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VADE MECUM, VOLVENTIBUS ANNIS

THE MAYANS
SAN ANTONIO,
TEXAS

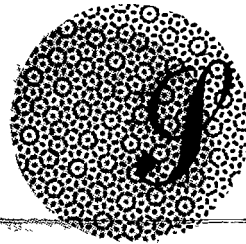
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THE



Secret *

OF REMEMBERING

Mayan Revelation Number 205

THE JOY OF MEMORY

THE MECHANISM OF MEMORY

THE PROBLEM

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*B*ELOVED CENTURION:

There is not much to be said by way of introduction about this lesson which we have called "The Secret of Remembering".

I consider this one of the most important lessons you have ever received, for it tells you exactly why you do not remember some things and do remember others. There have been many books written on how to improve your memory. Many memory courses have been prepared to help people who have poor memories. But there is one small secret - and we are bringing it to you in this lesson.

Memory depends very much on the regularity and order of our thoughts. Many people complain about their lack of memory, while really the defect is in their own judgment. And other people, in trying to grasp too much, retain nothing at all. One of the secrets of a good memory is attention, and attention to a subject depends on your interest in it. We rarely forget that which has made a deep impression on our minds. But it is good training and good practice from the standpoint of our memory to make every effort to be interested in all of those worthwhile things that we hear.

Of course, it is very true that some people have naturally better memories than others, but no matter how poor our memory may be, we all can improve our memories by following certain rules.

Our memories play a very important part in the sunset of our lives. Someone has given us this beautiful thought -

"The greatest comfort of my old age,
and that which gives me the highest
satisfaction,
is the pleasing remembrance of the
many benefits and friendly offices
I have done to others."

We would all do well to make our lives such that we could look back and remember the good we have done to others.

Let us go on to "The Secret of Remembering" by repeating the following prayer:

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for the power to preserve the lovely, the good, and the valuable of the yesterdays. Help me to use my memory to the good of life according to Thy will. Amen.

THE JOY OF MEMORY - Amazing as our lives and their possibilities reveal themselves to be, they are really much more so than we dream. Many and wonderful as our physical, mental, and spiritual powers are, they are more numerous and more wonderful than we know. Let us now think of one of the ways in which this is true.

The times we live through, the experiences we have, and the people and places we see, are very quickly lost. Like a traveler passing landmarks, we move on from one experience to another. We may not realize till afterward how much it meant to us, but afterward we wish we had better realized its importance. Even if it had seemed boring and unattractive at the time, we come to the hour when we feel a longing for it. Perhaps we did not even have a camera to take a picture of it. Something may have been seen, or said, or done, that at a latter day we will need or want to see, or hear again, but the moment is past and gone forever.

But is it really past and gone forever? Not at all. We may not have had a camera, but we had a whole photographic department with us, built in and ready for use at a moment's notice. We always do. Not only that, but it is equipped for sound, and has been so all through the generations. Like so many other things God invented it and gave it to His children to use from the earliest days of the race. This marvelous power and its equipment we call Memory.

Thus, if we want to recall a scene, a face, a voice, a happening, a statement, a situation, or anything, we need only turn on our section of sound film for that time and place, and there is everything faithfully reproduced. ~~What an amazing and valuable possession!~~ Does the thought of it not remind you how much and how often we fail to appreciate our blessings? Suppose we were without the power of Memory, how much poorer we would be! Those of us who do not maintain it well and use it rightly, how much we miss!

If we want to live over some wonderful hour, or hear a voice of long ago and far away, or see how someone now older looked when young, or hear again what some wise person said, or sit again in a gathering, or visit a home of long ago, or clear up some matter the years have dimmed, we can do it more easily than making a telephone call or turning on the television set.

How can the world seem drab or life be dull when we have such a marvelous power at our command? It is as though the past did not really vanish and the things it brought us did not perish. These images are not like a single instant frozen into a photograph. They are alive, smiling, and vocal.

This lesson is about this marvelous power we have, something of how it works, some ways of improving it and making it more effective, and one major secret by which to empower it for unfailing service.



THE MECHANISM OF MEMORY - Memory, like electricity, seems to be not a physical thing but an immaterial force. It is a mental power, which, like electricity, requires a mechanism to generate and start it and a conductor to carry it and apply it where it is needed at the moment. It has, then, its mechanical side, an apparatus it can use like a man

uses such implements as an engine or an automobile to produce certain desired immaterial results. Of course, the mechanism Memory uses is a part of the central nervous system, or the brain.

