WILLIAM ATKINSON

MEMORY: HOW TO DEVELOP, TRAIN, AND USE IT

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
MEMORY: ITS IMPORTANCE

It needs very little argument to convince the average thinking person of the great importance of memory, although even then very few begin to realize just how important is the function of the mind that has to do with the retention of mental impressions. The first thought of the average person when he is asked to consider the importance of memory, is its use in the affairs of every-day life, along developed and cultivated lines, as contrasted with the lesser degrees of its development. In short, one generally thinks of memory in its phase of "a good memory" as contrasted with the opposite phase of "a poor memory." But there is a much broader and fuller meaning of the term than that of even this important phase.

It is true that the success of the individual in his every-day business, profession, trade or other occupation depends very materially upon the possession of a good memory. His value in any walk in life depends to a great extent upon the degree of memory he may have developed. His memory of faces, names, facts, events, circumstances and other things concerning his every-day work is the measure of his ability to accomplish his task. And in the social intercourse of men and women, the possession of a retentive memory, well stocked with available facts, renders its possessor a desirable member of society. And in the higher activities of thought, the memory comes as an invaluable aid to the individual in marshalling the bits and sections of knowledge he may have acquired, and passing them in review before his cognitive faculties – thus does the soul review its mental possessions. As Alexander Smith has said: "A man's real possession is his memory; in nothing else is he rich; in nothing else is he poor." Richter has said: "Memory is the only paradise from which we cannot be driven away. Grant but memory to us, and we can lose nothing by death." Lactantius says: "Memory tempers prosperity, mitigates adversity, controls youth, and delights old age."

But even the above phases of memory represent but a small segment of its complete circle. Memory is more than "a good memory" – it is the means whereby we perform the largest share of our mental work. As Bacon has said: "All knowledge is but remembrance." And Emerson: "Memory is a primary and fundamental faculty, without which none other can work: the cement, the bitumen, the matrix in which the other faculties are embedded. Without it all life and thought were an unrelated succession." And Burke: "There is no faculty of the mind which can bring its energy into effect unless the memory be stored with ideas for it to look upon." And Basile: "Memory is the cabinet of imagination, the treasury of reason, the registry of conscience, and the council chamber of thought." Kant pronounced memory to be "the most wonderful of the faculties." Kay, one of the best authorities on the subject has said, regarding it: "Unless the mind possessed the power of treasuring up and recalling its past experiences, no knowledge of any kind could be acquired. If every sensation, thought, or emotion passed entirely from the mind the moment it ceased to be present, then it would be as if it had not been; and it could not be recognized or named should it happen to return. Such an one would not only be without knowledge, – without experience gathered from the past, – but without purpose, aim, or plan regarding the future, for these imply knowledge and require memory. Even voluntary motion, or motion for a purpose, could have no existence without memory, for memory is involved in every purpose. Not only the learning of the scholar, but the inspiration of the poet, the genius of the painter, the heroism of the warrior, all depend upon memory. Nay, even consciousness itself could have no existence without memory for every act of consciousness involves a change from a past state

to a present, and did the past state vanish the moment it was past, there could be no consciousness of change. Memory, therefore, may be said to be involved in all conscious existence – a property of every conscious being!"

In the building of character and individuality, the memory plays an important part, for upon the strength of the impressions received, and the firmness with which they are retained, depends the fibre of character and individuality. Our experiences are indeed the stepping stones to greater attainments, and at the same time our guides and protectors from danger. If the memory serves us well in this respect we are saved the pain of repeating the mistakes of the past, and may also profit by remembering and thus avoiding the mistakes of others. As Beattie says: "When memory is preternaturally defective, experience and knowledge will be deficient in proportion, and imprudent conduct and absurd opinion are the necessary consequence." Bain says: "A character retaining a feeble hold of bitter experience, or genuine delight, and unable to revive afterwards the impression of the time is in reality the victim of an intellectual weakness under the guise of a moral weakness. To have constantly before us an estimate of the things that affect us, true to the reality, is one precious condition for having our will always stimulated with an accurate reference to our happiness. The thoroughly educated man, in this respect, is he that can carry with him at all times the exact estimate of what he has enjoyed or suffered from every object that has ever affected him, and in case of encounter can present to the enemy as strong a front as if he were under the genuine impression. A full and accurate memory, for pleasure or for pain, is the intellectual basis both of prudence as regards self, and sympathy as regards others."

So, we see that the cultivation of the memory is far more than the cultivation and development of a single mental faculty – it is the cultivation and development of our entire mental being – the development of our *selves*.

