

Reading

The business man who goes along day by day without taking on any responsibilities or without tackling more difficult problems, finds he does not progress.

The person who gets into a rut and reads light, frothy literature all the time—the kind that is pleasing to the imagination, the kind that leaves no permanent impression—does not progress mentally.

Reading should be like eating; we should have the dessert as well as the substantials. It would be a great mistake to eat dessert alone, and it is certainly a mistake to read light, “entertaining” reading matter alone.

One of the prime requisites to a successful career is concentration of thought. Few things will dissipate thought as much as over-reading of newspapers.

The newspaper starts in with the first page, and by the time you have finished the last column on the last page you may have read a hundred articles, each one of these articles touching on a different line of thought. The daily newspaper contains climaxes of all kinds. Each article is a distinct change of thought. The daily newspaper gives us statistics, sorrow, laughter, crime, passion, death, lies, humor, and so on all through the gamut of the scale of human experience.

The man who craves the newspaper soon finds his line of thought frequently interrupted, side-stepped, drawn, cut off and dispersed.

Abundant evidences are at hand where the book reader acquired the daily newspaper habit and reads the daily to such an extent that it is impossible for him to read books thereafter. He has broken his continuity of thought, and when this happens book reading is impossible without a major retraining work.

Everyone should read two or three or more books at a time. One should be an interesting book, whether history, story or comedy, so long as it is well written and along lines that will hold one's interest. One should read one book after another of this sort as a dessert for his dinner, as it were, but along with it he should eat substantial food in the nature of substantial reading.

Do not read yourself to sleep at night over a light novel. Read your novel for an hour or so; then take up your old philosopher or scientist and read a page, or as much as necessary to find some thought clearly expressed so that it will be burned into your mind. That thought will remain and will be of service to you in years to come.

Read daily newspapers scantily. Read items concerning the business or course of study you are engaged in. Read the doings of Congress and the important events of the day. Go over the headlines, if need be, and eliminate all those shocking stories of crime and sordid influence. Do not let yourself get into the habit of reading the details of horrible

crimes and bad impulses and criminal acts. Skip over all the details of hangings and murders. They are weeds in the mind that choke up the beautiful flowers of thought.

Let it be said that the most important, most worthwhile reading material, which should be read daily, is the Bible. Start each day by reading God's Word first, and let that set the tone for your day that follows. There is no better mood-setting reading, no better advice, no better character training, no more worthwhile historical reading than the Bible.

Remember, everything you read depresses or elevates, and in proportion as you accustom yourself to read substantial matter so in proportion you will progress in this world, and have a flood of thoughts at your command when requirements come upon you calling for clean-cut expressions.

You will write better letters, you will converse better, you will enjoy social intercourse better if you read helpful reading matter from books and read newspapers very sparingly.

Argument

Not once in a thousand times will one man convince another in an argument, and the benefits you get if you do convince the other fellow will not compensate you for the waste of energy expended on the other nine hundred and ninety-nine times when your efforts failed.

You convince a man against his will and he is of the same opinion still.

There is a mighty lot of difference between argument and reason. You may accomplish more by dividing your case into one or two good reasons and telling your adversary that you will not argue the case, but you will let him look at these reasons, and when he takes it up logically you will have no fear of his conclusion, for truth must triumph.

While argument itself is a footless proposition, it is infinitely more so if your argument is with those of less mental calibre than your own, for by the law of compensation, in proportion as a man is ignorant, he makes up in perversity and lack of analytical ability.

Do not stoop to contend with those who have no standing, mentally, morally or physically. It is a waste of time, and your time is valuable.

If it is your purpose to change a man's opinion, do not try to do it by argument. Study the grounds carefully. State your points with preciseness, make careful analysis of every phase of the situation, take up the matter point by point. Start with your adversary by getting on ground on which you both will agree. Take up the points on which there can be little chance for differences of opinion. You will find the other person will get in the habit of agreeing with your propositions and that his antagonism weakens. State facts that are right and truthful, and are so plain that the truth will be self-evident.

After you have made several propositions on which the other person agrees with you wholly, then make a proposition that is ninety per cent his way and ten per cent your way. Gradually increase that ten per cent until you swing him around so that he sees the truth. He then imagines that he has made the deduction himself.

Remember, you can swing the biggest ship around by a steady, slow, gentle pull. On the other hand a sudden strain on the hawser would produce no effect whatever on the ship.

The man who wishes to convert another to his way of thinking must be a diplomat if he is successful. Do not get excited, keep cool and collected, be sure of your ground, be positive in your assertions, make the whole matter clear, and use good judgment, sound reason and clear logic.

Never resort to trickery to try and get someone else to believe your opinion; always be honest and true. Keep an open mind; be teachable and remember that it may be that the other person's opinion is the right one.

Speculation

You are playing against odds when you speculate.

