

Pelmanism

Lesson 10

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I've made some changes to bring this series of documents up to date. I'm sharing it with you because it helped me bring together a lifetime of experience dealing with the assorted problems in creating order out of chaos.

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PELMANISM
Books and Reading:
How to Organize your Mental Life
Lesson No. 10

The Pelman System of Mind and Memory Training

FOREWORD

Editor's Note: This is basically the original course but I've made some minor changes in an attempt to bring it into the 21st century but essentially kept the same language.

To the Student:

Scores of books have been written telling us how other books should be read. Doubtless you have read some of them. What is your verdict? Partly good and partly not? Precisely!

There are a few general rules: the rest must be left to the individual.

That is the line we propose to follow in this lesson. A book is a look at life through another man's eyes. So far good, for he may see very clearly; yet he may not. How are we to know? Only by looking at life ourselves. Therefore, whatever value you give to the printed volume,

the greater value—for you—must come from your own vision and reflection. Respect great authorship, but trust-in your own conclusions.

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

1. First, a word of explanation. This book is rather different from the previous books, mainly because it deals with an entirely different subject. It will be found to be a quiet book, a book which invites the student to a series of sober reflections on Reading and Study. Do not say you have no time for such things. You have, if you will but organize your spare moments. Besides, the Pelmanist ideal includes the life of thought as well as the life of action, and the course of instruction would not be complete without a lesson on the meaning and value of books.

2. We receive ideas from several sources; observation, conversation, reflection; but great numbers come from reading, or printed matter, in its protean forms. It is, therefore, a concern of no little importance that we should know how to make the best use of the time devoted to reading, and this lesson is an effort to attain that end.

The "Know How" of Books

3. If you have already formed sound habits in this respect you are to be congratulated; but, in speaking from long years of experience we can say, positively, that even he whom we may call the practiced student is often discovered wasting energy. With the unpracticed man this defect is, of course, still more pronounced. If he wants a group of facts to use in a speech or an address, he does not know where to find them; if he is compelled to consult six books in a hurry, he has no idea how to use the index for this purpose; if he desires to know the authorities on a specified subject, he is like a mariner without chart or compass; and if he wishes to keep a record of his reading, he writes at unnecessary length, because he is a stranger to the art of note-taking.

The Power of an Idea

4. So please betake yourself to some quiet corner, free from interruptions, and follow us step by step as we try to disclose what are to us the secrets of efficiency in the use of books. One great book, thoroughly mastered, may become a turning point in your life. One fine idea, entering into your very being, may transform your existence. It is often said, "Thoughts are things." They are, in the sense that they

become those invisible realities which drive us forward and move us to finer issues, or else poison the springs of our being. To be able to value the thoughts found in literature is to have an ability which will give us the best reflections of the ages in their true perspective; and it will also prevent us from accepting the inaccuracies of the past and present, however charmingly they may be embodied in language.

Truly, this lesson is one that all of us may learn and relearn with profit.

II. THE VASTNESS OF KNOWLEDGE

5. One of the hindrances that stands in the way of many students is a sense of the vastness of knowledge. To take up a subject for investigation and to see its innumerable ramifications as evidenced by the library catalog compels one to heave a sigh, and to exclaim: "I shall never know anything about it." This is a mistake in tactics. The field of knowledge, no doubt, is vast beyond conception, and we can do no more than specialize in a small section of it, but the meanings of whole spheres of knowledge in relation to other spheres may be comprehended in part, even though the mass of detail may defy us.

Spencer on Knowledge-Masses

6. In this connection it is interesting to recall a confession made by the late Herbert Spencer. He says: "My acquaintance with things might have been called superficial, if measured by the number of facts known; it might have been called the reverse of superficial if measured by the quality of facts. A friend who possessed extensive botanic knowledge once remarked to me that had I known as much about the details of plant structure as botanists did, I should never have reached those generalizations concerning plant morphology which I have reached." (*Autobiography*, p. 335.)

Balfour on Superficiality

7. We see, then, that, a knowledge of detail, usually spoken of as encyclopedic, is not always an advantage; indeed, it may be a positive disadvantage, hampering mental movements and preventing fertility of imagination. The real secret is to know well what we do know and to be able to put it to the best use. One need not then be afraid of the charge of superficiality, and in this connection Mr. A. J. Balfour has spoken some very apposite words. "Knowledge of the general principle may be obtained by those who have neither the time nor the ability to

master all the details of any particular branch of science; but to say that a smaller modicum of knowledge is therefore superficial, and therefore useless, is wholly to mistake what superficial knowledge consists in and what education aims at. You may know very little and not be superficial. Superficiality is a quality of yourselves, not of the knowledge you acquire." (*The Mind of A. J. Balfour*, p. 107.)

III. THE DIFFICULT QUESTION OF TIME

8. We often hear it said that "Time is Money, " but after all, money will not buy time. Time is one of the most precious things we have, and as life becomes increasingly complex, it is increasingly difficult to find sufficient leisure for all that we have to do and all that we would like to do.

9. Very few people organize their leisure, and use it to the best advantage. In the first lesson we gave some hints as to the formation of a Timetable, and perhaps, ere this, you have succeeded in bringing your spare-time hours into something like formulation and efficiency. Nevertheless, there is often room for slight improvements, and every economy in the disposal of time is valuable in the highest degree.

