



Vol. V, NO. 3, AUG., 1948. P. O. BOX 328, GRAND CENTRAL ANNEX, NEW YORK 17. YEARLY, \$2.50; COPY 25c

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

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Those Depressions—Make Them Work for Good!

From New York, N. Y.

MOST of us have them, I guess, those depressions that attack us without warning and apparently without adequate cause. I am sure that they are not limited to alcoholics, but for us they are dangerous, much more dangerous than they are to the average non-alcoholic, for they induce a craving, not for liquor necessarily, but for the effect of liquor.

I remember reading an article some time ago about mood cycles. I think it said that the mood swing for an average normal person took place in a matter of fourteen to eighteen days as a rule. It advised us to keep track of our feelings—that is, if we wake up feeling unaccountably happy and go through the day in that frame of mind, mark it down on our calendar and see how long it is until we have another such day. Do the same with the black days.

This might be an interesting experiment and prove helpful enough if it were not for the fact that our mood swings are wider than those of the average person. Our black times are blacker, our happy periods, perhaps because we have gotten used to doing without them, cause an elation that is unrealistic and almost as dangerous to us as the depressions. We make plans that are out of all proportion to our abilities, at least without years of sustained effort. We are not too long on sustained effort and when a few stabs in the direction of our goal, whatever it may be, don't produce immediate results, we are prone to give the whole thing up.

To make these violent changes in mood safe for ourselves, I think we will have to do something about them, turn them to account in some way. I wouldn't know what to do about the elations except to pull ourselves down out of the clouds by main force and go out and do something active

ANNOUNCEMENT

We are happy to announce—

A POCKET SIZED A.A. GRAPEVINE

Beginning with the September issue, your *A.A. Grapevine* will be 5½ x 7½ inches in size and will contain 32 pages of A.A. thoughts and experience, bound between completely anonymous covers.

The change in format is being made in response to your enthusiastic vote.

We thank you for your co-operation on this important change.

The A.A. Grapevine Editors

instead of day dreaming—do something that is within the realms of possibility and keep on doing it until we have accomplished something concrete. At such times our self-confidence is high and we are apt to do a good job.

Our depressions vary in length and intensity—at least mine do. Sometimes they are black indeed and last as long as a month. Sometimes they are light brown and I get over them in a few days. Dark or light they are distressing, unproductive times and life seems like a very dull business. Even A.A. loses its reality. I go to meetings, and come away bored and dissatisfied. If it is a discussion meeting and I contribute any optimistic thought, I listen to myself cynically and think, "Why don't we stop kidding ourselves? We'll never really amount to anything. We missed our chance long ago, we are way behind in the race."

These, to my mind, are the times to go to work, fight it out with yourself, answer yourself back. Say to yourself:

"All right. Perhaps I never will do anything spectacular. Maybe I'm not any ball of fire, never was, never will be. Suppose I have to plod along in the middle of the road just like the vast majority of human beings, scoring a small success here, a small set-back there, never getting very far ahead, trying not to get too far behind."

If we face these thoughts honestly and without shame, we have done something. We have turned our depression into an adjustment that is a necessary one for most of us. It is quite probable that our lives will be spectacular only in that they are so much better than they were during our drinking years. We will be important only to ourselves and the few who are close to us. If we stay sober, and we know that we must, we can say these things to ourselves and go on from there.

As active alcoholics, the word mediocrity meant all the dull, boring aspects of life that we were trying to escape. If we couldn't be tops, we didn't want to play at all. Well, most of us, not all of us by any means, but most of us are pretty run-of-the-mill individuals. We can do a job as well as the next fellow but perhaps not any better. We can make as much money if we work as hard as he does, and if we can stop this frantic drive to prove that we are remarkable people, it is quite likely that we will settle down and really enjoy whatever life has to offer us, and it offers a great deal now that we are sober and can appreciate it.

