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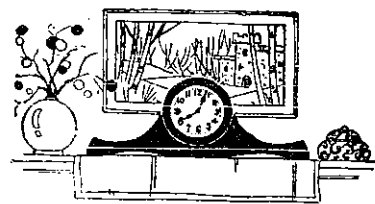
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TALKING SHOP

TO people who are keen on their work, shop is one of the most enthralling kinds of conversation. And, though it is supposed to be taboo in general society, there are often fascinating hours to be enjoyed when some interesting person, a traveller, a good lawyer or what not, can be induced to entertain with his or her particular shop.

But we've all met and been intensely bored by the person whose life and conversation seem entirely bounded by her job. She can't talk about anything else. To have only one interest in life is injurious, and there's something wrong here.

It's wise to try to discover where the mischief lies in a friend of this type. She may be lonely, with no friends to take her out of herself and acquaintances only in the same work as her own. She may be overworked, so that she has time for nothing but her job, and never gets her thoughts away from it, or it may be too responsible and heavy for her abilities. In either of these cases, unless something is done, a nervous breakdown is likely to be the eventual result.

If you feel yourself getting too much into the shop habit, not merely of talk, but of thought, counteract it by the simple expedient of throwing yourself into a hobby. The first thing one very successful nerve specialist does with his patients is to set them to stamp collecting or something of the kind; it's a significant fact that nervous breakdowns are much the commonest among those whose only hobby is their work—whose life, in fact, is one perpetual round of shop.

Cultivate friends whose work is entirely different from yours, and who are rather bored by the mention of your job. Read interesting books, play games, go to hear music and plays. And when you take a holiday, whether it is a week-end or your summer fortnight, make a resolution not to utter or think about shop. Even if you're in the company of fellow-professionals there are the "number of things" of which Stevenson says the world is so full to use as topics of interesting and restful conversation.

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