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The national monthly journal of Alcoholics Anonymous, devoted to those seeking further knowledge on the problem of alcoholism, with the hope that it will help all alcoholics everywhere. Individual opinions expressed here are not, necessarily, those of A.A. as a whole.

A Search in Personal Data for Key to "Slips"

What causes "slips?" Is there one, fundamental cause, or are there many causes? Can "slips" be blamed on acts of omission or commission?

These questions deal with one of the most discussed subjects in A.A. In fact, it might seem that the amount of discussion concerning "slips" runs far out of proportion to the percentage or frequency of "slips." But, if so, there is a ready explanation.

Rarely is a "slip" a matter of exclusive concern. It naturally concerns the unfortunate victim's family and friends, his sponsor or sponsors and everyone else in A.A. who has been trying to help him find solid footing.

Of course, a "slip" is primarily a matter of concern to the one who has this disturbing, baffling experience. Sometimes it is a tragic experience. At best it is humiliating. Never can it be said to be pleasant.

Back of the search for the cause or causes is the hope of finding the means of preventing a recurrence. And that, of course, alone justifies the questions and the discussion of the subject.

Many theories have been advanced, many answers have been given, and many more will be heard as the practices and techniques of A.A. are developed. Through examination of these theories and answers, and by testing them in the great school of hard experience, which is A.A., will finally be found the right answer.

It may be helpful to appraise some of these answers now, and at least to exchange suggestions, based on experience, as to what measures have seemed to work thus far. For this reason, the editors of *The Grapevine* asked several members to contribute their thoughts to a round-up of what might be called clinical data on "slips." The first of these contributions follow; others will appear in subsequent issues.

* * *

I have no doubts about why I had three

"slips" in eight months after first making contact with A.A. I won't say I was "in" during those eight months, because actually I wasn't, even though I attended a fair number of meetings, read the book and listened to older members.

I had a mental reservation about being an alcoholic. That is, I was ready to admit that I was an alcoholic—to a degree. I was not 100 per cent alcoholic. Now, of course, that seems ridiculous. Yet, I don't believe I was the first and only one to harbor that cockeyed idea.

I had never been in any jails, asylums or hospitals. I had not lost any jobs or family, and had not suffered much economically. So, although my life had become unbearable with myself, and although I did recognize that my drinking was out of control and a real problem, nevertheless I thought I was only partly alcoholic. To just what degree—whether I considered myself 40 per cent or 49 per cent or what—I don't know. But I put a qualification on my status in the matter and therefore, of course, put a string on my coming into A.A.

With this mental reservation, it was only a matter of time before I had to try it again. Or, rather it was not so much a matter of trying it again, as that when a situation arose in which I felt it would be very difficult to refuse a drink, I look one with the thought that the results might be bad, but not too bad. I had to do that three times before I discovered the cause.

Once I realized that so far as alcoholism is concerned, one is or is not; and that while the results of one particular drink may be better or worse than some other drink, the inability to control which it will be is the real test—once I realized all of that, I ceased having trouble.

* * *

My only "slip" came after an evening when a bunch of us sat about telling tall stories of our

past drinking days. I had been dry for more than a year and the unpleasant consequences of some of the sprees that came to mind had faded a little from my memory.

Hearing the exploits of this person and that person in the group brought up exploits of my own. I remembered only occasions on which I had had some fun, and somehow my recollections didn't follow through to the morning after.

Right there, I know now, is where I made a dangerous mistake. Strecker writes on this point in his wonderful book, *Alcohol—One Man's Meat*. He warns against the danger of letting your mind dwell on only the rosy, fuzzy dreams of the fun you used to have. He points out that one should force himself to push his recollections on to the bitter end, whether that end happened to be the next morning or two years later at the end of alcoholism's progression.

I failed to do that. When that evening session broke up, there still lingered in my mind glowing recollections of days when I could drink and of those rare occasions on which I did have fun. I started home with pretty pictures of frosty glasses, sparkling liquids and bright lights. I didn't force myself to think also of the cold, grey dawn of reckoning. I didn't get home—I had my "slip."

For the good it might do others, I'd like to stress Strieker's warning. I would also like to say that I don't think it's wise or helpful to anyone to sit around and tell drinking tales just to tell them. I agree that there is great therapeutic value in getting things off one's chest, and it's good when one can laugh about the past.

But, I think we should indulge in that kind of thing only when we are doing it with a real purpose—either to relieve ourselves of something or to help someone else. Always, then, we should be sure we bring up into our conscious mind the not so pleasant pictures; that is, the

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EDITORIAL:

On the 4th Step...

"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

Self appraisal which attains any real accuracy is unquestionably a difficult process. We all find it so easy and pleasant to view ourselves through a rosy hue of complimentary half-truths and so hard and unpleasant to take a look in the uncompromising and glaring light of the unvarnished truth.

The 4th Step is, indeed, a real challenge to honesty with oneself. In this way, it is both preparation and a complement to the 5th Step. To make the "searching and fearless moral inventory" called for in the 4th Step, one must first of all be searchingly and fearlessly honest about himself. The degree of honesty one can achieve will determine the accuracy and therefore the usefulness of the moral inventory.

One practical way of starting this very practical Step—or at least a way that helped one newcomer—is to prepare a record sheet: with two columns, one headed, "Liabilities" and the other, "Assets."

Under "Liabilities" can be listed personality deficiencies and faults, such as intolerance, selfishness, indecisiveness, fear, indolence, a bad temper, impatience and a whole host of other qualities which most everyone at this early stage discovers he has in abundance.

Under "Assets," if any, can be listed the opposite positives—tolerance, generosity (and this does not mean giving the poor bum a dime for a cup of coffee and feeling noble about it for two blocks), thoughtfulness of other people, humility, patience, and a few other attributes. Few persons, if honest, ever work up much of a list on this side of the ledger for their first moral inventory.

The actual process of deciding what to put in each column consists of asking oneself some pointed questions. Am I tolerant of other people's peculiarities, other creeds, other colors, other races, other opinions? Or do I dislike somebody because of the way he combs his hair or ties his tie? How many favors will I do other people without expecting one in return? Will I really go out of my way to help someone, or only when it's convenient? Do I feel superior to others? Am I impatient of others' shortcomings, while being very patient about my own? Am I honest, or do I practice deceit and double-talk, and then excuse myself afterwards with some fancy rationalizing? Am I kind, considerate, gentle?

The more questions one asks himself along this line the clearer become the entries he should make in each column.

If this is the first moral inventory one has taken of himself, or at least the most honest one, he will find it the most trying. But he also will find that in itself it will give him a certain feeling of relief. Finally he has begun to face facts. Finally he has worked up enough courage to face himself as he really is, and not as he has been dreaming he is. This is a courageous step forward. It is another step onto the path to sanity, stability and happiness.

The first inventory should not be the last by any means. In fact, the principle and the technique of the moral inventory become a vital part of the new life. The first is the most difficult. Subsequent inventories show where progress has been made, where more effort still needs to be placed. If an inventory be taken at regular intervals, one has at hand a guide for keeping on the beam.

The moral inventory is one of A.A.'s most effective techniques. Of course, as with other A.A. techniques, its effectiveness depends on how well it is used. The inventory will not work by itself. The benefit comes about through the efforts made to change that which the inventory reveals should be changed.—*T.D., Manhattan*

Our School For Living

At one of my very early meetings, I heard one of our older, experienced men make the statement . . . "A.A. is a school in which we are all learners and all teachers." Being in educational work and having gone to school a good part of my life, this appealed to me, and I started to take my A.A. on that basis. I have never been sorry. After some years of sobriety I am still attending that school, and have found it to be the most important school in the world for me, because I have finally begun to learn how to live.

Inspecting A.A. from an educational point of view, we see "the ideal learning situation." What do the educators strive for? INTEREST is a most necessary requisite to learn anything well. Do we have that qualification when we first approach A.A.? If we haven't, we soon develop an intense interest, if we continue with this new way of living. For many of us, it is the first ray of hope in many years, and naturally we are interested in living again. So, in this school of ours we have the first and one of the most important requisites, in any successful learning experience; a keen interest.

A second important need for doing a good job of learning anything: is motivation or INCENTIVE. We certainly have an incentive in learning in this school. For many of us the incentive is life itself.

