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A monthly journal devoted to those seeking further knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, in the hope that it may prove a unifying bond to all alcoholics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of A.A. as a whole.

What Is the Alcoholic's Moral Responsibility?

Alcoholism has been traditionally regarded as a vice, with the implication of moral responsibility that such a characterization involves.

The modern tendency is to consider any obessional aberration to be pathological. Hence, alcoholism is sometimes diagnosed as a disease, and the victim is accordingly absolved of moral responsibility.

Do the foregoing views constitute a conflict in which intellectual honesty compels us to take sides—or may they be reconciled and integrated?

If alcoholism is a disease it is one of which science has found so far neither cause nor cure. Dr. Silkworth in an article in the June, 1945, issue of *The Grapevine* says that "physically science does not know why a man cannot drink in moderation." The doctor also states that he is only "sure of one scientific fact—that detoxication by medical treatment must precede any psychiatric approach."

Thus, the "physical issue" is reduced to the routine of a mere dealcoholizing process, preliminary to the really fundamental matter of dealing with what Dr. Silkworth refers to as the "moral issue."

The A.A. Program of Recovery is devoted principally to the resolution of this "moral issue." The alcoholic is assisted in developing the personality change essential to permanent rehabilitation.

In so doing, the A.A. plan proceeds on the assumption that we have "defects of character" the removal of which is requisite to a restoration of sanity. The removal is to be accomplished not alone by the revelations of psychiatric treatment (self-knowledge), but by the application of spiritual force emanating from a Power in which we have faith (Steps 6-7).

Defects of character cannot, of course, be

rooted out by knowledge alone. The authors of *Alcoholics Anonymous* were well aware of the limitations of the aphorism that knowledge is power, for at page 50 of the book, they assert: "But the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception, will be *absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge*. This is a point we wish to emphasize and re-emphasize, to smash home upon our alcoholic readers as it has been revealed to us out of bitter experience" (italics theirs).

Elsewhere in the same text the same thought is expressed in different form and with varied application. It is said, for example, that "the alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except

THE GRAPEVINE, ADOPTED AS NATIONAL PERIODICAL, WILL BE MADE LARGER

Beginning with the December issue, four more pages will be added to *The Grapevine* to allow for additional features, and letters and contributing articles from A.A.s throughout the country.

The enlargement is in line with the adoption of *The Grapevine* as the national A.A. periodical, as announced in the recent letter from Bill W. to the secretaries of the more than 600 A.A. groups.

Following expansion of the size of *The Grapevine* and because of increasing overhead due to mounting correspondence and other clerical details, the subscription rate will be raised to \$2.50 per year and 25 cents per copy, beginning with the January, 1946, issue. This rate was decided upon to assure financial security and independence for future operations. Subscriptions received up to December 15 of this year will be accepted at the old rate.

in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a higher Power" (page 55).

Finally, for those of us who accept it, the predominance of the moral factors in the A.A. plan is summarized in the following statement at pages 35-36 of the book:

"The great fact is just this and nothing else: that we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences, which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows, and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do for ourselves."

Here, then, seems to be the answer to the question posed at the outset. Both moralist and scientist agree that there can be no blame imposed for a condition over which one has no control. Both agree that an alcoholic has been reduced to a state of powerlessness over alcohol. It follows that an alcoholic should not be held morally accountable for acts committed while in the grip of the obsession.

The syllogism suggests a corollary.

When an alcoholic realizes the nature of his malady, and that help, human and otherwise, is at hand and that "there is a solution," is it not reasonable to assume that an element of moral responsibility enters into the situation? Tolerance for the sinner but none for the sin is a noble sentiment. And alcoholics will probably always require understanding. But may we, who have accepted A.A. and assume to practice its precepts, continue to expect, under the new dispensation, condonation when the

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EDITORIAL: On the 1st Step...

"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable."

(Editor's note: In response to numerous requests, the 12 Steps have again been selected for a series of editorials. Many readers have expressed the view that *The Grapevine* could scarcely find more pertinent topics than those presented in the steps which, in the wording of the A.A. book, "are suggested as a Program of Recovery," and which define the working principles of A.A. In a number of groups throughout the country, the first series of editorials on the 12 Steps were used as the basis for discussion meetings. In this second series, the editorials will be written by different A.A.s than those who contributed to the first group, so that different views and interpretations will be presented, each, of course, the writer's own opinion.)

THE value of this Step in the A.A. Program of Recovery was made self-evident when it was placed first in numerical relation to the other 11 Steps. The logic in placing it first is readily apparent. Unless a man is convinced he has a serious problem he feels no need to seek a solution.

Logically, it might even be said that no one can consistently come into A.A. until he has at least arrived at the conviction that he is powerless over alcohol. But, much that seems illogical is happening all of the time in A.A. The record is filled with apparent paradoxes. In fact, the essence of the story of A.A. is that of people who have recovered who weren't supposed to have a chance.

Inconsistent or not, many do come into A.A. while they are still debating within themselves whether or not they are alcoholic. Any suggestion that the door should be opened only to people who have already concluded they are alcoholics collides with the fact that some have made the discovery only through the enlightenment gained in A.A.

Again, as in virtually all phases of A.A. and of alcoholism, no stern and inflexible rules can be laid down.

Experience indicates, however, that the Program of Recovery does not really begin, no matter how long "in" A.A., until one has rid himself of doubts about his inability to control alcohol. Experience also warns that as long as the individual continues the debate over whether he is or he isn't an alcoholic, he remains in a very vulnerable and precarious position.

