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Looking at Myself, After Six Months in A. A.

SO,—you haven't had a drink for six months, and you feel pretty smug about it! You think you are quite a guy to have given up something which was so important to you for quite a few years! But you think about drinking many times a day and even look back on those drinking years with regret that you can't ever drink again.

The other night you even remembered waking at 2 or 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, taking those drinks, then getting back in bed and letting that beautiful peace creep all over you until you went to sleep again. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? But why don't you remember what went before and came after that same peace? Why don't you remember that you woke up sick and tense and terrified before you had those drinks, and although they did make you feel awfully good, you woke up, and had to go through the same procedure? Or it was time to get up: you had to talk yourself out of bed and to the bottle and in to a breakfast that nearly gagged you, and then had to get through a day that was hell until you could get back to that bottle. How about remembering some of those days after that night drinking?

That is just one part of it. Why do you want to drink and why do you think so often about drinking with regret that you had to stop? And why do you feel so noble about giving up something that ruined your life and that of others? Let's examine those reasons you think up for wanting a drink and then let's just see if any of those reasons are any good at all.

I NEED A FEW DRINKS TO RELAX

So a couple of drinks would relax you? How about your journey from doctor to psychoanalyst to psychiatrist to psychiatric hospital, and the trips to Rock Island and the Ozarks and then to

the ranch to get away from those knots in the stomach which disappeared only when you stopped drinking? Those knots were from tension you know was brought about by the very liquor you say will relax you. Just how does that make sense? You really should know that you are more relaxed now than you ever were during the drinking years.

I WANT TO DRINK TO FORGET

What do you want to forget? The things you did and didn't do when you were drinking; that you lost your money, and friends and your wife?

You lost them by drinking, you know. Did you forget on those days and nights you were in that room at the ranch with the bottle handy? Did you forget when you were in Willcox and nothing seemed worthwhile and you just drank because you were at last in town where liquor was handy in any quantity and for the first time in your life there was no one to tell you to stop? Or did you stay awake and remember it all — every wrong you had ever done — and that your wife was dead because she no longer had you, and when you went to sleep didn't you dream of it all just the same?

I WANT TO SIT AROUND DRINKING SOCIABLY WITH PEOPLE

About how many times have you tried that, and how did it turn out every time, without exception? Did people say what a swell guy you were to drink with, or did they steer away from the guy who drank himself stupid and couldn't lift his head after those drinks? You always got away by yourself to drink because you knew you were not a pleasant sight drunk and you always got drunk.

I THINK BETTER WHEN I HAVE HAD A COUPLE OF DRINKS

Did you think very well those drinking years, and if you did will you explain just what brilliant headwork on your part lost those jobs, your wife, etc.? How well did you think that night your wife called you from New York and said that it was very important for you to write to her and tell her how you were doing? You borrowed a bottle and were going to drink very carefully so you could write her the best letter you ever wrote so you could go back to her and

(Continued on Page 6)

IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYBODY!

Some people try to draw lines around those professions or groups of men and women most likely to become alcoholic. But the fact that John Barleycorn is no respecter of place or position was brought out by a census taken at a hospital for alcoholics in an Eastern city recently.

Following are the occupations of the patients at that particular time:

Playwright	Chain restaurant
Novelist	owner
Reporter	Banket-
Night club	Doctor
operator	Retired doctor
State Supreme	District judge
Court Justice	Chemist
Retired engineer	Horse breeder
Millionaire	Housewife
manufacturer	Navy Commander's
Hotel operator	wife

EDITORIAL:

On the 11th Step...

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Here, again, is reaffirmation of the freedom to worship according to one's own understanding of the spiritual, and it is the saving grace in a Step that otherwise might make many balk in the Plan of Recovery.

To pray and to meditate according to denominational and dogmatic definitions and restrictions would be extremely difficult for many, at least at the beginning of their efforts to rehabilitate themselves. For so long so many have been rejecting prayer and meditation and have had no consciousness of the spiritual in any respect. By the time anyone has come far enough along the road of alcoholism to want and need A.A., he usually has been out of touch with anything spiritual for a considerable time. For him suddenly to accept all that he has been rejecting would be nearly impossible.

Even where the individual has been "going to church" and perhaps even saying words in the name of prayer he usually has lost "conscious contact" with the Spiritual Power. He may still be "religious" yet not spiritual. He, too, has need of meditation and the improvement of his "conscious contact with God," *as he understands Him*, even if he returns to the church of his choice or, in fact, has never left it.

The principle of freedom embodied in the 11th Step opens the door to any individual seeking spiritual help by whatever path and through whatever concepts he himself prefers.

Fortunate, indeed, are those who have clung even to the mere framework of religion, and of a teaching with which they once agreed. Usually, though not always, theirs is a shorter journey back to the spiritual life.

But there are many who have saved no contact at all or who never had any in the beginning. For them in particular, the words "as we understood Him" are appealing. Here is no dictation of teachings or concepts which they do not understand; no required acceptance of things they disbelieve.

Standing, then, on the privilege of exercising one's own understanding, we are invited to "improve our conscious contact with God" through prayer and meditation. Neither the prayer nor the meditation need be formal, or orthodox. The style or the stance are only the means, not the end, and how one reaches a "conscious contact with God" is not paramount, just so long as he does reach it. At least that is this writer's opinion.

Another way of expressing "conscious contact" might be "a working knowledge." It is an awareness or a feeling, and finally a conviction of the existence of the Higher Power and of It as a source of constant help. Once this conviction has been gained it is constant and the infinite help that it brings operates in the daily life.

How to get that conviction is, of course, the cardinal question. But the answer is here in the 11th Step. Prayer and meditation yield the answer. True, sometimes, the conscious contact is slow in developing. Yet, experience has proven for hundreds of members of A.A. that persistence in this direction, when combined with an open mind, inevitably produces that which is sought. The peace and the strength that are the rewards are infinitely worth whatever persistence is required.

PARDON ME, YOUR SLIP IS SHOWING!

Yes, your slip does show that you have failed to have faith in yourself and in A.A.

Slips are all too common in A.A., primarily because any and all with an alcoholic problem can and do come to some A.A. group for help. There is no pre-selection by A.A. as to the sincerity of the applicant.

It has to be assumed that the newcomer is sincere in his desire to stop drinking. No one is eliminated. This is important to remember as it accounts for a large number of the small per cent of failures to achieve sobriety.

Naturally it has to be assumed that the newcomer is sincere in his desire to stop drinking and that after an explanation of the A.A. program of 12 Steps and its purpose, he should be able to make up his mind. There is no way of knowing whether the prospect has "got to" or "wants to" stop drinking. In that may be the basic reason, without any rationalization, for slips. It must not be overlooked in this connection that "belonging to" A.A. may ameliorate a home or business situation — at least for the time being.

It must be remembered that there is nothing in the A.A. program that makes it work. We have to put it to work on ourselves. Our only measure of success is the sincerity of our desire to stop.

The attitude of the people who slip sometimes seems to be one of surprise — a sort of "By God, it didn't work!"

It seems almost unnecessary to talk about alcoholic thinking. Yet few realize that only one Step mentions alcohol—the balance are concerned with our characters and our thinking. Could there be a clue here to slips?

There should be great sympathy for and all the help possible given to those who slip. How often we should help should be based on the reason for such slips and measured by the amount of effort put forth by the victim of the slip.—*Norman B., Manhattan.*

New York Library Needs First Three Issues Of A.A. Grapevine

The New York Public Library has established a file of *The A.A. Grapevine*, but it lacks the first three issues which are now out of print.

The Library would appreciate the gift of the three missing issues, those for June, July, and August, 1944, if any subscriber no longer needs these copies.

Realization of Sobriety Comes Suddenly

So many persons have said to me, "How did you stop drinking; did something happen to you?" Even among fellow A.A.s this question keeps popping up, and many of us have no adequate answer. My personal feeling is that something did happen, and that something is the realization of sobriety.