When we are attempting anything new, it is encouraging to see PROGRESS. In A.A. we see progress almost immediately; others see it also and comment on how much better we look and how different we seem. This rapid, apparent, improvement is most helpful to us in our new school.

A fourth essential in a good learning situation is continued review and ACTIVITY. We have many opportunities to develop along these lines with meetings, hospital calls, clubrooms, and helping other people. As a group, alcoholics like to do things. We dislike standing by, listening and watching others. In A.A. most of us soon have a chance to talk to some other problem drinker or his family and to show them how the fellowship has helped us. We can always find action of some sort or another and that is most helpful in our school.

Unlike most schools, A.A. makes allowances for INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES in an ideal way. From the beginning we are told that there are no rules, no musts, no time limit, no restrictions of any kind. We may go as slowly or as rapidly as we like; we may become active immediately or we may wait until we think we are ready; we may take as much or as little of The program

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A.A. Ward at Knickerbocker Proves Success

As A.A. groups throughout the country expand, the need for real A.A. hospitalization will grow apace and in searching for a workable plan or set-up the group will encounter the same difficulties and discouragements as we of the Manhattan Group did here in New York about one year ago. Our experience, the disappointments and discouragements we encountered, may help others seeking to enlarge their hospital work.

A review of the former situation here is in order. A drunk had two choices: Either the psycho-ward of one of our large public hospitals, or a private hospital where acceptance was based strictly on the man's ability to pay and pay plenty.

At the time the position taken by the ten New York hospitals approached was either "our facilities are already over-taxed at this time" or, they were brutally frank . . . "alcoholics would create such a disturbance as to wreck the routine of the rest of the hospital."

Finally Knickerbocker Hospital, a small general hospital of not more than 200 beds, supported entirely by voluntary contributions, listened with sympathetic ear and with fingers crossed finally consented to a trial period of three months, under these conditions:

1. A.A. to guarantee payment of all bills.
2. By the end of the three months' period maintain a daily average of six beds.
3. Select ethical practitioners to take charge

29 New Groups Added to List

Every month more and more new groups organize. The roster of those which have established regular meetings during the last two months includes the following cities and towns: Echo Park, California; Garden City, Long Island, New York; LaGrange, Georgia; war veterans in Roanoke, Virginia; Sante Fe, New Mexico; Garden City, Kansas; Gainesville, Florida; Everett, Washington; Athens and Coshocton, Ohio; Anniston and Cherokee, Alabama; Waco and Alvin, Texas; Brockton, Massachusetts; Perryville, Maryland; Shawnee, Oklahoma; Fayetteville, North Carolina; Cornwall Bridge, Connecticut; Logansport, Indiana; Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Monroe, Wisconsin; Endicott and Shortsville, New York; Center, Colorado. Three groups beyond the United States borders are also listed among the newcomers—Halifax, Nova Scotia; Hollyburn, British Columbia, and London, England.

and visit me patients at least once each day.

4. The charge to be a flat \$10.00 per day to the hospital.

We were assigned a door in the private wing consisting of private and semi-private rooms together with a small six bed ward and comprising in all 19 beds. The first patient was admitted Easter Sunday, 1945, and from then on the plan was a success. From time to time changes in routine were made and added rules of our own were formulated; the two most important being that a patient is admitted once, and once only, and while in the hospital is visited only by A.A. members.

The single admission stops the project from deteriorating into just another drying-out spot and the second rule serves the double purpose of protecting the man, trying to get over the jitters, from a nagging wife or well meaning but misinformed friend and to assure his absorbing some of the fundamentals of A.A. The entire atmosphere is maintained to impress upon the patient the idea that his is a serious illness and, while it is no disgrace per se to have become an alcoholic, it is a disgrace not to do anything about it.

The growth was steady until now we average between 15 and 18 beds filled per day. To say that a great deal of time and effort is required to keep the plan going is putting it mildly. It takes work, lots of work. For example; 22 men per week were assigned as orderlies performing without compensation, other than the satisfaction derived from helping the other fellow, the simpler routine tasks. To date 700 persons have been hospitalized and expansion continues?

The average length of stay is five days, which allows the patient a chance to get the alcohol out of his or her system and to learn the true nature of the affliction and what the answer is. He has come in contact with and talked to any number of A.A. members, he is served by an A.A. volunteer worker and meets sympathetic understanding treatment from the nurses and the two doctors, one of whom is an authority on alcoholism, the other a competent interne.

When he is ready for discharge he is met by his sponsor and brought to a meeting. Should he decide he needs A.A. he is welcomed. If he still feels as though his drunk was the well known "accident" or if he is one of those "it can't happen to me types"—well and good. His hand is shaken and good-byes exchanged.

The hospital authorities are happy about the whole thing, though they are somewhat at a loss to understand why, contrary in all expectations, the alcoholic floor is the quietest and best run unit in the entire hospital. There are many

reasons why this is so but the principal one is that we all—patients, sponsors, visitors and volunteer workers—speak the same language and it is the old story of "it takes a drunk to handle a drunk."

The hardest job we have is to explain to the uninitiated that what we offer at Knickerbocker is not a "cure." A wife sees her husband, possibly on the lag-end of a month's drunk, leave her a sodden hulk only to return home bright-eyed and clear-headed. Then the sales job has to be done on both. He is not cured—he is only dried out, solely for the purpose of absorbing the methods and practices of A.A. he has only taken the first step along the path of sobriety and, believe it or not, Mrs. Doe, he must come to the meetings; he must revisit the hospital and he must do the work the rest of us do, the work which is so beneficial to us. Knickerbocker Hospital and its course of treatment is but the means toward an end and NOT AN END in itself.—J.G., *Manhattan*

Suggests Professors Should Be Educated

Last summer I was studying at a mid-western university; one of my courses was The Family, taught by Prof. E. M. In the course he discussed alcoholism. We were in the habit of handing in questions to be discussed. I took the opportunity one day of handing in an anonymous note suggesting that since he was a sociologist and that alcoholism was a social problem which had been handled best, to date, by A.A. that he look into A.A. To which he replied in class that he had heard of A.A., that it was some sort of evangelist group, but that, after all, it doesn't take a drunk to cure a drunk. The class laughed. Being the daughter of an A.A., I know that it is no laughing matter.

Many morals can be drawn from this story, but I think the most important one is that A.A. has captured one of the greatest fundamentally Christian virtues, tolerance. It is evident that this man, in a responsible position, has neglected this. This story also shows A.A. the wealth of work left to do—to contact the professors in our universities and show them the fundamental picture of alcoholism and educate them, because these men are shaping the minds of our young people, some of whom may become alcoholic in time or who today may have this problem in their own homes and are looking for help. If these professors could be educated A.A.-wise, they are in a position to help many people.—J.F.

ARE FAMILIES PEOPLE? —or Home Sweet Home!

The other night I made an A.A. call on a woman who had been dry eleven months last August and who has been nibbling and binging, wailing and regretting ever since. Her daughter called me hysterically and down I went with four other A.A.s who happened to be at my house and Bob, my son-in-law. It was a grim "home" we walked into. The woman was lying on her bed literally writhing—every fiber of her body crying out for a drink while her husband and daughter together and in chorus told her what a lousy, so-and-so drunken bum she was. The other four A.A.s went into the bedroom and soothed her jangled nerves with a few well-chosen words and a bottle of beer while Bob and I tried to explain the disease of alcoholism to pappa and child. We might as well have been trying to get in touch with Mussolini by means of a ouija board with Sanskrit characters. They weren't having any! "She was cured for eleven months, why did she deliberately have to 'uncure' herself?" they wailed. She was a no-good drunk and they had lost respect for her years ago and weren't going to try to get it back now, they went on. It was no good telling them anything. Their minds were closed, but, they told me plenty! Not by their abusive words but by what lay behind those words. The picture was clear and as I came home I wondered how, with no love or cooperation, fellowship or understanding, the gal had stayed sober for even one day.