There is one job that we *can* do superlatively well, and there isn't anything that can keep us from doing it if we are serious in wanting to. That is the job we do on ourselves, inside ourselves. It means clearing out a whole mess of false values, un-

(Continued on page two)

Vino Vignette-

It Was That Hungry Feeling

From New York, N. Y.

The first time I saw Rollo I was impressed. He was enthusiastic. His conversation about A.A. and what it was doing for him indicated that he knew the "pitch" and was on the beam. Over the coffee table after meetings he held forth on the 12 Steps, the "Spiritual" angle and the danger of goofballs. New members attached themselves to him and fell over one another to get close to him.

A nice-looking guy, Rollo had a way with women. Many A.A. women, especially the older ones, were interested in him. From time to time nearly everyone in the group—particularly the women—helped Rollo with his "financial problem." Because he certainly had a problem. It was eating.

Since the opening of the new clubhouse, he had been around steadily. He would lounge around, talking to new people, drinking coffee, and generally making himself available. If the telephone rang to summon someone for a 12th Step call, he was the first to put on his hat and make a dash for the door. If a brand new visitor appeared, he made it a point to be nice to him and to give him the lowdown on A.A. All in all, Rollo was a most useful man. But he was on the angle. He had to be. He had to eat.

One day someone made a complaint about Rollo. "Where's the 10 bucks I lent him?" it was asked. "Do you think its fair of him to ask me for half of my last \$25," another member asked.

When he got word of these mutterings, he sought out the complainants and pacified them with tall stories about the "check he was expecting" or the advance he would collect "next Thursday" from one of his "deals." For a long time this system worked. He took on the sleek appearance of a well fed cat. The only thing missing was the "purr."

Suddenly Rollo disappeared. After a week members began to ask each other about his whereabouts. No one seemed to know where he lived. A search of various "business" addresses failed to find anybody who knew him. The creditors began to get panicky. They organized a search-

ing party and before long, most of the bars were being visited by A.A.s on the alert for Rollo.

They found him in a small saloon in the suburbs. He was drunk. When he was sober enough to talk, he confessed that the pressure had become too much for him. He said that he had been eating for eight months on loans from anyone who would give him money. Finally, he said, A.A.s began to ask too many questions. They had put him on the spot. He seemed quite sad about it.

After Rollo got sober and returned to the clubhouse, a committee greeted him with orders to get out and stay out until he had made some effort to pay back at least part of the money he owed. After that he disappeared altogether from A.A. and a year passed.

Recently I passed a restaurant in the center of town. There was Rollo working as the counterman. He was sober and looking fine. I stopped in to see him. "Well, I finally got off the angle," he said. "Soon I'll have all the guys and gals paid off and I'll be back at the clubhouse. It was being hungry that got me. This job solved all my troubles."—W.J.

Those Depressions Make Them Count

(Continued from page one)

realistic ambitions, worn out resentments and putting in their place the qualities we want to have—kindness, tolerance, friendliness, for instance. We can begin to see what the real values of life are, and they are very different from the hazy, distorted dreams we had of becoming famous overnight.

If we can really talk to ourselves in this manner during our depression, we have made use of it. Instead of letting it submerge us and perhaps drive us into a slip, we have used it as a stepping stone toward a better understanding of what our sober lives can hold for us.

In our happier moods we will still day dream, and I wouldn't want to stop, but they will be constructive dreams rather than mere flights of fancy, and if we keep them within the bounds of possibility, we will have a good chance of making them come true.—M.N.

First things first

They Celebrated And Talked About Drinking

from Atlanta, Ga.

It was a man-sized celebration, but everyone was as sober as the proverbial judge.

They talked about drinking, about some of the really big bouts they had staged, but there wasn't the faintest odor of alcohol about the place, and no one had bulging pockets.

The occasion was the seventh anniversary of Atlanta's Chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous, with some 400 or 500 persons filling Taft Hall.

The experiences they related—these anonymous men and women who have conquered Demon Rum—would make a confession at a revival meeting seem tame.

Take Steve, for example. Steve, who hails from Washington, D. C., was the guest of honor. It was he, with the help of his wife, who founded the Atlanta group seven years ago in their basement apartment in Buckhead.