We do not know all about this mechanism and how it works, but Science has studied it, and has come up with some knowledge of its operation. Like electricity, we still do not know what it really is, but we do know enough about it to make use of it.

Science first announced the brain path theory, which in revised form still prevails. The idea was that any mental experience, such as learning a statement, hearing a name, seeing a face, and the like, creates a slight brain change. It digs a little iteration, or path, in the brain. This is like any new-blazed trail, likely to be followed again and again till it becomes a road. That is, if the results of some mental action are repeated again and again, a mental habit of recall develops there, and we have a memory of the thoughts, sights, sounds, and whatever else has passed.

Later, when the process of recording phonograph materials became known, we saw an image of the brain path process. We began to say that every experience of thought or sensation leaves a little record of itself among the brain cells, which we can put on any time and play over again. We were encouraged with the assurance that we need have no fear of running out of record space, since the brain contains capacity for at least three times as much remembering as the most learned scholar ever uses in his lifetime.

More lately we have gone on to new developments in recording and we may say that this mechanism of memory is now more like a sound film of any time, or scene, or experience, that plays the picture back with full sound effects.

As time passes, man will doubtless make more and greater improvements in the reproduction of sight and sound, but even each of these will be merely a man-made version of something the Creator did in nature long before we were here. Each time this happens we will be able to see a little more clearly how Memory operates and produces the marvelous effects it does.

We would be dull creatures indeed if the power to remember did not amaze us when we stop to think what it does. Think what it means to pack up everything one ever learns, hears, sees, or experiences, and carry it with him the rest of his life, yet without its adding a single ounce of weight to his burden!

Like every blessing, however, it carries certain problems and has certain limitations. At least we have limitations in its operation which need to be cleared away before we can derive the maximum service from it. We now consider them.



THE PROBLEM - We have used the word "limitation" and the word "problem" here, but it may be that neither is exactly the word. Perhaps it would be better to say "responsibilities - our failure to discharge which creates a problem". This marvelous power of memory sometimes ceases to function,

sometimes fails to function, and sometimes functions lamely. That is only because we fail to cultivate and use it.

Despite the possession of this amazing gift of memory, some people do not remember well. They do not try to remember, or do so in mistaken ways, till the power itself seems to be impaired, though it is impaired only in the sense that a mirror or a window gets dirty and needs washing. If we want to see through a window we must keep it clean. If we want to hear sounds we must keep them from being drowned out by other noises. If we want a mechanism to function well we must keep it oiled and in condition.

The power of memory operates so quietly and automatically that we sometimes assume it will take care of itself. To a large extent it will, but abuse, or misuse, or unuse, or lack of attention, will impair it. Like failing hearing or vision, it can be neglected till it all but disappears.

Preoccupation, often with things not important enough to justify the loss, is one enemy of clear, accurate, and tenacious memory. A man on the threshold of what is commonly called old age remarked to a psychiatrist friend during a drive that he noticed he was having difficulty recalling names and facts. Once well remembered things had sunk below the level of consciousness and were not even lingering impressions any more. He lamented that age was doing this to him.

The psychiatrist replied that he was certain the man was mistaken, and that time had nothing to do with it. At his age most people's minds and powers of memory were at their best, and it was probably true of him. He said the trouble is that as people grow older they have more things to do, and think about, and watch out for, with the result that they begin to neglect to apply their powers of recall in remembering things. So here is one of the minor secrets of remembering:

(do not let the things you want or need to remember be crowded out by preoccupations.)

We should not give mind room to either the ugly or the unimportant, even though true. Let them be "like the chaff which the wind driveth away". Let time take them and throw them on the junk heap. Give the lovely, the good, and the useful a place at the windows of thought, like flowers set where the sunshine and fresh air can keep them bright.

The point is that we have this problem of preserving memories. Later in the lesson we shall point out a master secret for solving it. Meanwhile we can help ourselves by using right attitudes and conditions to preserve our powers of what were once called retention and recall, but which we now know by the more adequate name of Memory. However, we must first prepare the way to make that master secret clear.



MEMORY SYSTEMS - We used to see many memory systems advertised, read books and articles about memory training, and have schools and teachers promoting memory exercises and development. The fact that

we see less of this today must mean either that they did not work very well or that people are having less memory trouble; but enough people do have it to make worthwhile a discussion that goes to the root of the matter and suggests a simple but sure solution.

The memory training systems, or Mnemonics, referred to above were usually some kind of memory exercises like gymnastics for the body. The power of memory was given a program of workouts, just like exercising muscles or organs, such as the eyes, or training for athletic contests. Normal and well-devised exercises, used in moderation, for anything, are worthwhile as far as they go, but a mere system of exercises is not enough. Deeper conditions must be taken into account.