Family Can Cooperate

It was New Year's night. Bob and I got home about midnight. The fire was burning, my grandchild was tucked safely in bed, my daughter was waiting up for us. Peace reigned as the three of us sat down for a cup of coffee and a good talk. The contrast with the early part of the evening was terrific and thankfulness bubbled up in my heart. I began to wonder, humbly, just how much of my sobriety I owed to my own A.A. efforts and how much to my children's A.A. understanding. Although I had never lost their love, like the daughter of my suffering friend they had lost their respect for and trust in me. While they never went so far as to call me a drunken bum they must have thought it, in a modified form, many times. How could they help it? The story of the woman I had visited was lily-white compared to mine. From my point of view she certainly deserves a break more than I do, but here I am with a couple of children whom I have hurt unmercifully in the past but who forgot all that when they themselves caught the spirit of A.A. As

far as I can figure it out in retrospect, they never stayed behind me giving me a push nor did they perch on a lofty place and give me a pull. They walked with me hand in hand stumbling and groping and learning the program with me. At first they were doubtful—sure—"Mummy has a new fad!" But they were willing to humor the "old gal" enough to look into the "ism" or "cult" which claimed that Mummy had a disease and not failing-of-the-will power—and lo!—another miracle! They became A.A.s themselves in all but alcoholism. Like any other successful A.A.s, after their first exposure, they didn't follow the program for me or for anyone but themselves, and they reaped rich harvests for themselves.

My children don't take my sobriety or their happiness for granted. They know that I'm not cured and they know that their happiness can vanish overnight. It's enough that I'm sober and they're happy today—and—that I'll be serenely sober and they'll be richly happy tomorrow—if—we continue to practice the 12 Steps in all our affairs.

I rather resented the intrusion of that particular A.A. call New Year's night. I had been joyously happy the night before at our group party, singing in the New Year soberly but gayly. I had gone up to Bill's on New Year's afternoon and had come home permeated with the spiritual happiness of good-fellowship. The call was a jarring note, but a jarring note that I now see I needed. Though I love my children and my home, mightn't, I have taken them all a little for granted if I hadn't seen the contrast? Why God has seen fit to bless me with the love and serenity which fills my life I shall never understand; why discord and lack of true compassion is the lot of my friend, I shall never know. It seems a pity that the deep gratitude which I have in my heart should be made deeper by witnessing another's misfortune—but there it is.

The Past Is Past

God grant that somehow, someday her daughter will say to her as mine did, "No matter how unhappy you sometimes made us in the past, you have made up for it a hundred times over in the last few years" and that she may hear her son-in-law say to her daughter, as mine did, "no matter how tough the going may be sometimes, dear, we'll always be all right as long as we stick closely to 'our' A.A."—Lois K., *White Plains, N. Y.*

VINO VIGNETTES: *Heartbreak Run*

It was nearing midnight on New Year's Eve in the New York A.A. clubhouse when Bill the brakeman, over a cup of coffee recalled how 1945 had brought him the most trying, dramatic moments of his forty-seven years.

Publicity and attending vanity; shock, sorrow and frustration followed by delirious joy had been the fare for the year. But Bill had ridden out the emotional stresses, stayed sober and had found a new inner calm ... an awakening.

People find Bill's face vaguely familiar, for his picture was published nationally in a war bond campaign sponsored by the railroad. They had selected him as the most typical brakeman to be posed helping a wounded GI off a train.

Bill had been working on the railroad for many years. Now his run was Washington-Philly-New York. It was on a bleak day last March leaving Washington that they handed him the frightening telegram others had been receiving.

His oldest son was an American Eagle pilot with the RAF, had been reported shot down over Berlin, but now the War Department regretted the intelligence reports that indicated that none of the crew had survived that burning bomber.

Bill stepped aboard and it became Heartbreak

Run. He cried in the men's room first. After Philly he didn't seem to give a damn for anything. Hope had winked out and now fate jeered. He had been around the group for a few years, had had some trouble, but had been dry nearly two years. Now he didn't care. Not now. Now there could be only the one thing—the 8th Avenue bars behind Penn station with their pastel blue fluorescent lighting—the rye to ease, to extinguish the hot burning, choking coal in his throat.

Bill doesn't remember much about his heavy zombie-like steps past those bars. The lights didn't divert the rimmed eyes in his frozen face, he didn't hear the juke boxes or smell the stale beer odors. He wanted to talk to somebody. And the A.A. clubhouse seemed to draw him like a mystical magnet.

At the clubhouse the leader of the meeting was in need of another speaker and asked Bill on sight. A sudden gratitude to be off the streets and in the clubhouse surged over Bill and he agreed. People who heard Bill that night said you couldn't have bought an encore for a cool million. At The end of the meeting the leader asked that the Lord's Prayer be said for

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(What's the funniest A.A. tale or quip you've heard?
Others would like to hear it. Send it in.)

One of the Vermont brethren, after a slip, described his last bottle purchase as "hospital lotion, \$150 a bottle."

* * *

After long and solemn deliberation Pat and Mike had decided to swear off and were on the way to the priest's to take the pledge. En route they came to a saloon.

Said Mike to Pat: "Let's stop in for our last drink together."

Said Pat to Mike: "No, indeed. The Father might smell it on our breaths. Better wait till we come back."

* * *

As one gal member explained her start towards alcoholism—"I just followed the crowd and got in the wrong line."

* * *

FAMILIAR SAYINGS

"Just one won't hurt you."

"You can't stand on one leg."

"Now it's my turn."

"Any room in Knickerbocker?"

* * *

The current crop of recruits in Washington, D.C., is said to be coming in suffering from delirium Trumans.

* * *

As one of the boys remarked to a wayward member, "Pardon me, but your slip is showing."

Our School

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as we like. (The importance of staying away from that first drink is stressed, of course.)

Reviewing these salient points so important in any successful educational experience; interest, incentive, progress, activity and attention to individual differences, we see that in our school we have the most favorable opportunity to learn to know ourselves and to learn how to live. There are many other characteristics and attitudes necessary and important in A.A. and any good school but I have attempted to list only a few of the outstanding essentials in "an ideal learning situation."

Our school is different from other schools in many respects but probably the two greatest differences lie at the beginning and the end. The entrance requirements are higher; in some cases scores of years of hell and thousands of dollars and . . . WE NEVER GRADUATE.

P. B. J.—Cleveland

The Pleasures of Reading

The Perennial Philosophy

by Aldous Huxley (Harper & Brothers, \$3)

Virtually every member of A. A. at some stage of his spiritual development reaches a point where he consciously desires to re-examine his "spiritual experience," to systematize his spiritual concepts, to enlarge his knowledge of metaphysical truths, and, by appropriate spiritual exercises, to achieve greater capacity for that service to God and man to which he has dedicated himself.

In most cases, the individual is not concerned with pursuing his inquiry along doctrinal or theological lines. He prefers, in seeking to learn more about the divine element in his life and in the universe, to proceed, if he can, empirically as the scientists do rather than by dogma or rule of thumb.

It is only by making physical experiments that we can discover the intimate nature of matter and its potentialities. And it is only by making psychological and moral experiments that we can discover the intimate nature of mind and its potentialities. But is there in our everyday experience anything which reveals a divine element in the mind of the average sensual man having substance and potentiality? The distinguished author of this work (kin of the famous Thomas Huxley), whose life and writings record a progressive development of great human interest in his search for universal truth, says, "Yes!" He affirms what many of us have learned without putting into words, that when the human mind "is subjected to certain rather drastic treatments, the divine element, of which it is in part at least composed, becomes manifest, not only to the mind itself, but also, by its reflection in external behavior, to other minds."

Philosophic perennis is a phrase coined by Leibniz to designate the Highest Common Factor present among the traditional lore of primitive peoples everywhere, and in its fully developed forms is to be found in every one of the higher religions. The present author describes this element as "the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the imminent and transcendent Ground of all being."

Huxley turns away from most of the professional philosophers and men of letters, the poets and metaphysicians, whose knowledge of this subject is "generally at second hand." Recognizing that in every age there have been some men and women who have fulfilled the necessary conditions for acquiring direct spiritual knowledge, and who have left accounts of their experience related in one comprehensive system of thought, Huxley has gone to these first-hand exponents of the Perennial Philosophy, "because there is good reason to suppose that they knew what they were talking about."