"I was drunk for more than 20 years," he recounted. "My wife had tried every cure known to mankind on me, and nothing worked. In fact, one of the cures made me so drunk I was unconscious for four weeks.

"We were living in Washington at that time," he continued, "and some man came in from New York to establish an A.A. group. My wife prevailed upon me to join. I did and I sobered up. it was tough going for a year but after that year I began to enjoy life, and when I was transferred to Atlanta I was determined to start an A.A. group here."

The Rev. Sam, now pastor of a large North Georgia church, described some of the difficulties of launching the Atlanta group, explaining: "It was a little story in the Atlanta Constitution that led me to Steve."

Bert, who now operates a home for former drunkards, said he was in Atlanta's City Stockade 105 times for being drunk.

"I guess I am the original man of distinction," he concluded. "I changed from bay rum to canned heat."

Charlie, a successful Atlanta businessman, traced his reclamation to the time he asked a friend for a dollar to buy a drink and was told to go to the A.A. club-rooms, after which he could return for the money. He never came back to get the dollar.

A Beginner Tells Why He Is An A.A.

From Kingston, Pa.

Briefly, why am I an A.A.? There is but one answer. After suffering the tortures of the damned and enduring the penalties which every alcoholic must pay, I have probed my soul to its innermost and with the help of the Supreme Being, I have come out of the bewildered chaos to understand fully that there is no road back but that very difficult route, which sometimes tries our determination severely but which is the only way in the end—the direct route to self confidence and respect—total abstinence.

In A.A. with its Program, I have found the only solution for an individual who will try to understand and accept it to the fullest. We are not in a class which should be considered with whispers and pointings of fingers. On the other hand, I feel that as the public becomes aware of the effects of alcohol and its influence upon the systems of alcoholics, our organization will flourish as a builder of men and the saviour of those who heretofore have considered themselves as hopeless. It cannot be disregarded when its appeal strikes home.

A man stands by the side of the road, his eyes are bloodshot, his body shakes as his tortured nerves seek to readjust themselves, his vision is blurred, his self-confidence is gone, forgotten by friends, sick, broken, destitute, ready for an institution or better yet the river. Here is a partial description of an alcoholic.

Yes, he started out with just a few cocktails. What a glorious sensation, he was high—awfully high, no one ever felt better—trouble vanished like the "bubbles in champagne. One more, oh yes, one more and then lots more.

Money Getting Low

And then day after day—hours measured by the number of quarts and pints he consumes, money getting low, need a hair cut and shave—do it tomorrow, better stop in Joe's Bar, Tom will be there—got to hang on to a few bucks for a bottle tomorrow. Work—to hell with it!—lots of jobs,—my wife, what'd she ever do for me? Kids are brats too. Burned a hole in my pants—get 'em fixed tomorrow. Down goes brother alcohol and further down goes the individual.

Finally, When everything is pawned, every dollar gone, friends offended, his

soul torn asunder and body quivering with terror and remorse he stands alone as we first met him. No one wants a drunk. His mind is befuddled, it is grasping out, seeking, searching for that it knows it needs, but can't just find. Pleadings to God, self-promises, he tries everything, he walks and walks and then a thought strikes him. John Smith,—What was it he once told me? "If I ever wanted to be honest with myself and stop drinking to come to him." I'll try it. What is John Smith's answer? First, let's get straightened out. It took five days to get him to his senses. He is introduced to A.A. his one remaining hope. Does he succeed, who knows? One never can tell the story of an alcoholic in words of success until the lid is closed on his casket.

After our final accounting if we adhere to the principles of A.A. the Almighty will greet us with "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Remember, God meant men to look the world in the face. That is why he stood them on two feet.—*J.K.*

A Son Speaks About Alcoholics Anonymous

From Salem, Mass.

Maybe you would like to know how the son of an alcoholic feels toward Alcoholics Anonymous.

Do you know what it is to have a Dad, who you respect, who you think is the most wonderful man in the world come home drunk? That's what I saw many a night.