Systematize Your Leisure

10. PELMAN students embrace every type of leisured and non-leisured individual. There is the man or woman who has an hour or two in the evening; there are some who have leisure in the morning only, and a few who never know whether it will be morning, mid-day, or evening. There is the married woman who hardly knows when there may be an hour to spare; finally, there is the man who has nothing to do, and the schoolboy who says he never has a moment to spare. How are these individuals to organize their mental life in such a way as to conserve health and happiness, and at the same time make the best use of their opportunities for intellectual and social culture? The answer is this; only by re-casting a time-table already in use and adapting it to changing circumstances.

11. For instance, a timetable that has been in use for some months may be found to be defective because it gives more time to less important, subjects than to those which are more important by reason of their intrinsic worth; or because of some need which has only recently manifested itself. It is possible, also, that the order of the subjects is not the best, and that instead of taking recreation at the end of a two-hours period, it should come in between the hours.

Fatigue

12. Further, there is the question of fatigue. Occasionally you may find you cannot complete your evening program; you are too tired, and yet you strongly desire to continue. In such circumstances it is wisdom to desist. A time-table should not be too rigid. When real fatigue (as distinct from mere disinclination) overtakes you, go out into the open air, or have a game of billiards or a romp with the children. If, when you sit down to your evening's work your mood is to take up the last subject on the list instead of the first, take up the last; for a mood is a state of mental fitness, the advantage of which must not be lost.

IV. WHAT TO READ

13. Advice on reading used to be a good deal more prolific in the past than it is to-day. In a book published in 1896, we find a bibliography of no less than 52 "Guides to Reading," but nobody seems to pay any attention to them nowadays. Why? Because the selection of books is largely a matter of personal preference. No doubt there are certain books which everybody ought to read, and there is also a truly scientific method of gaining knowledge from books; but even so, no man can successfully prescribe another man's reading in its entirety.

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Room must be left for individual tendency and the choice arising out of it.

14. What, then, shall be said of us when we set out to advise PELMANISTS on "What to Read "? We may be called presumptuous and illogical persons but we shall try to confine ourselves to the two points previously indicated: (a) the right method of gaining knowledge from books, and (b) mentioning a small number of books in which the student should be interested.

Word Study

15. To be really efficient, a reader's first studies should concern the nature, meanings and uses of words, not in the sense of studying philology, but partly in the mood of Professor Weekley's *Romance of Words*, or the volume by Dean Trench *On Words*, and partly as a study of dictionary definitions and of synonyms. But the average reader says he has no time for this detailed investigation, and we agree with him. Nevertheless, he has time to look up new or difficult words when he meets them, and he should make a point of consulting the dictionary, either at the moment or at the close of his reading.

Synonyms and Antonyms

18. Dictionaries of a serviceable kind are plentiful, and can generally be consulted at a Library. Dictionaries of Synonyms and Antonyms can be purchased at any large book-sellers. A reader who masters the word "Law," as explained and illustrated in a large dictionary, and amplifies it by material drawn from other sources, would never be guilty of using so important a word inaccurately, either in speaking, writing, or thinking.

Introductions to Science

17. Let us suppose the reader of these pages has been advised to study the record of science. How ought he to carry out this recommendation? By choosing a good book to act as an introduction to the whole subject. He needs a comprehensive survey; what used to be called "a bird's-eye view." He will therefore turn to Professor Thomson's *Introduction to Science*, (Williams & Norgate), for information as to principles and methods, and to Libby's *Introduction to the History of Science*, (Heath) for an account of the development of these principles from the earliest times to the present day. Thus

equipped, he can easily choose books dealing with Botany, Physics, Chemistry, or any other section of the subject.

English Literature

. 18. The same method is employed in Literature. If a close acquaintance with a period of English, Literature is desired, the only true plan is to study the actual books of that period, not summaries or analyses written by historians and critics. But no period can be severed from those which go before and come after it, consequently here again the comprehensive survey should be undertaken first of all. Such a survey is found in Pancoast's *Manual of English Literature*. The wide sweep of this volume gives the student a sense of perspective; he is less likely to estimate falsely the importance of any special period he has chosen, and more likely to interpret its authors in the light, of the influence which then prevailed.

Philosophy

19. The subject may be Philosophy: Having read a book on Platonism, picked up by chance, a reader has had his curiosity aroused, and desires. to know more about what philosophers have thought and written. How ought he to proceed? He should first read a general

history, and there is none better than Lewes' *Biographical History of Philosophy*.

Along with this an introduction to the problems of philosophy should be taken in hand. Sellar's *Essentials of Philosophy*, is a modern and very competent account of matters as they stand at present. After this, the student can select his own special department, be it metaphysics, time and space, the absolute, or any one of the many branches of so large a subject.

The Fine Arts

20. In Art, one should begin with Baldwin Brown's *The Fine Arts*, passing thence to the more sectional studies, e. g.; Painting, Poetry, Architecture. Each of these sections has its elementary textbook, a book which gives the reader a bird's-eye view of the whole subject. We shall not burden our pages with numerous titles, authors, and publishers, for new and better books are continually appearing, and the members of the Instruction Staff of the Institute are always ready to advise you on any branch of study you may wish to take up. What is of consequence here is an apprehension of the right method.

V. HOW TO READ

21. (a) Read with the spirit of Expectation. It is to be presumed that the author whose work is before you and whose name is well known, has given a good deal of time and reflection to the matter and form of his expression, consequently you are justified in your expectant attitude. To approach the book in the spirit of prejudice, or antagonism, may result in your losing much that is good and beneficial. Some authors have a difficult style and they may be secretly proud of it; but their thoughts are often worth digging out. You will never take the trouble to do this if your mind is full of antipathies.