To many persons the words memory, recollection, and remembrance, have the same meaning, but there is a great difference in the exact shade of meaning of each term. The student of this book should make the distinction between the terms, for by so doing he will be better able to grasp the various points of advice and instruction herein given. Let us examine these terms.

Locke in his celebrated work, the "Essay Concerning Human Understanding" has clearly stated the difference between the meaning of these several terms. He says: "Memory is the power to revive again in our minds those ideas which after imprinting, have disappeared, or have been laid aside out of sight – when an idea again recurs without the operation of the like object on the external sensory, it is *remembrance*; if it be sought after by the mind, and with pain and endeavor found, and brought again into view, it is *recollection*." Fuller says, commenting on this: "Memory is the power of reproducing in the mind former impressions, or percepts. Remembrance and Recollection are the exercise of that power, the former being involuntary or spontaneous, the latter volitional. We remember because we cannot help it but we recollect only through positive effort. The act of remembering, taken by itself, is involuntary. In other words, when the mind remembers without having tried to remember, it acts spontaneously. Thus it may be said, in the narrow, contrasted senses of the two terms, that we remember by chance, but recollect by intention, and if the endeavor be successful that which is reproduced becomes, by the very effort to bring it forth, more firmly intrenched in the mind than ever."

But the New Psychology makes a little different distinction from that of Locke, as given above. It uses the word memory not only in his sense of "The power to revive, etc.," but also in the sense of the activities of the mind which tend to receive and store away the various impressions of the senses, and the ideas conceived by the mind, to the end that they may be reproduced voluntarily, or involuntarily, thereafter. The distinction between remembrance and recollection, as made by Locke, is adopted as correct by The New Psychology.

It has long been recognized that the memory, in all of its phases, is capable of development, culture, training and guidance through intelligent exercise. Like any other faculty of mind, or physical

part, muscle or limb, it may be improved and strengthened. But until recent years, the entire efforts of these memory-developers were directed to the strengthening of that phase of the memory known as "recollection," which, you will remember, Locke defined as an idea or impression "sought after by the mind, and with pain and endeavor found, and brought again into view." The New Psychology goes much further than this. While pointing out the most improved and scientific methods for "re-collecting" the impressions and ideas of the memory, it also instructs the student in the use of the proper methods whereby the memory may be stored with clear and distinct impressions which will, thereafter, flow naturally and involuntarily into the field of consciousness when the mind is thinking upon the associated subject or line of thought; and which may also be "re-collected" by a voluntary effort with far less expenditure of energy than under the old methods and systems.

You will see this idea carried out in detail, as we progress with the various stages of the subject, in this work. You will see that the first thing to do is *to find something to remember*; then to impress that thing clearly and distinctly upon the receptive tablets of the memory; then to exercise the remembrance in the direction of bringing out the stored-away facts of the memory; then to acquire the scientific methods of recollecting special items of memory that may be necessary at some special time. This is the natural method in memory cultivation, as opposed to the artificial systems that you will find mentioned in another chapter. It is not only development of the memory, but also development of the mind itself in several of its regions and phases of activity. It is not merely a method of recollecting, but also a method of correct seeing, thinking and remembering. This method recognizes the truth of the verse of the poet, Pope, who said: "Remembrance and reflection how allied! What thin partitions sense from thought divide!"

CHAPTER II
CULTIVATION OF THE MEMORY

This book is written with the fundamental intention and idea of pointing out a rational and workable method whereby the memory may be developed, trained and cultivated. Many persons seem to be under the impression that memories are bestowed by nature, in a fixed degree or possibilities, and that little more can be done for them – in short, that memories are born, not made. But the fallacy of any such idea is demonstrated by the investigations and experiments of all the leading authorities, as well as by the results obtained by persons who have developed and cultivated their own memories by individual effort without the assistance of an instructor. But all such improvement, to be real, must be along certain natural lines and in accordance with the well established laws of psychology, instead of along artificial lines and in defiance of psychological principles. Cultivation of the memory is a far different thing from "trick memory," or feats of mental legerdemain if the term is permissible.

Kay says: "That the memory is capable of indefinite improvement, there can be no manner of doubt; but with regard to the means by which this improvement is to be effected mankind are still greatly in ignorance." Dr. Noah Porter says: "The natural as opposed to the artificial memory depends on the relations of sense and the relations of thought, – the spontaneous memory of the eye and the ear availing itself of the obvious conjunctions of objects which are furnished by space and time, and the rational memory of those higher combinations which the rational faculties superinduce upon those lower. The artificial memory proposes to substitute for the natural and necessary relations under which all objects must present and arrange themselves, an entirely new set of relations that are purely arbitrary and mechanical, which excite little or no other interest than that they are to aid us in remembering. It follows that if the mind tasks itself to the special effort of considering objects under these artificial relations, it will give less attention to those which have a direct and legitimate interest for itself." Granville says: "The defects of most methods which have been devised and employed for improving the memory, lies in the fact that while they serve to impress particular subjects on the mind, they do not render the memory, as a whole, ready or attentive." Fuller says: "Surely an art of memory may be made more destructive to natural memory than spectacles are to eyes." These opinions of the best authorities might be multiplied indefinitely – the consensus of the best opinion is decidedly against the artificial systems, and in favor of the natural ones.