When we come into A.A. we are usually very confused individuals, and when one is in this state in an alcoholic ward or private hospital and finds around him various "slippers" who are back for their second or umpty-second "cure", he is apt to view the A.A. Program with justifiable skepticism. He is told that he must admit his alcoholism; keep away from the "first" drink; work the program one day at a time; and do 12th Step work with other alcoholics. Yet he sees persons taking trip after trip through the "wringer" who claim to have done all of these things. Isn't there any stability or security in the program? Do you have to continue to fight out each day at a time? How do you know when you

have "gotten" A.A., and can have confidence in your own sobriety?

The answer to this ever recurring question is that *something* does happen to us, and that we do know when liquor has censed to be a problem. This is the feeling of release and freedom that comes to us when we thoroughly accept the first three Steps of our program. Thousands of A.A.s have felt this release and have never had any physical urge or desire for alcohol since their introduction to the program. Our own case falls into this category. We know members of five to ten year standing who have felt the same way. There is no doubt in their minds about the permanence of their sobriety, *as long as they live the program daily*.

We believe that any person coming into A.A. has a right to expect such release from an active urge to drink. But he or she must also *earn* this freedom. Not by a daily knockdown and drag-out fight with the Devil, but by a complete and unconditional surrender of our will and our lives to

guidance by the Power that is greater than ourselves.

I have talked to many "slippers", and none of them ever got "well" until he quit shadow boxing with J. Barleycorn and relaxed his own desperate hold on the steering wheel. Maybe that's why the Big Book stresses "Easy does it." And most of these "cured" alcoholics will admit that *something* did happen to them. They now have the realization of sobriety; they know that they *never* need drink again, providing they live each day according to the A.A. pattern.

12th Step Not Enough

So much of the outside skepticism and criticism of A.A. comes from persons who have observed the alcoholic gyrations of persons on whom an inoculation of A.A. failed to take. We cannot blame these outsiders. Within our own groups we have many skeptics who believe that the only way to stay sober is to keep busy dragging in drunks and reading them the 12 Steps in an authoritative tone of voice. Most of these over-busy zealots wind up in the Gas Chamber themselves at fairly regular intervals).

Such descriptions of A.A. as mass emotion, group therapy, etc., give this writer a pain in the neck. We are emotional persons, and this weakness becomes our greatest source of strength because it is only through a strong emotional experience that we contact this unseen source of spiritual power which clears up our confused thinking and gets us back "on the beam."

Some persons say you do not get A.A., it gets you. It seems to us that the way to receive it is to open your mind. And this seems to be almost impossible unless the alcoholic has received a tremendous kick in the pants and has definitely reached his "gutter." It is this closed mind business which gives us the greatest amount of trouble in talking A.A. to the man who needs it. And it is the closing mind that sends seemingly solid A.A.s back to the dry cleaners.

Wilful Thinkers

Most of the alcoholics we have run across are pretty smart persons. They are good at their trade, profession or business. But they quit "learning" about twenty years ago, (or whenever their heavy drinking started) and they closed the books at that time, locked up their minds and threw the keys away. Their thinking since then has been entirely negative. They have built up "iron curtains" around their personalities so that no one can get in, unless accompanied by a bottle. This is the wilfulness of the alcoholic

(Continued on Page 4)

ACCEPT OR ANALYZE ?

"If you want sobriety more than anything else in life, you can get it." This simple statement repeated with the monotony of a mechanical radio commercial was and is the starting point of my happiness. The confusion which is the natural consequence of an alcoholic existence was intensified in my case by an almost uncontrollable desire to analyze every statement, reaction, and action which touched my life. I had to know. The fact that I ended up more confused made no difference. All would be simple if I could only know why I drank — why this happened to me — why the program worked. Why?

A.A. recovery was denied me while I tried to analyze my problems, tried to analyze the program, tried to analyze God, and tried to analyze analysis. My good A.A. friends offered help, but I blocked them with "let me figure it out." Periodically again drinking became the most important thing in my life. Drinking was more important than my family — they were neglected while I caroused. Drinking was more important than duty, honor, and soul. All were neglected as I drank away hours and days.

Forced to recognize that my problems were becoming progressively, worse, I at last became willing to make sobriety the most important thing in my life.

I wanted sobriety more than a job which paid me an exceptional income, but kept me so exhausted that I couldn't relax. I quit the job. I wanted sobriety more than fame or power, so I quit fighting. I wanted sobriety more than

knowledge, so I quit analyzing. Out of my vocabulary went such words as psychiatric, neurotic, compulsion, complex, frustration, and all their ilk. They didn't belong to me. I had never studied to earn them. They merely confused me. I was ready to admit that I was just another drunk whose life was unmanageable. Now I could live a sober life.

How does one live a sober life?

One trades dependence on puny self for dependence on God. One trades resentment for understanding; fear for trust; selfishness for love. One trades dissatisfaction for hope; dishonesty for truth. One trades retaliation for amendment; taking for giving. One trades leaning upon others for serving others. One trades sectarian bigotry for tolerance. Cynics claim they have found little hope or faith or charity in this dog-eat-dog world. I agreed with them. I said I'd be a sucker to try to practice these virtues while others ran off with the fruits of my labors. But A.A. by example showed me that these qualities not only existed, but were the fabric of which sobriety was made. Sobriety became for me an all-inclusive term. It means everything from not taking the first drink to enjoying the present 24 hours. One learns when he stops trying to analyze the program or God, that he finds both, sobriety and God. He also realizes that what he called a search for God was merely a flight from God. He could easily have found sobriety and God by honestly saying "God, I am so confused — please help me."— *E.L., Chicago*.

FINDS LORD'S PRAYER KEY TO STEPS

Just recently, after more than four years on the ball in A.A., several of the 12 Steps were made simple and clear to me by a new approach. The light that clarified these Steps for me may appeal to some beginners who, like myself, find the program in its entirety hard to take.

Four years ago last February Jimmy B. caught me between drinks, after a post-graduate' course at Samaritan Institute. I thought at first my name was on the sucker list — there must be a dotted line somewhere in the offering. But my curiosity was aroused; and I knew something had to be done about my drinking.

From occasional drunken sprees in 1916 to continuous drinking and frequent spells of complete disability (hospitalized twice because of uremic convulsions followed by D.T.s; hospitalized for attempted suicide; failure of the Samaritan cure in 1940 and 1941; loss of two businesses and innumerable jobs; divorced once and on the

brink again), February 1941 found me desperately seeking an answer — so I attended my first A.A. meeting.

That meeting convinced me that this was it; the people I met had regained health, stability, self respect and a place in the community. If it worked for them it must and would for me. I went home filled with enthusiasm and elation. But one nagging doubt, a real fear, assailed me. What of the 12 Steps to which I must subscribe and which I must practice? What of all this spiritual approach; the requirement that I acknowledge and turn my life over to God? Those were staggering thoughts.

I told my wife about the meeting and my hope that it was finally a way out for me. Then I went out to the park to thrash out alone the need to accept God. And I knew I could never hurdle those Steps. For years I'd vainly called on God to help me. (I know now that I'd actually at-

tempted to trade with God — only when in a very bad trading position). There was much to think about, so I wound up in the rear booth of a taproom. Not to drink, of course. It was cold in the park and I needed to be alone with my thoughts. That was Thursday night.

Fortunately I sobered up enough by Saturday morning to remember mention of a downtown clubhouse, quite near where I lived. Somehow I found it — and the answer to my problem.

Jimmy B. arrived soon after I did. He and several other members told me to forget about the 12 Steps — to skip the "God part" of the program. "If you're sure of the 1st Step hang onto that. Stick around here awhile with an open mind. Anything you don't like, just skip it. And remember, easy does it".