I am 15 years old and while I was still very young I wondered what was wrong with my father. Was he sick? Was he mad? I didn't know but I soon found out. That was before he became a member of A.A.

When my father joined A.A. something happened. It was like a story. After awhile I could look up to people and say, "See that man? He's my Dad." I was so happy over this that I got interested in A.A. too. I went to meetings, and learned more about A.A.

To me A.A. is a magic something that came from nowhere and saved our whole family. To me a son or daughter can realize more what A.A. does for a father or a mother than anyone else in the family.—*Norman S.*

Man—Not the Bottle

"The scientists are searching for the causes behind problem-drinking—for they know that the root of the trouble lies in the MAN and not in the BOTTLE—and what can be done to remove those causes and with them the problem drinker's uncontrolled drive to drink himself into oblivion.

"Their findings are still incomplete. They have found no panacea to effect an overall cure. But they have come to some definite conclusions, which should be known to every member of the liquor industry:

"The problem drinker is a sick man; his real problem lies within himself, not in the alcohol he drinks without care or control. The problem drinker is a public health problem; he is essentially a community responsibility. The community—and that includes the liquor trade—must work with medical scientists, public health authorities, hospital administrators, police officials and legislators to bring about sane and appropriate treatment for the problem drinker. The public must be educated to the fact that uncontrolled and chronic drinking and their underlying factors are medical problems, so that it will lend its support to sound measures for dealing with them.

"From these conclusions there would seem to emerge three important requirements to deal with the problem on practical lines, namely: A model Union law dealing with problem-drinking; an analysis of the medico-legal aspects of problem-drinking and a redrafting of the law, placing problem drinkers under the jurisdiction of health rather than legal authorities; and assistance for the health and welfare agencies concerned with the care of problem drinkers to develop common conclusions concerning the type of facilities necessary for their care."—*The South African Hotel Review, Capetown.*

Never Again

"Carlos Monroy, 40, a laborer, was on the wagon today. Monroy got three bottles of rum during the height of the rioting last week. He drank them and passed out in the street. A government truck sent out to pick up the bodies of those killed in the revolt gathered up Monroy and carted him off to the morgue.

"He fled screaming when he came to and found himself surrounded by dead bodies.

"I'll never take another drop, so help me," he told friends."—*Bogota, Columbia, (U.P.).*

Group Meeting and Discussion Pages

(This is a discussion page. Ideas advanced here are only suggestions, put forward to help furnish group discussion topics, without any intention of reaching fixed conclusions or dogmatic "rights" and "wrongs." All readers are invited to submit group discussion topics.)

From New York, N. Y.

MY wife insists on attending closed meetings with me," writes a troubled member of a group in suburban New York. "We haven't any rules about this sort of thing," he continued, "but I find it hard to explain to her that non-alcoholics are allowed to attend open meetings but not closed ones. Have any other A.A.s been faced with this problem?"

The writer of this letter lives in a small community. His group numbers no more than 30 members, most of whom have known each other and their families for years. To these A.A. and their husbands and wives, A.A. functions of all kinds have become "family" activities. Apparently the wife in this case feels "left out of things" on the one night a week the group holds its closed meeting.

Husband Objects

"My husband objects to my going to an A.A. meeting of any kind without him," writes an A.A. wife from an Alabama Group. "Tom (the husband) isn't exactly jealous but he tells me that he has stuck with me so far and he can't understand why he can't continue to go with me to any meeting, open or closed."

Another letter reflects the opinion of an A.A. who is upset about the attendance of non-alcoholic members of an A.A.'s family at closed meetings. He says, "It burns me up to see every non-alcoholic Tom, Dick and Harry at our closed meetings. Unless we do something about it I'm not going to any more meetings. Last Thursday I saw Fred J.'s wife at the meeting. She was sitting in the back of the room and she didn't say anything but I felt uncomfortable having her there. Believe me I wouldn't discuss my personal problems with her or any other non-alcoholic in the room."