One reason why this is such a difficult question to resolve is that alcoholism has many definitions and the alcoholic many variations.

Some are fortunate enough to gain conviction on the 1st Step as soon as they acquire a definition of alcoholism that fits them. They immediately feel the relief that comes with the finding of an explanation for behavior which up to then has shamed and worried them to despair.

For many, however, the admission of alcoholism is a fearful step. It is as though they were being asked to go down to the public square and confess all of the crimes of mankind. They feel a great stigma is about to be attached to them and that they will have to go about branded forever after.

Egotism and stubborn pride combine to generate an acute aversion to admitting helplessness over anything. Social custom and false values, mixed with pleasant memories, perhaps, of earlier drinking days act as additional prods to an altitude of resistance.

All of this is quite understandable. The difficulty of taking the 1st Step is very real to the person experiencing it.

Once taken, of course, it brings a blessed release. Strangely enough, too, when one admits that he is an alcoholic, the heavens do not fall. Nor does his soul shrivel. Life goes on.

For the alcoholic, who has traveled his twisting, rocky road of unhappiness for years, this is where life really begins. Having come to the conclusion that he is powerless over alcohol and having admitted it, the conviction that he must do certain things to recover grows within. He then, and only then, has really begun his Program of Recovery.—*T. Y., Manhattan*

Those "Goof Balls"

By Bill

(This is the second in a series of articles on the use of sedatives. In the first, a summary was presented of material published in the press, magazines and medical journals stressing the dangers involved in "pills," especially for the alcoholic. Following is a presentation of personal experiences and observations on the subject.)

Morphine, codeine, chloral hydrate, luminal, seconal, nembytal, amytal, these and kindred drugs have killed many alcoholics. And, I once nearly killed myself with chloral hydrate. Nor is my own observation and experience unique, for many an old-time A.A. can speak with force and fervor on the subject of "goof balls."

Excepting an infrequent suicide, nobody uses these drugs in the expectation of death. To many alcoholics, still in the drinking stage, they represent blessed relief from the agonies of a hangover.

Some of us, perfectly sober for months or years, contract the habit of using sedatives to cure insomnia or slight nervous irritability. I have the impression that some of us get away with it, too, year after year, just as we did when we first began to drink alcohol. Yet experience shows, all too often, that even the "controlled" pill taker may get out of control. The same crazy rationalizations that once characterized his drinking begin to blight his existence. He thinks that if pills can cure insomnia so may they cure his worry.

Now a word about the use of morphine by physicians. Sometimes, a general practitioner, not knowing his patient is already loaded with barbiturates, will give a morphine injection. A friend of mine died like that. Sober about three years, he got into an emotional jam. Pills led to alcohol and this combination to still more pills. His doctor found an excited heart. Out came the needle and a few hours later out went a very good friend. Another close friend, sober three years, also fell on evil days—pills and liquor. At the end of about three weeks of this diet he was placed one evening in a sanitarium. Nobody told the doctor there about the pills with which his system was already loaded. The patient was "eased" with a shot of codein. Before daylight he was dead.

Near the end of my own drinking career I had an alarming experience. Chloral hydrate was prescribed for one of my terrible hangovers. The doctor warned me to stick rigidly to his dosage. But I kept possession of the bottle. While my wife slept quietly beside me I reached under the mattress, took out the flask, and guzzled the whole business. I had a narrow shave. Moral: When a doctor gives a legiti-

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SICK BED A TEST OF FRIENDSHIPS

Occasionally an A.A. gets sick—legitimately—even as the average run of people. When you're laid up for weeks, there isn't much chance of a slip, so how, you wonder, does A.A. come into the picture?

The same way it comes into the picture wherever you are, whatever you're doing, once you get into the thing wholeheartedly. It certainly changed the picture of me as a sick man.

Some years ago, before A.A., I had a bad spell of rheumatic fever—brought on by overdoses of alcohol—and was home in bed for more than a month. I had one caller, just one, in that whole month, and he arrived drunk.

Early this year, after a long stretch of A.A. living, I had to go to the hospital for over two months, and later had to pass a spring and summer of enforced idleness—convalescence the doctors called it.

I wish now that I'd kept some count of the people who came to the hospital to see me this time; A.A.s from all over the area, busy men and women who took time out from their jobs and other work to make the fairly long trip to my bedside.

The nurses kidded me, but couldn't contain their wonder at what caused my extreme popularity. I broke all records for visitors and other patients watched with growing amazement as they kept coming.

That was not the important angle, of course. What was so important during this period was that I now had real friends, people who actually cared, friends by the score.

Sitting still is the hardest work in the world for me. By nature, I'm pretty active. I loved the meetings, 12th Step work and all kinds of A.A. get-togethers. Now I've had to sit still for months. Without the understanding I have gained through A.A., without the changed outlook on life which it has brought, I don't know that I could have stood the inactivity.

Not only did my A.A. friends keep me bucked up. All the angles which worked so well to keep me sober before have worked during these months to help me get well faster—and with much less mental anguish. The 24-hour plan, not worrying about tomorrow—"easy does it" and "first things first" have remained my standbys and helped the days pass faster.

Though I was forced out of active participation, I was certainly not out of things for a day. A.A. included me in on all of the good things of life.

