

HOW

I

ELIMINATED FEAR

by

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WHEN I was a boy I was full of fear; afraid of everything. I dreaded the dark; was afraid of ghosts, hobgoblins, churchyards and graves. Being a sickly child, I was afraid of other boys; their rude ways and rough treatment scared me away from them, hence I had no boy companions none but girls.

When I began to read miscellaneous stories, I learned of vampires, giant spiders, and the like, and they gave me many hours of terror for years. Physically I was afraid of high places, of horses, cows, drunken men, and I never saw an animal killed until I was a man grown without fainting when the blood began to flow.

The sight of a knife, a razor, or a revolver turned me cold and sent the shivers up and down my spine, and I frankly confess I believe that is one reason why I have never shaved. When religious aspirations began to stir my inmost being, and Methodist theology was opened up in a measure to my understanding, I became dreadfully afraid of evil, of the devil, and, strange to say or is it strange? -of God. The thought of death was terrible to me. It was the gateway to punishment for an ill-spent life. I had that awful picture ever before me of "the lake burning forever with fire and brimstone," where "the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever," varied with the pleasant contemplation of being among those who "hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and say to the mountains, and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand it." I was constantly examining myself to find out whether there was any chance for my name not being "blotted out of the book of life."

When I began "to enter society" I was afraid of my manners. I was always humiliated by our poverty. I was afraid my clothes, my collars, my cuffs, were not "the correct thing," yet I knew it was hopeless to try to change these, for I was afraid of the battle of life and knew I never could win enough money in it to secure any of the rewards given to the brave. Indeed, so lamentable was my mental condition of servitude to fear that I had no ambitions, as most boys had. I never once looked forward to attaining any high position; never once had visions of myself honored and flattered by my fellows, and all the rest of it; never once saw myself a rich man, doing what other rich men did.

I would not have my readers think I am exaggerating my fearful condition. I am speaking the truth in strict soberness. I lived a very somber life as a boy. There was little or no sunshine in it. I was ever in a land of clouds. Day and night I was afraid, and as I now look back I wonder that I ever came out into the joy and sunlight, the blessedness and happiness of living.

When it was I began to work hard I really cannot remember, but I know I must have begun to do so early. I do not mean physically, for I have never been an athlete, and my physical labors did not begin until I was climbing mountains, riding down canyon trails, and the like, after I came to this country. The hardest work I ever did in my life until I came to the United States was to ride a bicycle. Intellectually, however, I was alert, and must have worked hard, though at the time I did not realize it.

But it was that hard work that, ultimately, was to be my salvation from fear. As I have read New Thought literature I have seen much of the need for making affirmations. The helpfulness of this method is constantly set forth. The teachers say : Let your affirmations be clear, strong, many, and positive.

Personally I know nothing of this method of attaining. I do not criticise it, reject it, refuse it. I know simply nothing of it. My mental make-up has seemed to require different treatment, and I can truthfully state that with me power, health, whatever I have sought has come with slow, plodding, diligent work, and the affirmation has come after - not before the power. In other words, when I was sick and ailing, I did not affirm:

“I am strength, I am health!”

I knew nothing of that method of attaining what I desired. I began to eat carefully, bathe, breathe deeply, exercise and the like, and as the years went by I slowly realized very slowly, yet surely my heart's desire for health, and then I was able to affirm: “I am health.”

When I was so fearful I did not affirm: “I have no fear. There is no fear in me. I will walk, live, talk, fearless and unafraid,” for I knew I was afraid, I was often almost paralyzed with terror, and I had not learned to differentiate between the real “I” of me, and the cowardly body of me that was subject to all these craven feelings. But I did resolutely strive to overcome my fears by prayer, and work mental and physical.

Now, as I look back, I can see that it was the result of my reading, the suggestions of good men and women, the promptings of my own spirit, the inspirations of the Holy Spirit of the Everywhere, that ultimately led me to freedom from fear. And I believe I owe more to the poems the thought of Robert Browning than to all else combined.

When I began to read him, the dark cloud of Pauline theology began to dissipate. I was thrilled, uplifted, inspired by the newer, larger, more noble conceptions. Hitherto I had been afraid of God, in spite of all that my Methodist theology taught me of His goodness. I knew He was good at least I supposed so yet He was still the “judge of all the earth.” He was keeping tab on me all the time, and every “sin” I committed was written down in the book of remembrance, and, sensitive youngster, I sinned a great deal in my own estimation. In other words, the being a Pauline theology had made me morbidly self-conscious. I was on the stool of repentance all the time. Had I lived in medieval times I should have been a monk, wearing sackcloth and putting ashes on my head all the time mortifying the flesh in order that the spirit might live.

