

■ How a person can achieve real success in life.

## MY CONQUEST OF SCARECROWS

I am one of those heirs who inherited a fortune after years of poverty and reckless living. This inheritance came as a result of a death I had no cause to regret. The man who bequeathed riches to me was my former self. He died of selfishness, pessimism, fear, worry, vain regrets, envy. But this old Vash Young wasn't wholly bad, for he left me a great store of courage, contentment, patience and freedom from harmful appetites. I took this inheritance out into business and it has made me successful beyond my hopes.

As the old Vash Young I was an advertising salesman in New York, where, despite turmoil and sourness inside me, I managed to make a living while failing to make a life. I hadn't the faintest idea of how happiness was to be achieved. Those were drinking, drifting days. Once I sank so low that I planned to have a look at

the next life, in the belief that it could not be worse than this one.

But one day this idea popped into my mind:

"Suppose you owned a factory. Would you manufacture in it only stuff you do not need? Would you deliberately operate it in such a way to make it harmful to you, the owner? Well, you do own a factory, a thought factory. You are owner, superintendent, night watchman. Nothing can come out of it except the products you yourself design.

"A thought factory! That's what you have inside you," I said to myself, "and you have turned it into a junk factory. Take a look at your products. Fear, worry, impatience, anger, doubt. Your factory is a menace to yourself and a nuisance to others."

Obviously! Why hadn't I seen that before? My next step was to make a list of

qualities that seemed ever-enduring: Love, Courage, Cheerfulness, Activity, Compassion, Friendliness, Generosity, Tolerance, Justice, Nine magic words! Night after night I sat alone with these words, fixing them in my consciousness, deciding what do with them. *Reflect them in my conduct*, that's what I would do. They are all positive. They are dominant. They are stronger than their opposites. Live these words! That was the way out of the muck in which I had been groping.

First of all I decided I must do something to vanquish fear. All my life I had been afraid. The thing I feared most was loss of my job. I decided to call the bluff of this great bully, fear. I quit my job with nothing saved. Deliberately I brought about the condition I most feared.

There is no finer sensation in life than that which comes with victory over one's self. The morning after I found myself jobless, with less than \$100 and with a wife and daughter trusting me to care for them, I had not one feeling of fear — only elation, ro-

mance, joy at a new start in a new world.

I started from scratch, as an insurance salesman, the most highly competitive of occupations. I had to stop thinking about myself, forget the past, leave the future to care for itself and concentrate on today. Doubts tried to creep into my mind, but every time a negative thought came I thrust it out of my consciousness and thought of something worth while. This is a habit any one can acquire. Try it. At first the unwholesome thoughts will struggle, but they are not strong enough to win.

For a time my household was hard up, but we were happier than we had ever been before, for we were fighting and winning a series of battles. One of my first fights was to cut out all habits which seemed to be harmful. I found that liquor, coffee, tea and tobacco all could be dispensed with, so within the space of a single day I cut these things out of my life. It wasn't easy. It took reason and understanding to win the day. Dominion over

these habits was a great victory for me. A great victory almost always makes subsequent victories easy.

A second battle was to get rid of self-centeredness. For there came a time when our condition was desperate, and I wavered and had to check myself sharply. "When you are keenly conscious of your own needs, do something for somebody else!" I demanded. So every Sunday for the next year I went to a hospital on the East Side of New York and sang for the crippled children there. Before that year was over, I had money. By refusing to put money first I had hit on a profitable program.

A third fight was my determination never to undertake any business venture if my happiness would be in the least disturbed in case it failed. When my dominion over disappointment was entrenched, I still had a bad temper to lick. A trivial adventure did that and was worth millions to me in happiness. After working very late one night, I dived into the subway, dog tired, eager to be in bed. The guard of a waiting train

slammed the door in my face. There would not be another for 15 minutes. I felt hot anger sweep over me. I started to yell at the guard, but then I stopped. Why burn up what little energy I had left? Looking around, I saw a woman leaving the station with a baby and a suitcase. I asked if I could help her, took her suitcase, hailed a taxicab, drove her to her destination. Then I started home, two hours after I had missed the subway train. My fatigue was gone and I was very happy. I had put myself through a course of discipline by doing something for somebody else.

The subject of fear is a favorite of mine. Fear is the greatest enemy of most persons. Every friend I have has lost something because of fear. Read biographies and you encounter frequent accounts of combats with fear, for men about whom biographies are written usually are those who overcome this emotion. Few persons go through life without at least one big chance. The fact that so many do not grasp it is due more often to fear than to any other

thing. "Never strike a sail to fear," says Emerson, and every man who has occupied a commanding position has said the same.

No man has ever had a harder fight against fear than I had. There is not a doubt nor a dread nor a sick sensation. I have not suffered. Most people are afraid of something, but I was afraid of almost everything, including mice, thunderstorms, teachers, physical encounters. In my first days as a salesman I often became so nauseated as I contemplated my next calls that I lost my food in the gutter. Literally that is true. Not once, but time after time, due always to fear. I have prayed — how I have prayed! — that my prospects would be out of the office when I got there.

But one day I stopped and spoke to myself. "You miserable coward!" I said. "You set out to do a job and you crawl out on it. Go and see those men!" And I called on every one of the men I had dreaded to call on, I had delightful talks with some of them and went home happy.

When I was a boy farmers used scarecrows in their fields. Timid birds, seeing the flapping of an old coat on crossed sticks, would fly away, but now and then a wiser bird would come down and enjoy a feast, using the scarecrow as a perch. Since I became tired of being a fool, it has occurred to me time and again that the fears of life are nothing more than scarecrows. Realization of this is the heart of the fortune I inherited.

This inheritance, as I have said, requires that I do everything possible for my fellow humans. I try. I have made it a rule these past ten successful years to devote less than half of my time to my own affairs. A considerable part of my happiness comes from these extra-official duties. I give each Saturday to people who are in trouble. The fortune which I share with people who come to me on "Trouble Day" is really my religion. This is what I think religion is:

It is saying gratefully in the morning, "Thank you, God, for what I have," instead of, "Please give me a lot more."

It is trying to make somebody happier for the day before leaving home.

It is pausing long enough in the morning to telephone to some friend who may need a word of encouragement. In doing this you develop the habit of thinking more of others than of yourself. The results will surprise you. As an insurance salesman, for instance, my plans differ radically from the standard plan of selling. I always submit a policy smaller than I think the man should take out, and let him raise it. That makes him feel comfortably. My idea always is to make a man on whom I call glad that I came. This I do as a matter of ethics. It is just a fine break of life that in some cases business follows in the wake of considerate conduct.

Again, religion to me is planning for the day more constructive work than we can possibly do. It is the exercise of constant dominion over harmful emotions and false appetites. It is telling

other people of things they have done which merit praise. It is development of the "giving" habit instead of the "getting" habit.

Finally, religion to me is living now, on this earth, as nearly as possible the life we imagine the next one to be. Selfishness, pride, greed, envy, fear, worry, hate and anger undoubtedly do not exist in the heavenly state. Heaven is unquestionably made up of such positive qualities as love, courage, cheerfulness, generosity. We can be in Heaven right here on earth by living these qualities. Life becomes almost automatic once you have tapped their sources of strength. It is silly for a poor mortal to buck the stream of life. I have sought out its current and have sought to flow with it. That stream is impelled by those positive qualities, and it is the fortune they have brought me that I'd like to share with all. — *By Vash Young, condensed from "A Fortune to Share"*.