So I stuck around there, a few hours every day. Attended all meetings; went on calls and visited alcoholics in the psychopathic wards of the city hospital. There was just one reservation in my mind. I'd not be a hypocrite by reciting the Lord's Prayer when I couldn't subscribe to a word of it. Of course I rose with the others — it would be too conspicuous to remain seated — and with gritted teeth remained silent.

I couldn't help hearing that prayer; hearing it spoken in frank sincerity by a group of people who had suffered all the reverses that had plagued me. Sometime during the first few weeks I began to follow the prayer as I heard it; to think it and think about it. Within a year I was saying it aloud at meetings and meaning every word of it.

For over three years I've had a comfortable feeling of peace and serenity. Some of the A.A. Steps have remained high hurdles, perhaps through that early habit of thought regarding them. Then a few weeks ago at a meeting the Steps were discussed in a way that started a new train of thought. After several days it dawned on me that I'd accepted those toughest steps some three years ago. I'd found comfort in the Lord's Prayer. I'd been thinking and saying it — and meaning it. I could start with

"Our Father Who art in Heaven" and end with "for Thine is the kingdom and the power" — and there was Step 2.

"Thy will be done" is certainly Step 3.

"Forgive us our trespasses — — — and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" was a way of practicing Steps 6 and 7.

And when the Lord's Prayer has been uttered sincerely and humbly Step 11 has truly been accepted.

The Lord's Prayer, beautiful yet simple, easily understood, has cleared up finally, for me, much that has been difficult in the 12 Steps of A.A.

—Bill C., Philadelphia

Realization Sudden *(Continued from Page 3)*

which is so puzzling to the doctor and the psychiatrist. He knows he's wrong — so what?

Poe speaks of this perversity, a living hell so deep that he was never able to climb out. Burns tells of wishing for a "gift" to see ourselves as others see us. The alcoholic in *The Lost Weekend* saw a handsome, talented man in the bar mirror; he never caught a glimpse of the real Don Birnam. If we can crack this nearly impenetrable wall, then A.A. can come in.

How can we open our minds to the truth, after years of completely reversed thinking? How can we be induced to admit that we weren't as smart as we thought we were; that we don't know all the answers? The old German writer back in 1530 who said that the only way to cure persons of the horrible vice of drunkenness was to give them *new heads*, may have had the right answer. Our answer is that we must feel true humility so deeply that we are willing to assume the role of a child and learn to live all over again.

Our own door slid open when we saw the calmness and serenity of the A.A.s who called upon us. It wasn't what they said, it was how they looked. We wanted some of that peace of mind, and we were humbly willing to do anything the book said to get even a small piece of it. To this day, we are convinced that the force of example is 75% of 12th stop work. No one can tell us that these truly serene A.A.s have not got security. That was two years ago, and the three men we have in mind are still sober.

Of course¹ we remain alcoholics. The disease is progressive, and we are never cured. All we need do to get back into the gutter is to take that first drink. But if we are thinking straight, such

an action should never occur to us. Our basis of security lies in keeping our mental doors open, in never permitting those "iron curtains" to build up again. We must continue our mental and spiritual growth, keep eager for knowledge, share ourselves with others, and keep "on the beam."

We have known men who have had trouble who seemingly had assimilated the program. In every case it was no overnight falling off the wagon episode; instead we could see the doors of their minds slowly swing shut until they were alone with themselves in the dark caverns again. A.A. seems a very simple thing, living right instead of wrong; doing good instead of evil; thinking straight instead of "screwy."

A great deal of the trouble lies in skipping once over lightly when we come to 6th Step. Many of us are emphatically *not* willing to have *all* our character defects removed. We want to save one up against the next time our mother-in-law comes to live with us. We are, unfortunately, a little proud of that beautiful temper of ours; or maybe we have no objections to promoting a quick buck or two in a slightly unsavory way; or maybe that babe on Eighteenth street pops up in our alleged minds. We won't preach; you know the answers.'

We do know this: that when you go on down through the program as best you can, you wind up one day *knowing that* you don't have to drink any more . . . the firm realization of sobriety. You feel the release from tension. You can think straight. You know right from wrong, because A.A. has amplified the small, still voice of conscience. You are *free*. And it feels good! — *H. B. P., Columbus, Ohio.*

The Clip Sheet

Milwaukee, Wis., *Sentinel*: "What the movie censors are up against is contained in this brief note from an upstate client who in red ink, writes: The kiss is an intoxicant and like liquor must be abolished from the screen.' Say, I wonder if he knows what *Lost Weekend* was about!"

* * *

Tulsa, Okla., *Tribune*: "The Chicago Marriage Committee has made its report on what we might do to stem the tide of divorces that threatens to divide the country more certainly than politics or civil war have ever done... ."

"Drinking was found by the Illinois committee to be the obvious cause of many of the divorce cases. Drinking seems to accentuate the mental and physical maladjustments which are chiefly responsible for separations. The report said nothing about how to eradicate the drink habit, though there are many ways. One of the best has been developed by Alcoholics Anonymous, which has a chapter in nearly every large city. Certainly the A.A. leader should be a member of any judge's advisory committee. So should a good doctor, an understanding preacher and a bright teacher."

* * *

Chapel Hill, N. C., *Weekly*: "James S., the novelist who lives in Chapel Hill, is a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. . . ."

"One day recently he got a telephone call from a fellow member, a business man in a town not far from here, who felt the mania coming on. 'Come right on over here,' said Mr. S. The man did come, but on the way he obtained a supply of liquor, and when he arrived late in the afternoon he was roaring drunk.

"There was no hospital to take him to, so Mr. S. decided he would ask the police to let him stay overnight in the jail in the basement of the Town Hall.

"The initial trouble was that the police did not know Mr. S. Not being familiar with Alcoholics Anonymous, naturally they did not at once understand his explanations.

"'No wonder they thought there was something queer about me,' he said afterward. 'I had just come off my farm. I was in old dirty clothes and had a heavy growth of beard.'

"He named several persons in Chapel Hill with whom he was acquainted. The jail was empty at the time, and the police willingly took the stranger in. Mr. S., seeing that there was plenty of room, asked if he could stay there, too. The police said yes, and he went to bed in one of the four bunks in the cell. Next morning the



"Whose life has become unmanageable?"

stranger, sobered up, was attended to according to the approved A.A. method."

* * *

Indianapolis, Ind., *Star*: "Indianapolis women who formed their own group of Alcoholics Anonymous a year ago report that there have been few slips among those who have decided to stop drinking. Ages of the women in the group are from 24 to 55 years. Housewives outnumber the business career women in the group."

* * *

Elberton, Ga., *Star*: "Drinking far outranked all other male faults in a recent Gallup Poll of the ten worst faults of husbands and wives. Among wives' faults drinking was number four, while nagging was number one.

"From wide experience with alcoholism, it is my firm conviction that nothing but the power of God can break the habit. Other so-called 'cures' are only temporary.

"Alcoholics Anonymous, now a nation-wide

organization, of growing proportions, with clubs in all principal cities, shows men how the power of God can cure alcoholism. To the increasing number of those who write the Everyday Counselor concerning alcoholism, I again say, seek out your nearest club, or write to Alcoholics Anonymous, Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y."

* * *

New York *World-Telegram*: "Simplicity, sincerity mark A.A.'s program over WNYC," said Harriet Van Horne, radio columnist. "This man's testimony, mercifully lacking in the smug fervor usually found in reformers, was far more persuasive than anything I ever heard from the dry crusaders. He didn't preach abstinence for everybody. Just those suffering from alcoholism."

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"Drink to me only with thine eyes—and you won't have to join those anonymous guys," writes H.I. Phillips in the *New York Sun*.

Looking at Myself, After Six Months in A. A.

(Continued from Page 1)

really work and live. You got drunk again if you remember and the letter wasn't so much and right then she gave you up.

