THE ORIGINAL “BILL’S STORY”

This is the first printed draft of the Big Book, which was mailed to various individuals for their comments and also as a fund raising tool. It is unclear at what time during the writing of the Big Book “Bill’s Story” became chapter one. The language in this draft is in many ways different than the final manuscript. This illustrates the process of having many individuals add their opinions to the contents.

[archivist's note: All pages are 8.5” by 14”; marked text (underlined) means more than one letter was typed over another, or text was crossed out with x’s though still readable]

[handwriting: "Wilson's original story"]

Page 1.
1. When I was about ten years old my Father and mother
2. agreed to disagree and I went to live with my Grandfather,
3. and Grandmother. He was a retired farmer and lumberman. As I
4. see him in retrospect, he was a very remarkable man After he
5. returned from Civil War he settled in the small Vermont
6. town where I was later to grow up. His original capital con-
7. sisted of a small, unimproved hillside farm, as sweet and
8. willing helpmeet, and enormous determination to succeed in
9. whatever he attempted. He was a man of high native intelli-
10. gence, a voracious reader, though little educated in the
11. school sense of the word. There was plenty of financial
12. sense in his make-up and he was a man of real vision. Under
13. other conditions he might well have become master of an in-
14. dusty or railroad empire.
15. My Grandmother brought into the world three children,
16. one of whom was my Mother. I can still seem to hear her tell-
17. ing of the struggle of those early days. Such matters as
18. cooking for twenty woodchoppers, looking after the diary,
19. making most of the clothes for the family, long winter rides
20. at twenty below zero to fetch my Grandfather home over snow-
21. bound roads, seeing him of long before daylight that he and
22. the choppers might have their access thawed out so that work
23. might begin on the mountaintop at daylight- this is the thought
24. of tradition upon which they nourished me. They finally
25. achieved their competence and retired late in life to enjoy
26. a well earned rest and the respect and affection of their
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27. neighbors. They were the sort of people, I see now, who
28. really made America.
29. But I had other ideas - much bigger and better ones
30. so I thought. I was to be of the war generation which dis-
31. ipated the homely virtues, the hard earned savings, the
32. pioneering tradition, and the incredible stamina of your parents
parents
33. Grandfather and mine.
34. I too was ambitious - very ambitious, but very un-
35. disciplined. In spite of everyone's effort to correct that con-
36. dition. I had a genius for evading, postponing or shirking
37. those things which I did not like to do, but when thoroughly
38. interested, everything I had was thrown into the pursuit of
39. my objective. My will to succeed at special undertakings on
40. which my heart were set was very great. There was a persis-
41. tence, a patience, and a dogged obstinacy, that drove me on.
42. My Grandfather used to love to argue with me with the object
43. of convincing me of the impossibility of some venture or
another in order to enjoy watching me 'tilt at the windmill' he had erected. One day he said to me - I have just been reading that no one in the world but an Australian can make and throw a boomerang. This spark struck tinder and every-	hing and every activity was instantly laid aside until it could be demonstrated that he was mistaken. The woodbox was not filled, no school work was done, nor could I hardly be persuaded to eat or to go to bed. After a month or more of this thing a boomerang was constructed which I threw around

3. the church steeple. On its return trip it went into trans-
4. ports of joy because it all but decapitated my Grandfather who stood near me.
5. I presently left the country school and fared forth into the great world I had read about in books. My first journey took me only five miles to an adjoining town where I commenced to attend a seminary well known in our section of the state. Here competition was much more severe and I was challenged on all sides to do the seemingly impossible. There was the matter of athletics and I was soon burning with the ambition to become a great baseball player. This was pretty discouraging to begin with, as I was tall for my age, quite awkward, and not very fast on my feed, but I literally worked at it while others slept or otherwise amused themselves and in my second year became captain of the team, whereupon my interest began to languish, for by that time someone had told me I had no ear for music, which I have since discovered is almost true. Despite obstacles I managed to appear in a few song recitals whereupon my interest in singing disappeared and I got terribly serious about learning to play the violin. This grew into a real obsession and to the consternation of my teachers, grew in the last year and everyone else it be-

3. came the immediate cause of my failing to graduate. This was my first great catastrophe. By this time I had become Presi-
7. dent of the class which only made matters worse. As in every thing else I had even very good in certain courses of study which took my fancy, and with others just the opposite, indolence and indifference, being the rule, So it was that the legend of infallibility I had built up around myself collapsed.

3. In the ensuing summer I was obliged for the first time to really address myself to the distasteful task of re-
5. pairing my failure. Although my diploma was now in hand, it was by no means clear to my grandparents and parents what they had better next try to do with me. Because of my interest in scientific matters and the liking I had to fussing with gadgets and chemicals, it had been assumed that I was to be an engineer, and my own learnings were towards the electrical branch of the profession. So I went to Boston and took the entrance examination to one of the leading technical schools in this country. For obvious reasons I failed utterly. It was a rather heartbreaking matter for those interested in me and it gave my self-sufficiency another severe deflation. Finally an entrance was effected at an excellent military college where it was hoped I would really be disci-

3. plined. I attended the University for almost three years and would have certainly failed to graduate or come anywhere near qualifying as an engineer, because of my laziness and weakness mathematics. Particularly Calculus, in this
subject a great number of formulas have to be learned and
the application practiced. I remembered that I absolutely
refused to learn any of them or do any of the work whatever

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until the general principles underlying the subject had been made clear to me. The instructor was very patient,
but finally through up his hands in disgust as I began to argue with him and to hint pretty strongly that perhaps he didn't quite understand them himself. So I commenced an in-
vestigation of the principles underlying Calculus in the school library and learned something of the conceptions of the great minds of Leibnitz and Newton whose genius had made possible this useful and novel mathematical device. Thus armed I mastered the first problem in the textbook and commenced a fresh controversy with my teacher, who angrily, but quite properly, gave me a zero for the course. Fortunate-
ly for my future at the University, I soon enabled to leave the place gracefully, even heroically, for the United States of America had gone to war.

