

The Torch

*Experience is not what happens to a person;
it is what a person does with what happens to them.*

Aldous Huxley

In this chapter we'll take a short break from financial matters and remember Orison Swett Marden. While we are doing so, don't forget to think about the quote by Huxley at the top of this page. All those quotes are there for a reason.

According to *Success* magazine, Marden was born in 1850 in poor circumstances in the backwoods of New Hampshire in the U.S. and lost both his parents before he was seven. He had several foster families and was put to work at an early age. He found "the labour hard, the families often abusive—and he was alone". Luckily in an attic in one of the farms he found a book, *Self-Help* by Samuel Smiles, that changed his life. Its theme was that anybody could rise above their circumstances and achieve whatever they set their mind to if they could exercise unwavering persistence and a positive mental attitude.

Samuel Smiles was a doctor and a newspaper editor who lived in the English city of Leeds. Also in that city lived a group of young men who were keen to learn and improve their lives despite their poverty. To do this they formed a kind of a self-help society and met at least once a week to exchange ideas and pass on knowledge to one another. They asked Samuel Smiles to come to some of their meetings and he began collecting rags to riches stories to inspire them.

The famous railway engineer George Stephenson convinced Smiles to collate these stories into the book, *Self-Help*, which was published in 1859 and had sold over a quarter of a million copies by 1900. Smiles' work so impressed the Queen of Italy that she authorised an Italian version and later wrote to Smiles, "You have done more to make Italy than Cavour or Garibaldi. Come and see."

Self-Help certainly worked on Marden for, shortly after reading it, the 17-year-old youth ran away to get an education. He found the going tough at first and worked at several odd jobs at the same time to help pay his way. He rose from waiting on tables to managing hotels and—by the application of Smiles' principles—managed to get through the Boston University Law School and the Harvard Medical School simultaneously. By the age of 32 he owned several hotels and was using all his spare time to collect inspirational stories with the aim of helping "strugglers trying to be somebody and do something

in the world". Obviously he was keen to pass on the knowledge he had gained from Smiles.

In 1890 a series of disasters struck. A fire burned down one of his hotels and destroyed all his writing notes, while a smallpox epidemic and a drought combined to wreak havoc in the community and decimate the value of the rest of his property. Many would have given up, but for Marden it was the spur that goaded him to greater heights. He immediately began his first novel, *Pushing to the Front*, which was such a hit that it provided him with the inspiration to start *Success* magazine as well.

On every page Marden's *Success* magazine proclaimed, "Everybody can triumph over fear and adversity and create their own opportunities" and Marden's writings and his magazine were highly influential in helping many Americans recover from the 1893 Depression. He showed that it was possible for everybody to "form a vision, serve his fellow man and work persistently for his goals".

The great J.C. Penney (who founded the U.S. retail chain) said: "The best thing, the most important thing... that influenced and dominated my whole career... was discovering the writings of Dr Orison Swett Marden...he aroused and stimulated my ambition, my determination and gave me the willpower to banish all thought of failure from my mind."

Marden was one of the first to publicly recognise the abilities of women. In the December 1897 edition of *Success* magazine he wrote: "The phenomenal elevation of women during the last quarter of a century is adding a new force to our civilisation." He then recounted the story of legal secretary Rita Wildwood who left her job after reading his writings and became the richest female coffee planter in Hawaii within two years.

In 1907 he took pleasure in publicising the rise of typist Mary Orr to the board of Remington. Her secret? Become indispensable. She made herself so valuable that the Remington people had no alternative but to make her a member of their board of directors.

Marden's writings were the inspiration for the great work of Napoleon Hill who became a reporter for *Success*. In 1908, when Hill was interviewing the legendary industrialist Andrew Carnegie, Carnegie offered to introduce him to the greatest men in the

country provided Hill would spend the next 20 years compiling their secrets of success. The conditions were that Hill had to make the decision within 60 seconds and take no pay for the job. Hill took up the challenge and, while doing his research, kept himself for those next 20 years by selling and running training courses.

He interviewed over 500 people including Woolworth, Ford, Theodore Roosevelt and Edison and published his findings in a huge book, *Law of Success*, which became a world best seller in 1928. Hill took over *Success* magazine in 1931 after Marden's death, and then refined and condensed his success principles in *Think and Grow Rich*, which was first released in 1937. Since the first edition of *Making Money Made Simple* was released mentioning Hill's book, sales for *Think and Grow Rich* have grown from 14 million to over 30 million copies in 2007 (and it's still selling fast!).

In 1937 insurance man W. Clement Stone was in trouble. His sales force had shrunk from 1000 to 135 and he was deeply in debt. He stumbled across the just released *Think and Grow Rich*, which so inspired him that he turned his company around in a matter of months and made a fortune. It became compulsory reading for all his salespeople.

Hill and Stone met in 1952 and at their first meeting formed a plan to publicise Hill's 17 success principles through courses, speeches and books. In 1960 they jointly wrote *Success through a Positive Mental Attitude*, which has transformed the lives of many of its readers and saved at least two people I know from suicide. In the last 40 years they have been followed by such great inspirational writers as Norman Vincent Peale, Og Mandino, Denis Waitley, Wayne Dyer and Steven Covey.

Notice the common thread in all this:

- There are certain principles that will help us succeed in life or cope with its inevitable problems.
- These principles have been known for hundreds of years, but most individuals go through their lives without ever encountering them.
- There are people keen to accept the responsibility of passing them on.
- These principles change lives.

In the introduction to this book I mentioned that the discovery of the book *Think and Grow Rich* was a turning point in my life. I made a vow then to promulgate the principles espoused in that book because I believed everybody should have the opportunity to benefit from them. I have tried to do this in my books and newspaper columns and know from the letters I have received that they have made a difference to many lives.

Making Money Made Simple is a tiny link in the chain that is passing the 'torch' from generation to generation to help those whose minds are ready. Now that you know about the torch, I hope that you will assist in passing it down—it is everybody's responsibility to do so.

For Further Reading:

The quotes in this chapter regarding Marden are all taken from pages 16 to 42 of the special 100-year anniversary edition of *Success* magazine released in November 1991.

Napoleon Hill's *Law of Success* is still available online and at all good bookstores.



“The Torch” is a chapter in Noel Whittaker's bestselling book *Making Money Made Simple*.

To order a copy, visit the website www.noelwhittaker.com.au.