I USED TO HAVE SO MUCH FUN DRINKING

"Used to" is the correct phrase. Those days have been gone for a long long time. How about those parties at Dobbs Ferry and other places when you left early and had to hole out somewhere because you hadn't waited until the party started and were drunk before the party even arrived? How many good times did you miss by being drunk or by being in the hospital sobering up? Do you miss a lot of fun by not drinking or did you miss a lot of fun by drinking? You know the answer to that one.

I AM NO FUN WITH OTHERS IF I DON'T DRINK

Does the record really show that you were the life of the party when you were drinking? I think we have already covered that, don't you?

I WANT A DRINK TO GET OVER THIS HUMP

What hump are you on that the drinking didn't put you on? Haven't you done more these last six months than you did in the ten years you were a drunk? You want to drink to get over something that drink caused. Nice if it worked that way but it doesn't.

I NEED A LITTLE EXTRA NERVE AND ENERGY RIGHT NOW

How about the time you got the good job in Princeton and tried the same idea? If I remember rightly you took some drinks for that purpose and lasted through three days and then came home drunk and wound up at St. Luke's Hospital again. I can give you more examples or will you remember that one the rest of your life?

I WOULD MEET MORE PEOPLE IN THE BARS AND I LIKE THE EASY INFORMALITY OF BARS

That wasn't really so much fun at Chez Marie, the Mayan Room, Toots Shors', the Stork Club, the way you did it, was it, and was it so much fun in the Third Avenue saloons? Was it fun in Steve's, and the Dublin Bar and Grill, and the Cedar Tavern, especially in the early morning? Would you like those days back or do you like the life you lead now a little better?

I JUST WANT A DRINK OR TWO A DAY

That is the worst one you have pulled yet. When did you ever stop after the first few and

what did the first few do to you? Didn't they make you feel rotten, so rotten you had to take more to get over feeling rotten and where did you wind up? Do you remember the last time you tried that and you lasted three months but wound up in bed in the hospital after quite a few noble feats like you always did? Got any more reasons or excuses?

As near as I can figure you want to drink to relax, to pep you up, to dull your memory, to sharpen your wits, because you feel good or feel bad, to have fun when it isn't fun, to get over things that drinking caused, and a lot of other contradictory reasons. Actually you just drank on any excuse. Are you really stupid enough to hang onto a lot of phoney reasons based on times when it seemed to work when you have to admit now that it never worked for you? I can't really believe you forget that drinking took just about everything away from you and brought all the things you are trying to work out of now. Sure, you are lonesome. Did you expect people always to put up with you as you were all those years? Will drinking fix it up, or is it a better idea to keep away from liquor and live so people will trust you and like you and want you around? Maybe that will happen if you do stay sober but you know it won't if you drink.

Wouldn't it be a good idea to tell the truth? You really want to drink yourself into stupidity and just give up. It seems like an answer if you don't look at it very closely but just for fun let's

WRITING CLASS TO ENTER SECOND SESSION SEPT. 5

The second session of the Writing Class which was inaugurated at the New York Metropolitan clubhouse this summer will get underway September 5.

Begun as an experimental extra-curricular activity, the class is being continued by popular demand with Charlie B., novelist and short story author whose works appear regularly in the leading "slicks," again serving as instructor. Classes will be held twice weekly — on Mondays and Thursdays at 8 P.M. in the clubhouse gymnasium.

Another interesting activity now underway is a class in sculpture and sketching which is held each Wednesday evening in the clubhouse gymnasium under the tutelage of Mitchel F., winner of several sculpture awards.

Consideration also is being given to getting some of the A.A. musicians to organize a class in their subject. Plans for this are awaiting a leader.

look at it closer, lots closer. All right, you give up and drink plenty — for you will drink plenty, you always have, if you drink at all. You can't work and pretty soon you can't eat. That can't go on because you need the money your job brings you and nature says you have to eat. It is just that simple. No one is going to take care of you financially or physically. And it takes so long to drink yourself to death — remember that fellow the doctor told you about, and he had almost unlimited wealth. It took him three years, and in that time he lost both his legs and his mind. It doesn't sound like such a good idea, or such an easy death, does it?

Suppose you don't have what you want, are you going to get any of it by drinking? How much more do you have now that you haven't had a drink for six months than you had a year ago when you were drinking? Do you remember when you came over here from the ranch, just a drunk to everyone but yourself? You have a job, some real friends, you have a chance now and you are beginning to feel that some day you may find a life that is not only tolerable but happy. Would you have those things if you had kept on drinking?

So you have thought up a lot of reasons for taking a drink but none of them stands up very well. Are you going to keep on trying to find an excuse you haven't already knocked apart or are you going to keep on knowing that you can't take even one drink? Try to forget about drinking and use that new clearer mind to get the things you know matter to you and that you want so much. Don't you think you have a much better chance without liquor than you ever had with it?

Keep on being honest with yourself — you cannot drink and you do not want to drink, and you do not have to drink. You want friends, and your job and the things that some money will bring you. You want to have some pride in yourself and confidence in yourself and other people's confidence in you. You want the knowledge that you can make your own way to where you want to be. You know that you can't do it full of liquor but maybe you can do it sober. It really is your only chance, you know. Remember — there never will be a good reason for taking one drink but there are thousands of reasons for you never to take one. — *B. C., Tucson, Arzi.*

* * *

Thank Bennett Cerf (writing in the *Saturday Review of Literature*) for the description of the inebriate midget who got himself caught in a bottleneck!

Barley
!!! CORN !!!

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

Have you heard of the two trains rushing headon along the same track, one driven by a Swede and the other by a drunken engineer? They did not crash. Know why? Because Norse is Norse and Souse is Souse and never the twain shall meet!

* * *

"Wish we had a fifth for bridge."

"You don't need a fifth for bridge, you dope."

"Well, make it a pint, then."

* * *

A priest walking down the street found a parishioner in a ghastly state of staggers.

"Tom!" he said, "What on earth could you be drinkin' to put you in such a condition?"

The drunk thought heavily.

"It warsb Three Fathers, Feather," he answered.

* * *

From L.J.C., Detroit, Mich.

A little Irishman in shabby clothes stepped up to the ritzy Book-Cadillac Motor Bar. Edging his way through the auto magnates, he laid a dime on the bar and loudly ordered whisky.

The dignified bartender, his pince-nez a-tremble, angrily said, "We have no ten cent whisky."

"That's all right with me, buddy," said the little man, as he picked up his dime and started for the door, "I don't go for the five cent kind."

* * *

The *Garden City, Kans., Telegram* reported recently that, "There's a local man who says he's started a counter organization to Alcoholics Anonymous. He calls it Inebriates Unanimous."

Actually, the mythical guy is a little late. We were all "inebriates unanimous" before we became "Alcoholics Anonymous."

* * *

Some people make A.A. so complicated they remind us of the fellow who was describing a new machine he'd seen to a friend. He said:

"By means of a pedal attachment a fulcrum lever converts a vertical reciprocal motion into a circular movement. The principal part of the machine is a huge-disc that revolves in a vertical plane. Power is applied through the axis of the disc, and work is done on the periphery, and the hardest steel by mere impact may be reduced to any shape."

The friend asked: "What is this machine?"

Answer: "A grindstone."

The Pleasures of Reading

THE IDEA OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPELS OR GOD IN MAN by George Santayana (Charles Scribner's Sons, \$2.75)

A. S. M. Hutchison in *This Freedom*, a quarter-century ago, wrote the story of the modern career woman who prostrated herself and her children in idolatrous worship of the modern trinity: truth, knowledge and reason. But for her, and for them, truth lied, knowledge deceived and reason betrayed. She cries aloud in her Gethsemane:

"All our intelligence, if materialism may be called intelligence; all modern teaching, offers us God the Spirit, but as it seems to me tonight, denies us God the Father and God the Son. It may be — reasonable. But things spiritual demand for their recognition emotions spiritual, and there's a pass that thousands reach when the spirit is a dead thing. If they are to believe in God only as a Spirit, a Force, a Power; an Essence to be felt but not seen; on Element to be absorbed into but not to be visualized, if this, if these, there needs in them some spirit, some force, some power of themselves to lift themselves to meet it.