Such a pragmatic approach to the riddle of the universe is appealing to alcoholics who learn little except from experience. Accustomed to paradoxes as we are, we are not surprised that this anthology, with its highly illuminated and fully explanatory running commentary, turns out to be a masterly, systematic presentation of mystical religious philosophy with its taproots in the rich ground of experience. The "saints," "prophets," "sages" and "enlightened ones" represented in the collection include St. Thomas Aquinas, Pascal, Eckhardt, Thomas a Kempis, St. Francis, Lao Tzu, Fenelon, Chuang Tzu, Boethius, Tolstoy, John Woolman and St. Augustine.

Beginning with the focal point where mind and matter, action and thought have their meeting place in human psychology, the material is arranged under topical headings some of which in particular have been the subject of much personal reflection and group discussion among our membership. Thus, in Chapter XVIII, there is an informative discussion of the variety of meanings attributed to the word "faith." It is stated axiomatically that "Faith is a pre-condition of all systematic knowing, all purposive doing and all decent living." But to this general faith there must be added two kinds of special faith. Stating it pragmatically and in a form which ought to be acceptable to the most skeptical, Huxley writes of:

"faith in the authority of qualified experts sufficient to permit the searcher after truth to take their word for statements which he personally has not verified; and faith in his own working hypotheses, sufficient to induce him to test his provisional beliefs by means of appropriate action. This action may confirm the belief which inspired it. Alternatively, it may bring proof that the original working hypothesis was ill founded, in which case it will have to be modified until it becomes conformable to the facts and so passes from The realm of faith to that of knowledge."

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IF DRUNKS ARE SQUARE PEGS, A.A. IS MY SQUARE HOLE

In January 1942 my book, *Drunks Are Square Pegs* was published. This book contained a fairly complete story of my struggles, defeats and victories as an alcoholic, in addition In some personal conclusions as a result of over five years of being completely "dry" and over six years of sobriety. Towards the end of my book I put forth a theory of my own—*maybe* an alcoholic could drink normally if he or she had been absolutely "dry" for at least five years (I wonder if I would have made it four if that's all I had been "dry") and had become completely re-adjusted to life, found his "square hole and stayed in it for sufficientlime".

This theory did not work.

No alcoholic can ever drink anything, containing the slightest amount of alcohol, in a normal way.

How do I know? I tried and it didn't work.

In addition to my own "experiment," I have talked to numerous other alcoholics who have shared my idea and "tested" it and I have interviewed many doctors of medicine and psychology who are working with alcoholics. Do you know what I learned from all of these? I have been unable to find a single alcoholic who has become a normal drinker.

My book, *Drunks are Square Pegs*, in my own opinion, contains many sound and proven conclusions. (Sounds kinda stuffy and conceited, doesn't it?) Anyhow—I did become "dry," stay "dry" for over five years and I did find my "square hole." Where I went off the beam completely and the whole reason my theory failed so miserably was that I brushed aside the very important trifle, an alcoholic's allergy to alcohol, as though it were about as important as beer foam to a guy with the shakes. Here's a direct quotation from my book on the .subject:

Double Allergy

"Another thing: Maybe there is something in this theory about some people being allergic to liquor. To be perfectly honest—I don't know. I have heard it argued most convincingly pro and con." I wish to state right here and now that I am thoroughly convinced an alcoholic is both mentally and physically allergic to alcohol. And if there is anyone who doesn't believe me, will he kindly step in the back room?

For the benefit of those who haven't read *Drunks Are Square Pegs* (I hope you haven't because you might have been induced to try my screwy theory). I will tell you briefly my story.

Bill W. turned the "key" in me and I became "dry" in October 1935. With Bill W., the late Fitz M. and some others I worked on alcoholics as we tried to keep ourselves "dry"

and insure ourselves against any return to our former miserable existence. In time the present 12 Steps of the A.A. program emerged and some of the little group went on to found A.A.

After I had been absolutely "dry" for over four years, I happened to spend a few months in a small southern university town. I became very friendly with several of the professors who showed keen interest in my work with alcoholics which was based on my personal endeavor to stay "dry." The professor of psychology was especially interested and he liked to start theoretical discussions on "why does an apparently normal person become an alcoholic?" All of us would offer various "causes" for the baffling phenomenon of the alcoholic—some plausible, others wholly ridiculous.

Readjustment First

The result of these discussions was that I became convinced an alcoholic was a "square peg in a round hole who drank because he was so miserable in his round hole," and if he could get "dry" and stay "dry" long enough to find his "square hole" he would become a happy useful citizen. Whether he could ever drink again never entered our discussions and would not have seemed to be of any importance to me if it had—I was much too concerned with being "dry," staying that way and helping others to "dry up" to bother with such an unimportant matter.

During the months following these "intellectual" discussions I told many people the "square peg" theory. In fact, I would elaborate on it to the probable boredom of living room gatherings in the way the newly converted Com-

Shades of Prohibition!

Time magazine, listing some of the less important events of 1945, reports that in March a North Carolina State Senator introduced, a bill to forbid public habitual drunkenness among judges.

* * *

FLUSHING QUOTES

Frank L.: "You cannot drown in Lac St. Pierre if you do not go in the water."

Mike D'A.: "The way I understand it, resentments do not make me drunk—liquor makes me drunk."

Joe F.: "Slips seem to be the cause of gossip, bits of news, The occasion for many phone calls. Why don't we call someone and talk with pleasure because So-and-so has been dry a year or two?"

mmists used to hold forth in the early 'thirties. (What a stupid so-in-so I was! Here was the old alcoholic ego building itself up to the inevitable splash. Hold your hats!)

It didn't take long. Yes—yes, quite possibly an alcoholic could drink normally after he had found his "square hole" I would say in my most profound manner. When I first offered this theory to the eagerly waiting world there was a big MAYBE in it. In nothing flat the capital letters of this "maybe" grew so small and my utterance of it became such an inaudible whisper—(Whoa! You're way ahead of me!) Sure—my alcoholic mind wrapped itself around this thing as though it were the most important discovery on earth. I must test my theory, and be the martyr to a cause.

My testing period of approximately ten months when I tried drinking to prove my theory, was one of the most, abnormal pieces of drinking anyone ever did. There wasn't one single thing normal about it even though I didn't get drunk. I kept an accurate account of the dates on which I took drinks, their exact number, what kind of liquor was taken, and my precise reaction before, during and after consuming them. (A normal drinker might vaguely have noted these facts the first few times but then would have dismissed the whole matter from his mind, just as a person would forget about a food which had formerly disagreed with him.) At the end of this farcical testing period (it wasn't funny to me then) came my book with its many quotations from my voluminous notes. How profound I believed them to be!

It Works

Drunks Are Square Pegs was published in January 1942. I continued to drink until the end of last May (1945) when I finally was willing to swallow my pride, admit the total failure of my theory, humbly return to A.A. and start through the 12 Stops as any other beginner. I believe there was only one difference in my approach — I felt I had been such a complete sap I didn't have the right to expert them to work. They have, thank God, and for me they are the ultimate for an alcoholic. Believe me — I'm just a "dry" drunk who is going to write *no more books* on the subject. It's all in our A.A. book.—*Charly C., Manhattan*

* * *

Bob B., who is a professional actor, gives a dramatic flair to his account of life in A.A., which he describes as being "without drunkenness, danger, disgust and D.T.s; fears, fantasies, fights and frustration; hangovers, heartbreaks, horrors and hospitals."

The Clip Sheet

Worry Clinic

Atlantic City, N. J., Press: "We need to launch a new society called N.N. or 'Neurotics National' so that millions of 'Worry Birds' and other psychoneurotics will realize they have a lot of company. This is one of the first benefits received by the drunkard who looks around at the large gathering of Alcoholics Anonymous that pack the auditorium."

Alcoholic Ward Asked

Los Angeles, Cal., Times: "Establishment of a separate ward in General Hospital for the treatment of alcoholics was advocated in a panel discussion before 200 delegates of the family and adult services division of a Welfare Council meeting. . . . J. A. Sullivan, county psychopathic probation officer, made the suggestion after Deputy Chief of Police Arthur Hohman pointed out that 59,252 arrests were made for drunkenness during the past year, compared with 44,116 in 1941.

"A spokesman for the local branch of Alcoholics Anonymous recommended establishment of a research council, pointing out that this is the only large metropolitan area without treatment, clinical and research facilities. . . . Speakers who described in detail the impact of alcoholism on the community included Miss Myrtle Judd of the Veterans Administration Facility, Dr. John Foyle of the County Medical Association, Dr. Charlotte Buhler of the General Hospital, and Marjorie Davies of the Assistance League."