Being students of a military academy school the student boy almost to a man bolted for the first officers training camp at Plattsburgh. Though a bit under age, I received a commission a second lieutenant and got myself assigned to the heavy artillery. Of this I was secretly ashamed, for when the excitement of the day had subsided and I lay in my bunk, I had to confess I did not want to be killed. This bothered me terribly this suspicion that I might be coward after all. I could not reconcile it with the truly exalted mood of patriotism and idealism which possessed me when I hadn't time to think. It was very very damaging to my pride, though most of this damage was repaired later on when I got under fire and discovered I was just like other people, scared to death, but willing to face the music.

After graduating from an army artillery school, I was sent to a post which was situated near a famous old town on the New England coast ones famous for its deepsea whaling, trading and Yankee seagoing tradition. Here I made two decisions. The first one, and the best, to marry. Th
second decision was most emphatically the worst I ever mad took up with took up with
I made the acquaintance of John Barleycorn and decided that I liked it him.
My wife to be
Here I set out upon two paths and little did I realize how much they were diverge. In short I got married and at about the same time, took my first drink and decided that I liked it. But for undying loyalty of my wife and her faith through the years, I should not be alive today. She was a city bred person and represented a background and way of life for which I had secretly longed. Her family spent long summers in our little town. All of them were highly regarded by the natives. This was most complimentary for among the countrymen there existed strong and often un-reasonable prejudices against city folks. For the most part, I felt differently. Most city people I knew had money, assurance, and what then seemed to me great sophistication.
and Most of them had family trees. There were servants, fine houses, gay dinners, and all of the other things with which I was wont to associate power and distinction. All of them, quite unconsciously I am sure, could make me feel very inadequate and ill at ease. I began to feel woefully lacking in the matter of poise and polish and worldly knowledge. Though very proud of the traditions of my own people, I sometimes indulged in the envious wish that I had been born under other circumstances and with some of these advantages. Since then immemorial I suppose the country boyshav thought and felt as I did have thought and felt as I did. These feelings of inferiority are I suspect responsible for the enormous determination many of them have felt to go out to the cities in quest of what seemed to them like true success. Though seldom revealed, these were the sentiments that drove me on from this point.

The war fever ran high in the city near my post and I soon discovered that young officers were in great demand at the dinner tables of the first citizens of the place. Social differences were laid aside and everything was done to make us feel comfortable, happy, and heroic. A great many things conspired to make me feel that I was important. I discovered that I had a somewhat unusual power over men on the drill field and in the barracks. I was about to fight to save the world for democracy. People whose station in life I had envied were receiving me as an equal.

My marriage with a girl who represented all of the best things the city had to offer, was close at hand, and last, but not least, I had discovered John Barleycorn, Love, adventure, war, applause of the crowd, moments sublime and hilarious with intervals hilarious - I was a part of life at last, and very happy. The warnings of my people, the contempt which I had felt for those who drank, were put aside with surprising alacrity as I discovered what the Bronx cocktail could really do for a fellow. My imagination soared - my tongue loosened at last - wonderful vistas opened on all sides, but best of all my self consciousness - my gaucheries and my ineptitudes disappeared into thin air. I seemed to the life of the party. To the dismay of my bride I used to get pretty drunk when I tried to compete with more experienced drinkers, but I argued, what did it matter, for so did everyone else at sometime before daylight. Then came the day of parting, of a fond leave taking of my brave In.

Then were in dear old England, soon to cross the channel to the great unknown. I stood in Winchester Cathedral the day before crossing hand in hand with head bowed, for something had touched me then I had never felt
213. before. I had been wondering, in a rare moment of sober
214. reflection, what sense there could be to killing and
215. carnage of which I was soon to become an enthusiastic part.
216. Where could the Deity be - could there be such a thing -
217. Where now was the God of the preachers, the thought of which
218. used to make me so uncomfortable when they talked about him.
219. Here I stood on the abyss edge of the abyss into which
220. thousands were falling that very day. A feeling of despair
221. settled down on me - where was He - why did he not come-
222. and suddenly in that moment of darkness, He was there. I
223. felt an all enveloping, comforting, powerful presence.
224. Tears stood in my eyes, and as I looked about, I saw on the
225. faces of others nearby, that they too had glimpsed the great
226. reality. Much moved, I walked out into the Cathedral yard,
227. where I read the following inscription on a tombstone. 'Here
228. lies a Hampshire Grenadier, Who caught his death drinking
229. small good beer - A good soldier is ne'er forgot, whether
A
230. he dieth by musket or by pot.' The squadron of bombers
231. swept overhead in the bright sunlight, and I cried to myself
232. 'Here's to adventure' and the feeling of being in the great
233. presence disappeared, never to return for many years.
234. --

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235. I was twenty two, and a grisled veteran of foreign wars.
236. I felt a tremendous assurance about my future, for was not
237. I the only officer of my regiment save one, who had re-
238. ceived a token of appreciation from the men. This quality
239. of leadership, I fancied, would soon place me at the head
240. of some great commercial organization which I would manage
241. with the same constant skill that the pipe organist does
242. his stops and keys.
243. The triumphant home coming was short lived. The
244. best that could be done was to secure a bookkeeping job in
245. the insurance department of the one of the large railroads.
246. I proved to be a wretched and rebellious bookkeeper and could
247. not stand criticism, nor was I much reconciled to my salary,
248. which was only half the pay I had received in the army. When
249. I started to work the railroads were under control of the
250. government. As soon as they were returned my road was re-
251. turned to its stockholders, I was promptly let out because I
252. could not compete with the other clerks in my office. I was
253. so angry and humiliated at this reverse that I nearly became
254. a socialist to register my defiance of the powers that be,
255. which was going pretty far for a Vermonter.
256. To my mortification, my wife went out and got a
257. position which brought in much more than mine had. Being ab-
258. surdly sensitive, I imagined that her relatives an my newly
259. made city acquaintances were snickering a bit at my predica-
260. ment.