In view of letters recently received by *The A.A. Grapevine*, it occurred to us that it would be interesting and, probably, helpful to request other opinions from readers on this subject.

In our own group this problem hasn't come up. Our group has only a few closed meetings. On one occasion a non-alcoholic visitor in our home expressed a wish to

"attend an A.A. meeting." In this case the non-alcoholic was not only a close friend of my wife but was interested in the problem of alcoholism because of a member of her family. However, when we learned that the meeting that night was a closed one, we explained the situation to her and suggested that she visit our group "on another night."

On another occasion, however, we took a non-alcoholic to a closed meeting without thinking about it. No one noticed it, but we have never felt quite right about it. We don't expect to do it again.

Members in smaller communities, particularly in the New England states, seem to take the appearance of non-alcoholic members of an A.A.'s family at any kind of a meeting as a matter of course. They say that mothers, fathers, husbands and wives are all interested in the family drunk and that "families enjoy the fun and frolic of A.A.s anyway." Although these groups don't have any rules about the matter, everything seems to work out alright under present arrangements.

In some groups a strict tradition has grown up on the subject. In these groups, non-alcoholics are *forbidden* to attend closed meetings. Some groups go so far as to insist that women sit in one section of the room and men in another. These groups take the position that a closed meeting means what it says; that such a meeting is the one time in the week when A.A.s can let their hair down and discuss their personal problems in privacy. They feel that in a strictly closed meeting it is easier to get frankness and sincerity into the discussion of personal troubles. Moreover, many A.A.s feel that the chief benefit of the closed meeting is its privacy. If non-alcoholics are allowed, they say, why call it a "closed" meeting?

Curiously, a number of A.A. Groups—particularly in foreign countries—have been started by non-alcoholics. In Australia, a non-alcoholic was largely responsible for the beginning and growth of A.A. in that country. We have had no news on the subject of closed meetings from these foreign groups.

Some A.A.s prefer to be anonymous to the extent they will attend closed meetings *only*. If they are getting the Program in that way no one can criticize. For these A.A.s it is extremely important that closed meetings remain closed meetings.

If the question has come up in your group or if you have had any experience

with the problem, drop a letter to *The A.A. Grapevine*.—J.T.

What's the Answer?

In the June issue of *The A.A. Grapevine* I read an item, entitled, "What Is the Answer," written by A. G., Rochester, N. Y.

According to the item, Brother A. G.'s A.A. group was discussing the case of a hypothetical "slipee" or an unfortunate member who had had a relapse. To make a long story short, the victim had hit bottom, and hard,—no job, no money, no room and no friends. A group takes hold and reclaims him from the dregs of humanity. After three months in A.A., he is sitting on top of the world because of his sobriety, but he has been lax in attending meetings although constantly contacted by the men who brought him back from the "living dead." And then he slips and within 48 hours he has lost everything he had gained in three months of sobriety.

Now, permit me to quote my friend, A. G. "Now comes the \$64 question. Do we start all over again? The man has been given the tools to work with, but did not use them. Are we supposed to go through all the same things? Sitting up nights, getting rooms, getting jobs, for this same man who ignored the members pleas to come to meetings?"

Probably I can offer a small fraction of help by citing a mistake I made. An alcoholic, whom I shall call Ed, came to me under similar circumstances. He had a large family, a sick wife in a sanatorium, and he was broke, disgusted and sick. I took Ed along to our group meetings at Williamsport and he took to A.A. like a duck to water. Within six months time Ed was looking at the world through rose-colored glasses. We, in our group, had given Ed the tools to work with.

After seven months of sobriety Ed slipped. No, he did not fail us; we failed Ed. His case was parallel with the neophyte who was given the finest set of watch-making tools and then instructed to build precision time pieces. This he was unable to do because of lack of training. We gave Ed the finest set of working tools, the 12 Steps, and told him to become master of himself. Realizing the seriousness of our mistake, we again got Ed back on the Program and taught him the fashion and use of God's Working Tools for alcoholics, the 12 Steps.

