, money policy, is adapted to allow for the change, civilisation will crash. It will be like the duke who drowned in a butt of Malmsey. No doubt he was drunk when it happened, but there is no need for us to drown in a glut of our making. The refusal to take advantage of the possibility of leisure and the continuous propaganda in favour of "more work," "full employment," "exports," and other leisure-preventatives must have a reason. Readers of this periodical should be quite clear in their minds as to the nature, locus, and force of the interests that are so anxious to prevent us benefiting from this gift of material abundance.

The main organs for anti-leisure propaganda, particularly the claim that consumption can only be financed through more "work" irrespective of its usefulness, are the daily newspapers. There are others, *e.g.*, the B.B.C. and, alas, the pulpit with few exceptions. The men who control the newspapers, who are not necessarily the editors or even the proprietors, are all men removed from any financial anxieties, men who themselves could enjoy their leisure in other ways. Clearly they use that leisure to try and prevent others having it. That the mass of our people believe the evil propaganda to which they are subjected is a curious psychological phenomenon. The action of the policy makers responsible for this propaganda is still more curious. It can have only one explanation, the urge to dominate others,

a condition of spiritual disease. A doctor once told the writer: "neurasthenics run the world. The others, the cabbages, never do anything, they don't count." Neurasthenia suggests a tendency towards a lack of balance in a person's character. That person will attempt subconsciously to correct that balance. The result in most cases is ambition. Unfortunately it is precisely here that the ways part, one along a path lit by Christian principles, the other promising power over others. Christ being tempted by the devil is the same thing as what happens to men. The greater the mental and material gifts of a man, the greater his temptation. One path is in the service of mankind, the other to dominate one's fellows. The former path is of benefit to one's self and leads to stability of character, the other is evil and leads to insanity, power mania. The first path involves an ambition to master some skill or subject, scientific, artistic, or otherwise; to develop some gift or capacity individual to one's self. The evil path of necessity starts by surrendering self to the power maniacs and supporting their policy. It is only by such surrender of a man's innate consciousness of right and wrong that he stands a chance of "getting-on" in this world at the present time. Hence we see so many intelligent men ranged against us.

H. R. PURCHASE.

They Said It

"We do not believe that the propounders of the scheme of filling up all appointments in the Civil Service by open competition can have contemplated the full scope or bearings of their plan. As we view it, it would amount to nothing short of an entire administrative revolution. It would create a special Profession—the members of which would be as exclusively entitled to practise the arts of government as are the members of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons and Physicians to administer medicine or to amputate limbs. It would hand over the whole Executive Government of the empire, except as regards its parliamentary functionaries, to a body of employees, trained in the same school, entering through the same gate, passing through the same ordeal, stamped with the same seal, imbued to a great extent with the same notions and traditions. And if, in addition to this, the rest of the plan were adopted, and the youths thus bearing the prescribed impress and superscription like warranted coin, were to rise by regular gradation to the higher posts, their intellectual and moral habits would be indelibly fixed by professional influence before they arrived there; the ideas and spirit of the corps would destroy or benumb all marked individuality; its character, principles, and pervading notions would become as it were stereotyped. . . . The nominal Ministers of the Crown . . . would find themselves, on entering their several departments, in the hands of a body of permanent functionaries, wholly independent of them, masters of all official traditions and details, and linked together in one close fraternity—through whom all business must be done, and who have their own resolute notions as to the right way of doing it. Would not the Chief Ministers be utterly powerless in such a situation?"—*The Economist*, August 4, 1855.

"Vernon Lee" on Leisure

From an Essay contained in a collection called "Ariadne in Mantua" (*The Week End Library—John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd., 1930*) by Vernon Lee (pseudonym of novelist and essayist, Violet Paget, 1856-1935).

We must evidently begin by a little work of defining; and this will be easiest done by considering first what Leisure is not. In the first place, it is one of those things about which we erroneously suppose that other people have plenty of it, and we ourselves have little or none, owing to our thoroughly realising only that which lies nearest to our eye—to wit, *ourselves*. How often do we not go into another person's room and say, "Ah!" *this* is a place where one can feel peaceful!" How often do we not long to share the peacefulness of some old house. . . . Meanwhile, in that swept and garnished spacious room, in that house or convent, is no peacefulness to share; barely perhaps, enough to make life's two ends meet. For we do not see what fills up, chokes and frets the life of others, whereas we are uncomfortably aware of the smallest encumbrance in our own; in these matters we feel quickly enough the mote in our own eye, and do not perceive the beam in our neighbour's.

And leisure, like its sister, peace, is among those things which are internally felt rather than seen from the outside. (Having written this part of my definition it strikes me that I have very nearly given away St. Jerome and St. Jerome's lion, since any one may say, that probably that famous leisure of his was just one of the delusions in question. But this is not the case. St. Jerome really had leisure, at least when he was painted; I know it to be a fact; and, for the purposes of literature, I require it to be one. So I close this parenthesis with the understanding that so much is absolutely verified.)