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261. Unwillingly, I had to admit, that I was not
262. really trained to hold even a mediocre position. Though
263. I said little, the old driving, obstinate determination to
264. show my mettle asserted itself. Somehow, I would show these
265. scoffers. To complete my engineering seemed out of the ques-
tion, partly because/my distaste for mathematics, My only
other assets were my war experiences and a huge amount of
ill-assorted reading. The study of law suggested itself, and
I commenced a three year night course with enthusiasm. Mean-
while, employment showed up and I became a criminal investi-
gator for a Surety Company, earning almost as much money as
my wife, who spiritedly backed the new undertaking. My day-
time employment took me about Wall Street and little by
little, I became interested in what I saw going on there.
I began to wonder why a few seemed to be rich and famous
while the rank and file apparently lost money. I began to
study economics and business.
Somewhat to the dismay of our friends, we moved
to very modest quarters where we could save money. When we
had accumulated $1,000.00, most of it was placed in utility
stocks, which were then cheap and unpopular. In a small way,
I began to be successful in speculation. I was intrigued by
the romance of business, industrial and financial leaders be-
came my heroes. I read every scrap of financial history I
could lay hold of. Here I thought was the road to power.
Like the boomerang, episode, I could think of nothing else.
How little did I see that I was fashioning a weapon that
would one day return and cut me to ribbons.
As so many of my heroes commenced as lawyers,
I persisted in the course, thinking it would prove useful.
I also read many success books and did a lot of things that
Horatio Alger's boy heroes were supposed to have done.
Characteristically enough I nearly failed my
law course as I appeared at one of the final examinations
too drunk to think or write. My drinking had not become
continuous at this time, though occasional embarrassing in-
cidents might have suggested that it was getting real hold.
Neither my wife or I had much time for social engagements
and in any event we soon became unpopular as I always got
tight and boasted disagreeably of my plans and my future.
She was becoming very much concerned and fre-
quently we had long talks about the matter. I waived her ob-
jections aside by pointing out that red blooded men almost
always drank and that men of genius frequently conceived
their vast projects while pleasantly intoxicated, adding for
good measure, that the best and most majestic constructions of
philosophical thought were probably so derived.
By the time my law studies were finished,
I was quite sure I did not want to become a lawyer. I know
that somehow I was going to be a part of that then alluring
maelstrom which people call Wall Street. How to get into
business there was the question. When I proposed going out
on the road to investigate properties, my broker friends
laughed at me. They did not need such a service and pointed
out that I had no experience. I reasoned that I was partly qualified
as an engineer and as a lawyer, and that practically speaking
I had acquired very valuable experience as a criminal investi-
gator. I felt certain that these assets could not be capita-
ized. I was sure that people lost money in securities be-
cause they did not know enough about managements, properties,
markets, and ideas at work in a given situation.
Since no one would hire me and remembering that
we now had a few thousand dollars, my wife and I conceived
the hare-brained scheme of going out and doing some of this
work at our own expense, so we each gave up our employment
and set off in a motorcycle and side car, which was loaded
down with a tent, blankets, change of clothes and three
huge volumes of a well known financial reference service.
Some of our friends thought a lunacy commission should be ap-
pointed and I sometimes think they were right. Our first ex-
plot was fantastic. Among other things, we owned two shares
of General Electric, then selling at about $300.00 a share.
Everyone thought it was too high, but I stoutly maintained
that it would someday sell for five or ten times that figure.
So what could be more logical than to proceed to the main of-
fice of the company in New York and investigate it. Naive
wasn't it? The plan was to interview one officials and get
employment there if possible. We drew seventy five dollars
from our savings as working capital, vowing never to draw
another cent. We arrived at Schenectady, I did talk with
some of the people of the to company and became wildly en-	husiastic over GE. My attention was drawn to the radio end
of the business and by a strange piece of luck, I learned
much of what the company thought about its future. I was
then able to put a fairly intelligent projection of the
coming radio boom on paper, which I sent to one of my brokers
in town. To replenish our working capital, my wife and I
worked on a farm nearby for two months, she in the kitchen,
and I in the haystack. It was the last honest manual work
that I did for many years.
The cement industry then caught my fancy and we
soon found ourselves looking at a property in the Lehigh
district of Eastern Pennsylvania. An unusual speculative
situation existed which I went to New York and described to
one of my broker friend. This time I drew blood in the
shape of an option on hundred shares of stock which
promptly commenced to soar. Securing a few hundred dollars
advance on this deal, we were freed of the necessity of work,
and during the coming year following year, we travelled all
over the southeast part of the United States, taking in power
projects, an aluminum plant, the Florida boom, the Birmingham
steel district, Muscle Shoals, and what not. By this time
my friends in New York thought it would pay them to really
hire me. At last I had a job in Wall Street. Moreover, I
had the use of twenty thousand dollars of their money.
For some years the fates tossed horseshoes and golden bricks
into my lap and I made much more money than was good for me.
It was too easy.
By this time drinking had gotten to be a very
important and exhilarating place in my life. What was a
few hundred dollars when you considered it in terms of ex-
citement and important talk in the gilded palaces of jazz up-
town. My natural conservativeness was swept away and I began
to play for heavy stakes. Another legend of infalability
commenced to grow up around me and I began to have what is
called in Wall Street a following which amounted to many
paper millions of dollars. I had arrived, so let the scoffers
scoff and be damned, but of course, they didn't, and I made
a host of fair weather friends, I began to reach for more
power attempting to force myself onto the directorates of
corporations in which I controlled blocks of stock. By this time, my drinking had assumed serious proportions. The remonstrances of my associates terminated in a bitter row, and I became a lone wolf. Though I managed to avoid serious scrapes and partly out of loyalty, extreme drunkenness, I had not become involved with the fair sex, there were many unhappy scenes in my apartment, which was a large one, as I had hired two, and had gotten the real estate people to knock out the walls between them.

In the spring of 1929 caught the golf fever. This illness was about the worst yet. I had thought golf was pretty tepid sport, but I noticed some of my pretty important friends thought it was a real game and it presented an excuse for drinking by day as well as by night. Moreover some one had casually said, they didn't think I would ever play a good game. This was a spark in a powder magazine, so my wife and I were instantly off to the country she to watch while I caught up with Walter Hagen. Then too it was a fine chance to flaunt my money around the old home town. And to carom lightly around the exclusive course, whose select city membership had inspired so much awe in me as a boy. So Wall Street was lightly tossed aside while I acquired dranks vast quantities of gin and the impeccable coat of tan, one sees on the faces of the well to do. The local banker watched me with an amused skepticism as I whirled good fat checks in and out of his bank.