Perhaps that will answer your \$64 question.—Dick K. Watson, Pa.

CAN A.A. be effective in prison? How many times have we asked ourselves that question since we joined the Arizona State Prison Group. We do know we are groping for an honest answer. But there are so many posers.

Didn't we all go through a compulsory period of dehydration? No doubt about that. We were all as dry as the sun seared desert. Weren't we all more or less rebellious at being confined and being told what to do 24 hours out of each day for 365 days out of each year. The answer to that would come when we were free to order, "steak, medium please, and a bottle of beer." Weren't we looking into the future when we could stage a good king-sized binge? No doubt about that. We've heard dreams of the future voiced too many times to even imagine that the majority of us would do anything else. And wasn't the brightest dream of all the one embracing new friends we would make when we were again members of free society?

Few Who Care

Few of us have anyone who really cares about us, as men, to go to when released. Many of us will be without friends of any kind. Past habits may send us to a cocktail lounge in our search for human companionship. We all know every bar has a ready friend for the guy—good or bad—who will buy drinks and be a good fellow. Where can we step back into the stream of free life with less effort? Then came a letter to one of the collaborators of this article.

The letter was from an executive officer of a company the collaborator had once worked for. It was a fine letter of commendation on the inmate joining A.A. It was fine morale building letter. But the biggest thing in that letter was a few words that allowed a sliver of light to filter through the clouds of doubt that kept our minds hazy. Quoting from that letter.

"The main joy in life comes from * * * and straight thinking." Now straight thinking was nothing new to us from an advisory standpoint. We had been told about "straight thinking" since the first day we went to an A.A. meeting. but somehow it had evaded us.

Controlling one's thoughts in prison is not one of the easiest things to do. The general atmosphere in prison is not conducive to "straight thinking." Then one of us remembered a psychology professor's illustration of controlling thought trains. His illustration was something like this.



Group Meeting

No person can prevent a thought from entering his or her mind. If we see a fire we are going to think of a fire. If we read about a baseball game, we are going to think about baseball. There is no door we can close to shut out those things we see or read about. But we can meet the train of thought at the threshold of our minds and guide it along a good or bad track.

As a result of this we started trying to find the good parts of things and keeping our trains of thought on the track of "straight thinking."

We found that even if a person is so mixed up he feels like "Tom and Jerry" batter, he will in time get some hint that will awaken him to the right answer if he keeps a steady attendance to meetings, tries his best to live according to the "12 Steps." This answer may come from the most unexpected place, but it will come.

By that we do not mean our thinking took an abrupt angle turn. Our thoughts had been careening down the road of least resistance too long for, anything as sudden as that. But our thinking is in a state of metamorphosis like the caterpillar changing to the butterfly. Maybe we are getting some place.—*Gene and Verle*.

They Have Gained

Our Group (Marin County Group) is two years old and is now running along smoothly. We did have some difficulties the first year, but with deeper understanding of the program, the 12 Traditions and tolerance we have gained a great deal.

We now have a steering committee of three members and they in turn select a chairman for each meeting and take care of any business along with our secretary.

About a year ago a group branched out from our group in Sausalito, which is known as the Southern Marin Group. This gives us two meetings a week which are well attended.

We are fortunate to be located just nineteen miles over the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco. This enables us to invite speakers from there at most any time. We also exchange speakers with many of the Bay Area Groups.

Our Group also participates in institutional work at San Quentin and Napa State Hospital, which is not only helpful to the inmates, but helps all of us.

Recently we had the privilege of sitting in on a staff meeting of doctors at Napa State Hospital. There were three members of Alcoholics Anonymous present, who were asked direct questions by the doctors.