Louisville Plans Clinic

Louisville, Ky., Times: "Establishment of the first private-sponsored clinic for the treatment of alcoholics in the United States today was being planned by Norton Memorial Infirmary, Alcoholics Anonymous and the distillery industry here. It will be housed temporarily in an old brick building on Oka, owned by the hospital. . . . Yale University professor. Dr. Selden D. Bacon, Mrs. Marty Mann, New York executive of the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism and A.A. member, conferred with F. W. Drybrough, chairman of the infirmary's \$6,000,000 drive for new buildings. . . . Representatives from the University of Louisville claimed to cooperate with the work, and the basic proceedings for the establishment were outlined by Mrs. Mann."

* * *

A Detroit, Mich., columnist writes: "A bartender in a Fort Street tavern is secretary-treasurer of Detroit's A.A. He was once a chemist, lost his job from drink, and took up bartending when he turned to A.A. Says he's doing fine."

PROSPECT?



"Now my brother John. . . . He's a guy who really NEEDS A.A."

A. A. AND THE ADVERTISING MAN

Reprinted from *Printers' Ink*, Sept. 14, 1945

As an A.A. of five years' standing and an advertising man of 30 years' experience, I feel qualified to make a few observations on the relation of sobriety to the creative worker. My views are personal and do not necessarily express the opinions of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, of my present or past employers or of this magazine.

Drinking is not a serious matter to nine out of ten people who drink, including advertising men and women. It may become a serious matter, but drinking is nothing to worry about unless the definite signs appear that label a participant *alcoholic*. To determine if you are alcoholic—that is, one whom alcohol controls rather than vice versa—attend an open meeting of A.A. in any city. Or ask an A.A. of your acquaintance—there's probably one in every agency or advertising department.

Among and between clients and agencies, drinking plays a salubrious and beneficial part, so long as the individuals are the lucky nine out of ten to whom alcohol is not a poison. A few highballs unstuff the stuffed shirts, relieve the tension, bring comic relief to a tough job, help get an O.K. As an A.A. is not a reformer, he observes these after-hours goings-on with ap-

proval and enjoyment—believe it or not. To explain this: A hay fever sufferer may not be able to ride a horse because of an allergy to horses, but this does not dull his enjoyment of a polo game or a day at the races.

But in the advertising business as in other occupations there is always the one man out of ten who is an alcoholic. He sees his boss and clients or employees having a hell of a good time over a few drinks, even getting plastered once in a while, and can't see why he isn't entitled to share in the fun. So he joins the brawl. Next day, the boss is at work, feeling a little foggy perhaps—but he's there, and so are the client's advertising manager and the agency's art director and the other copy writers and everybody else—except the alcoholic.

Yes, where the hell is Jones? He was at the party last night, wasn't he? Of course, and one of the party even dropped him off at his home. What Jones did, with the fiendish acuteness of the alcoholic, was to wait until the car buzzed out of sight, then hurry around to Murphy's, who would still be open for another hour. What happened in the next ten days, Jones himself couldn't tell you, except that the old nightmares returned with increased vigor. House

(Continued on Page 12)

FROM THE OUTSIDE, LOOKING IN

(How do we look to total strangers, to people who have never suffered personally from pangs of alcoholism, or who have never even lived near enough to an alky to know how violently it can effect life. Here's one answer to that question, penned by the secretary of John D., of Manhattan, who attended a meeting led by her boss at his invitation, so that she might see at first hand the people and the work that make up his extra-curricular interests.)

Some months before I became associated with Mr. D., I had read a number of articles and editorials applauding the work of A.A. but I never really understood what "alcoholic" meant, until Mr. D. put me right. Now I think I know, as well as any non-alcoholic can, just what a disease is alcoholism. Since starting to work for Mr. D., observing his activity and absorption in the program. I have wanted to attend a meeting, so when the invitation was extended nothing could have kept me away.

I may as well start at the beginning. After a good dinner (at very small cost) in the club cafeteria, Mr. D. introduced me to several of his friends, all of whom seemed glad to have me present—and this impressed me, for it seemed to me that I should probably not have felt the same if positions were reversed. Personally, from what I've seen, I think A.A. puts up with an awful lot from a bunch of "holier-than-thou" non-alcoholics who simply do not know what it's all about . . . and I think the injection of a little A.A. philosophy into all of us would help a great deal.

I have been very definitely instructed by Mr. D. not to indulge in any "laudatory exegesis," but, working with him as I do, I've gotten kind of used to his brusque, business manner, and I couldn't help noticing how he bloomed, as soon as he hit the door of the cafeteria . . . he glowed with pleasure at all of his friends, and, somehow, his manner relaxed.

Mr. D. spoke generally about his early experiences with alcohol, during the occupation period in Europe after the last war, then during his college and post-graduate periods, and, finally, of his really serious trouble in the roaring thirties (by "serious trouble," I mean that he himself then realized he had a drinking problem), he has the faculty of making his escapades extremely amusing, but, all the while, his listener is aware that he is listening to a serious man who is not making light of a serious matter. He made me understand what is meant by "remorse," as it applies to alcoholism, and, on the whole, I got a picture of how A.A. helped him, where other methods failed. I somehow felt, listening to Mr. D., that here was another side of his personality, and I felt very deeply his honesty and sincerity, and his very earnest wish to make the program work for others as it had for him. I knew, too, from what he told the meeting, and from little things he's said to

me from time to time, that A.A. was responsible for the blossoming of his friendliness and humor, and his warmth, and I began really to understand what might have been, had he not grasped the A.A. life line.

I want to make it very clear that I did not attend the meeting as a "sightseer" or to be "amused," but, even if I had, I should have realized, as must anyone, before any time had passed at all, that here is a way of life which anyone can practice to his profit . . . it does not take an A.A. to practice the principles of the 24-hour program; and certainly both A.A.s and non-A.A.s need a practical relationship with God. I had been assured, when I started for the meeting, that I was not going to hear a lot of "God stuff"; but I had qualms, nevertheless, about "this religious business." There isn't an A.A. in the world who is fussier than I about his religious affiliations, and I have yet to meet a friendlier, more practical, or easier-to-know God than I met at the A.A. meeting. Charlie H., the third speaker on Mr. D.'s program, introduced me to this God, and I want, somehow, to get to know him better. I recalled particularly that, when my father and I read Douglas' *Magnificent Obsession*, we were so fascinated by his suggested philosophy that we spent our evenings reading and studying the Bible until we found the passage which formed the subject for the book. All this made Charlie's talk just so much easier for me to appreciate, and A.A.—always allowing for personal opinions and individual understandings and my very limited knowledge—it seems to me, elaborates on Douglas' theory and improves it. I like the thought, "Do unto others as I have *done, to you*" a little better than, "Do unto others as you *would have, them do unto you*"; I think it fits in a little better with "You must not give it back, for I have used it all up." And I like the 24-hour principle . . . as I listened to Charlie, I realized that too much of my life has been spent worrying about what's going to happen tomorrow and the day after, and I made a resolution to follow the precept "Let *this* be a good day, and tomorrow will be a better one."

I cannot possibly cover all that I have in my mind to reflect on: what I want to make clear is that I benefited in no small degree by something every one of the speakers had to say . . . and that somewhat surprised me at the time, but it doesn't any more; I suppose I had the usual erroneous impression that the program (as I understood it) couldn't possibly be of any use to anyone but an alcoholic: I do think that a good many of its phases now that I know a little more about it would be no end helpful to all of us . . . and I'm speaking of the practical.

as well as the spiritual side of the program.

As Marty M. spoke, I wondered if, perhaps, I were not an alcoholic at heart, if not in fact, because almost everything she said bit me right between the eyes. She it was who really made me understand what made an "alcoholic" tick . . . she it was who told me why alcoholism is, in fact, a disease and not a habit.