Leisure requires the evidence of our own feelings, because it is not so much a quality of time as a peculiar state of mind. We speak of *leisure time*, but what we really mean thereby is *time in which we can feel at leisure*. What being at leisure means is more easily felt than defined. It has nothing to do with being idle, or having time on one's hands, although it does involve a certain sense of free space about one, as we shall see anon. There is time and to spare in a lawyer's waiting room, but there is no leisure, neither do we enjoy this blessing when we have to wait two or three hours at a railway junction. On both these occasions (for persons who can profit thereby to read the papers, to learn a verb, or to refresh memories of foreign travel, are distinctly abnormal) we do not feel in possession of ourselves. There is something fuming and raging inside us, something which seems to be kicking at our inner bulwarks as we kicked the cushions of a tardy four-wheeler in our childhood. St. Jerome, patron of leisure, never behaved like that, and his lion was always engrossed in pleasant contemplation of the cardinal's hat on the peg. I have said that when we are bored we feel as if possessed by something not quite ourselves (much as we feel possessed by a stone in a shoe, or a cold in the head); and this brings me to a main characteristic of leisure: it implies that we feel free to do what we like, and that we have plenty of space to do it in. This is a very important remark of

mine, and if it seem trite, that is merely because it is so wonderfully true. Besides, it is fraught with unexpected consequences.

The worst enemy of leisure is boredom; it is one of the most active pests existing, fruitful of vanity and vexation of spirit. I do not speak merely of the wear and tear of so-called social amusements, though that is bad enough. We kill time, and kill our better powers also, as much in the work undertaken to keep off *ennui* as in the play. Count Tolstoi, with his terrible eye for shams, showed it all up in a famous answer to M. Dumas *fils*. Many, many of us, work, he says, in order to escape from ourselves. Now, we should not want to escape from ourselves; we ought to carry ourselves, the more unconsciously the better, along ever widening circles of interest and activity; we should bring ourselves into ever closer contact with everything that is outside us; we should be perpetually giving ourselves from sheer loving instinct; but how can we give ourself if we have to run away from it, or bury it at home, or chain it up in a treadmill? Good work is born of the love of the Power-to-do for the Job-to-be-done; nor can any sort of chemical arrangements, like those by which Faust's pupil made *Homunculus* in his retort, produce genuinely living, and in its turn fruitful, work. The fear of boredom, the fear of the moral going to bits which boredom involves, encumbers the world with rubbish, and exhibitions of pictures, publishers' announcements, lecture syllabuses, schemes of charitable societies, are pattern-books of such litter. The world for many people, and unfortunately, for the finer and nobler (those most afraid of *ennui*) is like a painters' garret, where some half-daubed canvas, eleven feet by five, hides the *Jaconda* on the wall, the *Venus* in the corner, and blocks the charming tree-tops, gables, and distant meadows through the window.

Art, literature, and philosophy are notoriously expressions no longer of men's and women's thoughts and feelings, but of their dread of finding themselves without thoughts to think or feelings to feel. So-called practical persons know this, and despise such employments as frivolous and effeminate. But are they not also, to a great extent, frightened of themselves and running away from boredom? See your well-to-do weighty man of forty-five or fifty, merchant, or soldier, or civil servant; the same who thanks God *he* is no idler. Does he really require more money? Is he really more useful as a colonel than as a major, in a wig or cocked hat than out of it? Is he not shuffling money from one heap into another, making rules and regulations for others to unmake, preparing for future restless idlers the only useful work which restless idleness can do, the carting away of their predecessors' litter?

Nor is this all the mischief. Work undertaken to kill time, at best to safeguard one's dignity, is clearly not the work which one was born to, since that would have required no such incentives. Now, trying to do work one is not fit for, implies the more or less unfitting oneself to do, or even to be, the something for which one had facilities. It means competing with those who are utterly different, competing in things which want a totally different kind of organism; it means, therefore, offering one's arms and legs, and feelings and thoughts to those blind, brutal forces of

adaptation which, having to fit a human character into a given place, lengthen and shorten it, mangling it unconcernedly in the process. . . .

And think of the persons born to contemplation or sympathy, who, in the effort to be prompt and practical, in the struggle for a fortune or a visiting-list lose, atrophy (alas, after so much cruel bruising!) their inborn exquisite powers.

The world wants useful inhabitants. True. But the clouds building bridges over the sea, the storms modelling the peaks and flanks of the mountains, are a part of the world; and they want creatures to sit and look at them and learn their life's secrets, and carry them away, conveyed perhaps merely in altered tone of voice, or brightened colour of eye, to revive the spiritual and physical hewers of wood and drawers of water. For the poor sons and daughters of men require for sustenance, as well as food and fuel, and intellect and morals, the special mysterious commodity called *charm*. . . .