IN October 1929 the whirling movement in my bank account ceased abruptly, and I commenced to whirl myself. Then I felt like Stephen Leacock's horseman, it seemed as rapidly though I were galloping in all directions at once, for the great panic was on. First to Montreal, then to New York, to rally my following in stocks sorely needing support. A few bold spirits rushed into the breach, but it was of no use. I shed my own wings as the moth who gets to near to the candle flame. After one of those days of shrieking inferno on the stock exchange floor with no information available, I lurched drunkenly an the hotel bar to an adjoining brokerage office there at about 8 o'clock in the evening I feverishly searched a huge pile of ticker tape and tore of about an inch of it. It bore the inscription P.F.K. 32.. The stock had opened at 52 that morning. I had controlled over one hundred thousand shares of it, and had a sizable block myself. I knew that I was finished, and so were a lot of my friends. I went back into the bar and after a few drinks, my composure returned. People were beginning to jump from every story of that great Tower of Babel. That was high.
thought of before.
My wife took it all like the great person she is.
I think she rather welcomed it the situation thinking it
might bring me to my senses. Next morning, I woke early,
shaking badly from excitement and a terrific hangover. A
half bottle of Gin quickly took care of that momentary weak-
as
and I soon as business places were open I called a
friend in Montreal and said - "Well Dick, they have nailed my
hide to the barn door" - said he "The hell they have, come we
on up". That is all he said and up W went.
I shall never forget the kindness and generosity
of this friend. Moreover I must still have carried one
horseshoe with me, for by the spring of 1930, we were living
in our accustomed style and I had a very comfortable credit
balance on the very security in which I had taken the
heaviest licking, with plenty of champaigne and sound
canadian whiskey, I began to feel like Napoleon returning
Melba. Infallible again. No St Helena for me. Accustomed
as they were to the ravages of fire water in Canada in those
days, I soon began to outdistance most of my countrymen both
as a serious and a frivolous drinker.
Then the depression bore down in earnest. and
I, having become worse than useless, had to be reluctantly
Though I had become manager of one of the departments of my
friend's business, my drinking and nonchalant cocksureness,
had rendered me worse than useless, so he reluctantly let me
go. We were stony broke again, and even our furniture
looked like it was gone, for I could not even pay next months
rent on our swank apartment.
We wonder to this day how we ever got out of
Montreal. But we did, and then I had to eat humble pie. We
went to live with my Father and Mother-in-law where we
happily found never failing help and sympathy. I got a
job at what seemed to be a mere pittance of one hundred
dollars a week, but a brawl with a taxi driver , who got
very badly hurt, put an end to that. Mercifully, no one
knew it, but I was not to have steady employment for five
years, nor was I to draw a sober breath if I could help it.
Great was my humiliation when my poor wife was
obliged to go to work in a department store, coming home ex-
hausted night after night to find me drunk again. I became
a hanger-on at brokerage shops, but was less and less wel-
come as my drinking increased. Even then opportunities to
make money pursued me, but I passed up the best of them by
getting drunk at exactly the wrong time. Liquor had ceased
to be a luxury; It had become a necessity. What few
dollars I did make were devoted to keeping my credit good at
the bars. To keep out of the hands of the police and for
reasons of economy, I began to buy bathtub gin, usually two
bottles a day, and sometimes three if I did a real workman-
like job. This went on endlessly and I presently began to
awake real early in the morning shaking violently. Nothing
would seem to stop it but a water tumbler full of raw liquor.
If I could steal out of the house and get five or six
glasses of beer, I could sometimes eat a little breakfast.
Curiously enough I still thought I could control the situation the
and there were periods of sobriety which would revive a flag-
ging hope of my wife and her parents. But as time wore on
matters got worse. My mother-in-law died and my wife’s health
became poor, as did that of my Father-in-law. The house in
which we lived was taken over by the mortgage holder. Still
I persisted and still I fancied that fortune would again shine
upon me. As late 1932 I engaged the confidence of a man
who had friends with money. In the spring and summer of that
year we raised one hundred thousand dollars to buy securities
at what proved to be an all time low point in the New York
stock exchange. I was to participate generously in the
profits, and sensed that a great opportunity was at hand. So
?

prodigious bender a few days before the deal was to be
closed.

In a measure this did bring me to senses.

Many times before I had promised my wife that I had stopped
forever. I had written her sweet notes and had inscribed
the fly leaves of all the bibles in the house with to that
effect. Not that the bible meant so much, but after all
it was the book you put your hand on when you were sworn in
court. I now see, however, that I had no sustained de-
sire to stop drinking until this last debacle. It was only
then that I realized it must stop and forever. I had come
to fully appreciate that once the first drink was taken,
there was no control Why then take this one? That was it-
never was alcohol to cross my lips again in any form. There
was, I thought, absolute finality in this decision. I had
been very wrong, I was utterly miserable and almost ruined.
This decision brought a great sense of relief, for I knew
that I really wanted to stop. It would not be easy, I was
sure of that, for I had begun to sense the power and cunning
of my master - John Barleycorn. The old fierce determination
to win out settled down on me - nothing, I still thought,
could overcome that aroused as it was. Again I dreamed
of my wife smiling happily, as I went out to slay the dragon.
I would resume my place in the business world and recapture
the lost regard of my friends and associates. It would take
a long time, but I could be patient. The picture of myself
as a reformed drunkard rising to fresh heights of achieve-
ment, quite carried me away with happy enthusiasm. My wife
captured the spirit for she saw at last that I really meant
business.