Natural systems of memory culture are based upon the fundamental conception so well expressed by Helvetius, several centuries ago, when he said: "The extent of the memory depends, first, on the daily use we make of it; secondly, upon the attention with which we consider the objects we would impress upon it; and, thirdly, upon the order in which we range our ideas." This then is the list of the three essentials in the cultivation of the memory: (1) Use and exercise; review and practice; (2) Attention and Interest; and (3) Intelligent Association.

You will find that in the several chapters of this book dealing with the various phases of memory, we urge, first, last, and all the time, the importance of the use and employment of the memory, in the way of employment, exercise, practice and review work. Like any other mental faculty, or physical function, the memory will tend to atrophy by disuse, and increase, strengthen and develop by rational exercise and employment within the bounds of moderation. You develop a muscle by exercise; you train any special faculty of the mind in the same way; and you must pursue the same method in the case of the memory, if you would develop it. Nature's laws are constant, and bear a close analogy to each other. You will also notice the great stress that we lay upon the use of the faculty of attention, accompanied by interest. By attention you acquire the impressions that you file away in your mental record-file of memory. And the degree of attention regulates the depth, clearness and strength of the impression. Without a good record, you cannot expect to obtain a good

reproduction of it. A poor phonographic record results in a poor reproduction, and the rule applies in the case of the memory as well. You will also notice that we explain the laws of association, and the principles which govern the subject, as well as the methods whereby the proper associations may be made. Every association that you weld to an idea or an impression, serves as a cross-reference in the index, whereby the thing is found by remembrance or recollection when it is needed. We call your attention to the fact that one's entire education depends for its efficiency upon this law of association. It is a most important feature in the rational cultivation of the memory, while at the same time being the bane of the artificial systems. Natural associations educate, while artificial ones tend to weaken the powers of the mind, if carried to any great length.

There is no Royal Road to Memory. The cultivation of the memory depends upon the practice along certain scientific lines according to well established psychological laws. Those who hope for a sure "short cut" will be disappointed, for none such exists. As Halleck says: "The student ought not to be disappointed to find that memory is no exception to the rule of improvement by proper methodical and long continued exercise. There is no royal road, no short cut, to the improvement of either mind or muscle. But the student who follows the rules which psychology has laid down may know that he is walking in the shortest path, and not wandering aimlessly about. Using these rules, he will advance much faster than those without chart, compass, or pilot. He will find mnemonics of extremely limited use. Improvement comes by orderly steps. Methods that dazzle at first sight never give solid results."

The student is urged to pay attention to what we have to say in other chapters of the book upon the subjects of attention and association. It is not necessary to state here the particulars that we mention there. The cultivation of the attention is a prerequisite for good memory, and deficiency in this respect means deficiency not only in the field of memory but also in the general field of mental work. In all branches of The New Psychology there is found a constant repetition of the injunction to cultivate the faculty of attention and concentration. Halleck says: "Haziness of perception lies at the root of many a bad memory. If perception is definite, the first step has been taken toward insuring a good memory. If the first impression is vivid, its effect upon the brain cells is more lasting. All persons ought to practice their visualizing power. This will react upon perception and make it more definite. Visualizing will also form a brain habit of remembering things pictorially, and hence more exactly."

The subject of association must also receive its proper share of attention, for it is by means of association that the stored away records of the memory may be recovered or re-collected. As Blackie says: "Nothing helps the mind so much as order and classification. Classes are few, individuals many: to know the class well is to know what is most essential in the character of the individual, and what burdens the memory least to retain." And as Halleck says regarding the subject of association by relation: "Whenever we can discover any relation between facts, it is far easier to remember them. The intelligent law of memory may be summed up in these words: Endeavor to link by some thought relation each new mental acquisition to an old one. Bind new facts to other facts by relations of similarity, cause and effect, whole and part, or by any logical relation, and we shall find that when an idea occurs to us, a host of related ideas will flow into the mind. If we wish to prepare a speech or write an article on any subject, pertinent illustrations will suggest themselves. The person whose memory is merely contiguous will wonder how we think of them."