I have been mighty grateful to A.A. for sobriety. Now I am grateful to it for infinitely more.—*C. E. F., Manhattan*

The Pleasures of Reading

Cecil Rhodes gasped his seven last words: "So little done—so much to do." The brazen colossus with the lungs of clay lost his battle against time, that grisly fourth dimension. Time it is which Stuart Cloete pits "Against These Three" (Houghton-Mifflin, \$3.50)—Rhodes, President Kruger of the South African Republic, and Lobengula, savage tribal ruler of the Matabele. The articulate author of this triplex biography, whose name is pronounced *clew-lee*, recounts the struggle for South Africa among Rhodes, who wanted the country for Britain; "Oom" (Uncle) Paul Kruger, who strove to hold it for the Boers, and Lobengula, who was intelligent enough to know that his cause was hopeless.

Lobengula was one of those hapless native chiefs who fall afoul of the white man's destiny and are destroyed just as were the Wampanoags' Metacomet and the Seminoles' Osceola. Details of aboriginal life among the abysmally cruel Matabele make it easier to read objectively of their breaking in the nutcracker of history.

Born in the English Midlands of yeoman stock, Cecil John Rhodes, at sixteen, joined his brother in South Africa, where the air was better for his tubercular lungs. Soon the youthful emigrant had recovered his strength and, casting about for something to do, plunged into the exciting turmoil of the glamorous diamond fields. By the time he was nineteen the young Englishman had made a small fortune, so he returned home to complete his education at Oxford.

Back again in Africa, Rhodes organized the diamond trust, becoming so wealthy that he never troubled to find out just how much he had, and did not even carry cash in his pockets. His stupendous fortune must have twisted his character; he saw in pelf the means to power, and it was power that he wanted with all his forceful will, albeit for Britain as well as himself, above everything else in life. He took power unscrupulously, always insisting that the end justified the means, bribing traders and politicians, cynically playing on human weaknesses, controlling the press, and conniving at treacheries.

Mr. Cloete recounts this miraculous rise and inevitable decline with exceptional clarity. After entering South African politics, Rhodes progressed steadily toward the realization of his mighty dream—or was it a nightmare?—a vast world British empire. Then, having founded Rhodesia and begun undermining the Boers in the gold-rich Transvaal, Rhodes's friend, Dr. Jameson, made his ill-starred raid into the Dutch republic, and the power of the colossus went into decline. Yet, Rhodes carried on his work of wooing or bludgeoning the native chiefs into submission, and his personally conducted march of empire, softened somewhat by public works, continued onward steadily. He died in 1902, having founded the famous Rhodes scholarships.

President Kruger was a bearded Biblical patriarch who, all his life, thought that the world was flat. To Oom Paul the discovery of the Rand's gold was a curse; he feared that it would end the isolated simplicity of his compatriots, who were farmers and cattle raisers. The Boers did not like wealth and speed; they preferred ox carts to railways. They believed in the Bible and liberty for themselves, and slavery for the natives.

Mr. Cloete suggests comparisons between Rhodes and Hitler, calling the Englishman an early Fascist. Of course, this is possible, as the author says: "Modern Fascism could be said to have begun with Cecil Rhodes. A book could be written, 'From Rhodes to Hitler.' He was the first man to organize business politically, his diamond industry was the first great cartel. His was the dream of an elite, a secret society that ruled whole continents by money controlled by a single source. His hope was for a greater British Reich. He assumed and believed that his name would live, not one thousand but four thousand years."

This reviewer does not agree that Rhodes was fascistic, though he lost his sense of proportion in making his millions and doubtless was a megalomaniac. Mr. Cloete's own words give a clue to the psyche, of the Rhodesian colossus: "He drank heavily, according to his enemies; and hardly at all, according to his friends. The truth lies between these extremes; but the swollen purple of his face in later life was caused at least as much by his aneurism as his reputed alcoholic excesses...."

"Rhodes' temper was passionate. He was quick to anger and quick to repent of his anger, but it will never be known how much his temper, or even his drinking, was due to his knowledge that his time was limited... that he had so much to do and so little time in which to accomplish it. Incredibly successful in our terms, he was incredibly frustrated in his own. ... High, wide, fast, and handsome could have been his motto—and big, very big. He was an American in his ideas of size."

This reviewer sees schnapps, not swastikas, as a more plausible explanation. —R. E. B.

VINO VIGNETTES: *Thumbnail A.A. Biographies*

I heard about A.A. at a Christmas party last year but I thought it was a sort of club that would get someone off a bender—period! Right then, I was on the wagon so I wasn't even interested enough to ask many questions about it, and I might add that I was a pretty sour-faced female along about then.

One night I was talking to a friend of mine named Jean. She seemed to know quite a bit about A.A. and finally we went over to the Clubhouse at 405 East 41st Street. It was a Wednesday night and there didn't seem to be much doing; however, we sat around with a few people and talked for a while. Jean seemed very mixed up to me then. She wondered if she was an alcoholic, so asked this little bunch if they thought she was, and a guy got kinda rude and I went away without the slightest feeling A.A. was anything I needed.

And then I went on a nine-day bender. Each day I tried to stop but with absolutely no success. I became terrorized—this awful business was completely out of my power to control. I tried everything but I went on drinking and sleeping, sleeping and drinking. I began to think about suicide but I couldn't figure out how the best way would be. I finally decided to try turning on the gas oven and put my head inside. Then I found out I was too short.