22. A certain measure of sympathy is necessary for the interpretation of any author; we must sit by his side, so to speak, and see and feel with him, in order to understand his intention, and evaluate his results. Prejudice and antagonism prevent this mental maneuver. They compel us, as it were, to confront the author, consequently we do not perceive his meaning, for we cannot in that position look through his eyes and feel with his heart.

A Friendly Challenge to Authors

23. The publication of a book is really an invitation by the author to share his reflections, and we cannot do that with success unless we line up with him and face life from the same standpoint. To preserve our own individuality we must put his views to the test. Are they true? Are they expedient? Are they useful? Are they well expressed? That is, we must exercise the spirit of friendly challenge. But this is very different from the spirit of the reader before whose mind there is a sentry box, and who, himself, with a fixed bayonet fights against the entrance of other men's ideas. It is infinitely better to possess the spirit of the Greeks on Mars Hill and give a ready ear to every new teacher, not with the intention of accepting all he has to say, but as an expression of the open mind.

Unfair Verdicts

24. The man who is perpetually challenging authors and speakers in this military fashion often attains, a false reputation for acuteness, and his influence is in excess of his worth or his services to truth. No man gets into the limelight more easily than the iconoclast. A man picked up a book from the drawing-room table, saying, "What's this fool

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writing about?" He opened the book, and happened to fall on a rather weak sentence, which, divorced from its context and read aloud to the company was the very apex of absurdity. Everybody roared with laughter, and yet that book a novel—was written by a distinguished author and is highly regarded by all competent critics.

25. You may say; "But But this was a joke, not a serious attitude towards a well-known novel." It was a joke which affected the judgment of more than one person in that company, and it is symptomatic of the manner in which many readers have their literary opinions formed. They are guided too much by the dogmatic assertions of men and women with nimble minds and acid tongues.

Creative Reading

26. (b) We must also read Creatively. This means that we have to compare and contrast what the writer says with our previous information or ideas on the same subject; it is another method of unifying our knowledge, only in this case we bring the past and the present together with the express purpose of evolving a new idea. Let us take an illustration. At school you learned something about the Gulf Stream, and you were quite satisfied with the knowledge of its starting

point in the Gulf of Mexico, its northward course, and its effect on the climate of Western Europe.

27. In later years you were curious to know more about the origin of this stream of warm water, and on looking into the subject, you found that scientists and geographers believed "the chief cause of its existence is the heating up of the waters of the warm equatorial current." You say, "Oh! that's the cause, is it?" and if you are not too critical, you accept the explanation at once; if you are closely critical, you may harbor a doubt that the alleged cause is sufficient to account for the result.

The Process of "New Idea"

28. Some months pass and there falls into your hands a book describing the earthquake at Martinique. Your interest in the Gulf of Mexico and the islands adjacent is deepened. At this point you bring your past reading into line with your more recently obtained ideas. Here you have an immense stream of warm water pursuing a northward course from the Mexican Gulf; and in the same region you have volcanic islands. Have these volcanic islands no connection with the origin of the Gulf Stream? Is not the ocean bed rather thin in these

parts, so that the internal fires heighten the temperature of the sea? Should the answer be in the affirmative, it will not necessarily destroy the theory of "Equatorial currents."

29. Both theories may be true, although we may not know the degree of truth each contains; or your new idea about the volcanic origin of the Gulf Stream may not be new at all; indeed, it may prove to be an old and long discarded idea. But that is not the point. True or not, the mental process is the right one; bringing together your past and present reading into a creative union.

Unify Your Knowledge

30. Let us take another illustration which brings out the value of direct interrogation. If you are studying Geography, Economics, or Political History you do not study them from text-books as if they were bundles of disconnected facts; you study their inter-relationships. It is one thing to know where to find the Straits of Dover on a Map of Europe; it is another thing to know the effect of that stretch of water on the making of Britain.

Geography and History

31. What is the influence of mountains on the growth of Thought'? How have the Alps affected History and Commerce? Is the position of Greece in the Mediterranean Sea responsible for its favored development of genius? These, and a hundred other questions, may be asked by an inquiring mind, and even though no fully satisfactory answer be forthcoming there is usually answer enough to demonstrate the unity of all human interests; and, mark well, this unity is not merely matter for the philosopher to reflect upon in the quietude of his study; it is matter that often concerns you, for every life is affected by it.

The Solidarity of Existence

32. All things, lofty and lowly, hang together in the scheme of existence. A shortage of some commodity in the East is the cause of suffering in the West; the bankruptcy of certain firms in Europe may have its origin in Kentucky or Louisiana. The drought in Australia may take money out of the pockets of men all the way from Sydney to Cairo, and from Cairo to London. The solidarity of material things is analogous to that shown by a studious contemplation of other and

more spiritual phenomena. Buckle showed us that the number of marriages was regulated by the price of corn; and it may chance that some private investigator, acting upon Professor Jevons' idea that commercial crises are caused by sunspots, will discover some hitherto hidden law of the solar system; not a law respecting matter, but one that deals with what we call mind.

The Value of Comparative Study

33. For this purpose no books are so helpful as those which belong to the "comparatives." We can recall, for instance, the pleasure and illumination of reading, years ago, Bascom's *Comparative Psychology*. Principal Lloyd Morgan's later book with the same title has the same comprehensive treatment on more modern lines. For the student of words there is the *Comparative Philology* of Prof. A. H. Sayce; the medical student has Bell's *Comparative Anatomy*, indeed, every science and art has its manuals of the comparative method. But if the reader can get hold of treatises which trace an idea or a fact throughout many different spheres, witness Sir T. Andrea Cook's, *Curves of Life*, he will have an additional gain; it will not only unify his knowledge and introduce him to an excellent method of inquiry, but help him to memorize on a logical basis, by comparison and contrast.