In your study for the cultivation of the memory, along the lines laid down in this book, you have read the first chapter thereof and have informed yourself thoroughly regarding the importance of the memory to the individual, and what a large part it plays in the entire work of the mind. Now carefully read the third chapter and acquaint yourself with the possibilities in the direction of cultivating the memory to a high degree, as evidenced by the instances related of the extreme case of development noted therein. Then study the chapter on memory systems, and realize that the only true method is the natural method, which requires work, patience and practice – then make up your mind that you will follow this plan as far as it will take you. Then acquaint yourself with the secret of memory – the subconscious region of the mind, in which the records of memory are kept, stored away and

indexed, and in which the little mental office-boys are busily at work. This will give you the key to the method. Then take up the two chapters on attention, and association, respectively, and acquaint yourself with these important principles. Then study the chapter on the phases of memory, and take mental stock of yourself, determining in which phase of memory you are strongest, and in which you need development. Then read the two chapters on training the eye and ear, respectively – you need this instruction. Then read over the several chapters on the training of the special phases of the memory, whether you need them or not – you may find something of importance in them. Then read the concluding chapter, which gives you some general advice and parting instruction. Then return to the chapters dealing with the particular phases of memory in which you have decided to develop yourself, studying the details of the instruction carefully until you know every point of it. Then, most important of all —*get to work*. The rest is a matter of practice, practice, practice, and rehearsal. Go back to the chapters from time to time, and refresh your mind regarding the details. Re-read each chapter at intervals. Make the book your own, in every sense of the word, by absorbing its contents.

CHAPTER III
CELEBRATED CASES OF MEMORY

In order that the student may appreciate the marvelous extent of development possible to the memory, we have thought it advisable to mention a number of celebrated cases, past and present. In so doing we have no desire to hold up these cases as worthy of imitation, for they are exceptional and not necessary in every-day life. We mention them merely to show to what wonderful extent development along these lines is possible.

In India, in the past, the sacred books were committed to memory, and handed down from teacher to student, for ages. And even to-day it is no uncommon thing for the student to be able to repeat, word for word, some voluminous religious work equal in extent to the New Testament. Max Muller states that the entire text and glossary of Panini's Sanscrit grammar, equal in extent to the entire Bible, were handed down orally for several centuries before being committed to writing. There are Brahmins to-day who have committed to memory, and who can repeat at will, the entire collection of religious poems known as the *Mahabarata*, consisting of over 300,000 *slokas* or verses. Leland states that, "the Slavonian minstrels of the present day have by heart with remarkable accuracy immensely long epic poems. I have found the same among Algonquin Indians whose sagas or mythic legends are interminable, and yet are committed word by word accurately. I have heard in England of a lady ninety years of age whose memory was miraculous, and of which extraordinary instances are narrated by her friends. She attributed it to the fact that when young she had been made to learn a verse from the Bible every day, and then constantly review it. As her memory improved, she learned more, the result being that in the end she could repeat from memory any verse or chapter called for in the whole Scripture."

It is related that Mithridates, the ancient warrior-king, knew the name of every soldier in his great army, and conversed fluently in twenty-two dialects. Pliny relates that Charmides could repeat the contents of every book in his large library. Hortensius, the Roman orator, had a remarkable memory which enabled him to retain and recollect the exact words of his opponent's argument, without making a single notation. On a wager, he attended a great auction sale which lasted over an entire day, and then called off in their proper order every object sold, the name of its purchaser, and the price thereof. Seneca is said to have acquired the ability to memorize several thousand proper names, and to repeat them in the order in which they had been given him, and also to reverse the order and call off the list backward. He also accomplished the feat of listening to several hundred persons, each of whom gave him a verse; memorizing the same as they proceeded; and then repeating them word for word in the exact order of their delivery – and then reversing the process, with complete success. Eusebius stated that only the memory of Esdras saved the Hebrew Scriptures to the world, for when the Chaldeans destroyed the manuscripts Esdras was able to repeat them, word by word to the scribes, who then reproduced them. The Mohammedan scholars are able to repeat the entire text of the Koran, letter perfect. Scaliger committed the entire text of the Iliad and the Odyssey, in three weeks. Ben Jonson is said to have been able to repeat all of his own works from memory, with the greatest ease.