Finally, on Friday, the 1st of June, at four o'clock in the afternoon I came to enough—or shall I say, got so sick, I simply had to do something. My mental torture was so awful I felt I couldn't bear it any longer. Well, I staggered to a telephone, called the A.A. Clubhouse, said I was a victim of alcohol—and, could they suggest anything? They asked me if I could walk—I said, "Yes, barely," so they urged me to come right over. When I arrived I was introduced to a gal who took me upstairs for coffee. Well, the place looked so dreary, but in my condition, anything was okay by me. Up in the cafeteria—with the lights blazing—I felt even worse. Shaking in a spotlight with a cup of coffee and looking into fourteen new faces (or maybe there were only seven) isn't much fun!

What the girl next to me said I don't know—I just wasn't registering at that moment—but I do know she was so understanding and all the others were talking about the reasons given by different doctors for "why" people became drunks and all that sort of thing. When I look back now I realize several of them made sense but right then all I wanted to know was "how not to take the first drink."

Well—I sat around until about seven-thirty with people coming and going all the time,

then somebody got the bright idea they might go over to Brooklyn to a meeting. Oh, how frightened I was! Maybe they were going to leave me alone! What would I do? I was sure relieved when this gal asked me if I wanted to go along and I told her I would go anywhere as long as I could go with them.

The meeting in Brooklyn was held at the St. George Hotel and it gave me an entirely new feeling about A.A.—the surroundings were more cheerful than the Clubhouse and all the speakers said things that kept clicking in my muddled mind. When I left the meeting I had made step number one and become a member of A.A.—I knew and admitted I was an alcoholic.

The next day I spent at the Clubhouse with my new friend and I couldn't get over how kind and considerate she was—a girl who'd been a complete stranger to me. Her kindness and understanding simply overwhelmed me. I hope I never forget the grateful feeling I had that day.

The next step was not difficult for me because I had always believed in a "Power greater than myself," although I hadn't known how to call upon or use this power. The following day was Sunday, so I went, to Church and then went on to the Clubhouse. During the afternoon I heard someone say you should make amends to anyone you've hurt by your drinking. Well, the most recent one was my boss—I had walked out on her without any notice, she'd been unable to find me and was in a very bad spot because she couldn't locate anyone to take my place. I called her on the phone and told her the bleak awful truth, and believe me, it was a new thing for me to do—to tell the truth in a situation of this kind. I don't think she understood exactly what I was telling her because I was nearly hysterical, but she was very glad to hear from me and asked me to come back to my job the next morning.

Having the courage to face that situation gave me a peace within myself which enabled me to meet my boss and all the other people involved when I went to work in the morning. I don't just know how to describe my feelings—I wasn't proud and yet I wasn't ashamed. It was a feeling that was wholly and entirely new to me. With all the many things I'd learned in my three days with my new A.A. friends stored up inside me, I was able to return to work and pick up where I'd left off when I'd gone on my last bender.

For the next few weeks I went to every meeting I could find. Then I met a girl who took me to a small group and there I was able to

get numerous little things talked out and commence to "unlearn" the many stupid things I'd adopted as a sort of gospel of my own. In this way I made room for the many new and wonderful things I must now live by.—*N.F., Manhattan*

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW - and the Mail Flows In

When *The Grapevine* in the July issue published a piece of writing entitled, "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," under the heading, "Who Wrote It?" more work for the overburdened U.S. Postal Service was innocently started.

Since then answers have been flowing in to the editorial office from Texas, Maryland, Illinois, New York, Ohio, Michigan and California—and they're still coming in.

One fact seems clear: A piece of prose expressing the same thoughts as expressed in the article published in the July issue and having the same title was written by Robert Jones Burdette (1844-1914). Among other places it can be found in one edition of Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*.

But, several other versions of the same idea have been written. For instance, an A.A. down in Texas tells of having used parts of it in advertising, long before he ever heard of A.A. Another A.A. had the experience of writing something much like it when he was coming out of a "morning-after" fog.

Perhaps there's no need to go any further. Whether read in the long or short version, the Burdette or anonymous form, it's a pungent piece of writing, especially helpful to A.A.s.

Responsibility

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rules of society are broken? If the truth has made us free and the spirit has given us strength, shall we not take and maintain our places in the ranks of society without favor as well as without fear?

It is submitted that a lively sense of moral responsibility should be assiduously cultivated, the more so because of our newly found power to accept it and because in the very acceptance of it, we wax stronger and stronger as we "grow by what we feed on."—*R.F.S., Monclair, N. J.*

Mail Call for All A.A.s at Home or Abroad

Answer from Genesee

From Rochester, N.Y.

May I have a little space in which to reply on behalf of the Genesee Group of Rochester, N. Y., to the two Manhattan letter writers, "J.D." and "A.T.," both of whom availed themselves of our invitation to "comment," "suggest" or "criticize?" our "plan of education" briefly outlined in our letter in the September issue of *The Grapevine*?

That they both went outside the letter for their "criticisms" and only "A.T." addressed himself, and that mostly by inference, to the plan is immaterial. They both took exception to the "Four Absolutes," (not mentioned in the letter) "J.D." because, in a booklet prepared by our group for the assistance of our sponsors in informing their prospects of the "who," "what" and "why" of A.A., we used in the conclusion thereof the words, Four Absolutes, in the same sentence with the 12 Steps. "A.T." was annoyed because, after four and one-half years in A.A., he didn't know what they were.

For the edification of them both — Honesty, Love, Purity and Unselfishness comprise the Four Absolutes and how adherence to these well known principles of ethical conduct could harm even an alcoholic, the writer is at a loss to understand.