Needless to say, we do not necessarily recommend the purchase and study of these books: they are used as illustrations of an idea.

The Philosophy of "Lines"

34. Dr. Wm. Main, a practicing physician, was reading a book on Art and came across these words; "Uptending lines indicate progress and power; downtending lines suggest weakness and sadness; horizontal lines indicate repose and peace." He asked himself the question whether this was a rule that applied to the human face, to Nature, to everything that was capable of having lines in it. His book entitled *Expression in Nature* is a result of his inquiries, and although some of his conclusions are not convincing, many of them are curious, and a few are striking. We refer to the matter here because it is a good illustration of trying to trace a law in those spheres to which it did not originally belong.

The Value of the Formula

35. (c) The formula method of reading and study, judiciously practiced, is often fraught with excellent results. An illustration is found in the work of Henri Taine. In a letter (1855) to DeWitt, he said: "The difficulty which I experience in an investigation is to discover a

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characteristic and dominant feature, from which everything can be geometrically deduced; in a word, what I need is to have the formula of my subject." He then gives an illustration. The formula for Livy is; "An orator who becomes a historian. All his faults, his qualities, his influence . . . may be traced to that."

Walter Pater

36. The cleverness of this idea will not be denied. Evidently it appealed to Water Pater, for we find him adopting the same method. His biographer says of him that before writing on any subject, it was his invariable plan to ask himself; "What is this man's or that object's real self? What is the peculiar sensation, the peculiar quality of pleasure which his work has the property of exciting in us and which we cannot get elsewhere? In short, what is the formula?"

37. Thus after analyzing Merimee, Pater decided that the French writer's formula was, "delight in the crude naked form of man." Similarly Botticelli's formula was "neutrality"; that of Leonardo was "clairvoyance." It is not for us to agree or disagree with these findings, but we do desire to know in what sense the method employed is sound. It is sound in this sense; that every mind which has impressed

itself on the world must have had an inward urge towards some specific idea. There was a purpose, and the formula is an attempt to define it in language.

Limitations of the Method

38. The danger lies in pressing the method too far. Taine wanted to deduce everything geometrically, but in spite of his brilliance he did not succeed. You cannot cram a personality into a formula, but you can often find one which will greatly assist in the work of interpretation. There is no doubtless a formula for Plato, one for St. Paul, and one for Herbert Spencer. No one supposes, however, that such a formula would embody the whole man; it can do no more than indicate the significance of that side of him which is expressed in his work. This, of course, may be an advantage of considerable importance, and we can think of no exercise more intellectually fascinating than the attempt to discover the formula of each of the three writers just mentioned.

Wells and Bennett

39. Should one's interests be more exclusively modern, attention can be given to the prominent novelists of the day. Most people have read

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H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett; so take a list of their works, write down a few distinctive impressions of each, then seek, for each writer separately, the one property that is common to all his novels. The result of this search ought to bring you near to the predominating conceptions, and you can begin to think of phrasing the formula. When the investigation is complete, it will be found interesting to compare your conclusions with those of other investigators. The similarities will confirm themselves, but the differences may require a good deal of harmonizing. Anyhow, in the final issue, you will know the works of these two novelists as you never knew them before; not their chief incidents only, not merely the plot of *Ann Veronica* or the scheme of the *Old Wives' Tale*, but the philosophy of life which, in their unity, the writer's works disclose.

Every Man Has His Formula

40. Remember that every man has his formula. Sometimes it is a shoddy affair, although picturesque, like Micawber's. Sometimes it is vague, as in the case of the dark horse politician who poses as a statesman and causes on-lookers to ask; "What's his game?" It means that he refuses to disclose his formula. Then the astute journalist begins to pin-prick him in biting paragraphs until a declaration is

made. Every PELMANIST who has mastered Lesson II has a formula that. is as crystal in its clearness as it is forceful in its activity.

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The Classic Authors

41. (d) There is a right way, just as there is a wrong way of approaching a classic, whether it be a great book of ancient wisdom or a more modern utterance. Suppose, for instance, you have selected an edition of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* in an abbreviated form, duly supplied with an introduction and notes by some competent scholar. After reading a stanza or two, you turn to the "notes" to learn the meaning of this and that; you consult also a classical dictionary and a book on English History. Meanwhile the poem itself, which is the one reality, is held up until these details have been settled. Now this is the wrong way to study a classic. Let details stand over until the second reading. The first reading should be given up to the enjoyment and appreciation of the poet's message. He is speaking to soul, rather than appealing to pure intellect.

A Shakespeare Illustration

42. When Shakespeare says:

"That memory, the warden of the brain/ Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason a limbeck only,"

he does not desire us to interrupt the flow of thought and feeling by asking him what a "limbeck" (Okay – it's a contraction of alembic, which is a glass or copper vessel formerly used in distillation) is; he intends the reader to keep pace with him, and thus to share his feeling and his flights of imagination. Obsolete words, definitions, and classical allusions can be considered when we give the classics a more leisurely study. Unfortunately, the edited editions of the classics, ancient and modern, have set up the habit of mastering details during the first reading; with the result that a class of students "doing" *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* will spend weeks over a single Act.

43. This turns literature into drudgery, for the mind becomes weary with the work of grubbing into dictionaries, tired of philological wrangles, and bewildered with minutiae. Shakespeare did not write to provide scholars with employment, nor did he write to provide unpleasant hours for schoolboys and students; he wrote for all

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mankind, but primarily for his countrymen; not to puzzle but to inspire them. It is true that his English, and the allusions, social and otherwise, need some explanation; but they should be quite subordinate to the message of the work itself.