But in a short while I came in drunk. I could
give no real explanation for it. The thought of my new re-
solve had scarcely occurred to me as I began. There had
been no fight - someone had offered me a drink, and I had
taken it, casually, remarking to myself that one or two
would not harm a man of my capacity. What had become of my
giant determination? How about all of that self searching I
had done? Why had not the thought of my past failures and
my new ambitions come into my mind? What of the intense de-
constantly on guard. After two or three weeks of sobriety I began to think I was alright. Presently this quiet confidence was replaced by cocksureness. I would walk past my old haunts with a feeling of elation - I now fully realized the danger that lurked there. The tide had turned at last and now I was really through. One afternoon on my way home I walked into a bar room to make a telephone call, suddenly I turned to the bartender and said "Four Irish whiskies - water on the side" - As he poured them out with a surprised look, I can only remember thinking to myself - "I shouldn't be doing this, but here's how to the last time". As I gulped down the fourth one, I beat on the bar with my fist and said, "for God's sake, why have I done this again?” Where had been my realization of only this morning as I had passed this very place, that I was never going to drink again I could give no answer, mortification and the feeling of utter defeat swept over me. The thought that perhaps I could never stop crushe me. Then as the cheering warmth of these first drinks spread over me, I said - "Next time well get good and drunk". And I did exactly that. I shall never forget the remorse, the horror the utter hopelessness of the next morning. The courage to rise and do battle was simply not there . Before daylight I had stolen out of the house, my brain raced uncontrollably. There was a terrible feeling of impending calamity. feared even to cross a street, less I collapse and be run over by an early morning truck. Was there no bar open? Ah, yes, there was the all night place which sold beer - though it was before the legal opening hour, I persuaded the man behind the food counter that I must have a drink or perhaps die. Cold as the morning was, I must have drunk a dozen bottles of ale in rapid succession. My withering nerves were stilled at last and I walked to the next corner and bought a paper. It told me that the stock market had gone to hell again - "What difference did it make anyway, the market would get better, it always did, but I'm in hell to stay - no more rising markets for me. Down for the count - what a blow to one so proud. I might kill myself, but no - not now," These were some of my thoughts - then I felt dazed - I groped in a mental fog - mere liquor would fix that - then two more bottles of cheap gin. Oblivion. The human mind and body is a marvelous mechanism, for mine withstood this sort of thing for yet another two years. There was little money, but I could al-ways drink. Sometimes I stole from my wife's slender purse when the early morning terror of madness was upon me. There were terrible scenes and though not often violent, I would sometimes do such things as to throw a sewing machine, or kick the panels out of every door in the house. There were moments when I swayed weakly before an open window or the medicine chest in which there was poison - and cursed myself for a weakling. There were flights from the city to the country when my wife could bear with me no longer at home Sometimes there would be several weeks and hope would return, especially for her, as I had not let her know how defeated I really was, but there was always the return to the conditions still worse. Then came a night when the phys-ical and mental torture was so hellish that I feared I would
610. take a flying leap through my bedroom window sash and all
611. and somehow managed to drag my mattress down to the kitchen
612. floor which was at the ground level. I had stopped drinking
613. a few hours before and hung grimly to my determination that
614. I could have no more that night if it killed me. That very
615. nearly happened, but I was finally rescued by a doctor who
616. prescribed chloral hydrate, a powerful sedative. This relie-
617. ed me so much that next day found me drinking apparently
618. without the usual penalty, if I took some sedative occasion-
619. ally. In the early spring of 1934 it became evident to

Page 22.
620. everyone concerned that something had to be done and
621. that very quickly. I was thirty pounds underweight, as I
622. could eat nothing when drinking, which was most of the
623. time. People had begun to fear for my sanity and I fre-
624. quently had the feeling myself that I was becoming deranged.
625. With the help of my brother-in-law, who is a
626. physician I was placed in a well known institution for the
627. bodily and mental rehabilitation of alcoholics. It was
628. thought that if I were thoroughly cleared of alcohol and
629. the brain irritation which accompanies it were reduced, I
630. might have a chance. I went to the place desperately hoping
631. and expecting to be cured. The so-called bella donna
632. treatment given in that place helped a great deal. My mind
633. cleared and my appetite returned. Alternate periods of
634. hydro-therapy, mild exercise and relaxation did wonders for
635. me. Best of all I found a great friend in the doctor who
636. was head of the staff. He went far beyond his routine duty
637. and I shall always be grateful for those long talks in which
638. explained that when I drank I became physically ill and that
639. this bodily condition was usually accompanied by a mental
640. state such that the defense one should have against alcohol
641. became greatly weakened, though in no way mitigating my
642. early foolishness and selfishness about drink, I was greatly
643. relieved to discover that I had really been ill perhaps for
644. several years. Moreover I felt that the understanding and
645. fine physical start I was getting would assure my recovery,
646. Though some of the inmates of the place who had been there
647. many times seemed to smile at that idea. I noticed however
648. that most of them had no intention of quitting; they merely
649. came there to get reconditioned so that they could start in
650. again. I, on the contrary, desperately wanted to stop and
651. strange to say I still felt that I was a person of much more
652. determination and substance than they, so I left there in
653. high hope and for three or four months the goose hung high.
654. In a small way I began to make some progress in business.
655. Then came the terrible day when I drank again
656. and could not explain why I started. The curve of my de-
657. clining moral and bodily health fell of like a ski jump.
658. After a hectic period of drinking, I found myself again in

[archivist's note: the typewritten manuscript text continues correctly with
page 23, but line numbers 659 - 679 remain unknown ]

Page 23.
680. Everyone became resigned to the certainty that I
681. would have to be confined somewhere ore else stumble
682. along to a miserable end, but there was soon to be
683. proof that indeed it is often darkest before dawn,
684. for this proved to be my last drinking bout, and I am
685. supremely confident that my present happy state is to be
for all time.

Late one afternoon near the end of that month of November I sat alone in the kitchen of my home. As usual, I was half drunk and enough so that the keen edge of my remorse was blunted. With a certain satisfaction I was thinking that there was enough gin scattered about the house to keep me fairly comfortable that night and the next day. My wife was at work and I resolved not to be in too bad shape when she got home. My mind reverted to the hidden bottles and at I carefully considered where each one was hidden. These things must be firmly in my mind to escape the early morning tragedy of not being able to find at least a water tumbler full of liquor. Just as I was trying to decide whether to risk concealing one of the full ones within easy reach of my side of the bed, the phone rang.

At the other end of the line came the voice of an old school friend and drinking companion of boom times. By the time we had exchanged greetings, I sensed that he was sober. This seemed strange, for it was years since anyone could remember his coming to New York in that condition. I had come to think of him as another hopeless devotee of Bacchus. Current rumor had it that he had been committed to a state institution for alcoholic insanity. I wondered if perhaps he had not just escaped. Of course he would come over right away and take dinner with us. A fine idea that, for I then would have an excuse to drink openly with him. Yes, we would try to recapture the spirit of other days and perhaps my wife could be persuaded to join in, which in self defense she sometimes would. I did not even think of the harm I might do him. There was to be a pleasant, and I hoped an exciting interlude in what had become a round dreary waste of loneliness. Another drink stirred my fancy; this would be an oasis in the dreary waste. That was it - an oasis. Drinkers are like that.