"The Ethical Conduct of Alcoholics Anonymous is based on two definite sets of *laws* (italics mine) known as the Twelve Steps and the Four Absolutes." (Quotation from "A Manual for Alcoholics Anonymous" published by Akron Group No. 1, the original chapter so-called of A.A.—a book which the writer saw about three years ago when he first attended an A.A. meeting.)

The further criticism of "A.T." seems to be that he objects personally to any method of instruction other than through the medium of a group meeting—on the ground that "any other course of instruction" borders on "self-righteousness"—I would call his attention to a letter published in the October issue of *The Grapevine* by "Bill"—and would ask "A.T." how Bill, Dr. Bob and the early members could have informed others if their *only* recourse had been to take a prospect to a "meeting"? For that matter, how would an A.A. Group in a new city get started if only one A.A. were to attempt it, as has been done many times without the assistance of any group meetings and with considerable success?

"A.T." has another objection, not to the plan, but to one question and answer contained in

the booklet referred to above—on the ground that the answer, "you must have a belief in God and faith in His power to help you," might have frightened him away from A.A. forever.

That might be so, but "A.T." must remember that this book was prepared by our group from our personal experience in A.A. work and contains only what we found was the most effective way, not the only way, in which we could work to help a man become a successful A.A. We are not primarily concerned with large attendance at meetings.

On the other hand, I do not see what harm can be done by telling a man in advance that a belief in God is an integral part of the program—or isn't it? Unless "A.T." attended meetings conducted differently from those with which the writer is familiar, he ran headlong into God at the opening of his first meeting. All meetings around here are opened and closed with prayer—I never heard a prayer yet addressed to anyone but God and most prayers contain petitions. It would seem extremely silly to address a petition for help to any person or thing if you had no faith in His or Its power to help you.

"A.T." closes his letter by wishing us "good luck." We thank him for that wish but with the gentle reminder that depending too much on "luck" and not enough on good judgment, common sense, and a firm belief in the truth of A.A. principles was one of the reasons we wrote the little booklet.

So we say to "A.T.," may he have continued success in his A.A. life and come and visit us—we promise not to frighten him. —M. L. (*For the Genesee Group*).

* * *

As a Minister Sees A.A.

From Oakland, Cal.

The enclosed is a copy of a sermon delivered by the Rev. Clarence Reidenbach, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Oakland, to his own congregation on a recent Sunday morning....—C.L.R.

(A few excerpts from Rev. Reidenbach's sermon follow—Ed.):

"... It is difficult to imagine such a phenomenon as A.A. anywhere else but in Christendom. A consideration of the 12 Steps discloses a remarkable similarity between the program and the plan of salvation in the Bible and Christian theology. The leaders make the point that their program is not new, that it uses the old principles of religion. That is true....

"The movement is a good religion, a very

good religion. It is not vague and general, as so much of religion and religious thought is nowadays. It is pointed and definite. It is not based on theory, but on living authentic experience. It has made a suggestive adjustment between religion and science, which furnishes a clue that might be hopefully followed up in other ways by religion. To be specific, religion, and medical science, especially in the form of psychiatry, might with fruitful results be more closely associated for the treatment of other forms of difficulty than alcoholism.... It illuminates religion, and shows religion itself what it was meant to be and can be. Finally, it gets results...."

* * *

Aid to Happy Marriage

From Little Rock, Ark.

Enclosed is the Little Rock plan which we have been following for the past three years. I noticed with interest some of the ways others handle their prospects, in your September issue. We appoint a chairman for six months.... Our main groups have 97 members and we take in from two to four each Thursday night.... ... I drank for 32 years. Am 48 now. My wife and I have been married for seven years, but by my way of thinking it has been only 18 months for that is how long I have been sober. But it has been wonerful.—C.E.W.

(Editor's note: an outline of the Little Rock plan referred to in the above letter will be published in an early issue of *The Grapevine*.)

* * *

12th Step Compromise

From St. Louis, Mo.

I read with a great deal of interest the two articles in different issues of *The Grapevine*, the first of which was, according to your editor's note, by a non-alcoholic friend of A.A. and the second by "M.S." of Manhattan. One of the points made in the first article was that nobody should try to do any 12th Step work until he had a good understanding of the program. The other article disagreed with that view.

In my opinion, the question here can be debated with good reasons on both sides. Undoubtedly, it's true that somebody who's been in A.A. only a short time is not likely to be able to talk it very well. He certainly doesn't know many of the answers and he can't have much of a working knowledge of the program.

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Mail Call

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His visit to another prospect may only confuse the latter.

Yet, it's also true that the quicker one begins to do 12th Step work the quicker he starts using one of the most helpful of A.A. tools. He gets infinite good out of the 12th Step work he tries to do, even though he may not succeed in drying up anyone else for a long time. The 12th is surely one of the most beneficial of the 12 Steps.

It seems to me there is a perfect compromise on this. Why can't the newcomers be paired with oldtimers when they go out to do 12th Step work? That way the newcomer can learn much from the oldtimer about presenting A.A. to a prospect. At the same time he can participate in the 12th Step job with his own, more recent experience. Then everybody stands to benefit.—A. O. W.

* * *

A National Plan

From Manhattan

With the great growth of any organization founded upon fine principles there comes a time when the individualistic method of procedure becomes not obsolete but may lose its purpose....

The need of a national committee to plan a *modus operandi* which would be both pliable and supple enough to meet the requirements of all groups is paramount; a committee of representative members which would shape the working tools.