In this manner study the great utterances of the past and present. Breathe their spirit; divine their intention; absorb their philosophy, Afterward, with more leisurely steps, turn aside to investigate their obscurities and to discover their hidden beauties.

Topical Reading

44. (e) Topical reading comes next. It simply means that when you are interested in chess, sport, watches, aeronautics, sociology, or a period of history, you go from book to book seeking the information you want. Thus, if you desire to know the effect of chess on the power of concentration, you will open a volume on the history of the game, but you will not read it closely because most of its pages deal with an aspect of the subject which at the moment is outside your purview.

45. On the other hand, if you come across Mason's *Morals of Chess*, you will study it closely, because it offers some reflections on the very idea you have in mind. In this way a reader obtains a firm grip on his

subject; he sees it in its past and present, and can give an intelligent estimate of its future. Topical reading, apart from the gathering of information, is a training in analysis and synthesis; indeed, properly pursued, it is good, all-round mental discipline.

Personal Preferences

46. (f) Follow your Inclinations is a sound rule of reading. It may be good sometimes, as we have said already, to read a book which has no attraction for you. It may create an interest where one did not exist; but it is sound practice to follow your preferences, courageously, for there are many people who do not care to confess that they revel in theology; or psychism, or books on children's toys. Whatever be your line, accept it. If you wish to study poltergeists (mischievous ghosts), study them; if you are interested in the progress of Christian doctrine and desire: to know why one teacher taught that the atonement was offered to the Devil, make the search; if you feel you would like to see the pictures of the dolls which amused little girls hundreds of years ago, well, why not? If your neighbor is keen on the history of theatres, he has no right to impose the same subject on you. You are you, not another.

Books to Read

47. So choose your sphere and rejoice in it. This means that there are books which it is advisable to read. There are, for instance, the books of the moment which everybody is talking about. You may decide to avoid them, the much discussed novels, perchance, but it is often better to go through them, if you can. Some of them will win a place in literature. Then there are English and other classics which call for perusal and study. You cannot well afford to ignore the Bible and Shakespeare, for example; and in addition to these you would include other works selected perhaps from Sir William Nicoll a excellent little book called A Library for Five Pounds. But even then, the real guide to choice is personal preference.

Written Expression

48. (g) Read with a due regard for the claims of Self-Expression. This is a point to which reference has already been made in a previous lesson. We now desire to enlarge more fully on the relationship between reading and one of the arts of self-expression, namely, writing. The other arts belonging to the group have been treated in the lesson on Personality.

49. When you have finished a good book take up your pen and write in your note-book a summary of your impressions, also, if possible, a few of the criticisms which, have occurred to you. At first the task may be rather difficult, for although you appear to have a definite idea of the argument or pleas of the author, you experience a considerable amount of hesitation when the moment arrives to express your idea in words. Why is this? Because, as yet, you have not learned how to organize the ideas arising out of your reading. You garnered a good many of them, but you did not trouble to arrange them in logical order.

Writing Clarifies Ideas

50. Further, some of the ideas are far more vague than you had imagined; you thought they were clear, definite, and forceful; nevertheless, when you came to write them, you realized how vague some of them were. This is not necessarily a serious fault; it means only that your impressions exist more as feelings than as reasoned conclusions. Moreover, unless a book is mastered very slowly, it is not possible to systematize one's reflections. That process comes later, at any rate with volumes that are rapidly read, and is carried out by means of the exercise we now prescribe.

Memory and Sequence

51. You can test the value of such an exercise in this way: Recall the titles of some books which you have read with close attention, and then try to give an account of them. You succeed to some extent, but it is often *on the hop, skip, and jump method. If there were twelve chapters in the book, your recollections might begin near the center and move backward and forward according to memory, not according to the progression of the author's ideas. Had the book been valued on the method herein advised, its contents would have been recalled' with logical cohesiveness and probably with all the added associations which come from the practice of this exercise.. As a method it helps us to avoid that kind of reading which consists of a continuous absorption of print; and it thus preserves the ratio between impression and expression.

On Note-Taking

52. (h) Read with a Note-Book handy. There is generally something in a good book which one desires to make a note of, and we now propose to discuss the various methods of recording the results of reading. Usually, passages are copied verbatim; the paragraph or page is

transferred literally to the note-book. This is often strictly necessary, for if the quotation is to be used argumentatively it is important that the writer's exact words should be used, not our version of them. But to adopt this method all the time, that is, for every kind of printed opinion, is too mechanical; it tends to destroy initiative and originality. Besides, the amount of time consumed in literal copying is often unjustifiable. It is better for ordinary purposes to make an abstract or precis of the chapter or paragraph concerned; you condense the words but preserve the ideas.

Literary Indices

53. (i) Then there is the Literary Index, the object of which is merely to preserve a reference to some book or magazine, e. g., Bagehot's *Physics and Politics*; "Nation-making" *International Journal of Ethics*; Vol. I. "*The Morality of Strife*"; by H. Sidgwick.

So far as these entries are necessary for one's own work, they must be made, but it should not be forgotten that in every large public library such indices can be found, notably Poole's Periodical Index, wherein references to every important magazine article for many years back are given.