Our meetings are closed with the exception of the last week of each month when visitors are welcomed.—*Z. S., San Anselmo, Calif.*

Afternoon Meeting

For the members who work at night and many women who cannot attend evening meetings, the Franklin Square, L. I. Group has organized a closed afternoon meeting. The meeting is held every Tuesday afternoon in the basement of a church and is limited to one hour. Since its organization in April this meeting has proved very successful in helping newcomers over the first hump and keeping older ones "on the beam." The meeting procedure is very informal with refreshments being served during the talks.—*M.A.J., Franklin Square, L. I., New York.*

With the assistance of A.A.s on the outside, Texas Prison System Group, No. 1, Huntsville, Texas, was recently organized.

The first meeting held on June 27 was attended by seven inmates and seven members of the Houston and Conroe Groups. The second meeting had eleven inmates in attendance. This group has been organized along the lines of other successful prison groups and meets with the full approval of the prison authorities.—*Clair and Anna, Houston, Texas.*

Louisville, Ky. groups are experimenting with beginners' meetings. They are keeping in mind the hazard of inviting new members to look upon the speakers as "officials." To overcome this, the group is trying to swing these beginners meetings to a form of round table discussions. In this procedure no one is considered an expert, but rather as one who has had more experience in the Program.—*J.S., Louisville, Ky.*

From Muskegon, Mich.

I think it behooves the wife or husband of the alcoholic to read the A.A. literature. We families in A.A. need to help ourselves too. Living in close contact with an alcoholic is one sure way of soaking up a lot of alcoholic thinking and acting. Believe me, I know from experience.

It is now just a little over three years since my husband became a member of A.A. I can well remember the day I wrote my letter asking for help. Our family difficulties brought about by the old demon "booze" parallel thousands of other problem-drinker family situations. It is the same story one hears over and over again in A.A. A sad story indeed, but not without a happy conclusion.

I, personally, believe that the recovery of an alcoholic to the way of life that A.A. teaches, is something of a revelation and an education. Surely, money can't buy this kind of education, except as the experience is acquired through untold dollars spent in the cost of alcohol and all that goes with it.

Better People

I know that in our own individual family that the whole process of bad years caused primarily by the effects of alcohol, has brought about an outlook on life that will make us better people for having had the experience.

The older of our two boys, age 16, never knew his father to be anything other than yesterday's hangover and today's binge coupled together. They make an interesting and comic combination, or perhaps peculiar and tragic—all according to where one sits, the view one gets. His was a miserable childhood, but unfortunate as conditions were, I have a feeling he has profited by the experience. At least he realizes and understands that he is not alone or that our particular situation is unique or outstanding. We are just one family numbered among many having the same kind of problem. We are learning gradually, as are many other families, how to overcome our difficulties and live in harmony with others.

Since our younger son was only four years old when his daddy quit drinking, he won't remember much of the old days. He did make some private observations and some public admissions. He made his regular rounds of the neighborhood, calling on all and sundry, spreading the regular news and some not so regular—at least from my point of view. It got to be like the phonograph record with a crack in it,

Families, Wives Need Help Too

"My daddy gets drunk and he gets uggsy." Poor little guy; he didn't know the neighbors were already well aware of it—uncanny, isn't it, that sixth sense the neighbors seem to be blessed with!

Uggsy or ugly, and drunk! That's what our pet spaniel dog thought too, if dogs think. She never failed to scoot for shelter under the table and would stay there until the "storm" with the big feet that didn't track right staggered away out of sight and hearing, and to bed.

Nightmare Vanished

Our nightmare seems to have vanished and we are a happy family, happier than we ever were before, even before the disease alcoholism struck.

Yes, I tried everything, and I mean EVERYTHING to get my husband to quit drinking or not drink so much.

After many years of fumbling and groping, trying to figure out what the real trouble was and what to do about it—just literally beating my brains out against a stone wall, I came to the realization that there was nothing at all that I could do to remedy the situation. In desperation I called our family physician's wife on the telephone and told her that I was at the very end of my rope and couldn't take it any more. She asked me if I knew anything about Alcoholics Anonymous. Also, way back before that, I had read an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* on the same subject. Queer, how dulled one's senses become—it was there all the time. I busied myself right then and there with a letter to the National Headquarters in New York. I couldn't find a magazine in

the house with the address of Alcoholics Anonymous Inc., so I wrote my letter in care of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Within 10 days after writing my letter I had an answer to it. Imagine my glad surprise to note that there was a group right here in Muskegon! A little less than a week later one of our local members called on my husband and gave him a brief outline of the 12 Steps. From there on it would be just a repetition of what every A.A. knows about the recovery of the alcoholic to sane and sober living.