A muscle, or limb, or organ of sense, may be strengthened by exercise, but still be subject to abuse and failure. For one thing, there is the danger and frequent harm of overexercise, with later reactions of weakness and ill health, in some cases even the shortening of life. Again in some cases, even when exercise itself has not been excessive, its benefits begin to weaken and disappear when it is discontinued or lessened, which always happens sooner or later. In other words, the results of mere exercise are not permanent when there is no inner change of attitude or manner of practice that really reaches to motivation itself. The need is not to change the objective but to adopt a way of doing the thing that really works. That is exactly what we shall suggest presently.

All of us manage to remember some things by associating them with something else. We do this unconsciously all the time. But we cannot stop to do that with every detail of mental experience, and sooner or later we forget what it was we used as an associative peg to hang the item on. When this happens it shows us that our memories have not really been improved at all.

Some of us charge our minds to remember this or that, but our minds get tired of the thing and let it go just the same. We keep notes, then lose them or get so many we have to throw some away. We tie strings on our fingers, and they remind us to remember something but may not be able to tell us what it was. We commit things to memory by repetition, which is good because each repetition cuts the recording deeper; but in time the record gets dusty and part or all of what we memorized is gone.

You see, all these things are good in their way, but you can also see that they are mere temporizings that do not get to the root of the problem and really and permanently hold things at command, meanwhile adding permanent sinew to memory itself. They might have done when life was simple, but it is no longer so simple.

We have been leading up to one thing. It is a very simple thing, - but if a simple thing is going to solve a very serious, trying, and costly problem forever, it is eminently worthwhile. We now come to the secret. It is one you can easily apply, beginning now. It is no mystery, but many have found it effective.

THE SECRET - We keep calling this a secret, though many people, without knowing it, have used it. Most people know it, though they may not have observed its operation. Most people use it at times, though they may not notice the fact. Sometimes when one's interest in anything is sufficiently great it happens in the impact of the experience. The person may wonder why he never forgets it, but he probably hasn't noticed what made it so.

Here we want to point out the importance of carrying the process out consciously, deliberately, and intentionally, in the case of everything important enough to justify the effort, and of making it so truly a mental habit that we will do it unconsciously concerning everything we know or experience. It is not a matter of memorization. It is a matter of attention. It is as simple as that.

Most of our thoughts and experiences are like snapshot negatives we have taken with the camera lens stopped down to a very small aperture and the shutter speed set very high. That means that too little light reaches the surface of the sensitized film and what does reach it does not remain long enough to make a real, clearly-defined impression. Enough light and enough lens opening to allow time for that light, get a full reaction from the nitrate of silver on the film, and you get a picture that will last.

It is exactly the same with the reaction of the mind. When the eye, or ear, or both, admit enough stimulation and focus it on the proper brain centers long enough, you get a lasting impression. If they are not allowed to do so, the impression is weak and temporary, and we cannot recall it again. In other words, if real attention is focused on anything till the brain can fully absorb the stimulus, the impression will remain. Otherwise it will not. In fact, it has never really been registered there in the first place.

If a student sits indolently in class with only a faint and fleeting impression of what is happening, he is like a camera not giving the light a chance to register an effective exposure. On examination he will say he doesn't remember. The fact is that he did not give the lesson and the teacher enough attention.

Suppose you are reading an interesting book and remembering what you read. Then you grow dull with weariness or something else. You can tell afterward where and when the listless dullness began and ended. There will be a blank section there that is entirely strange to you. It will not be marked by page, paragraph, and line, but by the point where attention lost its focus and the one where it was regained.

The things you remember and can vividly recall at this moment are the ones to which you "attended", on which you concentrated your attention vigorously, steadily, and long enough - a moment usually suffices if the concentration is complete - for the mind to form a good, clear, positive impression. On the other hand, the things you have forgotten are those in the case of which you did not do this. With some things it is just as well, but in the cases of others the loss is very great.

There, then, is your secret. You can see that it is very simple and plain, but mastering it and using it can be one of the most profitable things you ever did in your life.

A DEMONSTRATION CASE - One winter night long ago, a clergyman took a brilliant young college president into the dimly lighted lobby of a small town hotel to meet a boy who was working his way through high school. The meeting lasted only about five minutes, the clergyman and his educator guest went away, the educator not to be seen again for a long time.