Ed S. helped a lot to make me understand what A.A. means, and he showed me a man who had learned, the hard way, to laugh at himself (and enjoy it as much as the other fellow) and, by laughing, to conquer his own particular devil. I admired his sincerity and unselfconsciousness, and his humility. It's pretty hard to be humble, but, from what I saw, A.A.'s humility is not craven, it's a proud humility; for while it recognizes that each individual is only a small segment of an enormous pie, still it is aware that the pie is only as good as each of its ingredients. And so I bumped into self-examination again, and found it good.

I don't want to say much more about Bill than that I'm not at all surprised to find that he is one of the founders of A.A. It seemed to me, as I listened to him, that the word Mr. D. used in introducing him—"modest"—was the only one which really described him. And, here again, I think that a fellow who needed a friendly hand, and wise counsel, whether he suffered from alcoholism or not, could be sure of truly sympathetic understanding and the right answer, if he just asked Bill about it.

I went home feeling quite certain that I'd made a lot of new friends who had shared with me an unforgettable evening, and permitted me to take something of each of them home with me . . . and all I want to know is: "Please may I come again?"—*Jessica Bove, New York*

SEAMEN'S GROUP ISSUES PAMPHLET

At the A.A. Seamen's Club, 334½ West 24th Street, New York, is now available an excellent, informative pamphlet for alcoholic seamen; on one page the 12 Steps have been streamlined into 5, while on another the entire 12 are given.

* * *

A.A. Street

Montgomery, Ala., *Advertiser*: "In a grand gesture New York City changed the name of Sixth Avenue to Avenue of the Americas. The President of Chile came up for the formalities, and numerous other dignitaries were on hand. . . . People used to referring to Sixth Avenue will not welcome so long a name for the old street. . . . Maybe it will come to be known as A.A. Avenue. . . . A.A. is generally associated with the organization called Alcoholics Anonymous, but it might easily become the popular name for the Avenue of The Americas."

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

Letters to this department are invited on any subject pertinent to A.A. Due to space limitations you are asked to hold your letters to a maximum of 350 words.

Only initials will be published unless the writer authorizes use of his first name as identification for A.A. friends.

The Grapevine will not divulge the full name of any writer but will forward A.A. communications addressed to the writers of letters published here.—The Editors.

Just Like Sponges

From Santa Ana, Cal.

To me, the way this thing seems to work is that it fills our lives to the exclusion of the thoughts about or need for alcoholic stimulant.

If you wring out a wet sponge, you dehydrate it, just as we can dehydrate an alcoholic by removing the alcohol from his system. Then, if you release the wrung-out sponge, it fills up on air and is empty and useless. If you dehydrate an alcoholic, then release him, as we were always released before A.A., to try and keep our sobriety on will power alone, the same thing happens to us that happens to a sponge. We filled up on air because we could find nothing to devote the time and energy to that we usually spent in consuming alcohol so we started to soak it up again, just as the sponge would start to absorb water if dropped back into it.

But this time A.A. was there to show us the way of life we had really always wanted and couldn't find, so after we were dehydrated this time we filled up on A.A. The more we expand the more A.A. we soak up so that we have no empty void to fill with boredom, resentments, and ennui, to drive us back to drink. So give me more and more A.A. By the way, I now own a home, something I never had before.—*J.F.H.*

Charity Begins at Home

From Manhattan

We alcoholics have dreamed fine dreams, idealistic and impossible dreams and our dreams were as inconsistent as our reality. We drank to dream and when we couldn't hold the dream we drank for oblivion.

We come into A.A. and only a small complement of us are able to put more than a few of the 12 Steps into positive action. Our individual will power, never much to begin with, has become negligible. Yet, through a collective pool we are able, each one, to draw enough strength for a large percentage of us to stay sober. Always, we have needed protection and in A.A. we receive it along with the opportunity of giving it. Actually, no reformation we may ac-

complish compensates for the menace we have been to society, and only the inscrutability of the Creator, who permits abnormalities throughout Nature, justifies our being.

There are others, our parents and our wives, who have dreamed fine dreams, unrealized dreams, that were consistent with reality. Our parents, in most cases, are above or beyond care since most of us reach A.A. in the middle of our prime. Our wives, in an astonishingly large number, have stayed by us. Can we, liars and cheats that we have been, wake that foggy part of our brain to an understanding of what these fine women have gone through?

Here is the plumed knight in shining armor she married, whose plumes turned to froth and whose armor became a beer can. Look at the weakling, who after ten to twenty years of debauchery, hasn't the stamina for any more; who has lied to her, humiliated her, even caused her to beg for him. Look at the still shaking wreck Straightening his drooping plumes, polishing his rusty armor and this fatuous egotistical ass expects admiration and approbation because he has found a way to stay sober! These loyal women are only too happy to see us sober. Now, it is their right to receive the courtesy, affection, consideration, understanding and protection that was always their due.

We are sick people! We have a mental or physical allergy towards drink! Always, we had excuses for taking a drink and if we are looking for reasons for drinking one allergy is a good many. It would be more realistic if we look our collective self to a mirror and looked at the weakling with the immature emotions, the shallow thinker and the moral coward, the one who has confused stubbornness with will and who cannot walk alone.

We have found a way of sobriety applicable to all although only acceptable to a few. We do not know all the answers nor does that self-appointed missionary, the "professional" A.A. We must stop decrying any method which is apparently keeping a man sober; even the man "on the wagon" may stay there; many do.

We have made a mess of the past and if we are not learning, the dignity of humility it will be impossible for us to learn the will of God; only with His help can we lay the ghosts of our vague disquieting fears and overcome our ingrained dislike for facing the disagreeable conditions of living. We need His help if we are ever to attain the stature of the manhood we have never known. Above all, first let us practice our new-found fellowship of man on our loyal ones for our charity must begin at home.—*Pat C.*

A Costly Annoyance

From Pittsburgh, Pa.

It always used to annoy me when I heard that someone considered himself too socially prominent in town to become associated with the A.A. group. The person was usually one who admitted he or she was an alcoholic, and after studying the A.A. book had agreed to go along on the program . . . provided it didn't entail close association with the main group.

In my opinion, people like that hadn't really hit bottom. They hadn't suffered enough. On one occasion I became so annoyed that I frankly told the person to his face that he had forgotten he was just another stumblebum like the rest of us from across the railroad trucks. Perhaps that is why I got drunk that night.—*A.L.M.*

No Escape Clause

From San Francisco, Cal.

I took a nosedive soon after coming into A.A. Then after a few months of meetings I slipped badly again. Looking back now after several dry months I can see what was wrong and I am writing this letter to *The Grapevine* with the hope it may help some other newcomer.

It had been easy for me to take the 1st Step . . . admitting I had become powerless over alcohol, and my life, unmanageable. I knew I had a serious problem. Like the rest I also had lost jobs, friends, had been hospitalized many times, and had become a thoroughly miserable person, without hope.

But while I could admit my problem I was uncomfortable about it. WHY had I become an alcoholic? WHY did this have to happen to me? WHAT had happened to put me in this position? I wanted the answers, including what made A.A. work.

The explanation that I had abused drinking and God had taken away my franchise to drink seemed wholly unsatisfactory. I wasn't a religious person and had always rebelled at the sin-punishment dogma. Others said that alcoholics had developed a physical sensitivity, an "allergy" to alcohol which could never be reversed. That seemed more intelligent, but not necessarily true.

That was my trouble. I knew I was alcoholic but I couldn't face the shocking impact of the words, "You can never drink again!" So I had wrestled with the whys and wherefores in the subconscious hope that I might discover the reasons behind my alcoholism. Then perhaps I could change them and be able to drink nor-

(Continued on Page 12)

Slips

(Continued from Page. 1)

unfunny memories of the happenings that made us come into A.A.

* * *

Don't get sore with what you read below . . . I know how you feel and would have been sore had I run onto the following a few years ago.

I think the slips I have had during my five years in A.A. have taught me something, so a word may be helpful, although controversial. But you don't have to slip to learn.

I blew up on a one-night stand after eighteen months of being dry; then the others came after various intervals. In retrospect, the answer seems simple. In comparison with my present prayerful practice and comfort in A.A., I am certain I had unconscious reservations concerning the so-called "spiritual angle."

It had been big of me to nod when people spoke of a power greater than ourselves. I also vaguely mentioned it to be fashionable, yet felt sporadic gratitude toward the principle working in my behalf. that was as far as it went, and I felt my course was safe.