"Well, there are thousands (am I not one?) that have it not. It once was theirs. Now it is not theirs. If there is for them only God the Spirit, then is there for them only that to which they have no more power to reach than has one bedridden the power to rise and find a mile away what may restore him. They have only that, their breaking heart, which would cast itself, oh, with what bliss of utter abandonment, before God the Father, quick to succor, and before God the Son, a human and a personal Son, ardent to intercede. And that is denied them. That God that existed and that was taught to exist for my mother and for her day to this day may not exist. It may be —reasonable. Oh, it is offered—a stone where bread was sought."

Many of us are among the thousands "that have it not." True, our feelings have been moved, our minds have been quickened, our souls have been touched with the lambent flames of a holy spirit. Nonetheless we are humanly mercurial. We are alternately elated and depressed. Or if we level off the peaks and valleys of emotional vacillations, we acquire in place of serenity a bovine passivity.

Stricken by misfortunes or elevated by successes, or during the long intervals between, are we conscious of any significance in events or of any meaning to our lives? Do we entirely ignore the material element in our natures or do we live on so animalistic a plane that we distinguish ourselves from the beasts only by the attribute of reason and a sense of the comic? Have we discovered the difference between sentiment and sense, between sentimentality and sensibility? Have we discovered that there is *no* difference between realism and idealism? Are we puzzled by the idea of the humanity of God or the divinity of Man? Do we not feel that there is something that transcends reason? Are we not aware of phenomena going beyond knowledge? Do we not, as Pascal says, make an idol of truth itself "for truth apart from charity is not God but his image and idol, which we must neither love nor worship?"

These are perennial questions and they are answered perennially. The answers have never been lacking. Vision is always at hand for those who wish and are ready to see. And one finds a fundamental sameness in the right answers to cosmic questions, however and by whomsoever they are furnished. Only the methods and media of presentation are variable — and immaterial. Therefore, it seems to come to this: are we ready to receive the answers, are we ready to become communicants? It sometimes takes a cataclysm to get one in a state of readiness. For many readers this phenomenon already has occurred.

Now comes George Santayana, dean of American philosophers, wise and learned, and rationalist *par excellence*, in the evening of his life but by no means in his dotage, with a book which a newspaper reviewer said was not for the ordinary man — a challenge, indeed, to the readers of this publication.

This philosophical critic, with an orthodox heritage and a heretical mind, has examined the Gospels to find answers to some questions of his own, not unlike those propounded above. He abjures superstitions, which many a wise and learned man believed until yesterday. He is not concerned with the historical or metaphysical validity of Gospel truth. He states he really wishes only to analyze and to detach one original element in the inspiration of the Gospels, namely the dramatic presentation of the person of Christ. But, of course, he should have been astute enough to know that he couldn't and wouldn't stop at that point. He is aware of the limitation of the

(Continued on next page)

Evangelists, but he is also aware that the intellectual St. Paul had only visionary evidence of Christ and that this alone was the foundation of his faith.

The author, while denying that inspiration reveals speculative truth, is struck by the example of St. Thomas Aquinas, who, in order to decide rightly difficult points in theology, would drop his pen, and in prolonged prayer, humbly and with many tears, would implore divine assistance. So, the writer concludes: "And is it not more likely that clear light, in matters that can be manifested only to intuition, should come through rapt concentration and prayer, than that clear light should proceed from hearsay, from treacherous memory, or from the precipitate malice of wits, trying to beat one another in argument?"

Again Mr. Santayana is not a little puzzled that so refined a spirit as J. H. Cardinal Newman does not hesitate to join the Evangelists in translating the idea of Christ into a divine power at work in the hearts of men, and creating there the only true religion and the only pure morality. He sees no need to follow such people in so impetuous an assumption. "Yet we may admit that an image or idea that can be so idolized by sensitive and noble minds deserves to be studied and to be clarified. Some inborn predicament of the spirit must be expressed in such an inspiration. What exactly is this inspiration as enshrined in the Gospels? And what, in fact, is the predicament it expresses?"

Such are the questions to which the first part of the volume is devoted. With his critical faculties most acute, and with unexpected insight and understanding, the writer probes into the relationship between Father and Son and between God and Man. Miracles are not assumed to be impossible because "when the rationalist says that something is impossible, he is merely confessing that such a thing has not come within the circle of his thoughts and that he has not wit enough to imagine it."

The *idea* of Christ being that of God in man, the Eucharist is viewed as a sacrament through the instrumentality of which grace and assimilation to God may flow to one called to receive them. Prayer is regarded as expressing poetically the troubles and longings of the soul, "but in expressing them tends to transcend them, to accept defeat, to make a victory of that acceptance, and to redeem itself by self-transformation," a true catharsis. It is duly noted that Christ forgave the sins of the flesh as readily as he healed its miseries; neither could disgust him with being a man. "What taxes his [Christ's] patience is the incapacity of the virtuous to understand the principle of mercy; also the incapacity of the ready intellect to understand the necessity of faith."

Having found that the idea of Christ as it appears in the Gospels gives an inspired dramatic expression to the felt presence of God in man, Mr. Santayana turns next to a different question: How far is this idea of Christ, as being God in man, a philosophical idea, valid for all men and in all religions? Reserved for the reader will be the intellectual delight and soul-satisfying experience of pursuing this inquiry with the author as he discusses the matters of Creation, the Fatherhood of God, God's Love of Man and Man's Love of God, the Animal Psyche and the Supernatural Soul, and Self-Transcendence.

These subjects are treated with clarity and reasonableness, the dialectic intricacies not being too involved or the layers of erudition overwhelming. This investigation of the central idea of religion frequently reaches levels above the empirical world, yet the method is always philosophical and there are no loose ends. Coolly and dispassionately, and with a trace of the sardonic which gives it terrific emphasis in spite of the misleading simplicity of language, the matter is summed up:

"The idea of Christ crucified has had many worshippers, and has inspired many saints. But it has not converted the world or saved it. The world does not wish to be saved. If we say that the world thereby wills its own damnation, we are merely venting our private displeasure, without frightening the world. The flux of existence cannot be stopped by reflection, save as it has partially stopped already to make that reflection. To stop may well seem to it a worse damnation than never to be able to stop. But in fact life is not condemned to either fate, because materially it always passes on, but in spirit it sometimes transcends into realization of the eternal. There is aesthetic delight in this, as well as moral peace and intellectual clearness; but those who miss these things do not regret missing them. It would not be in the spirit of Christ to blame them for that privation: verily they have their reward. Yet that reward, from the spiritual point of view, is itself their punishment, for it keeps them from ever understanding the power of their own minds or judging anything otherwise than by an accidental passion."

This book solves no problems; no book of the kind does. But it serves to give direction to the thinking of those (and their number is legion) to whom strait-laced orthodoxy is unacceptable and a pallid humanism is inadequate—*R.F.S., Montclair, N.J.*

IN A PENT HOUSE OR FLOP HOUSE, JITTERS ARE JITTERS

I have heard the term "Park Avenue drunk," used more than once in A.A. meetings and also in conversation around the club house. I suppose it means the man or woman in A.A. who was born into what is known as "Society" and who was fortunate enough to have financial security and was protected in such a way that it was impossible for him to kick all this background overboard however hard he tried.

There seems to be a feeling that such a man or woman doesn't really know what it's all about; that he hasn't been through the mill. I think we have all heard the type of speaker who gets up on the platform and virtually apologizes for the fact that in spite of all his efforts he has never attained the colorful and dramatic "low bottom" described by the speaker who proceeded him.