Bulwer could repeat the Odes of Horace from memory. Pascal could repeat the entire Bible, from beginning to end, as well as being able to recall any given paragraph, verse, line, or chapter. Landor is said to have read a book but once, when he would dispose of it, having impressed it upon his memory, to be recalled years after, if necessary. Byron could recite all of his own poems. Buffon could repeat his works from beginning to end. Bryant possessed the same ability to repeat his own works. Bishop Saunderson could repeat the greater part of Juvenal and Perseus, all of Tully, and all of Horace. Fedosova, a Russian peasant, could repeat over 25,000 poems, folk-songs, legends, fairy-

tales, war stories, etc., when she was over seventy years of age. The celebrated "Blind Alick," an aged Scottish beggar, could repeat any verse in the Bible called for, as well as the entire text of all the chapters and books. The newspapers, a few years ago, contained the accounts of a man named Clark who lived in New York City. He is said to have been able to give the exact presidential vote in each State of the Union since the first election. He could give the population in every town of any size in the world either present or in the past providing there was a record of the same. He could quote from Shakespeare for hours at a time beginning at any given point in any play. He could recite the entire text of the Iliad in the original Greek.

The historical case of the unnamed Dutchman is known to all students of memory. This man is said to have been able to take up a fresh newspaper; to read it all through, including the advertisements; and then to repeat its contents, word for word, from beginning to end. On one occasion he is said to have heaped wonder upon wonder, by repeating the contents of the paper backward, beginning with the last word and ending with the first. Lyon, the English actor, is said to have duplicated this feat, using a large London paper and including the market quotations, reports of the debates in Parliament, the railroad time-tables and the advertisements. A London waiter is said to have performed a similar feat, on a wager, he memorizing and correctly repeating the contents of an eight-page paper. One of the most remarkable instances of extraordinary memory known to history is that of the child Christian Meinecken. When less than four years of age he could repeat the entire Bible; two hundred hymns; five thousand Latin words; and much ecclesiastical history, theory, dogmas, arguments; and an encyclopædic quantity of theological literature. He is said to have practically retained every word that was read to him. His case was abnormal, and he died at an early age.

John Stuart Mill is said to have acquired a fair knowledge of Greek, at the age of three years, and to have memorized Hume, Gibbon, and other historians, at the age of eight. Shortly after he mastered and memorized Herodotus, Xenophon, some of Socrates, and six of Plato's "Dialogues." Richard Porson is said to have memorized the entire text of Homer, Horace, Cicero, Virgil, Livy, Shakespeare, Milton, and Gibbon. He is said to have been able to memorize any ordinary novel at one careful reading; and to have several times performed the feat of memorizing the entire contents of some English monthly review. De Rossi was able to perform the feat of repeating a hundred lines from any of the four great Italian poets, provided he was given a line at random from their works – his hundred lines following immediately after the given line. Of course this feat required the memorizing of the entire works of those poets, and the ability to take up the repetition from any given point, the latter feature being as remarkable as the former. There have been cases of printers being able to repeat, word for word, books of which they had set the type. Professor Lawson was able to teach his classes on the Scriptures without referring to the book. He claimed that if the entire stock of Bibles were to be destroyed, he could restore the book entire, from his memory.

Rev. Thomas Fuller is said to have been able to walk down a long London street, reading the names of the signs on both sides; then recalling them in the order in which they had been seen, and then by reversing the order. There are many cases on record of persons who memorized the words of every known tongue of civilization, as well as a great number of dialects, languages, and tongues of savage races. Bossuet had memorized the entire Bible, and Homer, Horace and Virgil beside. Niebuhr, the historian, was once employed in a government office, the records of which were destroyed. He, thereupon, restored the entire contents of the book of records which he had written – all from his memory. Asa Gray knew the names of ten thousand plants. Milton had a vocabulary of twenty thousand words, and Shakespeare one of twenty-five thousand. Cuvier and Agassiz are said to have memorized lists of several thousand species and varieties of animals. Magliabechi, the librarian of Florence, is said to have known the location of every volume in the large library of which he was in charge; and the complete list of works along certain lines in all the other great libraries. He once claimed that he was able to repeat titles of over a half-million of books in many languages, and upon many subjects.

In nearly every walk of life are to be found persons with memories wonderfully developed along the lines of their particular occupation. Librarians possess this faculty to an unusual degree. Skilled workers in the finer lines of manufacture also manifest a wonderful memory for the tiny parts of the manufactured article, etc. Bank officers have a wonderful memory for names and faces. Some lawyers are able to recall cases quoted in the authorities, years after they have read them. Perhaps the most common, and yet the most remarkable, instances of memorizing in one's daily work is to be found in the cases of the theatrical profession. In some cases members of stock companies must not only be able to repeat the lines of the play they are engaged in acting at the time, but also the one that they are rehearsing for the following week, and possibly the one for the second week. And in repertoire companies the actors are required to be "letter-perfect" in a dozen or more plays – surely a wonderful feat, and yet one so common that no notice is given to it.