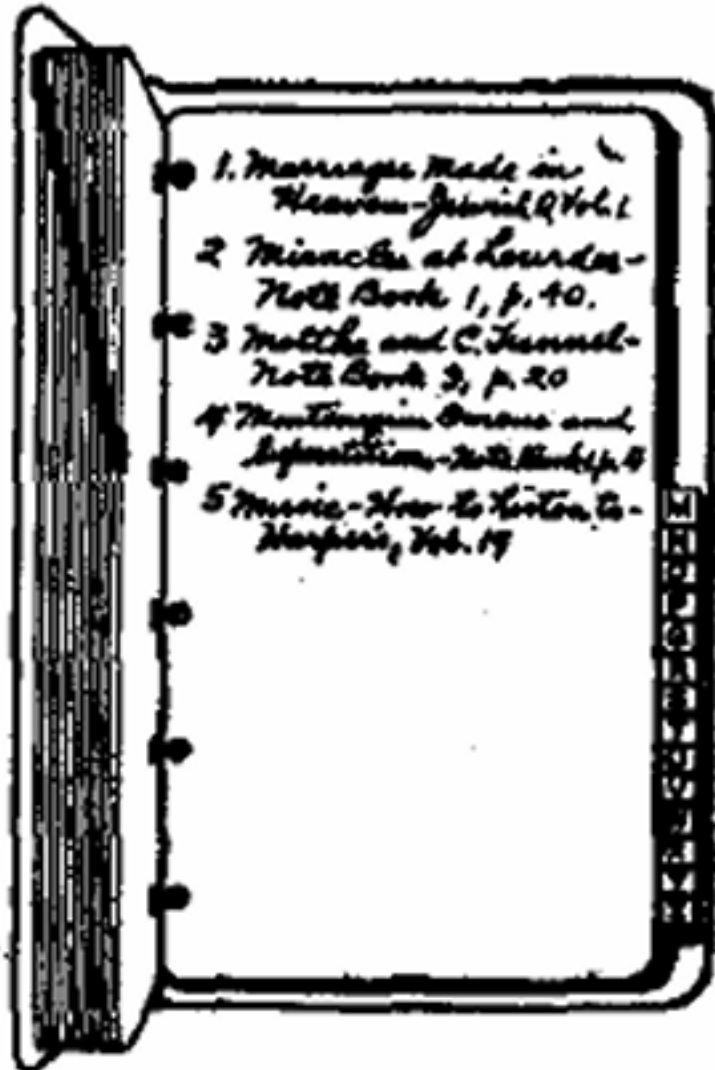
The Ideal Method

54. The ideal method is to make the kind of record required, (whether a literal copy or a précis) plus a critical opinion of your own. For instance, if you have just finished reading the *Maxims of Rochefoucauld*, and wish to record the words, "Gravity is a mysterious carriage of the body, invented to cover the defects of the mind," you naturally make an exact copy, but you add some critical remarks, e. g., " Is there no gravity, then, which is perfectly natural and undersigned! The essence of gravity is seriousness. May not a man be serious without being a hypocrite? Is not the Frenchman's maxim a good illustration of reasoning from the particular to the general? Darwin was a man of gravity, but his gravity was not invented to cover the 'defects' of his mind."

Notes Alphabetically Filed

55. Such then are the methods of note-taking. Now a word as to the form in which this work should be carried out. If an Exercise book is used, every page should be numbered, and its contents entered in a separate Index book. This book may be of the "Where is it?" kind, with

certain pages alphabetically cut. We give below a specimen page of entries.



The index serves as a guide to the record of your reading of (a) Books, and (b) Magazines; and also of (c) the written quotations or abstracts

in your note-books. In this way it is a focus of all your intellectual activity.

Envelope Cases

56, The use of large envelopes, with flaps removed, is recommended for separate cuttings from newspapers and journals. On the front of the envelope every new addition can be indexed and numbered.

Suppose, for instance, you are interested in Utopias; schemes to attain the perfectibility of the race. You get a large envelope, and as you collect items one by one, you index them in the manner suggested.

Here is a diagram of what it would be like: The entries would be made on the front of the envelope.

Detachable Notes vs. Fixed

57. To have all your cuttings for detachable use is much better than to have them pasted in a book; the fixed position is very inconvenient when two or more cuttings have to be used at the same time.

Naturally, every cutting inserted in the open envelope is entered in the index book; the entries on the outside of the envelope are intended to facilitate the finding of a particular cutting, each one being numbered.

For private purposes the system thus outlined is sufficiently exact, but for large schemes, with great masses of data, a more intricate scheme would be necessary.

VI. HOW TO USE A PUBLIC LIBRARY

58. Let us suppose you have decided to write an article on "Unused Sources of Energy." Your own collected information is soon put into shape, and you repair to, the local library for a further supply. What action do you take when you get there? It depends a good deal on whether or not you have a clear idea of what you want. There will be no obscurity in this respect if you have already thought out your own scheme. To go to the reference room with merely a general notion, is to waste a lot of time unprofitably; but if on your slip of paper, Or in a note-book, you have definite points to look up, you can direct your attention to the most likely quarters.

Index to Periodicals

59. Let us imagine your notes contain the following:

1. Article in Magazine some years ago on "Harnessing the Sun."

2. Article on "Using Using the Tides," by a man of science.

You have other entries, but these are articles you can remember reading at the time they appeared. The problem is to find them and read them again. You therefore ask for Poole's Periodical Index, and when you have found the references you ask for the bound volumes of the journals concerned. Prosecuting your search in other directions, you ask for *The Reader's Guide*, *The Cumulative Book Index* or Fortescue's *Subject Index*, all the volumes, and under the words "Energy," "Sun," "Tides," and probably "Efficiency," you may discover that writers have expressed views on the subject which are entirely new to you, even though eventually you may not agree with them. You next consult the London Library Subject Index in the same way; and if Potter Briscoe's Subject Index is handy, you consult that also, turning last of all to the catalog of the Library itself.