Why should this have to be? Why should the drunk who has hit the jails, the flop houses, the state hospitals feel that he deserves more credit for sobering up than the man who has spent years going from one private sanitarium to another, from one psychiatrist to another in frantic efforts to cure this disease that is common to all of us? To my mind the cotton wool that surrounds the rich drunk merely prolongs the agony and delays by years the blessed release.

I am sure that the miseries and horrors of coming off a drunk are very much the same no matter where the process takes place. The walls of a suite at the Waldorf can sway and threaten to cave in just as sickly as those of a cell. Those grotesque faces that creep under your eyelids are just as frightening in a pent house as in a flop house. Those voices whisper and threaten the same things on Park Avenue as they do on Tenth. If the rich drunk's painful journey back to temporary health is slightly eased by good care, proper food and sedatives it only means that it will take him much longer to reach our common goal, complete and permanent sobriety. He will have a few more years in which to break the hearts of his family, lose the respect of his associates, antagonize those who were his friends and make a complete hash of his life.

As I see it, an alcoholic is an alcoholic irrespective of color, race or creed, irrespective of the accidents of birth, money or education. So please let us do away with the term "Park Avenue drunk" and get together in real thankfulness that we have all reached the haven of A.A.—*M.N., Manhattan, N. Y.*

* * *

Definition for WILL-POWER
Our WILL-ingness to use a Higher POWER.

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 it will forward A.A. communications addressed to the writers of letters published here.—The Editors.

"Safe" Combination

From Chicago, Ill.

Every now and then someone wants to take the 12 Steps apart to see what makes them tick and subject them to scrutiny, analysis, personal notions of alterations and improvements. But at my first reading of them I believed and accepted them without question and with the confidence that they were as definite and immutable as arithmetic.

The word "steps" however, seemed to imply a progression or a moving from one to another, a climbing one step at a time. No, these were not "steps." I saw them rather as a combination of features all of equal importance that must work together at the same time to be effective. It was as if someone had said to me, "I know where there is a treasure—valuable beyond price—the most precious thing that can come into your life. It is sobriety, and a new philosophy of joyful living. It is locked in a vault but here is the combination. All you have to do is follow it as set down and you can open the door to that treasure."

Thus with definite assurance I set to work with the combination to unlock the door. I didn't question the numbers. I didn't try to use a 4½ instead of 5 or say I didn't like 3, 4, or 7 so I'll just skip those. Do that, and the door won't open. Anyhow, the combination works. I have the treasure. So for my own personal needs, a spin of the dial each day, with no numbers omitted, is the answer—the only "safe" combination.—L. C.

A.A. Is Timeless

from Linda Vista, Calif.

Time stands still. The other night at a presentation of two two-year birthday cakes, I made the remark that it didn't seem like two years, and that time really meant nothing in A.A., after we had learned to live today only.

Then today, while waiting for the delivery of some concrete and with no immediate problem concerning the job on my mind, I started doing the thing I seem always to do, fill in my time with thoughts about A.A. rather than worry about the past or fret about the future, both of

which I have found out I can do very little about.

The thought about time came back to me and I started to analyze the reason why time stood still in A.A. I went back over my years of drinking and found that in reality time had stood still then. Those last two and one-half years before A.A. really meant nothing. I had used wine to drown out the past and blot out the future. The past I couldn't bear to think about and the future was something to fear and dread, so wine had made time stand still.

Then I came into A.A. and was taught, "First things first," "easy does it," and that we can live only in the present. By living each passing moment so that our conscience is clear we need have no regrets for the past, nor need we worry about the future. God will take care of that for us.

I send this in just as it came to me on the job, between times when I had no problems to solve there. These I take the same way, one at a time and as they come.—J.F.H.

Name Is Changed

From Youngstown, Ohio

The name of the Tri-County Alcoholic Foundation is being changed to the Youngstown Committee for Education on Alcoholism, and we will be affiliated with the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism. We changed our name because we found our aims and purposes were already so similar to those of the National Committee that it seemed wise to affiliate with them. Also, we wished to comply with the suggestion received from the A.A. trustees that the terminology, Alcoholic Foundation, be reserved for the national group.

We believe that there is a great deal of educational work to be done but that A.A. has a big enough job on its hands getting people sober and keeping them sober without tackling anything else so we have our Committee on Education to do the job—Neil K.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The suggestion from the trustees was to the effect that since the national board has been known as the Alcoholic Foundation the use of the same name by individual groups would be confusing.)

A Friend's Tribute

From Rome, Ga.

On Saturday, July 13th, Carl K. died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage. For some time, those associated with him realized he was not himself. For two years, Carl had maintained a perfect record of sobriety and contributed much to the

cause of A.A., so near to his heart. Those associated with him and who were his personal friends, admired his fine tact and deep sincerity, although they differed with him frequently in the interpretation of A.A. principles, he will be greatly missed.—Sam S. D.

Let's Be Human, Too

from Detroit

Two articles in the August issue particularly impressed me with the common sense views they presented. One was entitled "God Made Our Relatives, Too," the other, "You'd Do It If You Were Drunk."

The writers of both of these pieces, it seemed to me, have caught hold of the real essence of A.A.—the problem of fitting ourselves back into a normal way of life among our fellow men, outside as well as within A.A.

I feel that we have performed only half of the job of rehabilitation so long as we cling fearfully to the group and to our A.A. contacts. Surely it is better to be clinging thus (than to be out drinking; that I'd never deny. But I think we are creatures of habit, and liable to get in the habit of leaning too heavily on A.A. while giving too little of ourselves back to the world in which we have been fortunate enough to remain. Furthermore, I think some of us develop an actual superior air, almost a snobbery, towards those outside the bonds of our alcoholic fraternity. I know I've been guilty of that fault, much to the displeasure of family and friends.

More thought of others, more participation in the life around us, will make us better A.A.s and better members of society. Thanks for those two articles. They said it better than I could, and may help prod some of us into an awareness of this responsibility towards society.—J.C.D.

Playing, at A.A.

from Portland, Ore.

As new A.A. groups are continually being formed throughout the country, and we are receiving more and more publicity, it is inevitable that we shall attract numbers of persons who do not possess the first requisite for membership in Alcoholics Anonymous. We mean those who do not honestly admit that they are powerless over alcohol, and who do not have a wholly sincere desire to be helped to quit drinking once and for all.

Numbers of such persons are already to be found in every large group. The class we refer to are not "true alcoholics" desperately in need of help, but just more or less intemperate drinkers who come into a group for sympathy, and for a breathing spell between bouts with John

(Continued on next page)

Barleycorn There is an old and apt quotation that goes: "The devil was sick, the devil a saint was he; the devil was well the 'divil' a saint was he."

They have a tendency towards self-dramatization, and come into a group to recuperate and build up for another binge. In short, they are playing around in A.A. Every honest member of A.A. must know one or two. It often takes some little time to recognize them, but when they are recognized they should be at the very least, discouraged from, or perhaps I should say, firmly, but politely denied admittance to meetings open or closed when they are even slightly "under the influence."

The harm that can be done by such persons to honest, but doubtful newcomers is too serious a consideration to be ignored through a mistaken conception of tolerance.

Nor should the contents of this letter be mistaken for "smugness" or self-complacency— on the contrary I feel that I am voicing the opinions and sentiments of many others.

I hope that you will print this letter in order that we may have the views of others as to how this situation can best be dealt with—*L.C.*

* * *

Leaving Group A Challenge

From Nashville, Mich.

After five years association with the Toledo, Ohio, A.A. group, the last two of which had been marked by very active participation and attendant good results, I have found myself by force of circumstance and nature of work in this small Michigan town of only 1,200 souls.

Therefore, I have been unable for the past six or seven weeks since coming here, to enjoy the fellowship and companionship and unable to reap the benefits of hospital calls available to those of our ever increasing number who dwell in metropolitan areas.