Now, however, Browning opened up a new world of life, hope, and joy to me. He showed me God as I had always felt He ought to be, but as I never had dared assert He was. He did the affirming for me, and I began to dare to affirm with him. Never shall I forget the thrill that went through my whole being when I read in Abt Vogler:

“Doubt not that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands!” Of course if God expands my heart to desires for good, He must intend that it shall be filled, or He is a cruel monster thus to mock me. Then in Rabbi Ben Ezra I read:

“Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be,

The last of life, for which the first was made:

Our times are in His hand Who saith: “A whole I planned, Youth shows but half ; trust God: see all nor be afraid.”

Read it again carefully so that you get the full beauty and joy of the thought that came to me. God planned my life, or I should not have come into being. He planned. Then if He planned, He must have planned something perfect. If it was imperfect, or seemed imperfect, the fault could not be in Him.

Where was it? I didn't know, but from that time on I resolved I would believe that my life was planned by the All Creator to be a perfect life. And neither man, devil, nor myself could hinder God in the accomplishment of His purpose. Then, later on in the same poem, I came to this stanza:

“He fixed thee mid this dance,

Of plastic circumstance, This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest: Machinery just meant To give thy Soul its bent, Try thee, and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.”

What? God fixed me in these apparently adverse circumstances? In this poverty, fear, ill-health, and other evils? And it was all done with a purpose? Then what a consummate fool I was to kick against the purpose of God! Why not learn the lesson? Why not conform myself to the Divine plan, and welcome the poverty, the ill-health, the fear, the everything, provided I had the warming assurance in my inmost Soul that out of it all God was preparing the way that the motive for it all was my good, my perfect health, happiness, freedom from fear, my serenity, peace, joy.

From that moment I began to improve. I began to rise to have confidence, to say to my fears, Begone! I took on a new lease of life the first real joy-lease I had had. I held my head up. I was the King's son! I had the Eternal Power behind me. I mightily near became a fatalist, in that I felt, as I now feel, that if whatever comes is planned by the Divine, ill-health, failure, taxes, fears, even death itself these are the very best things that can come, so let them come! I'm ready for them, will joyously welcome them, for I know, now, that these are only the disciplinary preparations I need for the larger, fuller, surer, blessed life that I know is mine. What room then for fear? And can you not see how that my affirmations have come after my experiences, rather than before?

Afraid? Now? I am afraid neither of God, man nor devil! Why should I be of God, who is the loving All Father who planned everything for my good? And as far as being afraid of man is concerned; what man is there that is more than a man? I am a man among men, therefore neither president, king, kaiser nor emperor can make me afraid. None of them can do more than imprison, hurt, kill the body, and what does that amount to? They never can touch the “me,” the inner self, the “I,” that is of God, under His protection, and that will go back to Him. So I now go through life with my head held aloft, fearless and unafraid, for, as far as the old devil of my Methodistic days is concerned, I just tell him to go to hell, where he belongs, and attend to his own business; I and mine are no concern of his.

As soon as these blessed assurances took full possession of me there came the belief that I ought to be free from the ill-health that so long had cursed me. God was a God of health, not of disease. The world was full of health. It was mine to call upon. I resolved I would do so. For years I had felt the hopelessness of my own case. I had seen the terror the world felt of disease: the bondage most people were in to the doctors, medicines and the drugstore. I came to the conclusion that, fundamentally as a matter of principle, of right, of justice, of God's planning, this was all wrong; must be wrong, or there was no God. As I was assured there was a loving power in the Universe, I determined to break loose from this incubus of fear of disease. I began to call upon the powers of the Universe. I breathed deeply as I walked, and allowed sun, air, rain and fog to caress my whole body. I sought to be as near “natural” as I could; took pattern from the Indians; went to bed early, got up early, ate little, ate simply, bathed often and soothingly, and worked hard.

For I had begun to gain insight into the greatest lesson I think I have ever learned, viz., that the natural way, God's way, to get more of anything is to use what you have.

As I got health I worked harder, in what I conceived to be work that would benefit mankind. I resolved that I could easier starve to death than do work that would injure mankind. I could never be a winemaker, wine-seller, beer-seller, whisky-seller, cigar-maker, tobacconist, even a pill-maker or druggist. I must do something for a living that commended itself to my judgment and conscience as beneficial to mankind, and whatever it was, I would work at it for all I was worth.

