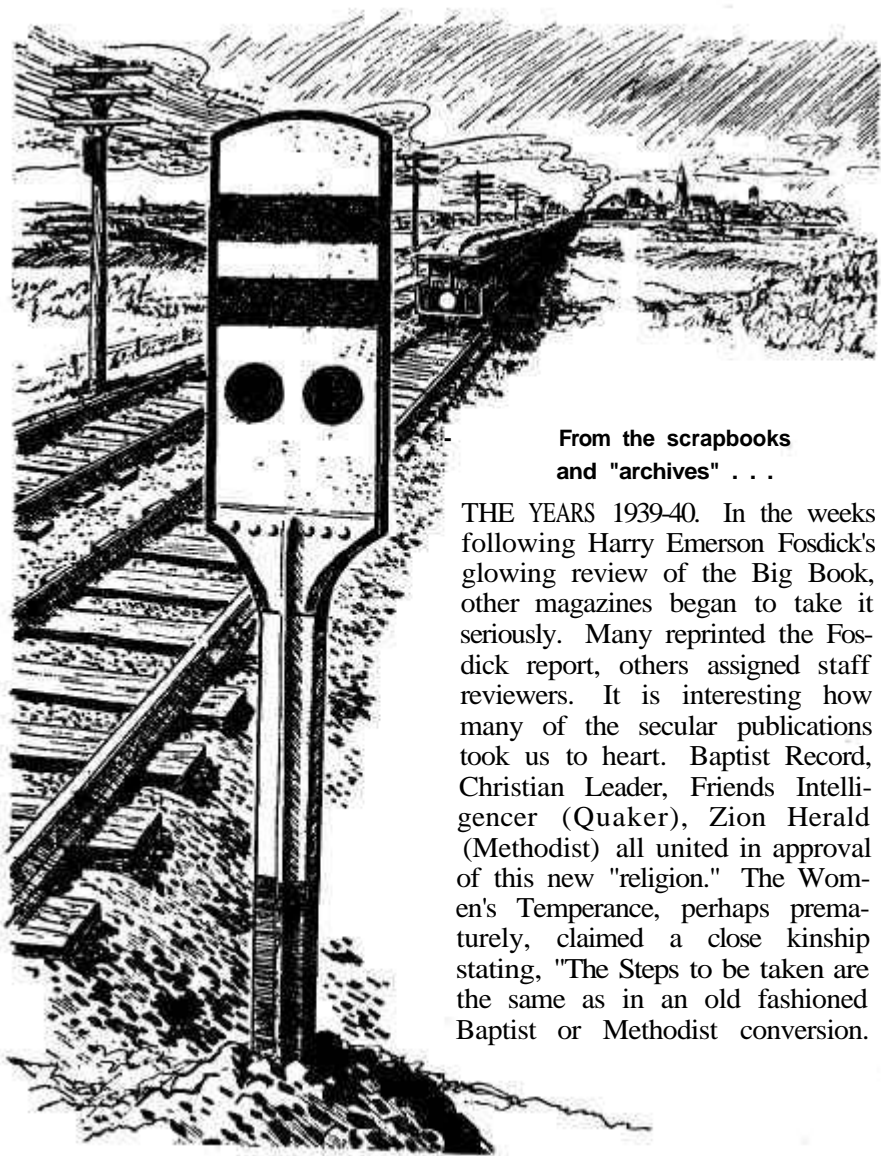


August 1957



From the scrapbooks
and "archives" . . .

THE YEARS 1939-40. In the weeks following Harry Emerson Fosdick's glowing review of the Big Book, other magazines began to take it seriously. Many reprinted the Fosdick report, others assigned staff reviewers. It is interesting how many of the secular publications took us to heart. Baptist Record, Christian Leader, Friends Intelligencer (Quaker), Zion Herald (Methodist) all united in approval of this new "religion." The Women's Temperance, perhaps prematurely, claimed a close kinship stating, "The Steps to be taken are the same as in an old fashioned Baptist or Methodist conversion.

MILESTONES IN AA

The sinner turns from his life of Sin."

The Christian Leader showed rather more insight: "Gothic windows are not the sole things which can be truly seen only from within, alcoholism is another." "Newsweek" took us seriously but called Bill W. a "commercial traveler" and in September, 1939, Liberty Magazine published a romantic story by Morris Markey, "The Alcoholic and God." The daily press was equally devoted and assiduous in reporting the doings of AA, remarkably so considering the membership was still less than 500; they went out of their way to help us in every way.

Indeed in all of this hullabaloo, only the official organs of medicine and psychiatry remained discreetly silent. Finally the AMA took notice and in the October issue of the Journal of The American Medical Association an anonymous reviewer dismissed us at length as "a curious combination of organizing propaganda and religious exhortation." His final words were, "the one valid thing in the book is the recognition of the seriousness of the addiction to alcohol, other than this the book has no scientific merit or interest."

Our stout friends in the medical world took strong exception to this statement but the Journal refused to refute the findings of their man, even though the late Foster Kennedy, a world famous neurologist, Professor at the Cornell School of

Medicine and head of the Alcoholic Division at Bellevue, wrote a strong letter of protest which he asked the AMA Journal to publish. Dr. Kennedy was not exactly silenced as he read both the original review and his answer to it at the Rockefeller dinner for AA, held at the Union Club in February.

This famous dinner needs no introduction but I do not remember ever reading Dr. Kennedy's answer to the AMA Journal, as he read it on this occasion: "To the editor—Sir—An unsigned review appeared in the Journal of the American Medical Association, Oct. 14th, of the book Alcoholics Anonymous. . . . The cheapish tone reflects on the thoughtfulness, experience and kindness of the reviewer. . . . The aim of AA is high, their success considerable. . . . One might ask the reviewer to produce a book on the subject of alcohol concocted out of 'pure' science. It would be unfortunate if the opinion of your 'Cynic Anonymous' be given too wide credence by our profession which has never before refused to use faith to move mountains." I think we can, in the light of history, assume that Dr. Kennedy had the last word.

Mr. John D. Rockefeller Jr. has been a staunch and loyal friend of AA for many years. The headlines that exploded around the world after his kind and generous dinner make of Mr. Rockefeller's continued support of AA a remarkable

testimony to his tolerance and sense of humor. The press has seldom had a giddier time—"John D. Jr. Secretly Aids Alcoholics," "Rockefeller Helps to Cure Alcoholics," "Rockefeller Bared as Angel of Alcoholic Reform Project," "J. D. Jr. Gives Hand to Toper Reform," "Rockefeller Secretly Helps Chronic Drinkers," "John D. Dines Toss Pots." These are a few of the more dignified ones. The scrap book contains, alas, no clippings

from the scandal sheets. The imagination staggers at the field day they must have had.

The status of respectability and acceptance by the general public which we enjoy today makes those early years sound like a penny arcade tune compared with the mighty orchestration of AA recovery today. We newer members missed a lot of the heart aches and struggles but we missed a lot of the challenge and glamor too!