However, this is an interesting experience and not one to give me any great cause for alarm. I find that I have had to pay more attention to my daily life than ever before. Daily meditation and morning reading have come to mean more than they ever did in the hustle and bustle of the city.

I find that constant referral to the "Big Book" provides what I call a refresher course, for at times I become aware of a feeling that the old life and old ways are far behind, which thoughts I know are dangerous thoughts, for in my own experience after being "dry" for almost two years after coming into the group, I found myself thinking that possibly I was not really alcoholic. You know the rest, and it was only after much stumbling that I convinced myself and put life and the A.A. program on a daily basis.

I do hope that if you receive any inquiries as to where one can talk A.A. in the neighbor-

hood you will refer them to me at this address, for my wife and I will have open house and a full coffee pot.—*G.T.M.*

Climbing Back

From San Francisco, Cal.

As a person in A.A. becomes more willing to have a Higher Power help him, he thinks less of himself. He is sustained by and lives only as the instrument of this Power — called God. As he receives help, he gives help to others.

Sometimes, the harder he tries, the less he attains. So he must take it easy and live each 24 hours the very best he knows how. Slowly but surely he gets the feeling that he is being helped by this Higher Power. He feels peace and happiness, something money cannot buy.

Who am I to tell you what it is? I do not know. But when I feel it, it is wonderful. Sometimes I lose it. Then I have to try to get myself in tune again so I can receive the help I know is there. Because I have felt that help before, I cannot now doubt that it is ever present — if I be willing and ready to receive it — if I do not close my mind and heart.

When I lose this feeling of harmony, I lose my temper, self-pity returns, I am dishonest with myself, jealousy creeps in — so does selfishness. I have to take hold of myself as quickly as I can and try to get that harmony back. If I do not, I may get drunk. And I don't want to get drunk. If I do, I lose all I have.

It's a long way back. Believe me — I know. I am trying to climb back now. It's not so easy. The willingness and desire to stay sober more than anything makes me try once more. I hope and pray I can correct those evil things before they build up within me again — before they make me forget that I am an alcoholic and I take that first drink. Should I take that drink, I'd be off to the races — another drunk — the same old pattern of thinking and living.

I know. I tried it. It was not fun. Why? Because A.A. had taught me better. I also know in my heart if I had asked this Power for help before I took that first drink, and if I had really been on the 24-hour program, I would not have got drunk. I hope and pray that all of us ask for help, and when we receive it, we shall use it the best we know how — each 24 hours. — *Juanita W.*

A Fresh Start Each Day

From Newton, Mass.

My start at straight thinking came to me as I watched a new day breaking high in the air over Texas. It was after 72 hours of sleeplessness and strain that I didn't think I could take, but had to.

Watching the day break clean and new and unspoiled made me understand that each dawn gave us another chance to start clean and new if

we wanted to. The yesterdays and the blackness of the night were past and gone, and God had given us another chance at life. When the wheels set down, it was then that men and women started in the day bringing out the greed, hate, intolerance, lust, and selfishness that are a part of life in these troubled times and with which we must all brush shoulders in our daily lives. It was at this point that the prayer which has been quoted around Boston so much came to take on more meaning — "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change those which I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." A few of the many things that A.A. has taught me I would like to set down in the hope that they may help others to understand themselves.

1. Try and look the truth in the face and accept it. Don't try and duck around the truth or your sorrows and misfortunes. Try and live through them by seeking the help and understanding of your friends . . . both the friends in A.A. and outside.

2. The truth and your friends will help you again to respect yourself and to recognize your own worth and courage.

3. Don't be afraid of your inner thoughts and hidden impulses. If you are thinking straight, you will pass up the mean and unnatural thoughts and impulses and act only on the ones that are good. We are all human and we must sort out the good from the bad. I suppose that is what is called conscience.

4. As A.A.s, we will all acknowledge some traces of the immaturity we were accused of. Admit this fault and try to put it aside by seeking maturity through personal contact with friends and acquaintances.

5. God will give us the strength to face each new day and its problems and perplexities if we are only willing and humble enough to ask His help.

6. As a drunk, I ran my life without help, but as a sober alcoholic I need the help of God (the Higher Power to me) and the understanding of my friends.—*B.P.B.*

Indianapolis Churches Offer Clubrooms

An Episcopal rector in Indianapolis, with the approval of his "board," has made available to a sectional A.A. group the facilities of the church parish house for its weekly meeting. The facilities include a commodious meeting room, well-equipped with chairs, speaker's desk, a large refreshment room with adequate table-seating, and a housekeeper to prepare coffee and cake or doughnuts.

Nonetheless sympathetic is the offer of the Unitarian church of the city, with accommodations equally pleasant and suitable.—*R.P.C., Indianapolis.*

A. A.'s Country-Wide News Circuit

Baltimore, Md., A.A.s "take the air" every Thursday night at 7:15, and the resulting 12th Step follow-up work has been extremely gratifying. The management and staff of radio station *WBFR* in Baltimore are enthusiastic about the possibilities of A.A. as a sustaining program. . . . Plans for a larger permanent club are under way and in the interim Baltimore's Wednesday night open meetings are held at 512 Charles Street. . . . Appointment of a commission to study alcoholism in Maryland has been announced by Governor O'Connor. The Governor's action in naming a seven-member group was in line with a Senate resolution passed at the last regular session of the Legislature calling for appointment of the commission and a report by it to the 1947 General Assembly.

* * *

The Batesville, Ark., Group had its inception last year when a local man went in desperation to the Little Rock Group, and after a two-week stay came home and started to work on other alcoholics. Today the Batesville Group has a membership of 14, and clubrooms where they hold regular meetings. . . . The A.A. radio dramatization over Detroit's *WWJ* is recorded every Sunday at 6:15 P.M. over New York City's own station, *WNYC*. . . . The Little Rock, Arkansas, Group has now passed its *sixth anniversary* as one of the most active Groups in the Southwest. Membership continues to grow steadily.

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In the attractive Sponsorship Program pamphlet—which contains no musts, merely suggestions — distributed among membership by Miami, Fla., A.A.s, we note: "A sponsor is a person who accepts responsibility to another person in A.A.; to be a friend, advisor, and an understanding confidant in any problem concerning the common malady, alcoholism. . . . LET HIM (the new member) TALK, TOO. . . . For the first 30 days, the new member (shall) be sponsored by the member who introduces him or her to A.A.; if no member was the direct avenue through which the new member contracted A.A., then the secretary assigns a temporary sponsor. . . . Explain the necessity of reading and re-reading the A.A. book. Point out that this book gives a detailed description of the A.A. tools and the suggested methods of application of these tools to build a foundation of rehabilitation for living." . . . It won't be so very long before the Miami Group will be six years old.

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Definite arrangements have been completed for the Southern Regional Meeting in Asheville, N. C., September 16, 17 and 18, with the George

Vanderbilt Hotel as headquarters. Plans are being made to accommodate the largest A.A. crowd yet assembled in the South. Nationally known speakers will be heard, and scheduled A.A. clinics will be held. These plans were announced at an Inter-Group meeting of all the Carolina groups which took place recently in Shelby, N. C., and was attended by about 90 members and their families.

* * *

During the Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies which started July 7 and came to a close August 2, the New Haven, Conn., Group had an extra Wednesday night meeting at the local high school for four weeks, in addition to its regular Tuesday night meeting. The discussions proved highly interesting to audiences of about 275 persons. Many prominent speakers were heard at these meetings, among them clergymen, doctors, judges, lawyers and A.A. members from all over the country. Dr. Seldon D. Bacon of Yale University spoke briefly from the floor at the initial open meeting, giving praise to A.A. and expressing the hope for A.A.'s continued cooperation with The Yale Clinic in helping the alcoholic. He also said that plans were already established for clinics in several of the larger cities of Connecticut to be run by the State, and spoke of plans for establishing a new hospital to be sponsored by the State for inebriates. The picture, *Problem Drinkers*, was run at two of the local theatres during the first two weeks of the school, and A.A. newspaper ads were tied in. The New Haven Group has, in consequence, many new members, quite a few of whom are women.