In talking to newcomers I felt apologetic on the spiritual reference. I thought I was keeping an open mind but actually I wasn't tolerant of the prayer boys and girls in A.A. But I couldn't escape the fact that they were going through unscathed by slips.

Little by little I seemed to catch on a bit. One time I prayed for three straight weeks, day by day, and then wandered off the habit. Months later I was drunk and I couldn't understand, since I had been twelfth-stepping out all over town. And I had been talking my head off at the clubhouse "helping the newcomers," and not realizing my alcohol heroics.

Each slip seemed to jerk me up . . . to face me up to the inevitable crisis on the issue of prayer or humility. That point came on the battlefield and prayer has seemed a natural function ever since.

Now I am convinced that my well being is in direct proportion to my altitude of humility, honesty and helpfulness. And that my constancy in that attitude can only be maintained by daily prayer as I am essentially an ornery jaboney.

Now I don't think there *is* a "spiritual angle" to A.A. . . . rather that A.A. is totally a spiritual program. But don't get sore . . . since this can be wrong.

* * *

As a periodic, the cause of the several "slips" I had after my first A.A. meeting may not apply at all to the former steady drinkers. Al-

though all drinkers may be basically alike, I contend that there are certain very important differences which should be taken into account especially when coming into A.A.

Like most periodics, I didn't want a drink during my in-between or dry periods. Nobody could make me take a drink during those times. I could serve it to other people with ease and have absolutely no urge to take anything myself.

During these times, I usually felt pretty good physically and mentally, too. Though I would have moods, I was for the most riding along pretty well, with a fair degree of confidence, and passing bars and liquor stores with scarcely a thought about them.

Of course, I never knew when these periods were to end abruptly in a sudden, inexplicable urge for a drink. But while they did last I was "safe."

Naturally, when I came into A.A. I was just coming off a spell of drinking;. As always at the end of these, I was greatly depressed, and as always before, the depression lifted as I recovered my health. Gradually, I regained my confidence. I listened to and read A.A. with great interest. It all sounded and seemed very understandable, logical and wonderful.

But, I felt so confident that I failed to take all of the precautions. Because I had no urge to drink, being then in a dry period, I didn't think it was necessary to go on the 24-hour basis, to give the matter a little thought in the morning and at night, and to keep it uppermost in my mind.

I "slipped," as you would expect. I repeated that sequence several times. I thought I was trying hard and I honestly never wanted to drink again. The strange thing is that during the dry periods I really didn't see how I could ever drink. At those times, I just could not imagine myself ever filling a glass. But then would come that unexpected, unpredictable change of mood.

Finally, I got my tip from another periodic, and am passing it on for still other periodics.

The lesson is that a periodic must learn to work just as hard at this business during his dry periods as when he may be approaching the wet cycle. He must build up insurance. He needs to go on the 24-hour plan just as much as the daily drinker. Only by setting up the right habits of thought, day in and out, can he protect himself against that moment when he suddenly moves from the dry period into the wet period.

But, if he does build every day and if he does ask for help even on those mornings when the idea of taking a drink seems to him to be an utter impossibility—then he'll have the protection he needs when the time comes.

Vino Vignettes:

Heartbreak Run

(Continued from Page 4)

Bill's son. Some openly wept. But Bill had found a new inner calm.

Back on the run Bill redoubled his 12th Step work. Drunks on his train could hardly escape a knowledge of A.A. Bill roved the washrooms on dry heave patrol. And it was there the drunks look long pulls on concealed bottles. Once he caught one lifting a pint when the train suddenly lurched and the bottle broke in the washstand. The railroad and Bill took a cussing.

Later Bill scooped up a drunk off the platform and safely onto the crowded vestibule as the train started to move out of Penn Station. The alky was loud in his proclamation of thanks, saying Bill was the only one in New York who understood him. It seemed he had tried to catch a train back to Washington for five days and other brakemen had not allowed him to jump moving trains. But he gave Bill a bad time all the way down.

Bill said he had distributed more than 800 A.A. pamphlets to the needy on trains. However, most of them were slipped into pockets. Often Bill would have to stalk his prey, then slip a pamphlet into a pocket, taking a chance he would be observed—and possibly accused of rolling the drunk.

Months slipped by as Bill silently grieved his dead son. Curiously it was the railroader who had ribbed Bill the most for his "going on the wagon" who told him of the BBC broadcast. He could have sworn he had heard Bill's son among those interviewed after being recaptured from a German POW camp.

Bill rushed to the British Ministry of Information offices and they sent a tracer cable. Ten days later a recording arrived by air. Bill heard his son's name . . . then his voice . . . The boy was alive and well, and flying home. The overwhelming joy of the news didn't throw Bill either.

Bill finished his story and his third cup of coffee. It was now midnight and we joined the crowd on the dance floor. After "Auld Lang Syne" and the yippee Bill said he had just one wish for 1946. He wanted to be present when some newcomer identified himself by saying. "I don't know who told me about this A.A. . . . it seems some joker slipped a Jack Alexander article into my pocket while I was drunk on the train to New York."

Yes, 1945 had been a great year for Bill the brakeman . . . and for those of us who heard the story.—*Hugh B. Manhattan.*

A.A.'s Country-Wide News Circuit

The non-alcoholic wives of Fort Worth, Texas, A.A.s went to town in a big way recently, entertained a large gathering of alcoholics at dinner in the Hotel Texas, with civic leaders and clergymen as guests and speakers. One of the latter was the Rev. Lance Webb, pastor of the University Park Methodist Church of Dallas. . . . Nevada's first group has gotten under way in Las Vegas. Address: Box 732, Las Vegas, Nev. . . . Cincinnati, Ohio, A.A.s have established a twelve-member Speakers Bureau to explain the disease of alcoholism and A.A. to meetings of interested non-alcoholic groups.

* * *

Acquisition of clubrooms by the Portland, Oregon, Group has been announced. . . . New York's North Shore Group, comprising members from Port Washington, Manhasset, Roslyn, Plandome, Great Neck and other surrounding towns, which came into being a little over a year ago with eight drunks, now totals more than eighty members. . . . Speaking before the Red Bank, N. J., Group, Col. Pingataro, psychiatrist, who has just been released from the Army, told of A.A. work in Army hospitals throughout the country. . . . The *first anniversary* of the Oberlin, Ohio, Group was celebrated by a big get-together, which included many friends and relatives. . . . A new group has been launched in Falmouth, Mass., with speakers coming from Worcester, New Bedford, and Boston for the first meeting.

* * *

Pueblo, Colo., now has a second group, composed of alcoholic State Hospital patients. Handling organization details were several members of the original Pueblo Group, which was formed about seven months ago; these members will attend the initial meetings to help the new members with their interpretation of the program. The older group now has a membership of twenty. . . . The Jackson, Miss., Group, organized in January, 1945, turned over the clubrooms at 416½ George Street for a meeting conducted by Memphis A.A.s. The rapidly growing Jackson Group now totals forty-five men and women. . . . An A.A. of Carmel, N. Y., addressed the Criton Valley Ministers Association. . . . The Binghamton, N. Y., Group has acquired clubrooms at 89 State Street. Their as yet unlisted telephone number is 4-1690.

* * *

The Exchange Club of Jacksonville, Fla., where A.A.s are steadily increasing in number,

was addressed on "Alcoholism and Its Allied Problems," by Dr. A. C. L., local physician. Judge Charles Miller of Jacksonville stated that in 34,000 cases before the Municipal Court annually, alcoholism is involved in approximately eighty per cent. . . . Kansas City, Kans., papers carried pictures of that city's A.A. hilltop clubhouse, a two-story brick structure with a Norman tower on one corner and the letters "A.A." in red and white over the door. When the old house was purchased early last spring, The plumbing was out of kilter and the plaster falling off the walls. Today it is clean and pleasant, painted and well maintained, with cooking and bathroom facilities on both floors. "Anything we have done for the house," said one of the members, "has been done with money which otherwise would have been spent on liquor. It looks to us like pretty good economics."