60. Then there are the Encyclopedias, large and small; they are all worth looking into, and the articles frequently end by referring the reader to the best authorities. It is hardly possible to pursue a line of investigation such as that suggested without finding material which may confirm previous ideas or modify them considerably.

The Reference Library

61. In order to use the wealth of a Reference Library in an advantageous manner, you should have a knowledge of its contents; you know then where to find your facts. Most Reference rooms will contain a copy of Kroeger's *Reference Books* and a perusal of it, or some equivalent book, will tell you just those things, about dictionaries, guides, text-books, and so forth, which you can discover in no other way except by long and hard-earned experience. Thus equipped, a reader who is anxious to understand political science, with a view to taking an active share in a local society of politicians, does not look through the leading catalog, "hoping to find something that will help me"; he goes to Robertson's *Courses of Study*, or Sonnenschein's *Best Books*.

There is a right way of doing everything, and hence, a right way of using a Public Library. If you do not know it already, it will pay you to learn.

Exercise XXXIX

A PELMAN student with keen literary interests is enjoying a day in town, and of course, must find time to look at the second-hand book shops. He picks up a copy of Questions at Issue by Edmund Gosse, being attracted by the chapter headings, the fame of the writer, and the modest fifty cents asked for the book. One of the chapters is entitled: "What is a Great Poet?" The student is not prepared to answer the question himself; if pressed for an opinion he would take refuge in a declaration of his incompetence. He avers that he bought the book in order to learn. Well and good. But he will learn all the more truly, if he tries, first of all, to answer the question himself. Let him divide it into two:

(a) What is a poet?

(b) What is a great poet?

The first question alone is a fine exercise in concentration, in comparison and contrast, in memory, in judgment, and valuation; it unifies all the impressions and ideas of all the poetry the student has ever read. He may not be satisfied with his tentative answers to the

question, but that is a secondary affair; he did not set out to be satisfied, but to conduct a critical inquiry. When he has done his best to answer both questions, he may profitably turn to Gosse's illuminating essay. Why profitably? Because he has formed his own opinions, and is not prepared to accept every statement made by another, unless it is supported by real evidence; because, having probed the subject, he can appreciate all the more deeply the critical valuations of other readers and critics.

Exercise XL

In testing the value of any book you may read, use the following list of Reviewer's questions:

- (1) Who is the author? What are his qualifications?
- (2) What is his aim in this book?
- (3) Has he succeeded?
- (4) If not, where has he failed?
- (5) How does this effort stand in relation to similar efforts by other authors?

Exercise XLI

Choose a dozen books from your shelves, any kind of books will do, and classify them according to the branch of knowledge to which they belong. Here, for instance, is a list of imaginary books:

1. Tait's *Rules for Electrical Engineers*.
2. Dobson's *How to Run a Store*.
3. Quibell's *Guide to Siberia*.
4. Thompson's *Chess Tactics*.
5. James' *Outlines of Theology*.
6. Cope's *The Doctrine of Manifest Destiny in America*.
7. Smith's *Plasterers' Manual*.
8. Dod's *Hotel Book-keeping*.
9. Whipple 's *Antiques, and How to Buy Them*.
10. Toper's *History of Base-ball*.
11. Darden 's *National Psychology*.

12. Waffer's *Evolution of Clothing*.

The work of classification is not so easy as it might at first sight appear. Book can be included under two headings. For instance, No. 8 would come in the class of educational works, but it is also classifiable as belonging to the literature of business. No. 12 would have to appear under Sociology, but it has also a claim to be included in History. The aim of the exercise is not to teach library classification, as a science, (that is a task in itself) but to accustom your mind to the "placing" of individual books according to genus and species. Every bookman should be able to put his books into groups. It shows that he possesses an acquaintance with the areas and borderlines of the great province of knowledge.

Exercise XLII

Not every business man is acquainted with the literature of his calling, and it is desirable for several reasons that he should remedy this defect. To rely on experience solely may not be unwise altogether, but nowadays the newspaper, the trade journal; and the book provide material of such importance That no man can afford to neglect it. So look around and see whether or not you are miss-'ink real

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opportunities. We do not refer so much to the large spheres of enterprise and activity, .like Finance, but to the narrower function as seen in the production of leather, : of special foods, of articles of clothing, and so forth. Expansion is the order of the day, and early and sound information is one of the best contributions to accomplish that end. The chief sources of information are, as already suggested, the newspaper, the trade journal, and books written by competent authors. Ask yourself whether you draw upon these sources, and if so, whether you use the items there gleaned for the profit of yourself and others. We have known men who carried out this exercise and made vast strides in consequence. You pay for the. upkeep of a public library, but have you made your payments yield a return by way of information-dividends? If not, get busy and make some use of your Government taxes, and regard a Press cutting agency as possibly a good paying investment.. (Our attention has just been called to an Article on `How to make. your Public Library a Business Asset," by Alfred Greenberg, in the American Magazine, May, 1919.)