* * *

Louisville, Ky., reports that its group, formed about five years ago, huffed and puffed along until about the first part of 1945. Then things began to happen and it has steadily grown until it now has a membership of over 150, all of whom are really working at the program. This number includes 36 women. The Louisville Group also includes New Albany, Ind., and they have four sectional groups which meet weekly. In addition to meetings almost every night in the week, there is a weekly luncheon for the men and another one for the women. Recently the Louisville A.A.s supervised the formation of a group at Shelbyville, Ky. "We operate with a light touch," writes a member from Louisville, "and don't get too sad or exercised about anything. Tolerance is our watchword, and the constant reminder that 'nobody speaks for A.A.' has kept us sober, happy, and growing."

With a membership nearing 400, Vancouver (B. C.), A.A.s recently came to the point where they felt the chapter was growing so large as to be unwieldy, and the meetings too crowded to achieve a useful intimacy of fellowship. So the decision to divide into smaller groups was made. Seven such groups, completely autonomous, now have been set up in Vancouver proper, with other groups in adjacent West Vancouver and New Westminster. The city groups are West End, Central, Hastings, Charlie Brown, Kerrisdale, Kitsilano, and Bayview. To establish some sort of liaison between these, a Central Steering Committee with one delegate from each group has been formed. It is purely a consulting body. Elsewhere in British Columbia A.A. continues to flourish, with new groups being continually formed. . . . In another section of Canada — Toronto, Ontario — word comes that the *March of Time* film has created a tremendous demand for information about A.A., and that this is partially responsible for the formation of a Central Committee. A Speakers' Bureau has also been formed, with names given from each group to the Central Club to answer calls from clubs, churches and social organizations. Dr. Bob is going to speak in Toronto in September. The Toronto Women's Group, now numbering approximately 20, is going strong.

* * *

Writing about the Las Vegas, Nevada Group, with 35 men and women to date, and the new branch that has been formed by members from Boulder City and Henderson, a Las Vegas correspondent, lauding the work of A.A., begins with: "Last November, when it was announced that Alcoholics Anonymous had organized in Las Vegas, a startled woman went to her minister and complained at the sorry state of affairs. She declared that things were coming to an awful fix 'when the drunkards organize'." . . . More than 260 San Francisco A.A.s and their families held their annual picnic at the Sonoma County Golf Club — a steak barbecue. This group now has four active neighborhood groups, the members of which retain their identities with the central group. . . . the combined groups of San Diego County, Calif., had their first annual picnic in Cuyamaca State Park in the Laguna mountains. More than 200 A.A.s, their friends and families were there.

* * *

Visitors from Kent, Ravenna, Barberton and Canton attended the picnic of the East Akron, O., Group. . . . Among recent visitors to Akron was the man who, back in 1935, drove Bill to the home of the prominent Akron woman who ar-

ranged the first meeting between Dr. Bob and Bill. The man in question, now a member of the Phoenix, Ariz., Group, was a chauffeur in those days, still struggling with his problem. He is a five-year-old member now. . . . One of the most inspiring meetings in the history of A.A. in the Cleveland area took place at Vermillion, O., when the group there celebrated its *first anniversary*. The fellow who originated the group was known for some time as the "one-man group" of Vermillion as he carried on alone for months. But on this first birthday the church basement was filled with visitors and well-wishers from all neighboring towns.

* * *

The rapid growth of A.A. activities in Syracuse, N. Y., was further advanced with the formation of the Eastwood Group, with headquarters at 121 Ashdale Ave., Eastwood. The entertainment committee of the new group immediately hoisted its flag by staging a picnic, held in the foothills of the Adirondacks at Panther Lake, on the summer estate of one of the members. . . . The three-month-old Wichita Falls, Texas Group, reports that it is grateful to the editor of the local newspaper who has offered use of his news columns in publicizing A.A.

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The Pittsburgh, Pa., Groups will be six years old in November, and have 14 five-year members. There were only five Pittsburgh alcoholics at the first meeting six years ago. There are now more than 300 members and 18 groups in Allegheny County and vicinity. . . . The Tacoma, Wash., Group reports sure, steady progress—as does the Pittsfield, Mass., Group. . . . Oil City, Pa.'s *second anniversary*, September 19, will be commemorated by an open meeting at the YMCA, Seneca Street; several prominent speakers are scheduled for the affair.

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A. A. Digest—Excerpts from Group Publications

Weekly News Letter (Deep East Texas Group), Nacogdoches, Texas: "The Deep East Texas Group was one year old July 25. On that date in 1945 the first meeting was held in Nacogdoches with one member present from Palestine and one from Nacogdoches. The following week six members of the Houston group and five members of the Dallas group spent up to three days with us helping us get started."

* * *

The Eye-Opener, Los Angeles, Calif.: It is better for the newcomer to put his faith in the "Principles" of A.A. rather than in the "Personalities" of A.A. The 12 Steps will never let you down! . . .

For our Egotists:
You see a man wise in his own eyes,
There is more hope for a fool than for him.

For our Tempers:
Like a city breached and defenseless
Is a man who has no control of his temper.

For Gossip:
An evil man pays heed to wicked words,
A false man gives ear to mischievous speech."

* * *

A. A. Tribune, Des Moines, Iowa: "The Information Center can be financed by the Community Chest, and that would definitely put it where it belongs, namely, making it a public health problem. . . . What alcoholic bought a new house here lately and then tore off the front porch in fixing it up? Brother, he'll have a new front porch on it soon the way, I hear, he's working. Funny how in A.A. we start buying homes, start fixing them up, and start living again like we were humans once more. Great deal, that permits such happiness."

* * *

Central Bulletin, Cleveland, Ohio: "Gossip is one of the cardinal sins An old Italian legend tells the following: In the old days, a peasant confessed to a priest that he had slandered an innocent man. The priest said to him, 'For your penance do this now. Take a bag of chicken feathers. Go to every yard in the town and drop one bit of down into each garden. Do not miss one yard. When you have finished, return to me.'

"The sinner believed the punishment was light. With his bag of down he made the circuit of the village and carefully dropped one soft feather into each garden. Then he reported to

the priest saying: 'I have done my penance.'

"'No, my son,' replied the old abbe. 'You will not have done your penance until you take the bag, go again on your rounds, collect every feather you have dropped, and bring it here to me.' The gossip protested that it would be impossible! He could not find the bits of down in a lifetime; many of them had blown far away.

"'So it is with gossip,' replied the priest. 'It is easily dropped. But never again, no matter how hard you try, can you gather back the words you have so thoughtlessly scattered!'"

* * *

Camel Club Chronicle, Marshalltown, Iowa: "There is no A.A. member who is proud of the funny things, the silly things, the mean things, the awful things, he did in his drinking days. They are gone and past forever. Our past lives cannot be lived over again nor can they be changed. So to think about our past lives unduly, to condemn, berate, or belittle ourselves for having done what we did do, is wrong. It is unsound. It is bad psychology. It is just plain damn crooked thinking. We should be thankful that we are not drinking now, and we should show our thankfulness by helping others who need our help."

WOMEN'S MAGAZINES DISCUSS ALCOHOLISM

Vast new audiences are being reached, in the drive to extend education on the subject of alcoholism, through articles appearing recently in leading women's magazines, journals which boast huge circulations and reach into every strata of American life.

The Ladies' Home Journal carried a lengthy article in its August issue entitled, "Can Alcoholics Recover?" *The Woman's Home Companion* features in its September issue another piece, "Are Women Drinking Too Much?" A condensation of this article is being shown in the magazine's newspaper ads.

Another angle on the subject will be presented in the October *Grapevine*, when a woman member discusses some of the problems peculiar to women.