The door opened and there he stood, very erect and glowing. His deep voice boomed out cheerily - the cast of his features - his eyes - the freshness of his complexion - this was my friend of schooldays. There was a subtle something or other instantly apparent even to my befuddled perception. Yes - there was certainly something more - he was inexplicably different - what had happened to him?

We sat at the table and I pushed a lusty glass of gin flavored with pineapple juice in his direction. I thought if my wife came in, she would be required to find that we were not taking it straight - "Not now", he said. I was a little crest fallen at this, though I was glad to know that someone could refuse a drink at that moment - I knew I couldn't. "On the wagon?" - I asked. He shook his head and looked at me with an impish grin.

"Aren't you going to have anything?" - I ventured presently. "Just as much obliged, but not tonight" I was disappointed, but curious. What had got into the fellow - he wasn't himself. "No, he's not himself - he's somebody
is
745. else - not just that either - he was his old self, plus
746. something more, and maybe minus something". I couldn't put
747. my finger on it - his whole bearing almost shouted that
748. something of great import had taken place.
749. "Come now, what's this all about", I
750. asked. Smilingly, yet seriously, he looked straight at me
751. and said "I've got religion".
752. So that was it. Last summer an alco
753. alcoholic crackpot - this fall, washed in the blood of the
754. Lamb. heavens, that might be even worse. I was thunder-
755. struck, and he, of all people. What on earth could one
Page 25.
756. say to the poor fellow.
757. So I finally blurted out "That's
758. fine", and sat back waiting for a sizzling blast on sal-
759. ration and the relation of the Cross, the Holy Ghost, and
760. the Devil thereto. Yes, he did have that starry edy
761. eyed look, the old boy was on fire all right. Well, bless
762. his heart, let him rant . It was nice that he was sober
763. after all. I could stand it anyway, for there was plenty
764. of gin and I took a little comfort that tomorrow's ration
765. wouldn't have to be used up right then.
766. Old memories of Sunday School - the profit
767. temperance pledge, which I never signed - the sound of the
768. preacher's voice which could be heard on still Sunday
769. mornings way over on the hillside beyond the railroad
770. tracks,- My grandfather's quite scorn of things some
771. church people did to him - his fair minded attitude that
772. I should make up my mind about these things myself - his
773. convictions that the fears really had their moxxx music -
774. but his denial of the right of preachers to tell him how
775. he should listen - his perfect lack of fear when he men-
776. tioned these things just before his death - these memories
777. surged up out of my childhood as I listened to my friend.
778. My own gorge rose for a moment to an all time high as my
779. anti-preacher - anti-church folk sentiment welled up in-
780. side me. These feelings soon gave way to respectful at-
781. tention as my former drinking companion rattled on.
782. Without knowing it, I stood at the great turning point of
783. my life - I was on the threshold of a fourth dimension
784. of existence that I had doubtfully heard some people des
785. cribe and others pretend to have.
786. He went on to lay before me a simple
787. proposal. It was so simple and so little
788. complicated with the theology and dogma
789. I had associated with religion that by
790. degrees I became astonished and delighted.
791. I was astonished because a thing so simple
792. could accomplish the profound result I now
793. beheld in the person of my friend. To say that
794. I was delighted is putting it mildly , for I
795. relized that I could go for his program also.
796. Like all but a few u human beings I had truele
797. believed in the existence of a power greater
798. than myself true athiests are really very scarce.
799. It always seemed to me more difficult and illogical
800. to be an athiest than to believe there is a
801. certain amount of law and order and purpose
802. underlying the universe. The faith of an athiest
in his convictions is far more blind than that of the religionist for it leads inevitably to the absurd conclusion that the vast and ever changing cosmos originally grew out of a cipher, and now has arrived at its present state thru a series of haphazard accidents, one of which is man himself. My liking for things scientific had encouraged me to look into such matters as a theory of evolution the nature of matter itself as seen thru the eyes of the great chemists and astronomers and I had pondered much on the question of the meaning of life itself. The chemist had shown me that material matter is not all what it appears to be. His studies had encouraged me that the elements and their myriad combinations are but in the last last analysis nothing but different arrangements of that universal something which they are pleased to call the electron. The physicist and the astronomer had shown me that our universe moves and evolves according to many precise and well understood laws. They tell me that the last second when the sun will be next eclipsed at the place I am now standing, or the very day several decades from now When Hallyes comet will make its turn about the sun. Much to my interest I learned from these men that great cosmic accidents occur bringing about conditions which are not exceptions to the law so much as they result in new and unexpected developments which arise logically enough once the so called accident has occurred. It is highly probable for example-that our earth is the only planet in the solar system upon which man could evolve - and it is claimed by some astronomers that the chance that similar planets exist elsewhere in the universe is rather small. There would have to be a vast number of coincidences to bring about the exact conditions of light, warmth, food supply, etc. to support life as we know it here. But I used to ask myself why regard the earth as an accident in a system which evidences in so many respects the greatest law and order? If all of this law existed then could there be so much law and no intelligence? And if there was an intelligence great enough to materialize and keep a universe in order it must necessarily have the power to create accidents and make exceptions. The evolutionist brought great logic to bear on the proposition that life on this planet began with the lowly omebia, which was a simple cell residing in the oceans of Eons past. Thru countless strange combinations of logic and accident man and all other kinds of life evolved but man possessed a consciousness of self, a power to reason and to choose, and a small still voice which told him the difference between right and wrong and man became increasingly able to fashion with his hands and with his tools the creations of his own brain. He could give direction and purpose to natural laws apparently and so he, created new things for himself and of
864. [line number skipped in the typewritten manuscript]
865. and do he apparently created new things for himself an
866. [line number skipped in the typewritten manuscript]
867. out of a tissue composed of his past experience
868. and his new ideas. Therefore man tho’ resembling
869. other forms of life in many ways seems to me
870. very different. It was obvious that in a limited
871. fashion he could play at being a God himself .
872. Such was the picture I had of myself and the
873. world in which I lived, that there was a mighty
874. rhythm, intelligence and purpose behind it all
875. despite inconsistencies. I had rather strongly
876. believed.
877. But this was as far as I had ever got toward
878. the realization of God and my personal relationship
879. to Him. My thoughts of God were academic and
880. speculative when I had them, which for some years
881. past had not been often. That God was an intelligence
882. power and love upon which I could absolutely rely
883. as an individual had not seriously occurred to me.
884. Of course I knew in a general way what theologians