Thus I grew stronger yearly until now, as I near the sixtieth milestone, I am younger in feeling than I was at twenty-five; I am able to do ten times the work I did then and I do it easily. Three days ago I met a prominent physician of the city where I am now working. He did not know me, though he said we had been introduced to each other at a convention, and that was why he presumed to stop me, but he wished to tell me that I was the most healthy-looking and acting man he knew. I walked with the springiness of youth; my face and whole body radiated perfect health, and he was sure I should live to be over a hundred. I told him I expected to make it 150 years, and he seriously remarked as I passed on, "There's nothing to hinder! I should not be surprised but that you'd do it!"

And I confidently expect to. Anyhow, I'm having a great deal of fun and joy in planning my work for the next ninety years, and living now as if I had all that time at my disposal. May I here state what is my habitual mode of thought in regard to the things men and women generally are afraid of in matters of health?

If I am seated in a draft and my friends say, "You'll take cold," my invariable reply is, "I'll stay then, for I'd rather take cold and die than go back to the old bondage of fear." If I fear I mustn't eat anything, if it is mere fear that stands in the way, I immediately eat the forbidden thing and kill the fear. If I fear, or other people try to make me fear, anything, I deliberately do that thing. I flaunt fear in the face, I challenge him, provoke him, dare him, defy him, until now, instead of being something to be afraid of, he comes slinking around like a trodden-down hobo, begging me not to kill him off entirely, as he doesn't want to be banished entirely from the earth.

For a time I overworked indoors, when I was longing to get out-of-doors. I brought on a well-defined, apparently chronic case of asthma. My friends became afraid for me.

As soon as I felt their fear and as long as I felt it I resolutely determined to let the asthma kill me before I would yield fear of it. Then, when I was ready, I broke loose from my work, went and fasted fifteen days, then, a little later, took off all my clothes and got into the air and sun for two weeks, took nothing but milk, and then went off into the wildest part of our United States, among the Navajo Indians, slept out with few covers many nights when the temperature was below zero, ate simply, and came back better than I had been for years.

Now and then I am urged by the exigencies of work to do things that are not good for me, but I go ahead, trusting in the All Health for health. When I seemed to fail as I did a couple of months ago, when I had a severe attack of grippe that took hold of my bronchial tubes, I went where I could take off my clothes and get the air and sun on my body, fasted for four days, lived on nothing but milk the next ten days, and then went and delivered seven lectures a day to show that I was convalescing.

I am now lecturing in a hall capable of seating crowded a hundred and fifty people. It has little ventilation. My audiences often run up to 250 and even 300, and one lecture follows another sometimes for four consecutive hours. I ought to get sick, according to all the accepted ideas, but I feel that if, in the discharge of my duty, under adverse conditions, I cannot call for the extra help the Universe of Love is full of, what is the use of there being such a universe? So I go on, am content, happy, and except for the experience related above am vulgarly healthful and radiantly happy in my work and life. But there were other fears I had to overcome. I believe I was, and am, naturally, a coward. I used to be afraid of a horse running away with me; of drowning when I went in swimming; starving to death if I got lost. Soon after I began my exploring life in the wilds of our West I made up my mind to kill all these fears, I determined to use all the caution my brain could suggest, all the foresight, knowledge, and experience of others as well as myself, and then go fearlessly and bravely to my work.

For instance, I wanted to explore the runaway Colorado River, when it broke loose and made the Salton Sea. No one knew where it went and how it reached the Salton. In a lecture I announced I was going to follow it and find where it went. Two or three adventurous souls asked if they might go along. A party was made up of seven. I engaged two Indians to go and aid us. The engineers who were spending hundreds of thousands, that later were to become millions of dollars, in curbing the runaway river and get it back to its natural courses, told us we could never get through the country. They had sent expert men, men familiar with the country, with their best Indians, and they all had given it up.

They even called upon these men to give me their experiences. One said it was "hell boiled down." Another said the river ran out into a sandy desert, seeped through into some rocky channel and thus worked its way to the Salton Sea, and there were other dreadful things conjured up, as that we should get stranded in the midst of quicksands and be unable to get out, etc., etc. Now this is what I wish to make clear. The more these people sought to dissuade me, the more scared I got. But I was determined to kill my fear. I resolved to go ahead, for I knew I had rather die trying than back out to live and be afraid, and forever after have the feeling that I had not dared.

We started. We found all the warnings were true. It was "hell boiled down." For fifteen days and nights we were constantly wet through. One night I slept in my boat, which sank in quicksand nearly up to the gunwale, opened its seams and let in water, so that when I awoke I was in water up to the chin. Yet so weary was I that I slept through it.

At the end of the fifteen days five of the seven and one of the Indians had had enough, and as an opportunity arose to leave the party they went. Two of us and one Indian went on to such adventures as few would care to repeat, but that give me a thrill of joyful triumph as I recall. I won! I killed the fear! I have been the better man for it ever since.