A year and a half later the boy, then a college freshman, was a delegate to a religious convention two or three hundred miles away from where the midnight meeting took place. The college president was one of the speakers there. The young man went forward intending to shake hands and pass on with the line, but the educator called him by name, recalled the former meeting, and asked how he came to be there. He was doing much the same with others there whose meetings with him may have been as brief and long before.

The student was amazed and puzzled. The next year he transferred to the institution headed by the speaker, partly to study academic subjects and partly to study the president. He found that this man remembered other people he had met in his wide and constant travels, just as he had remembered him. It was known to be quite a factor in his remarkable success. As time went on the student caught onto how the great man did it.

When he met a new person he concentrated wholly on that person long enough to get a direct image of him, and he listened similarly to his name and then held it carefully and exclusively in his mind for a moment. After that he seldom if ever forgot. If he met that person on the other side of the world he could call him by name and speak familiarly of what he knew about him.

The young man learned of a number of other men with remarkable powers of recall, remembering names as well as they could remember faces which few can do because the visual stimulus is so much stronger than the auditory one. Some of them could stand in a reception line greeting hundreds of people they had met somewhere before, and call every one by name as he passed. Such men were always spoken of as having powerful memories. Many people thought they had read books, or taken memory courses, or were just blessed in that regard. None of these things was true. They had merely cultivated the habit of giving real and complete attention to a name, face, or fact, the first time.

When the student, who was going into public work himself, caught on, he began practicing the formula and found it worked for him just as it had for others. As years passed he too became known as a person who remembered names and faces in what to most people was a surprising way. It was not magic, nor memory training, nor a special gift. It was something anyone could do by trying and something simple and free. When you see a face, or hear a name, or learn a fact, or what not, give your eyes, ears, and mind a good, full, complete chance at it. Then the picture will be there to stay, filed away among your mental records, ready to re-play at will.



IN CONCLUSION - Our point has now been made. It remains only to gather up a few loose ends, mention a few incidentals, and add a few sidelights. While attention is the whole of the secret, it can be well used

or poorly used; and there are ways to give it a better chance, just as a camera will yield a better picture if it is in good position, has a good light, and the possible picture is well composed.

First: Consider how worthwhile this secret is to you. It has made many people more popular, more successful in business, and better adjusted in the world of affairs. Life is something like a labyrinth. If you go into a labyrinth, give careful attention to every turn and way-mark and to what they would be in reverse. Then you can walk out as readily as you went in. And if you did that what power would you have to use? Memory; of course, Memory assisted by attention. A competent memory is just that valuable in everyday living.

Second: When you once get this idea clearly in mind, use it. The exercise will strengthen it and your competence with it. It will make you increasingly familiar with it and enable you to improve your use of it as you go along. If you begin at once to use it all the time, which is not difficult or wearying but exciting and exhilarating, you will not make the costly mistake of forgetting to use it in some important instance until it is too late.

Third: Bear in mind that the trouble with most forgetting rises from haste, preoccupation, or momentary unconcern. The specific is attention, and the foe of attention is being in a hurry, or busy, and just letting the matter pass, perhaps at the expense of a friend, an influence, an opportunity, or some other value that would have blessed and enriched your life. We may be too indolent to want to take the small trouble, but taking the trouble might render us the great service of proving an antidote to the indolence itself. We may think we have something more important to think about at the moment, only to find that the most important thing to us that day was fixing in memory something that would suddenly be found vitally important at some other time.

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A certain man knows a vast amount of poetry, and can quote it accurately to the letter and punctuation mark by the page, canto, and chapter, any time. Yet he has never memorized a line of it, or tried to. He has remembered it because it impressed him, and done so with one reading.

That does not mean that he has not forgotten poetry. He has forgotten more than he has remembered, and because he was not sufficiently impressed to remember it. With labor he might memorize a poem he does not care for, but his command of it would still be shaky.

He writes poetry himself, but seldom remembers or recognizes what he has written. It has come largely from the subconscious level and he has not taken the time to give it the necessary conscious attention.

This demonstrates the point that we remember not what we try to remember,

but that on which we concentrate, even with a moment's attention. There are no poor memories, only memories that have not been given sufficiently strong stimuli.



Now that you have read this lesson and know the secret of remembering, make it a point to use the following Affirmation every day. If you will do this, your Instructor feels sure you will notice a great improvement in your ability to remember.

It can all be summed up in two words - PAY ATTENTION. Pay close attention to that which you wish to remember.

AFFIRMATION

I appreciate the importance of remembering what is good to remember. I focus my mind on what is important, and give the concept enough light and time to make a permanent picture.

Blessings,

YOUR INSTRUCTOR