**SPECIAL EXERCISES FOR MIND TRAINING AMID
HEALTH**

Tenth Lesson

Before beginning any fresh exercise, recall again to your memory the advantages of the right exercises done in the right way. Do not go through the whole lot, but go through those that were mentioned in the Ninth Lesson. Here are some further advantages

There is the health of the many organs of the body, and especially of the heart, the most overworked muscle; the heart is relieved of its overwork to a large extent when there is proper exercise of the extremities, and when there is skin-massage, etc., the liver also is stirred up to activity; the stomach is helped; the kidneys have the strain taken off them; the bowels are assisted in their peristaltic action; the skin (the greatest organ in the body) is helped; the whole nervous system is benefited; the spinal column—through which so many nerves pass, and about which so many nerve-centers are found—is rendered more and more healthy; and last, but not least, the brain, the organ of thinking and willing, is given enormous advantages through proper Physical Culture.

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The money.-earning capacity of the right exercises is very interesting.. Other things being equal, those employees who are healthy, and who look healthy, get promotion, and are relied upon for positions of trust. We can grasp the difference between health and ill-health if we contrast two businesses, in one of which there are only unhealthy employees, constantly ill and away from business, and in the other of which there are only fit and healthy and happy employees, who never miss a day's work at all.

On the negative side, there is the advantage of economy. Those who are fit through healthy exercise, through diet, and other means, need fewer and shorter holidays, and they have no extra expenses for drugs, and (that terrible drainer of money) , incompetence. Nothing is so expensive in the world as incompetence!

The system, if it is clean and works smoothly, needs less food and less fuel. This is vitally important. The system, if clear, is content with simple things, and simple things are cheap things. Less food is needed because more food is assimilated by a healthy person.

Yet another advantage of the right exercises done in the right way is the using up of odd moments which would otherwise be misused—e,

g., in worry or wrong thoughts. The recreation of Physical Culture should divert the attention from the causes of worry.

Now for new exercises. _

1.—in Bed

Take as deep and full a breath as possible. Expand the lungs downwards, with a forward (abdominal) expansion as already described. Then, while you are still inhaling, expand the chest-walls outwards in all directions, keeping the, shoulders back and down. Hold this breath in, and, while you hold it in, contract the abdomen and contract the chest-walls, so that the greater part of the air goes upwards to the top part of the lungs. Then exhale the air quietly and gradually.

Lying flat on your back, and not letting your head poke forward, first bring your right leg, bent at the knee, up as far as it will go, with the toes as far away as they will go. Then send that leg straight out in front of you, still keeping the toes as far away as they will go, and not letting the foot touch the bed. Still keeping the leg straight out, go through the same movement with the left leg. Then repeat with the

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right leg, then with the left leg. Do this, but do not strain at all, and stop when you begin to feel tired. It is the kind of exercise that some babies do instinctively. It develops, to a wonderful extent, many important muscles of the trunk, back, and legs. While you are doing the exercises, try not to clench or grip your hands.

Now rest in bed, lying flat and relaxed, and go through that exercise in memory and imagination. Do not let your muscles twitch while you recall the movement.

II.--Out of Bed

Stand equally balanced on your two feet, and with your body inclined rather forwards from the hips, but with the chin in, and the small' of the back hollow, and the hands relaxed and limp, not gripped. First bend forwards from the hips as far as you can go. In this movement the hands, will hang limply in front of you. Then bend back as fast as you can go without straining. Then go to the first position again, and bend to one side, then to the other side, then forward to the right, . then forward to the left; then forward to the left and backward to the right. Last of all, rotate the body round, always facing forwards with the shoulders and head. Move the trunk forwards to the left, then,

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while keeping forwards, across to the right: then back to the right, then, still keeping back, to the left. Then reverse the movements, and go in the opposite direction, but be sure (once again) not to strain.

Standing on the balls of the feet, not on the heels, and with the chin in, and the small of the back hollow, spring off from the left foot, straight in front of you, landing on the right foot, and retaining your balance as far as possible. Go back again to the first position. Always face forwards throughout this exercise, and keep your hands relaxed, and keep your feet at the same angle. Then, again starting from the left foot, let the right foot go out in front of you and to the right. Then let it go out to the side of you to the right, then behind you to the right, then straight behind you, then behind you to the left (passing behind the left leg), then straight to your left (passing in front of the left leg).

Each time, of course, come back to the normal position without loss of balance. If you lose your balance, recover it as quickly as possible. Be sure, once more, not to let the head poke forwards, nor to let the back be rounded. Then go through the exercise, starting this time from the right foot, and sending the left foot out in various directions.

PELMAN LESSON XI

Scores of books, good, bad, and indifferent have been written about the subconscious life of the mind. Readers are frequently puzzled with this array of knowledge, ignorance, or dogmatism. Lesson XI puts the whole matter in a nutshell, and shows the place of the subconscious- in the obtaining of mental efficiency. The Lesson also deals with music memory.

DON'TS

1. Don't rely on books altogether; use them.
2. Don't lose courage when you enter a great library. You are not the only man who realizes the vastness of knowledge and yet the littleness of it.
- 3: Don't forget, in all disputes, to examine the chief words, critically.
4. Don't keep your knowledge in water-tight compartments. Unify it.
5. Don't neglect the Public Library. Even a small one contains much of great value.

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6. Don't fail to go through your note books occasionally. Revision means memory and new ideas.

DO THIS

1. Realize that good books contain the personalities of great writers, and that you can get into touch with these by reading.
2. Always try to get ideas over and above those which the author offers you.
3. Read critically and satisfy yourself that the author makes his points.
4. Secure the best results of your reading by a proper system of note-taking.
5. Learn to distinguish between the emotional appeals of good authors and the sentimental appeals of "cheap" writers.
6. Always make a point of discussing, subsequently, the good books that you read.

Thank you for reading...check out <http://chaoscure.com/pelmanism> for the rest of the series.