885. claimed but I could not see that religious persons
886. as a class demonstrated any more power, love and
887. intelligence than those who claimed no special
888. dispensation from God tho’ I grant de that
889. christianity ought to be a wonderful influence
890. I was annoyed, irked and confused by the attitudes
891. they took, the beliefs they held and the things
892. they had done in the name of Christ,. People like
893. myself had been burned and whole population put
894. to fire and sword on the pretext they did not
895. believe as christians did. History taught that
896. christians were not the only offenders in this
897. respect. It seemed to me that on the whole
898. it made little difference whether you were
899. Mohamadem, Catholic, Jew, Protestan or Hotentot.
900. You were supposed to look askance at the other
901. fellows approach to God. Nobody could be saved
902. unless they fell in with your ideas. I had a
903. great admiration for Christ as a man, He practiced
904. what he preached and set a marvelous example.
905. It was not hard to agree in Principle with
906. His moral teachings bit like most people, I preferred
907. to live up to some moral standard but not to others.
908. At any rate I thought I understood as well as any
909. one what good morals were and with the exceptions
910. of my drinking I felt superior to most christians
911. I knew. I might be week in some respects but at
912. least I was not hypocritcal, So my interest in
913. christianity other than its teaching of moral
914. principles and the good I hoped it did on
915. balance was slight.
916. Sometimes I wished that I had been religiously
917. trained from early childhood that I might have the
918. comfortable assurance about so many things I found
919. it impossible to have any definite convictions
920. upon. The question of the hereafter, the many
921. theological abstractions and seeming contradictions
922. - these things were puzzling and finally annoying
923. for religious people told me I must believe
924. a great many seemingly impossible things to be one
of them. This insistence on their part plus a
powerful desire to possess the things of this life
while there was yet time had crowded the idea of
the personal God more and more out of my mind as the
years went by. Neither were my convictions strengthen
by my own misfortunes. The great war and its
aftermath seemed to more certainly demonstrate the
omnipotence of the devil than the loving care of
an all powerful God
Nevertheless here I was sitting opposite a
man who talked about a personal God who told me
how he had found Him, who described to me how I
might do the same thing and who convinced me
utterly that something had come into his life
which had accomplished a miracle. The man was
transformed; there was no denying he had been re-
born. He was radiant of something which soothed
my troubled spirit as tho the fresh clean wind of
mountain top blowing thru and thru me I saw and
felt and in a great surge of joy I realized
that the great presence which had made itself felt
to me that war time day in Winchester Cathedral
had again returned.
As he continued I commenced to see myself as in
as in an unearthly mirror. I saw how ridiculous and
futile the whole basis of my life had been. Standing in
the middle of the stage of my lifes setting I had been
feverishly trying to arrange ideas and things and people
and even God, to my own liking, to my own ends and to
promote what I had thought to be true happiness. It was
truly a sudden and breath taking illumination. Then the
idea came - "The tragic thing about you is, that you
have been playing God." That was it. Playing God. Then
the humor of the situation burst upon me, here was I a
tiny grain of sand of the infinite shores of Gods great
universe and the little grain of sand, had been trying
to play God. He really thought he could arrange all of
the other little grains about him just to suit himself.
And when his little hour was run out, people would
weep and say in awed tones- 'How wonderful'.
So then came the question - If I were no
longer to be God than was I to find and perfect
the new relationship with my creator - with the Father
of Lights who presides over all ? My friend laid down
to me the terms and conditions which were simple but
not easy, drastic yet broad and acceptable to honest
men everywhere, of whatever faith or lack thereof. He did not
tell me that these were the only terms - he merely said that
they were terms that had worked in his case. They were spiritual
principles and rules of practice he thought common to all of the
worthwhile religions and philosophies of mankind. He regarded them
as stepping stones to a better understanding of our relation to the
spirit of the universe and as a practical set of directions setting
forth how the spirit could work in and through us that we might
become spearheads and more effective agents for the promotion
of Gods Will for our lives and for our fellows. The great thing
about it all was its simplicity and scope, no really religious
persons belief would be interfered with no matter what his training ,
For the man on the street who just wondered about such things, it ws
Was a providential approach, for with a small beginning of faith
and a very large dose of action along spiritual lines he could be
sure to demonstrate the Power and Love of God as a practical
This is what my friend suggested I do. One: Turn my face to God as I understand Him and say to Him with earnestness - complete honesty and abandon- that I henceforth place my life at His disposal and direction forever. TWO: that I do this in the presence of another person, who should be one in whom I have confidence and if I be a member of a religious organization, then with an appropriate member of that body. TWO: Having taken this first step, I should next prepare myself for God's Company by taking a thorough and ruthless inventory of my moral defects and derelictions. This I should do without any reference to other people and their real or fancied part in my shortcomings should be rigorously excluded." Where have I failed-is the prime question. I was to go over my life from the beginning and ascertain in the light of my own present understanding where I had failed as a completely moral person. Above all things in making this appraisal I must be entirely honest with myself. As an aid to thoroughness and as something to look at when I got through I might use pencil and paper. First take the question of honesty. Where, how and with whom had I ever been dishonest? With respect to anything. What attitudes and actions did I still have which were not completely honest with God? With myself or with the other fellow. I was warned that no one can say that he is a completely honest person. That would be superhuman and people aren't that way. Nor should I be misled by the thought of how honest I am in some particulars. I was too ruthlessly tear out of the past all of my dishonesty and list them in writing. Next I was to explore another area somewhat related to the first and commonly a very defective one in most people. I was to examine my sex conduct since infancy and rigorously compare it with what I thought that conduct should have been. My friend explained to me that peoples ideas throughout the world on what constitutes perfect sex conduct vary greatly Consequently, I was not to measure my defects in this particular by adopting any standard of easy virtue as a measuring stick. I was merely to ask God to show me the difference between right and wrong in this regard and ask for help and strength and honesty in cataloguing my defects according to the true dictates of my own conscience. Then I might take up the related questions of greed and selfishness and thoughtlessness. How far and in what connection had I strayed and was I straying in these particulars? I was assured I could make a good long list if I got honest enough and vigorous enough. Then there was the question of real love for all of my fellows including my family, my friends and my enemies. Had I been completely loving toward all of these at all times and places. If not, down in the book it must go and of course everyone could put plenty down along that line.