True it is that each group has a problem all its own. It must have its way of functioning which is expedient for its need. Yet the basic principle of the 12th Step cannot be lost. Snobbery, condescension or patronage must never enter into any phase. The man in dirty shirt, baggy trousers and wornout shoes is in the same position and just as important as the woman in mink' coat and a square-cut diamond. Both are alcoholics.

A.A. will never get into the category of the kind of organization which has large national conventions which are used primarily as an excuse for wayward husbands and misunderstood wives to break loose or a repressed alcoholic to do some high-powered drinking. But A.A. should get together nationally and solve such problems as visitation, offices of consultation in key cities and many other vexing questions. A schedule of making calls upon sponsored patients in approved institutions such as Knickerbocker in New York City or Valley in

Toledo, O., should be religiously kept, should the sponsor fail. A committee should shape the policy of these most important functional procedures. Loosely knit status is all right to a degree but basic features should not and must not be haphazard.

In any event let some group make a start on a truly purposeful program.—/ B., Manhattan

* * * Key to Letters

From Manhattan

Would it be possible, without causing you too much difficulty in your mailing arrangements, to insert in each issue being mailed to A.A. regular subscribers, a little "key" slip to the initials which appear after your articles?

I realize that the second "A" in "A.A." means quite a lot, particularly to new members and in our dealings with non-A.A.s, but actually we know that in our relations inside the group there is nothing particularly "anonymous." It is not only to satisfy our curiosity that I make this suggestion, but because I think some of us would quite often like to get in touch and talk with the writers of articles which interest us.

For example, in your September issue, which I thought was excellent, I liked particularly the editorial "On the 11th Step." The initials after it meant nothing to me, and it was only after considerable inquiry that I discovered they represented my old friend Bob.—J.D.

Regarding the above suggestion, another way would be to use *The Grapevine* as a means of contact. Anyone wishing to communicate with the writer of any letter printed here can address a letter to *The Grapevine* and it will be forwarded to the proper person. That way contact can be established and at the same time the anonymity of the writer be preserved.—Ed.

* * *

'Peace'

From New Orleans

Wonders never cease! Here in this room are 60-odd people, approximately 90 per cent of the active members of our group; these people can honestly say to their fullest satisfaction that they are at Peace.

Now the whole world is rejoicing for the Peace after the surrender of Japan.

It is August the 14th at the regular Tuesday meeting of New Orleans A.A. Group. Outside the streets are crowded with people shouting, singing, blowing horns and making general whoopee, such as a New Orleans crowd can, and of course there are many pints, flasks and quarts of liquor being drunk to celebrate. Gee!

MEDICAL JOURNAL TELLS OF SURVEY ON ALCOHOLIC CARE

A recent issue of the publication of the Medical Society of the County of New York deals with a survey on the care and treatment of alcoholics in the New York area, conducted by the New York Academy of Medicine's committee on public health relations, with Dr. Hubert S. Howe as chairman, and Dr. E. H. L. Corwin as secretary of the subcommittee in charge. The magazine states the survey is in line with energetic movements in Maine, New Jersey, Washington, D. C., Boston and elsewhere. Commenting on this wide interest and activity, the magazine reports: "So great has been the recent indication of cooperation between existing groups that the movement to improve treatment and facilities is taking on the semblance of a national campaign." Questionnaires have been sent to every physician in New York City and to every hospital and sanitarium. The subcommittee hopes to make a report late in the fall.

Can it be possible that this bunch of ex-drunks are not in the crowd?

We are all here at this meeting rejoicing, too, over our Victory over our common Enemy, "John Barleycorn," that caused each of us so much trouble and losses that a lifetime cannot bring back, but our hope is in the faith we've learned in God and through the wonderful fellowship found in A.A.

May we all continue to carry on this great work and bring Peace to others who seek the open portals of a true brotherhood and will bring help to him who honestly seeks help from his great enemy, Alcohol.

Here is the Open Door. Walk in.—C.G.K.

* * *

Who's to Judge?

From Birmingham, Ala.

When I read or hear about some group having set up any kind of a system or screening or rules for "admitting" newcomers I feel uneasy. I can't help but ask if anyone of us in any group anywhere has the right to appoint himself a judge as to when somebody is "ready" for A.A. I certainly don't think anyone has the right to go beyond the two requisites: Admitting one's life has become unmanageable through alcohol; wanting to do something about it. I find nothing in the A.A. book suggesting that one has to have a belief in God, for instance, BEFORE he can come into A.A., or that one must be pure or saintly or anything else like that.—E. P.

A.A. 's Country-Wide News Circuit

Expanding its activities, the San Bernadino Valley group, which got under way five years ago and now includes residents of Colton, Riverside, Fontana and Redlands, held a large open meeting recently which was attended by several hundred A.A.s from various Southern California sections.... Out in Hollywood, where the group owns a brand new clubhouse, the press agent of a movie actress who paints her dog to match her clothes, wrote in his publicity blurb: "It's a matter of record that this actress converted three men to A.A. when she walked down Vine Street with her green dog."... Boise is the first town in Idaho to start a group. And Seattle sends in a Can-You-Top-This report: Their membership has grown from 32 to nearly 100 in the past two months!... Besides Boise, other new groups are now going in Livingston, N. J., an outgrowth of Morristown's which started barely a year ago with 8 members and now has over 70, with attendance often reaching 100; Mt. Kisco, N. Y.; Redona Beach, Cal.; Lynn and Woburn, Mass.