And here let me open a parenthesis of lamentation over the ruthless manner in which our century and nation destroys this precious thing, even in its roots and seed. *Charm* is, where it exists, an intrinsic and ultimate quality; it makes our actions, persons, life, significant and desirable, apart from anything they may lead to, or any use to which they can be put. Now we are allowing ourselves to get into a state where nothing is valued, otherwise than as a means; where to-day is interesting only because it leads up to to-morrow; and the flower is valued only on account of the fruit, and the fruit, in its turn, on account of the seed.

It began, perhaps, with the loss of that sacramental view of life and life's details which belonged to Judaism and the classic religions, and of which even Catholicism has retained a share; making eating, drinking, sleeping, cleaning house and person, let alone marriage, birth and death, into something grave and meaningful, not merely animal and accidental; and mapping out the years into days, each with its symbolic or commemorative meaning and emotion. All this went long ago, and inevitably. But we are losing nowadays something analogous and more important: the cultivation and sanctification not merely of acts and occasions but of the individual character.

Life has been allowed to arrange itself, if such can be called arrangement, into an unstable, jostling heap of interests, ours and other folks, serious and vacuous, trusted to settle themselves according to the line of least resistance (that is, of most breakage!) and the survival of the toughest, without our sympathy directing the choice. As the days of the year have become confused, hurried, and largely filled with worthless toil and unworthy trouble, so in measure, alas, our souls! We rarely envy people for being delightful; we are always ashamed of mentioning that any of our friends are virtuous; we state what they have done, or do, or are attempting; we state their chances of success. Yet success may depend, and often does, on greater hurrying and jostling; not on finer material and workmanship, in our hurrying times. The quick method, the rapid worker, the cheap object quickly replaced by a cheaper—these we honour; we want the last new thing, and have no time to get to love our properties, bodily and spiritual. 'Tis bad

economy, we think, to weave such damask, linen, and brocade as our fathers have left us; and perhaps this reason accounts for our love of bric-à-brac; we wish to buy associations ready made, like that wealthy man of taste who sought to buy a half-dozen old statues, properly battered and lichened, to put in his brand new garden. With this is connected—I mean this indifference to what folk *are* as distinguished from what they *do*—the self-assertion and aggressiveness of many worthy persons, men more than women, and gifted, alas, more than giftless; the special powers proportionately accompanied by special odiousness. Such persons cultivate themselves, indeed, but as fruit and vegetables for the market, and, with good luck and trouble, possibly *primeurs*: concentrate every means, chemical manure and sunshine, and quick! each still hard pear or greenish cauliflower into the packing-case, the shavings and sawdust, for export. It is with such well-endowed persons that originates the terrible mania (caught by their neighbours) of tangible work, something which can be put alongside of others' tangible work, if possible with some visible social number attached to it. So long as this be placed on the stall where it courts inspection, what matters how empty and exhausted the soul which has grown it? For nobody looks at souls except those who use them for this market-gardening.

Dropping metaphor; it is woeful to see so many fine qualities sacrificed to *getting on*, independent of actual necessity; getting on, no matter why, on the road to *no matter what*. And on that road, what bitterness and fury if another passes in front! Take up books of science, of history and criticism, let alone newspapers; half the space is taken up in explaining (or forestalling explanations), that the sage, hero, poet, artist said, did, or made the particular thing before some other sage, hero, poet, artist; and that what the other did, or said, or made, was either a bungle, or a plagiarism, or—worst of all—was something *obvious*. Hence, like the bare-back riders at the Siena races, illustrious persons, and would-be illustrious, may be watched using their energies, not merely in pressing forward, but in hitting competitors out of the way with inflated bladders—bladders filled with the wind of conceit, not merely the breath of the lungs. People who might have been modest and gentle, grow, merely from self-defence, arrogant and aggressive; they become waspish, contradictory, unfair, who were born to be wise and just, and well-mannered. And to return to the question of *Charm*, they lose, soil, maim in this scuffle, much of this most valuable possession; their intimate essential quality, their natural manner of being towards nature and neighbours and ideas; their individual shape, perfume, savour, and, in the sense of herbals, their individual *virtue*. And when, sometimes, one comes across some of it remaining, it is with the saddened feeling of finding a delicate plant trampled by cattle or half eaten up by goats.

Alas, alas, for charm! People are busy painting pictures, writing poems, and making music all the world over, and busy making money for the buying or hiring thereof. But as to that charm of character which is worth all the music and poetry and pictures put together, how the good common-sense generations do waste it.

(To be concluded.)