In some of the celebrated cases, the degree of recollection manifested is undoubtedly abnormal, but in the majority of the cases it may be seen that the result has been obtained only by the use of natural methods and persistent exercise. That wonderful memories may be acquired by anyone who will devote to the task patience, time and work, is a fact generally acknowledged by all students of the subject. It is not a *gift*, but something to be won by effort and work along scientific lines.

CHAPTER IV
MEMORY SYSTEMS

The subject of Memory Development is not a new one by any means. For two thousand years, at least, there has been much thought devoted to the subject; many books written thereupon; and many methods or "systems" invented, the purpose of which has been the artificial training of the memory. Instead of endeavoring to develop the memory by scientific training and rational practice and exercise along natural lines, there seems to have always been an idea that one could improve on Nature's methods, and that a plan might be devised by the use of some "trick" the memory might be taught to give up her hidden treasures. The law of Association has been used in the majority of these systems, often to a ridiculous degree. Fanciful systems have been built up, all artificial in their character and nature, the use of which to any great extent is calculated to result in a decrease of the natural powers of remembrance and recollection, just as in the case of natural "aids" to the physical system there is always found a decrease in the natural powers. Nature prefers to do her own work, unaided. She may be trained, led, directed and harnessed, but she insists upon doing the work herself, or dropping the task. The principle of Association is an important one, and forms a part of natural memory training, and should be so used. But when pressed into service in many of the artificial systems, the result is the erection of a complex and unnatural mental mechanism which is no more an improvement upon the natural methods, than a wooden leg is an improvement upon the original limb. There are many points in some of these "systems" which may be employed to advantage in natural memory training, by divorcing them from their fantastic rules and complex arrangement. We ask you to run over the list of the principal "systems" with us, that you may discard the useless material by recognizing it as such; and cull the valuable for your own use.

The ancient Greeks were fond of memory systems. Simonides, the Greek poet who lived about 500 B.C. was one of the early authorities, and his work has influenced nearly all of the many memory systems that have sprung up since that time. There is a romantic story connected with the foundation of his system. It is related that the poet was present at a large banquet attended by some of the principal men of the place. He was called out by a message from home, and left before the close of the meal. Shortly after he left, the ceiling of the banquet hall fell upon the guests, killing all present in the room, and mutilating their bodies so terribly that their friends were unable to recognize them. Simonides, having a well-developed memory for places and position, was able to recall the exact order in which each guest had been seated, and therefore was able to aid in the identification of the remains. This occurrence impressed him so forcibly that he devised a system of memory based upon the idea of position, which attained great popularity in Greece, and the leading writers of the day highly recommended it.

The system of Simonides was based upon the idea of position – it was known as "the topical system." His students were taught to picture in the mind a large building divided into sections, and then into rooms, halls, etc. The thing to be remembered was "visualized" as occupying some certain space or place in that building, the grouping being made according to association and resemblance. When one wished to recall the things to consciousness, all that was necessary was to visualize the mental building and then take an imaginary trip from room to room, calling off the various things as they had been placed. The Greeks thought very highly of this plan, and many variations of it were employed. Cicero said: "By those who would improve the memory, certain places must be fixed upon, and of those things which they desire to keep in memory symbols must be conceived in the mind and ranged, as it were, in those places; thus, the order of places would preserve the order of things, and the symbols of the things would denote the things themselves; so that we should use the places as waxen tablets and the symbols as letters." Quintillian advises students to "fix in their minds places of

the greatest possible extent, diversified by considerable variety, such as a large house, for example, divided into many apartments. Whatever is remarkable in it is carefully impressed on the mind, so that the thought may run over every part of it without hesitation or delay… Places we must have, either fancied or selected, and images or symbols which we may invent at pleasure. These symbols are marks by which we may distinguish the particulars which we have to get by heart."

Many modern systems have been erected upon the foundation of Simonides and in some of which cases students have been charged high prices "for the secret." The following outline given by Kay gives the "secret" of many a high priced system of this class: "Select a number of rooms, and divide the walls and floor of each, in imagination, into nine equal parts or squares, three in a row. On the front wall – that opposite the entrance – of the first room, are the units; on the right-hand wall the tens; on the left hand the twenties; on the fourth wall the thirties; and on the floor the forties. Numbers 10, 20, 30 and 40, each find a place on the roof above their respective walls, while 50 occupies the centre of the room. One room will thus furnish 50 places, and ten rooms as many as 500. Having fixed these clearly in the mind, so as to be able readily and at once to tell exactly the position of each place or number, it is then necessary to associate with each of them some familiar object (or symbol) so that the object being suggested its place may be instantly remembered, or when the place be before the mind its object may immediately spring up. When this has been done thoroughly, the objects can be run over in any order from beginning to end, or from end to beginning, or the place of any particular one can at once be given. All that is further necessary is to associate the ideas we wish to remember with the objects in the various places, by which means they are easily remembered, and can be gone over in any order. In this way one may learn to repeat several hundred disconnected words or ideas in any order after hearing them only once." We do not consider it necessary to argue in detail the fact that this system is artificial and cumbersome to a great degree. While the idea of "position" may be employed to some advantage in grouping together in the memory several associated facts, ideas, or words, still the idea of employing a process such as the above in the ordinary affairs of life is ridiculous, and any system based upon it has a value only as a curiosity, or a mental acrobatic feat.

