

CHAPTER 3. THE FIRST LESSON

The Daily Mentative Record. To aid in discovering your predilections, abilities, and originality—lines the Daily Mentative Record should be kept. This practice was the most useful thing ever accomplished by the author for his life-work. It is a careful and complete daily record of your accumulating mentative data, so at any time reference may be made to all the original work your mind has done along any line, the data being constantly classified, up-to-date, and completely and concisely described in detail without repetition. Each group of related data is kept as a whole, if it formed a whole or part of a whole of any subject, and the data distributed throughout a systematic treatise on that subject or science or art or philosophy. The mentative record is a system of *mentative bookkeeping*. It is part of the art of using and utilizing the mentative activities of your own mind according to your predilections. It is a lesson of basic importance which is preparatory to the more elaborate and technical curriculum. It is a lesson of utmost value to originality and should be known and practiced by all who expect to rise above the mediocre and who aspire greatly.

Keep daily a full and true record of *every* original (to you) fruitage of your mind's ideas, thoughts, successes, aspiration, insights, impulses, attitudes, skills, creative work, moral and ethical urgings and exaltations, and other promptings.

Every item should be kept fully classified. Every item should be fully and carefully expounded, concisely and in good literary form, in every detail, and kept up-to-date with reference to (a) your accumulating ideas and (b) the world's knowledge on the subject. Add every new meaning and insight and discovery and invention achieved by your mind.

Like a painter working on his great picture, you should improve and perfect this picture of your original mental content, watch it grow, and if your discoveries or thoughts or insights call for a revolutionarily different sketch of the picture, do not hesitate to change it — you may get nearer the truth (insofar as it is achievable by your mind at your degree of evolution and knowledge and moral and ethical character). You are perfecting a picture of your very personality, of your self, and it should be complete as a literary exposition at any time so that if you were to

die unexpectedly your mental bookkeeping would be finished.

You do this work to conserve all the original things your mind brings into the world, and to stimulate your mentation relating to your predilections and their growth and fruitage. The mind of a

[p. 74]

genius pursues an orbit of its own according to its predilections and phylogenetic influences, and this orbit as a whole is not visible at the orbit. By recording *every* bit of original mentation, each item of insight will be a small portion of the arc of the orbit, from which after a sufficient number have been assembled the path of the orbit may be determined and the general direction of the mind's growth will be indicated. The sections of the mind's orbit will continue to grow and some of the empty spaces will begin to fill.

The mind may be likened to a tree upon which has been grafted all manner of fruits (as many as there are kinds of abilities) each trunk bearing its own special kind of fruit, at its own season of life and in no one person do all these limbs bear fruit, but only one or two or more and the rest are unfertile. By keeping this record of mentative crops you will be able, even *early in life*, to ascertain from which limbs you may expect to gather fruit, and what kind of fruit, and which ones will bear the most fruit and to which ones to give the most attention of the *kinds of attention* they need.

When a predilective ability (one of the said limbs) begins to yield discoveries, skills, inventions, insights, creative results, moral and ethical urgings and exaltations, these results, *each and every one of them*, as Emerson said are "Like children born to you which you may not carelessly let die," and should not be allowed to run wild and keep in bad company (false knowledge and The Unproved) and grow up into slackers and idlers. They should be kept cumulatively in mind by the daily mentative record to which you systematically refer and consciously pass the meanings through your mind, to keep them fresh and vivid and in solution. Improve each item in detail every time you can so as to keep the original and predilective part of your mind *growing* and *awake* and *aware*. *Keep it fully* and systematically expounded, else any given item of growth will *drop out of attention* and *awareness* and lie dormant (like a seed in soil that is too dry) and quit growing and quit being associatively integrated.

When a tree makes additional growth in the spring its growth

begins with that growth which it had attained the previous season and if some of that growth were lopped off or forgotten, the growth would not occur (as in the case 999 times out of 1000, if such a classified synopsis were not kept) and therefore do not neglect, from this time on, to keep a classified and fully-expounded record (not a diary) for the sake of your own more complete development.

If you have predilective abilities, you may not discover some of them unless you do this work.

If you do this, after a time, with the aid of certain additional

[p. 75}

rules of the curriculum later described, you will seldom re-write your synopsis, or any part of it, without having the joy of adding important new matter. Such new matter being born on a live limb, will keep on growing and the twig will become a limb, sometimes larger and more fruitful than the one from which it sprouted. If you do not do this work you will not only cheat yourself but the world!

Every supposed step of this progress must not be considered a step until verified by scientifically directed observation.

The best part of yourself is this addition made by your mind to your own self-expression and to the world's knowledge; it will give you the most satisfaction and joy. As you go along in this great life-work of writing an exposition of Your Mind's Work (your mentative synopsis or comprehension synopsis or mentative classification) you will find it will acquire an impetus of its own. The main discoveries and insights will begin to direct themselves — the book will begin to write itself.

You will begin to write this book of yours in the quiet of your room; there will be no stage-fright; no consideration as to what others will say. We are naturally bashful when for the first time we confess or admit a hidden love, whether it be for a person or for a poem. We regard it too sacred for the common knowledge of others; but it is sometimes a far greater embarrassment to reveal to another for the first time the real undercurrent of our deeper thoughts and feelings — most people pass their entire lives without having done so; their actions and motives throughout life are mysteries to others, and even to themselves. It is a test to appear for the first time before an audience about a matter in which our real beliefs are at stake; it is a severer test to frankly admit to another our real ambitions; but it is a much more difficult task for

you to *admit to yourself your real weaknesses*, and your mentative record will reveal them.