A few years ago an eastern editor, having read of some of my adventures, asked me to tell of the times I had "faced Death," and write out the story of each experience. That led me to count them up, and I found I had sat face to face with Death twenty-seven different times; three times by near drowning; once by being thrown down a twenty-five foot precipice from the back of a runaway mule; once by falling when alone and where no one could ever have found me down a precipice, where I lay, the whole of my lower body paralyzed for several hours; thrice for want of water; once by being caught in quicksands; once from attack of a panther; once from the bite of a rattlesnake; once in a railway collision; three times from guns in the hands of drunken, infuriated men; once by a frenzied and angered man in one of my audiences: once by having a horse jump on to me and break one of my ribs; another time by being thrown from the back of an unbroken horse; again through a severe operation I was compelled to undergo as the result of being injured by a bucking horse, etc., etc.

So that now the Arch Fear, Death himself, literally has no terrors for me. I laugh at him, defy him, dare him to touch me for I know, deep down in my inner consciousness, that there is no such thing as Death. The Universe is not controlled by Death; it is under the benign forces of Life, and I AM, and I always shall be I AM, for there, is no time, only the Eternal Now.

Another fear, however, I had to learn to master. When I was a Methodist preacher I was afraid of offending people, and especially those who paid my poor and meager salary. I had a family. Money was essential. What fights I had when threats came as they did that I must quit preaching on this, that, or the other line, or so and so would cut out his subscription! But, thank God, there was a streak of stubborn conscience in me that refused to be silent at such times, and I dared the loss of my salary and said my say. I am free to confess one of the most pitiable things in our civilization to me today is this moral fear, this cowardice that is engendered lest one lose his job. The truckling subservience of employees to employers; the fear of business men offending their patrons; the pandering, yielding of the professional men to the rudenesses, vulgarities, indignities, insults even, of those who employ them, are a sad sight to me. I have had my share of the temptations, but am doing my best to kill every fear of this kind.

Then there came another development of fearlessness. I had ever been afraid to reach out and do things that required energy, strength, money, and long life to accomplish. I had been deterred by the fear that I had not the strength, and could never raise the money, and could not live long enough to accomplish anything. But now new ideas of fearlessness took the place of these thoughts of dread. Why should I be afraid? Life was eternal, and was the gift of God. If I wanted to live for God and mankind I had the right to call upon the inexhaustible resources of God. In Browning's Abt Vogler I had learned that when God expanded my heart in a desire for good I could absolutely rest assured that sometime, somewhere, somehow, that desire would be fulfilled.

There came with this assurance another equally satisfying, and that was that there was, with those who knew, loved and trusted God, "no more near nor far" no time it was all one Eternal Now. Therefore I began to plan large things. I started to write books, that ten years before no one on earth

ever could have convinced me I could accomplish. I should not live long enough! I did not know enough! I had never been educated in the schools, and was incompetent; But first one book, then another, came from my pen, and now I have about twenty-five works that are recognized as standards to my credit, four others half written, two more urgently ordered, and a contract with one publisher for a book a year for the next twenty years.

Then I decided to become a rancher. I bought 280 acres of land from a railroad on a ten-year contract. To pay for it would require far more each year for ten years than I had ever earned in any year in my life. But I had the confidence of my new assurance.

God was in His heaven. He had inspired me to this step. He would see that it worked out all right. Hence I have gone ahead with confidence. And, without any wire-pulling on my own part, I have been kept so busy at the work I delight in, and at such fair pay, that my income has more than taken care of the first four of my yearly payments. And, in addition to making these payments, I have paid off in full on eighty of the 280 acres, and now have a deed for them; I have paid \$1500 for an artesian well; \$200 for a stable; \$600 for a house; \$100 for fencing; \$1000 for mules, horses, cows, etc.; have cleared and planted about a hundred of the 280 acres, and am ready next year to plant out another 100 in a crop that will prove profitable.

But and here I suppose I may run counter to the ideas of many of my New Thought friends "suppose," they say, "you were to fail in this. Your health were to break down; you were unable to keep up your payments; you were to lose the land?" Ah! Can you not see in what I have written above, the answer to these questions? I am a child of the King of Wisdom and Love. He has planned my life.

He plans ever wisely and well. If I am to lose I will lose joyfully, gladly, as well as bravely, for I can never lose. "I" am the important thing; the land and my plans are nothing but temporary and insignificant, compared with myself. So I have no fear none whatever. Love has overcome fear; I am fearless and unafraid, because I love and am beloved of the Supreme Power of the Universe.

End

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