Akin to the above is the idea underlying many other "systems," and "secret methods" – the idea of Contiguity, in which words are strung together by fanciful connecting links. Feinagle describes this underlying idea, or principle, as follows: "The recollection of them is assisted by associating some idea of relation between the two; and as we find by experience that whatever is ludicrous is calculated to make a strong impression on the mind, the more ridiculous the association is the better." The systems founded upon this idea may be employed to repeat a long string of disconnected words, and similar things, but have but little practical value, notwithstanding the high prices charged for them. They serve merely as curiosities, or methods of performing "tricks" to amuse one's friends. Dr. Kothe, a German teacher, about the middle of the nineteenth century founded this last school of memory training, his ideas serving as the foundation for many teachers of high-priced "systems" or "secret methods" since that time. The above description of Feinagle gives the key to the principle employed. The working of the principle is accomplished by the employment of "intermediates" or "correlatives" as they are called; for instance, the words "chimney" and "leaf" would be connected as follows: "*Chimney*– smoke – wood – tree —*Leaf*."

Then there are systems or methods based on the old principle of the "Figure Alphabet," in which one is taught to remember dates by associating them with letters or words. For instance, one of the teachers of this class of systems, wished his pupils to remember the year 1480 by the word "BiG RaT," the capitals representing the figures in the date. Comment is unnecessary!

The student will find that nearly all the "systems" or "secret methods" that are being offered for sale in "courses," often at a very high price, are merely variations, improvements upon, or combinations of the three forms of artificial methods named above. New changes are constantly being worked on these old plans; new tunes played on the same old instruments; new chimes sounded from the same old bells. And the result is ever the same, in these cases – disappointment and disgust. There

are a few natural systems on the market, nearly all of which contain information and instruction that makes them worth the price at which they are sold. As for the others – well, judge for yourself after purchasing them, if you so desire.

Regarding these artificial and fanciful systems, Kay says: "All such systems for the improvement of the memory belong to what we have considered the first or lowest form of it. They are for the most part based on light or foolish associations which have little foundation in nature, and are hence of little practical utility; and they do not tend to improve or strengthen the memory as a whole." Bacon says that these systems are "barren and useless," adding: "For immediately to repeat a multitude of names or words once repeated before, I esteem no more than rope-dancing, antic postures, and feats of activity; and, indeed, they are nearly the same things, the one being the abuse of the bodily as the other of the mental powers; and though they may cause admiration, they cannot be highly esteemed." And as another authority has said: "The systems of mnemonics as taught, are no better than crutches, useful to those who cannot walk, but impediments and hindrances to those who have the use of their limbs, and who only require to exercise them properly in order to have the full use of them."

In this work, there shall be no attempt to teach any of these "trick systems" that the student may perform for the amusement of his friends. Instead, there is only the desire to aid in developing the power to receive impressions, to register them upon the memory, and readily to reproduce them at will, naturally and easily. The lines of natural mental action will be followed throughout. The idea of this work is not to teach how one may perform "feats" of memory; but, instead, to instruct in the intelligent and practical use of the memory in the affairs of every-day life and work.

CHAPTER V
THE SUBCONSCIOUS RECORD-FILE

The old writers on the subject were wont to consider the memory as a separate faculty of the mind, but this idea disappeared before the advancing tide of knowledge which resulted in the acceptance of the conception now known as The New Psychology. This new conception recognizes the existence of a vast "out of consciousness" region of the mind, one phase of which is known as the subconscious mind, or the subconscious field of mental activities. In this field of mentation the activities of memory have their seat. A careful consideration of the subject brings the certainty that the entire work of the memory is performed in this subconscious region of the mind. Only when the subconscious record is represented to the conscious field, and recollection or remembrance results, does the memorized idea or impression emerge from the subconscious region. An understanding of this fact simplifies the entire subject of the memory, and enables us to perfect plans and methods whereby the memory may be developed, improved and trained, by means of the direction of the subconscious activities by the use of the conscious faculties and the will.