The successful businessman some day wakes up to the fact that his bills are paid, and that he has surplus money. This surplus money should be used for investment purposes and not for speculation. Of course, it is hard to draw the line where investment leaves off and speculation begins.

When you speculate on margins you are like the fellow holding on a bear's tail as it runs around a tree—if you lose your hold the bear will get you.

The man who makes an investment, buying stocks or real estate and paying cash for them does not have to worry about the market. Prices may be up or down, but the man who has paid for what he has bought will sleep well.

You can't beat the speculation game. The only ones who make a success, and their success is ephemeral, are those who make speculation their whole occupation. The professional speculator is merely a high grade gambler, and he always winds up a loser.

Go to the Stock Exchange or the Board of Trade and you will see at either place a half a dozen old fellows hanging around. They are all men who have seen better days. A little inquiry and diplomacy on your part will bring forth the fact that these men were once prominent figures on 'Change.

When you have more money than you need in your business buy good farm lands out west, or good timber lands. No man ever bought good farm land or good timber land at the prevailing market price and lost money eventually. Of course, at different seasons of the year the price of land may go down a little temporarily, but the moment a good crop comes in, the price goes up again.

With good clear farm land or real estate you can always go to the nearest bank and borrow from sixty to seventy-five per cent of its value.

Real estate is the true basis of wealth, and if you want to play a sure game, buy land that produces things.

When you buy vacant property in a large city, it is mere speculation. The land does not bring in any remuneration, and you are simply betting that the prices will increase.

Every large city has abundant instances of vacant property that is not worth as much now as it was ten or twenty years ago. Real estate booms come in cycles. Prices go up and men get the fever and buy vacant property. The boom explodes, property goes down and you can't get your money back. The chances are you have bought the property on two or three years' time, and it certainly is paying for a white elephant when you are paying for land that is worth less than what it cost you. You cannot get out, however, because the

original payment has already been made, and your only hope is to save something on your investment.

Notwithstanding the fact that certain business sections and certain residence sections in any city steadily increase in price, yet the average real estate in the city increases by very slow percentage. The same amount of money, put out in mortgages, with the interest added and compounded, will develop wealth greater than the average vacant property investment, for where one lot soars up to a high price there are a hundred that don't increase at all, and the picking out of the lot that is going to increase in value is as hard as picking out the horse that is going to win the race. It is because the vacant city property has only speculative value that the business man should not touch it.

Buy farm property that you can rent. It will bring you interest on your money right along, and the tendency of farm land is and always has been steadily forward.

Mr. Yerkes, of Chicago, was a speculator who made millions in the street-car system. He was thoroughly familiar with Hydraulics, and he soaked the stocks as full of water as possible and then unloaded on the investors who speculated in street-car stocks. These speculators are now holding the bag. When Mr. Yerkes closed out his holdings in Chicago he granted an interview, and one truth he uttered in that interview has ever been remembered by the writer. It is so valuable an expression coming from such a successful speculator that we are going to give it to you. It is as follows: "I have never known a business man to successfully speculate in grains or stocks for two years."

The business man who is watching the ticker or calling up the Stock Exchange every day, who takes little flyers, is skating on mighty thin ice.

When you buy farms you are exchanging your money for the most certain thing in the world, for the basis of all wealth is land, and money simply represents the things which come out of the land.

The stock broker may not like this chapter because the more speculation the more he benefits. He gets a percentage every time a man buys and every time a man sells. He plays a sure thing.

Don't Speculate. Invest.

Elimination

One of the greatest brain savers is elimination. Every man should try to operate along lines of the least resistance, eliminate the deterrent influences and all things that fret him. Do not look for trouble. Do not concern yourself too much over disagreeable things over which you have no control.

Do not build up an intricate system in your business. Have simplicity as your ideal. Eliminate all useless moves. If you have disturbing influences in your institution, such as an employee who is continually causing friction, eliminate that employee. The man who causes friction is pulling back on the forward impulses of your business, and he is holding back one or more men who are trying to help you forward.

Get rid of useless things that take your time or cause you worry.

Remember that as you grow successful people will come to you under various excuses to get your aid financially or morally. They want you to go into new companies. The officers of the Club to which you belong will ask you to be a director. You will be invited to dinners, asked to speak, asked to do a thousand and one things, and in proportion as you accede to these demands you will find the demands increasing until finally you have little time to attend to your own affairs or to attend to your family.

Have as your center idea—elimination. Everything that takes your time from your business or your family is an extra tax on your strength.

Eliminate every habit that holds you back, every practice that unfits you for progress, every person who depresses you, every move that is not necessary, every footless idea that crowds your brain.

Charlotte Mason, an educator who lived in England at the turn of the 20th century, called these things “twaddle.” They are time suckers, energy suckers, and keep you from employing your time to your best advantage by making you think you don’t have enough time to do what is needed because you have wasted your time on things that are not profitable.

These are the things to eliminate.