

Fernando Pessoa

## PERSONAL NOTES

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I have outgrown the habit of reading. I no longer read anything except occasional newspapers, light literature and casual books technical to any matter I may be studying and in which simple reasoning may be insufficient.

The definite type of literature I have almost dropped. I could read it for learning or for pleasure. But I have nothing to learn, and the pleasure to be drawn from books is of a type that can with profit be substituted by that which the contact with nature and the observation of life can directly give me.

I am now in full possession of the fundamental laws of literary art. Shakespeare can no longer teach me to be subtle, nor Milton to be complete. My intellect has attained a pliancy and a reach that enable me to assume any emotion I desire and enter at will into any state of mind. For that which it is ever an effort and an anguish to strive for, completeness, no book at all can be an aid.

This does not mean that I have shaken off the tyranny of the literary art. I have but assumed it only under submission to myself.

I have one book ever by me — *Pickwick Papers*. I have read Mr. W. W. Jacobs' books several times over. The decay of the detective story has closed for ever one door I had into modern writing.

I have ceased to be interested in merely clever people — Wells, Chesterton, Shaw. The ideas these people have are such as occur to many non-writers; the construction of their works is wholly a negative quantity.

There was a time when I read only for the use of reading. I now have understood that there are very few useful books, even in such technical matters as I can be interested in.

Sociology is wholesale [ . . . ]; who can stand this scholasticism in the Byzantium of today?

All my books are books of reference. I read Shakespeare only in relation to the «*Shakespeare Problem*»: the rest I know already.

I have found out that reading is a slavish sort of dreaming. If I must dream,  
why not my own dreams?

[...]

1910?

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