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The story of a man who wanted sobriety so much that he made a round trip of 200 miles twice a week for six months was told at the testimonial dinner and meeting of tribute held Sept. 5 in Springfield, Mass., for Dr. D., founder of the Springfield group. Before starting the group, Dr. D. drove twice a week to the meetings in Boston. Attending the testimonial dinner were 66 A.A.s and friends from Hartford and Manchester, Conn., and Boston.

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Wilmington, Del., A.A.s had the largest crowd yet at the open meeting in the DuPont Community Y.M.C.A., with borough officials, representatives of several churches, and executives of the DuPont plants attending.... Speakers from Wilmington and Philadelphia addressed the new Perms Grove, N. J., group at their first open meeting.... The Bing-

THE EYE-OPENER

A lusty new A.A. group publication has made its debut in Los Angeles in the form of a four-page monthly published by the Central Committee there and fittingly named, "The Eye-Opener."

The Eye-Opener is packed with breezy, newsy paragraphs about California group activities and A.A. topics in general, and carries a generous sprinkling of humor.

From *The Grapevine* to The Eye-Opener—welcome and congratulations on the first issue!

hamton, N. Y., group will celebrate its first anniversary this month... Both Uphams Corner, Dorchester, Mass., and Upper Darby, Pa., new groups, are beginning their open meetings.... Staten Island, N. Y., A. A. s are rapidly increasing in numbers.... Establishment of a clinic for alcoholics in Erie County, N. Y., is under discussion by A.A. groups, the county Medical Society, the Board of Health, and other social agencies.

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The Portland, Ore., A.A.s now have their own club rooms in the heart of the city. Although the first Portland group was founded less than two years ago, two active groups are now functioning there and holding regular bi-weekly sessions. In a note from one of the members, headed "Handshake across the Rockies," it is reported that the groups have rented 2,000 square feet of space on the second floor of a building directly across the street from the public library.

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"The Saga of the Fish," favorite drinking anecdote of a member of the Louisville, Ky., Group, given its initial boost by an Indianapolis, Ind., traveling A.A. in 1941, tells of his leaving the office one afternoon for his home in the country. Already considerably soused as a result of nips from a desk-drawer bottle, he stopped at a seafood market and bought a tremendous fish, with an old-fashioned fishfry in mind. It occurred to him that his purchase might meet with disfavor on his customary bus ride, so he took a taxi. He soon found the taxi had a distinct advantage over busses; it could be ordered to stop at bars en route. He promptly availed himself of this service at every tavern, storing the three-foot marine specimen in the proprietor's refrigerator wherever he stopped. Along his dazed itinerary he often forgot the fish, and had to taxi back for it, which naturally meant another snifter. "It took me two days to get home 10 miles, and cost \$100 in cab fares. When I finally arrived, the fish was as bad off as I was," he grins when telling the story. "We both reeked, and I was only slightly more alive."

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Two Chicago members were instrumental in starting the group in Minneapolis during the blizzard of November, 1940. Marooned in Minneapolis, they succeeded in sobering up one man. From that humble beginning A.A. has spread in Minnesota to St. Paul, Duluth, Hibbing, Rochester, Stillwater, and to Eau Claire, Wis.... In future alcoholics placed on pro-

bation in Ramsey County, Minnesota, will be advised by Frank Valesh, deputy probation officer, who attended the Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies, to get in touch with A.A. He reports that 65 per cent of the persons who appear in probation court in the county are there because of drinking.... South Bend, Ind., A.A.s are preparing to establish a group in Culver.... A.A.s from all over the Midwest were present in Des Moines, Iowa to help that group celebrate its second anniversary.... At the fourth anniversary meeting of the Palo Alto, Cal., group a San Francisco physician, Dr. Frederick Niemand, described many people as "psychic suicides" in that they refuse to face life and its problems squarely. A.A.s, he pointed out, who have found rehabilitation through the 12 Steps have faced the biggest problem of their lives squarely and proceeded to solve it by "rebirth".

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The Hartford, Conn., group, where Dr. Norman Vincent Peale will be a guest speaker November 5, are using the means of two or three rehearsals of their own speakers prior to big open meetings as an effective means of running a smooth program. The nearby New Haven A.A.s have started a series of instruction class meetings.... The program and benefits of A.A. were discussed at a recent meeting of the W.C.T.U. in Glens Falls, N. Y.

Delegations of the Clearwater and Tampa, Fla., groups attended the first Tri-City group meeting at St. Petersburg.... While continuing to attend the co-educational meetings, the A.A. women of Birmingham, Ala., have formed a group for women only.... The first entry in the Buffalo, N. Y., telephone book is A.A.—Parkside 1321.

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Observing its first anniversary, the State Prison, Trenton, N. J., A.A. group notes in the current issue of the institutional publication, *The Viewpoint*, that the membership has grown to 100 during the year, and that the weekly

(Continued on Page 8)

ANNUAL N. Y. DINNER

The date of the annual Metropolitan group dinner is November 7, at the Commodore Hotel, New York City. The time: 7.00 p.m. Last year *The Grapevine* (December, 1944) reported that about 1,500 A.A.s, their friends and relatives filled the Commodore's ball room. It's expected that the number will be still larger this year, with A.A.s coming from all parts of the country, as they have in the past.

Those "Goof Balls"—Then a Miracle

(Continued from Page 2)

mate sedative prescription don't let the alcoholic have the bottle.