* * *

A blind A.A., who spoke from notes written in Braille, was one of the speakers at a joint meeting held by Salt Lake City and Ogden, Utah, Groups, in the former city. Over 100 members were present; guest speakers were Governor Herbert B. Maw; the Most Reverend Duane G. Hunt, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake, and Dr. H. L. Marshall, acting

dean of the University of Utah medical school, all of whom gave high praise to A.A. Ogden now has two thriving groups. . . . Thirty-eight Flint, Mich., A.A.s chartered a bus to attend a meeting in Detroit recently.

* * *

Baton Rouge, La., A.A.s, at their *first anniversary* meeting, were hosts to representative groups from New Orleans, Covington, Bogalusa, Hammond, Franklinton, Gonzales, Plaquemine, and Tylertown, Miss. One of the guest speakers was the Rev. Henry A. Rickey of Bogalusa, who attended the Yale School of Alcohol Studies last summer; another was Dr. Glenn J. Smith, superintendent of the East Louisiana Hospital at Jackson, who spoke of how much the people of the state were being benefited by the work of A.A. . . . The 400 members of the eight St. Louis, Mo., Groups have held their fifth *anniversary* meeting. . . . An A.A. of Mount Morris, N. Y., a psychiatrist and a clergyman, spoke on alcoholism before the Penn Yan Rotarians in that city. . . . The Greater Lawrence Youth Forum was addressed by a member of A.A. from Lawrence, Mass. . . . The Lions Club of Marshfield, Wis., was startled when an A.A., invited to speak at one of their meetings, tossed out the fact that alcoholism was the fourth major health problem in the United States.

A.A. DIGEST

Excerpts from Group Publications

A.A. *Tribune.*, Des Moines, Iowa: "If there is someone that needs information on alcoholism, send them to the Alcoholic Information Center. There they will be given literature about alcoholism, will talk to non-alcoholics who will tell them something about alcoholism, and we hope it will help a lot of people that we are not reaching in A.A. . . . Since Marty has been to Des Moines we have had 36 new men and women in A.A. . . . FLASH: Des Moines Committee for Education on Alcoholism AIRS ITS FIRST SHOW ON KRNT. And, what a show it was."

Hi and Dri, Minneapolis, Minn.: "Our Bart P. may be the instigator of starting some good A.A. work among the Salvation Army group at Hibbing, after personally making it a point to explain his view of the program and what it had done for him, to the Salvation Army head at Hibbing. The week-end was thoroughly enjoyed by all those who had the privilege of making the trip and we thank all of Hibbing for the unusually warm hospitality. . . . Use what tal-

ents you have—the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those who sang the best."

Dubuque Alanews, Dubuque, Iowa: "TO THE OTHER TWENTY-FIVE PER CENT. Well, fellows, we had you and lost you, why I do not know and deep down in your own hearts I don't think you can answer the question. First of all, I don't think that one of you really had the program. By that I mean you came and supported the organization—you were friendly, but you were afraid. . . . Maybe we are at fault. I sometimes think so. . . . Well, fellows, you are welcome back . . . come on down."

The Brighter Side, Waterloo, Iowa: "Frank gave a talk before about 50 representatives from social, civic, law and fraternal groups on what A.A. is and how it works. Judging from the number of questions Frank was called on to answer after his talk, there must have been a lot of interest created. More good constructive publicity. During the day, we held open house at our rooms and coffee and cake was served, in charge of our angel, Florence. Good attendance and both outsiders and home folks enjoyed this part of the day's doings."

Pleasures of Reading

(Continued from Page 5)

Helpful also is the chapter (XVI) on prayer as applied to at least four distinct procedures—petition, intercession, adoration, contemplation. The anthologist concludes that "the highest prayer is the most passive," a statement which becomes understandable after reading his analysis. Nor can we read a more penetrating dissection of Old Man Remorse who bobs up in Chapter XXII:

"This necessary change of mind—repentance—is normally accompanied by sorrow and self-loathing. But these emotions are not to be persisted in and must never be allowed to become a settled habit of remorse. In Middle English 'remorse' is rendered, with a literalness which to modern readers is at once startling and stimulating, as 'again-bite.' In this cannibalistic encounter, who bites whom? Observations and self-analysis provide the answer: the creditable aspects of the self bite the discreditable and are themselves bitten, receiving wounds that fester with incurable shame and despair. But, in Fenelon's words, 'it is mere self-love to be inconsolable at seeing one's own imperfection.'"

Continually getting himself enmeshed, as he does, in words and formulae, the alcoholic like all neurotics has often found "truth" as he earnestly sought it, obscured by such externals and superficialities, and has yielded to his

"weakness" in consequence. Huxley's discussion of how the word in religious literature is used indiscriminately in at least three distinct and very different senses, will be found clarifying. And of special interest to us who believe in the "24-hour" plan is the discussion in this chapter and elsewhere of the proposition that "Man must live in time in order to be able to advance into eternity."

Mystic though he now appears to be, Huxley concludes his work on another practical note, the function of spiritual exercises. He states forthrightly:

"What ritual is to public worship, spiritual exercises are to private devotion. They are devices to be used by the solitary individual when he enters his closet, shuts the door, and prays to his Father which is in secret. Like all other devices, from psalm singing to Swedish exercises and from logic to internal combustion engines, spiritual exercises can be used either well or badly. Some of those who use spiritual exercises make progress in the life of the spirit; others, using the same exercises make no progress. To believe that their use either constitutes enlightenment, or guarantees it, is mere idolatry and superstition. To neglect them altogether, to refuse to find out whether and in what way they can help in the achievement of our final end, is nothing but self-opinionatedness and stubborn obscurantism."

In point of fact, this book itself is not altogether free from "obscurantism," some passages are not clear on first reading, and disagreement with some conclusions is sure to arise. In spite of these human defects, however, this volume on the life of the spirit, encyclopedic in scope but not in size, deserves a place on the night table beside *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Its reading and re-reading in a mood of reflectiveness are bound to be informative, stimulating and inspirational in a very practical sense to those constituted as alcoholics are represented to be.

R.F.S., *Monclair, N. J.*

Mail Call

(Continued from Page 9)

mally. I was reaching for that drink without knowing it!

The words "powerless over alcohol" mean simply that. And we must become comfortable in accepting that verdict as final. There is no "fire escape" clause in the contract. Why we were forced to sign the contract isn't important. An effort to wiggle out is only futile. We can only start to build sound sobriety on the complete acceptance of that fact.—B.N.A.

Advertising Men . . .

(Continued from Page 7)

silent, wife gone, job in doubt, no money, clothes a mess, everything stinks—and, my God! my check book!

If Jones is lucky enough to remember about A.A. and can read numbers in a telephone book, he may call A.A. headquarters. And now may begin a program of thinking and doing along the A.A. routine that may restore him to sanity and usefulness and pleasure to himself, his employer, his family and friends.

Now I must get personal, as we all do at A.A. The one thing that staggered me, in prospect, when contemplating trying A.A. was what seemed to be a dreadful, dreary expanse of years ahead without a single drink to relieve the monotony, or the tension, or to reward me for accomplishments.

"You can't fool with it," the boys told me, "not even one cocktail, not even one glass of beer."

But they eased me down somewhat by telling me to forget the years ahead, forget even tomorrow, pointing out it was certainly no chore to do without a drink for a day. Tomorrow, if the effect was good, I might consider another 24-hour stretch of sobriety..

It wasn't easy and it won't be for other advertising men. I needed help daily, nightly, continuously, but I needed only to ask to receive it. I am now a re-claimed alcoholic. Experimentally, I deliberately went on a couple of tentative bats during my five years as an A.A. I will never go on another, because I enjoy sobriety too much—and here's the answer to the alcoholic advertising man who holds back because of those dreaded years of sobriety:

To an alcoholic, alcohol is a drug. It dulls rather than stimulates the perception and abilities. It steals away the pleasure of living, of loving and of working rather than it intensifies and heightens these pursuits.

I am aware of the merry lights that dance in my daughter's eyes, of the pleasant quietness of my home, of the glance of confidence from my employer and of the trustworthiness of friendships made over cups of coffee. I am twice as well paid as a copy writer because I am now reliable. Excellent work is a matter of routine with me—in fact, I often look at a piece of my copy and wonder where I got the ability to write it—it seems to have issued subconsciously, rather than as a mighty effort, as in my alcoholic days.

More than to any other type of person, sobriety offers rich rewards of accomplishment, happiness and peace to the alcoholic advertising man.

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