

November 1954

He Kept the Faith

IN MEMORIAM

By Bill



BILL D., AA Number Three, died in Akron Friday night, September 17th, 1954. That is, people say he died, but he really didn't. His spirit and works are today alive in the hearts of uncounted AAs and who can doubt that Bill already dwells in one of those many Mansions in the Great Beyond.

Nineteen years ago last summer, Dr. Bob and I saw him for the first time. Bill lay on his hospital bed and looked at us in wonder.

Two days before this, Dr. Bob had said to me, "If you and I are going to stay sober, we had better get busy." Straightway Bob called Akron's City Hospital and asked for the nurse on the receiving ward. He explained that he and a man from New York had a cure for alcoholism. Did she have an alcoholic customer on whom it could be tried? Knowing Bob of old, she jokingly replied, "Well, Doctor, I

suppose you've already tried it yourself?"

Yes, she did have a customer—a dandy. He just arrived in D.T.s. Had blacked the eyes of two nurses, and now they had him strapped down tight. Would this one do! After prescribing medicines, Dr. Bob ordered, "Put him in a private room. We'll be down as soon as he clears up."

We found we had a tough customer in Bill. According to the nurse, he had been a well-known attorney in

Akron and a City Councilman. But he had landed in the Akron City Hospital four times in the last six months. Following each release, he got drunk even before he could get home.

So here we were, talking to Bill, the first "man on the bed." We told him about our drinking. We hammered it into him that alcoholism was an obsession of the mind, coupled to an allergy of the body. The obsession, we explained, condemned the alcoholic to drink against his will and the allergy, if he went on drinking, could positively guarantee his insanity or death. How to unhook that fatal compulsion, how to restore the alcoholic to sanity, was, of course, the problem.

Hearing this bad news, Bill's swollen eyes opened wide. Then we took the hopeful tack, we told what we had done: how we got honest with ourselves as never before, how we had talked our problems out with each other in confidence, how we tried to make amends for harm done others, how we had then been miraculously released from the desire to drink as soon as we had humbly asked God, as we understood him, for guidance and protection.

Bill didn't seem too impressed. Looking sadder than ever, he wearily ventured, "Well, this is wonderful for you fellows, but can't be for me. My case is so terrible that I'm scared to go out of this hospital at all. You don't have to sell me religion, either. I was one time a deacon in the church

and I still believe in God. But I guess He doesn't believe much in me."

Then Dr. Bob said, "Well, Bill, maybe you'll feel better tomorrow. Wouldn't you like to see us again?"

"Sure I would," replied Bill, "Maybe it won't do any good. But I'd like to see you both, anyhow. You certainly know what you are talking about."

Looking in next day, we found Bill with his wife, Henrietta. Eagerly he pointed to us saying, "These are the fellows I told you about, they are the ones who understand."

Bill then related how he had lain awake nearly all night. Down in the pit of his depression, new hope had somehow been born. The thought flashed thorough his mind, "If they can do it, I can do it." Over and over he said this to himself. Finally, out of his hope, there burst conviction. Now he was sure. Then came a great joy. At length peace stole over him and he slept.

Before our visit was over Bill suddenly turned to his wife and said, "Go fetch my clothes, dear. We're going to get up and get out of here." Bill D. walked out of that hospital a free man, never to drink again. AA's Number One Group dates from that very day.

The force of the great example that Bill set in our pioneering time will last as long as AA itself.

Bill kept the faith—what more could we say?