

February 1949

London Calling—

From London, England.

THE escape again?? Yes, but this time from the traffic noise and the petrol smell of the Big City, into the quiet and peaceful countryside of Sussex.

Also to escape from the uninterrupted ringing of the telephone in the "Private Office of the British A.A.H.Q."

I am staying for just this weekend in the same old country house where many times before I spent my weekends. My eyes look around this enormous room, with all its curtains, Victorian furniture, old-fashioned huge fireplace and all the little cupboards which at times provided "hiding places" for just those bottles, for just those occasions.

You know, when it was too cold to get up without having just a drink to warm you up, and another one just before having a stroll through the park or a ride through the woods. A drink to steady your nerves or to cure the hangover from the night before, or just a drink, just because...

The room with its overpowering decorations is the same. The hiding places as well, but things otherwise have changed. The cold no longer an excuse, nor do I need to strain my slowly drying-up brains to in-

vent new excuses—which for some reason or other I always thought essential—although I was determined to get "it" anyhow.

I can relax. I don't need to think up a reason for having a quick one at times when no one else would dream of having one. I don't need to watch the time, waiting for the bar to open. I can drive home tomorrow, not bothering about the possibility of the chambermaid discovering the empties I had to leave behind.

The rooms here have no numbers, they have names. "Sunshine" is the one I occupy. A ridiculous name for a foggy, cold December morning. But the sun *is* shining for me. More than a year ago I felt its first warming rays, when A. A. came into my life. Through my psychiatrist I met Bob the Canadian, who during the first year succeeded in getting five members together. These five represented the British A.A.

I joined them with all my heart, my hopes, my ambitions, and the remainder of my brains and energy. A.A. got hold of me more than alcohol ever did. I live, I think, I dream of A.A. and it has become my only hobby.

We started the way you started. Small gatherings in private houses over plenty of coffee and tomato juice. Our story is the same as the story of all starts of new groups. We succeeded in getting the medical profession interested. We invited reporters, probation and welfare of-

icers. Membership increased, groups were formed, group-leaders appointed, advisory committees, and for a short while even a treasurer.

With the increase of members, the growing pains multiplied. Of course we had them, and of course we had struggles and resentments, intolerance, criticism, and all the busy-bodies you all know, and the pan-handlers and gossips.

But A.A. and its Tradition, its Principles and 12 Steps of Recovery proved stronger. We overcame the growing pains, with the help, experience, and guidance of the Foundation and so we are happy to say that the London Group has topped its "First Hundred." In January two new groups will be formed. One in Lancashire and one in Kent. There is a small group in Scotland, a member of which recently made the first British A.A. broadcasts from Edinburgh. I am glad to report the result was excellent.

Not all of our members live in London, and most of those living in other counties travel up to London to attend our meetings. You have to know British travel facilities to appreciate what this means.

Thus the story of British A.A. in its first year. So as one of the first six members, I feel sure that I can express the thanks of the whole British Group to its Big Brothers and Sisters in U.S.A. and wish *The A.A. Grapevine* and all A.A. Groups everywhere.

A DRY AND HAPPY 1949.—*L. T.*