As a matter of fact our friends, the doctors, are seldom directly to blame for the dire results we so often experience. It is much too easy for alcoholics to buy these dangerous drugs, and once possessed of them the drinker is likely to use them without any judgment whatever. Sometimes his well meaning friends, unable to see him suffer, hand him pills themselves. It's a very dangerous business.

Effect Is Accumulative

It's even dangerous to give a suffering alcoholic a drink if he is already loaded with pills. Years ago I had an experience of this sort. We had an "alkie" in tow whom I shall call Slim. He finally had consented to go to a hospital. On the way he had a few—but only a small quantity compared to his customary capacity. Just before we reached the hospital Slim's speech suddenly got very thick and he passed out. I had to get a porter to help him to a cab. As he could usually manage a couple of bottles a day when active, I couldn't understand this performance at all. Arrived at the hospital, Slim was still slumped in his seat and I couldn't move him. Our good friend, Dr. Silkworth, came out and peered in the cab door. One look was apparently enough. Said he to me, "How is this man's heart?" Confidently I replied, "He's got a heart like an elephant. Told me so himself. But I don't see how he got drunk so fast. I gave him very little liquor." Out came the doctor's stethoscope. Turning then to me, he said, "Not much use bringing this man in here. He can't last long. What else has he been taking besides liquor?" Stunned, I replied, "Nothing, that I know of."

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Very gingerly an attendant carried Slim inside. Out come the stethoscope again. The doctor shook his head, saying, "This poor chap has been loaded with barbiturates for days. When you gave him alcohol, even a little, it fired off the accumulated charge of sedative he had in him. See how blue he is? His heart isn't really working much. It's just jittering. I can't even count it.

The doctor rushed to the phone and called Slim's wife. To my horror she confirmed the fact that he had been taking heavy doses of amytal for about 10 days. The doctor gently told her she had better hurry, else she might be too late. Then he called a famous heart specialist for consultation and told him to hurry too. They laid Slim on a bed upstairs. The great specialist came and drew out his stethoscope. At once he looked very serious and, motioning us out into the hall, he said he would leave a prescription but that he did not think my friend could possibly live through the night. Dr. Silkworth agreed.

Then a Miracle

During these proceedings I had been praying as I never had prayed before. After the two doctors had "pronounced the death sentence on Slim I told them of my prayers and explained, cheerfully as I could, that I had been reading Dr. Alexis Carrel's book, "Man the Unknown," in which prayer was described as effecting miraculous cures. The great specialist took his leave. Dr. Silkworth and I went downstairs to wait for the prescription to come in. A boy finally brought two capsules from the drugstore. The doctor looked at them, saying he hated to give them, they were so powerful. We went upstairs and as we stepped off the elevator we saw someone coming down the hall jauntily smoking a cigarette. "Hello, boys," roared Slim, "what am I supposed to be doing in here?"

Never, so long as I live, shall I forget the relief and astonishment which spread over the doctor's countenance as he quickly tested Slim's heart. Looking at me, he said, "This man's heart is now normal; Fifteen minutes ago I couldn't count it. I thought I knew these alcoholic hearts pretty well. But I've never seen anything like this—never. I can't understand it." What miracle saved Slim, no one can say. He left the hospital in a few days, without ill effects from his experience.

As for me—well, I guess I learned my lesson then and there. No more "goof ball" unless the doctor says so—not for me. No thank you!

WASHINGTON CLINIC HAS NEW DIRECTOR

Pending the arrival of Dr. Wexberg as director of the Washington, D.C., clinic for alcoholics, the clinic has been functioning since September 1 under the direction of Dr. Benjamin Weininger who replaced Dr. Michael Miller. Dr. Weininger is a psychiatrist from St. Elizabeth's Hospital.

The clinic's staff is assisted by volunteer A.A. workers.

In Washington, D. C., where for the first time two private hospitals, Garfield and Providence, are accepting alcoholics, 54 A.A.s volunteered their services to help care for the alcoholic patients.

News Circuit

(Continued from Page 7)

meetings in the prison auditorium "help a man to step out of maximum security into a society of maximum liberty with the assurance that he will complete his parole and take his place in society." About a year ago an A.A. woman of the Manhattan group, while doing volunteer war service, met a non-alcoholic woman who spoke of the dire necessity for helping women alcoholics in the Clinton (N. J.) Reformatory for women. As a result of their conversation, a group now functions in the reformatory.

* * *

Greenwich Village in New York City is now to be found on the A.A. map. The Villagers, at a meeting in that well-known landmark, the Brevoort Hotel, formed a group with about 40 present and are planning weekly sessions.

* * *

A.A.s from White Plains, New Rochelle, Mount Vernon, Peekskill and Yonkers, N. Y., have given timely aid to Grasslands Hospital, White Plains. Awaiting admission was a long list of alcoholics, but an inadequate staff to care for them. Thirty A.A. women volunteered and made it possible for the hospital to reopen the women's ward which had been closed last year through lack of trained aides, "Not only did these A.A. women enable us to take in the alcoholic waiting list," said Dr. John G. Lynn of Grasslands, "but they helped as nurses aides in caring for other psychiatric patients. As a result of A.A. help our whole psychiatric hospital is open again. Eighty volunteers, both men and women, from A.A. are making that possible."... The Montpelier, Vt., Group also uses a questionnaire, in pamphlet form, to help indecisive eligibles make up their minds. It's the one used by Johns Hopkins University Hospital in deciding whether or not a patient is alcoholic. The pamphlet reviews the meaning of alcoholism and A.A.