Hering says: "Memory is a faculty not only of our conscious states, but also, and much more so, of our unconscious ones." Kay says: "It is impossible to understand the true nature of memory, or how to train it aright, unless we have a clear conception of the fact that there is much in the mind of which we are unconscious… The highest form of memory, as of all the mental powers, is the unconscious – when what we wish to recall comes to us spontaneously, without any conscious thought or search for it. Frequently when we wish to recall something that has previously been in the mind we are unable to do so by any conscious effort of the will; but we turn the attention to something else, and after a time the desired information comes up spontaneously when we are not consciously thinking of it." Carpenter says: "There is the working of a mechanism beneath the consciousness which, when once set going, runs on of itself, and which is more likely to evolve the desired result when the conscious activity of the mind is exerted in a direction altogether different."

This subconscious region of the mind is the great record-file of everything we have ever experienced, thought or known. Everything is recorded there. The best authorities now generally agree that there is no such thing as an absolute forgetting of even the most minute impression, notwithstanding the fact that we may be unable to recollect or remember it, owing to its faintness, or lack of associated "indexing." It is held that everything is to be found in that subconscious index-file, if we can only manage to find its place. Kay says: "In like manner we believe that every impression or thought that has once been before consciousness remains ever afterward impressed upon the mind. It may never again come up before consciousness, but it will doubtless remain in that vast ultra-conscious region of the mind, unconsciously moulding and fashioning our subsequent thoughts and actions. It is only a small part of what exists in the mind that we are conscious of. There is always much that is known to be in the mind that exists in it unconsciously, and must be stored away somewhere. We may be able to recall it into consciousness when we wish to do so; but at other times the mind is unconscious of its existence. Further, every one's experience must tell him that there is much in his mind that he cannot always recall when he may wish to do so, – much that he can recover only after a labored search, or that he may search for in vain at the time, but which may occur to him afterwards when perhaps he is not thinking about it. Again, much that we probably would never be able to recall, or that would not recur to us under ordinary circumstances, we may remember to have had in the mind when it is mentioned to us by others. In such a case there must still have remained some trace or scintilla of it in the mind before we could recognize it as having been there before."

Morell says: "We have every reason to believe that mental power when once called forth follows the analogy of everything we see in the material universe in the fact of its perpetuity. Every single

effort of mind is a creation which can never go back again into nonentity. It may slumber in the depths of forgetfulness as light and heat slumber in the coal seams, but there it is, ready at the bidding of some appropriate stimulus to come again out of the darkness into the light of consciousness." Beattie says: "That which has been long forgotten, nay, that which we have often in vain endeavored to recollect, will sometimes without an effort of ours occur to us on a sudden, and, if I may so speak, of its own accord." Hamilton says: "The mind frequently contains whole systems of knowledge which, though in our normal state they may have faded into absolute oblivion, may in certain abnormal states, as madness, delirium, somnambulism, catalepsy, etc., flash out into luminous consciousness… For example, there are cases in which the extinct memory of whole languages were suddenly restored." Lecky says: "It is now fully established that a multitude of events which are so completely forgotten that no effort of the will can revive them, and that the statement of them calls up no reminiscences, may nevertheless be, so to speak, embedded in the memory, and may be reproduced with intense vividness under certain physical conditions."

In proof of the above, the authorities give many instances recorded in scientific annals. Coleridge relates the well-known case of the old woman who could neither read nor write, who when in the delirium of fever incessantly recited in very pompous tones long passages from the Latin, Greek and Hebrew, with a distinct enunciation and precise rendition. Notes of her ravings were taken down by shorthand, and caused much wonderment, until it was afterwards found that in her youth she had been employed as a servant in the house of a clergyman who was in the habit of walking up and down in his study reading aloud from his favorite classical and religious writers. In his books were found marked passages corresponding to the notes taken from the girl's ravings. Her subconscious memory had stored up the sounds of these passages heard in her early youth, but of which she had no recollection in her normal state. Beaufort, describing his sensations just before being rescued from drowning says: "Every incident of my former life seemed to glance across my recollection in a retrograde procession, not in mere outline, but in a picture filled with every minute and collateral feature, thus forming a panoramic view of my whole existence."

Kay truly observes: "By adopting the opinion that every thought or impression that had once been consciously before the mind is ever afterwards retained, we obtain light on many obscure mental phenomena; and especially do we draw from it the conclusion of the perfectibility of the memory to an almost unlimited extent. We cannot doubt that, could we penetrate to the lowest depths of our mental nature, we should there find traces of every impression we have received, every thought we have entertained, and every act we have done through our past life, each one making its influence felt in the way of building up our present knowledge, or in guiding our every-day actions; and if they persist in the mind, might it not be possible to recall most if not all of them into consciousness when we wished to do so, if our memories or powers of recollection were what they should be?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.