Our distinctive thoughts and original ideas seem so simple and commonplace and matter-of-fact to our own understanding that we cannot believe that others would feel an interest in them. Our momentary gleams of understanding of matters before dark to us, seem so evanescent and shadowy as to perhaps be true for ourselves only, and not for others. They will soon cease to be shadowy if we write them out cumulatively in our mentative record until we get original ideas on the subject. We imagine that the insight which we have just attained regarding some subject is too simple to tell others. We think our feelings and sentiments and sympathies are too ordinary to write out. If you are predilective on that subject and sincere, that fear is a mistake. That gleam which you thought so trivial was perhaps a ray that struggled up through all the mists and clouds of your selfish

[p. 76]

nature to reach your consciousness, and if you but follow it, as you get nearer the source, that gleam will glow with increasing brilliancy and the phenomena and objects of life which it illumines will emerge from the darkness.

If consciousness cannot trust itself, then the universe is a liar and an imposition. If truth is an untrustworthy guide, then there is no guidance possible to mind. Apart from all the struggle of your life stands your Awareness and your memory, like spectators, witness to your own actions. That which you really know — not the opinion which others have forced upon you — is your real guidance; follow it and you will be good; utter it and you will be great. Your predilection is your authority. It is easy for the vine to grow grapes, for the rosebush to bloom, for the fish to remain under water, for the bird to fly — but they could not exchange duties. That which is not delightful and easy for you to do is not your sphere; but how shall you know what your sphere is?

The answer is, if you do not know what most interests you and pleases you in thought and action, how can you be expected to know anything? Your inborn affections and emotions, your intellectual mind-embodiment, and the circumstances and events which surround you make it impossible, if you are conscious at all, not to know what pleases you most, provided the possibilities *for you* are all systematically passed in review predilectively. In them

(your abilities and predilections and feelings and productive mentation) you have the elements of a true prognostication of what your life's actions and hopes should be. But if that which pleases you is not based on truth then your sphere and vocation will lead you to wrong ends.

Are you in doubt what to do? Then face the world in all the ensemble of its multitudinous details and ask your Awareness what it is that your consciousness actually most desires and enjoys. Make a chronological and classified record of these beckonings and opportunities, of your antagonisms and obstructions, of your failures and successes, of your appreciations and censures, of your gains and losses, and see what the algebraic sum of these factors is and in what direction abilities and original work lead you; it will be a true solution of your life's problem. It is obvious that the sum of your mind's contents is all that you know of the universe (or of yourself as part of that universe) and it is plain that these most interesting parts (to you) will determine your life's vocation; for certainly the strongest normal tendencies of your mind should lead.

“As a man thinketh so is he, and as a man chooseth so is he and so is his nature. . . . A man is a method, a progressive arrangement; a selecting principle, gathering his like to him

[p. 77]

wherever he goes. He takes only his own out of the multiplicity that sweeps and circles round him. . . . The facts, words, persons, which dwell in his memory without his being able to say why, remain because they have a relation to him not less real for being as yet not apprehended. They are symbols of value to him as they interpret parts of his consciousness, which he would vainly seek words for in the conventional images of books and other minds. . . . What attracts my attention shall have it, as I will go to the man who knocks at my door, whilst a thousand persons as worthy go by it, to whom I give no regard. It is enough that these particulars speak to me. A few anecdotes, a few traits of character, manners, face, a few incidents, have an emphasis in your memory out of all proportion to their apparent significance if you measure them by the ordinary standards. They relate to your gift. . . . What your heart thinks great is great. . . . No man can learn what he has not prepared for learning, however near to his eyes is the object. Our eyes are holden that we cannot see things that stare us in the face, until the hour arrives when the mind is ripened — then we behold

them, and the time when we saw them not is like a dream.”

If you have chosen your vocation from your abilities and originality tendencies, your heart will not be centered elsewhere while you are engaged in your daily work. If you have been awaiting the time when you could commence something more congenial, that is evidence enough that you are out of your place and you have not succeeded according to the merits which you alone know you possess. Return to your real self and deny it no longer; then will occur your transfiguration. Surely enough has been said in brief outline to point out the general way to choose your life’s work by this mentative record method, and thereby *secure spontaneous power of continuous attention* to your chosen subject. This attention will enable you to engage in that contemplative comprehension of your Practical Prospection which is the most effectual siege of the Shrine of Originality. If the daily work relates to that subject which you most love, varied interests will conspire to create in you a great capacity of consecutive attention and concentration which the intervals of rest will not abate, and you will have perseverance as easy and spontaneous as breathing.

If you have no distinct predilections amounting to genius-capacities you will have special abilities and tastes, and a livelihood to make or a profession or some kind of a career, and this method can put your *whole ability* at work at *what concerns you most*. This first lesson is a perpetual lesson — it is a daily lesson you should practice all your life (you will anyhow if you ever get fairly started at it); thereby your predilective abilities

[p. 78]

and whole highest personality and your own *growing* will be your own teacher. The first lesson is, in a way, a practical outline of the mentative life, whereby your mind and your true knowledge and your phylogenetic subconscious leading guide your career.

The mind is a growth and not a chaos of disconnected results, as has often been supposed. The growth *always* comes from previous growth, and if some were forgotten then the new growth would not occur.

A lifetime of keeping this Daily Mentative Record with many years’ systematic ideating and thinking about his accumulated researches emphasized to the author the following conclusions. A man, to the extent that he is *predilectively awake and aware*, is

something more than an individual force; he is also, and more largely, the product of the total progress of the world in which he is an integral part. The predilective urge was not wholly of an intellectually definable nature but also largely came out of the mind's subconsciousness as strong impulses-to-do or not to do, and as insights out of the general fund of conscious and subconscious functionings. Out of these came growing conscious purposes that were resolute in getting certain things done, and later found themselves justified when they were at last accomplished.