(Resentments, self-pity, fear, pride.)

Step number three required that I carefully go over my personal inventory and definitely arrive at the conclusion that I was now willing to rid myself of all these defects moreover I was to understand that this would not be accomplished by myself alone, therefore I was to humbly ask God that he take these handicaps away. To make sure that I had become really
honest in this desire, I should sit down with whatever person I chose and reveal to him without any reservations whatever the result of my self appraisal. From this point out I was to stop living alone in every particular. Thus was I to rid keep myself free in the future of those things which shut out God's power, It was explained that I had been standing in my own light, my spiritual interior had been like a room darkened by very dirty windows and this was an undertaking to wipe them off and keep them clean. Thus was my housekeeping to be accomplished, it would be difficult to be really honest with myself and God and perhaps to be completely honest with another person by telling an other the truth, I could however be absolutely sure that my self searching had been honest and effective. Moreover I would be taking my first spiritual step towards my fellows for something I might say could be helpful in leading the person to whom I talked a better understanding of himself. In this fashion I would commence to break down the barriers which my many forms of self will had erected. Warning was given me that I should select a person who would be in no way injured or offended by what I had to say, for I could not expect to commence my spiritual growth at the expense of another. My friend told me that this step was complete, I would surely feel a tremendous sense of relieve accompanying by the absolute conviction that I was on the right road at last.

Step number four demanded that I frankly admit that my deviations from right thought and action had injured other people therefore I must set about undoing the damage to the best of my ability. It would be advisable to make a list of all the persons I had hurt or with whom I had bad relations. People I disliked and those who had injured me should have preferred attention, provided I had done them injury or still entertained any feeling of resentment towards them. Under no circumstances was I to consider their defects or wrong doing, then I was to approach these people telling them I had commenced a way of life which required that I be on friendly and helpful terms with every body; that I recognized I had been at fault in this particular that I was sorry for what I had done or said and had come to set matters right insofar as I possibly could. Under no circumstances was I to engage in argument or controversy. My own wrong doing was to be admitted and set right and that was all. Assurance was to be given that I was prepared to go to any length to do the right thing. Again I was warned that obviously I could not make amends at the expense of other people, that judgment and discretion should be used lest others should be hurt. This sort of discipline would helped me to see others as they really are; to recognize that every one is plagued by various of self will; that every one is in a sense actually sick with some form of self; that when men behave badly they are only dis playing symptoms of spiritual ill health.

one is not usually angry or critical of another when he
suffers from some grave bodily illness and I would
how
by those burdened by their own wrong thinking. I was to
entertain towards everyone a quite new feeling of tolerance
patience and helpfulness I would recognize more and more
that when I became critical or resentful I must at all
costs realize that such things were very wrong in me
and that in some form or other I still had the very
defects of which I complained in others. Much emphasis
was placed on the development of this of mind toward others.
No stone should be left unturned to achieve this end.
The constant practice of this principle frequently ask-
ing God for His help in making it work under trying
circumstances was absolutely imperative. The drunkard
especially had to be most rigorous on this point for one
burst of anger or self pity might so shut him out from his
new found strength that he would drink again and with us
that always means calamity and sometimes death.
This was indeed a program, the thought of some of the
to
things I would have admit about myself to other people
was most distasteful - even appalling. It was only to o
plain that I had been ruined by my own colossal egotism
and selfishness, not only in respect to drinking but with
regard to everything else. Drinking had been a symptom
of these things. Alcohol had submerged my inferiorities
and puffed up my self esteem, body had finally rebelled
and I had some fatally affected, my thinking and action
was woefully distorted thru infection from the mire of
self pity, resentment, fear and remorse in which I now
wallowed. The motive behind a certain amount of generosity,
kindness and the meticulous honesty in some directions
upon which I had prided myself was not perhaps not so
good after all. The motive had been to get personal
satisfaction for myself, perhaps not entirely but on the
whole this was true. I had sought the glow which comes
applause
with the flaws and Praise rendered me by others.
I began to see how actions good in themselves might avail
little because of wrong motive, I had been like the man
who feels that all is well after he has condescendingly
taken turkeys to the poor at Xmas time. How clear it
suddenly became that all of my thought and action, both
good and bad, had arisen out of a desire to make myself
happy and satisfied. I had been self centered instead of
God centered. It was now easy to understand why the taking
of a simple childlike attitude toward God plus a drastic
program of action which would place himx would bring
results. How evident et became that mere faith in God
was not enough. Faith had to be demonstrated by works
and there could be no works or any worth while demonstrations
until I had fitted myself for the undertaking and had be-
come a suitable table agent thru which God might express Himself.
There had to be a tremendous personal housecleaning, a
sweeping away of the debris of past willfullness, a restoring
of broken relationships and a firm resolve to make God's
will my will. I must stop forcing things, I must stop
trying to mold people and situations to my own liking.
Nearly every one is taught that human willpower and ambition
if good ends are sought are desirable attributes. I too
had clung to that conception but I saw that it was not good
enough, nor big enough, nor powerful enough. My own will had
failed in many areas of my life. With respect to
alcohol it had become absolutely inoperative. My ambitions,
which had seemed worthy at some time, had been frustrated.
Even had I been successful, the pursuit of my desires
would have perhaps harmed others add their realization
would have added little or nothing to anyone's peace,
happiness or usefulness. I began to see that the clashing
ambitions and designs of even those who sought what to them
seemed worthy ends, have filled the world with discord and
misery. Perhaps people of this sort created more havoc
than those confessedly immoral and crooked.
I saw even the most useful people die unhappy and defeated.
All because some one else had behaved badly or they had

[archivist's note: the rest of this manuscript is currently missing]