I'm wondering if the wife of the alcoholic may be possibly more cooperative, tolerant and willing to let by-gones be by-gones, than is the husband of the alcoholic? It seems the drinking wives have more difficulty getting on with the Program. Most of the wives that I have talked with are so thankful and happy to know that their husbands are making an honest effort to overcome the difficulty, that they want all the information they can get on how best they can be helpful.

Read A.A. Literature

For myself, I read every piece of A.A. literature that comes my way, it also helps me to help myself as well as my husband and some of the other wives as well. Occasionally we meet a wife who is intolerant and disinterested in the Program (they're few and far between) but usually in these cases, the husband has difficulty with the Program. That is why I'm wondering just what approach, if any, can be used in the case of the intolerant husband of the alcoholic wife. Does anyone have any suggestions?—*Mrs. F.O.S.*

Remember Well

"Rememberwell what we wanted when we adopted this design for living-- not to be a salesman of a philosophy -- not to be a reformer, not to be a zealot of any fanatic type but to subscribe to a plan of sane living, proven by others to be a safe vehicle for a sober passage through the day. No glowing promises—no quibbling with the truth- no concessions to social standings -in a word, no deviation from the simple plan is necessary to offer to man such a great reward for so little effort." -A.A. *Twelve Stepper, Omaha, Nebraska.*



And Can Gain from the 12 Steps

From Vincennes, Ill.

I am not an alcoholic, but being human do have my faults and some habits that are not conducive to good living. From each of the 12 Steps of the A.A. Book, I may gain help in overcoming these handicaps. My major fault is a quick temper which vents itself in a sharp tongue.

According to the 1st Step, each time I give way to these temper outbursts, it becomes harder to control myself until, in time, I am a slave to my temper. Then like the A.A. I must admit I am powerless alone and ask God to take over.

As in the 2nd and 3rd Steps, I too must admit that if I am to correct my faults, I shall have to put my trust in a Power greater than myself and turn my will and my life over to God. When I feel myself slipping, I must of necessity take time out to relax. With peace of mind restored there will be no occasion to "blow my top". I cannot help my husband when I cannot control myself.

Takes Inventory, Too

As humans, we all fail to see our own shortcomings. As in the 4th Step, I, too, must make an inventory of my faults. Do I have self pity, resentment, jealousy, criticism, fear, anger, hate, in my heart mild, passive or violent? If so, then I must admit these things to God and be honest with myself as the 5th Step states. I share equally with my husband the responsibility for a happy home and a successful marriage and need to see and correct my own faults. Having made a clean breast of my weakness and assured of both spiritual and human help, I feel strong and confident of the victory almost won.

Though I have admitted those things which are not good in my life, as the 6th and 7th Steps make plain, I shall need God's help to remove both the cause and desire to do them. With His aid I can gain spiritual courage and a serenity and calmness that will be a benefit to my husband.

Now comes a very vital step. That is the making of a list of all those whom I have offended in any way and ask God to show me the way to make amends. As the 8th and 9th Steps indicate I must be much in prayer and meditation before I try to do this else I may make the wound deeper. If my husband is big enough to admit to me that he has done wrong, then,

I must take inventory of myself to see if I have been just the kind of a wife that inspires my husband to right living. If not, I must be just as ready to admit it as he. God cannot give much help to an individual who gives offense and is not big enough to ask forgiveness as we must need ask God to do for us.

Having had continuously and religiously done all this, it is now easy for me to say to myself that I am now master of the situation, but as the 10th Step tells us, we never "stay put", either I am improving myself or backsliding. I must constantly be taking inventory of myself and never fail to make amends for every misdeed.

As the 11th Step brings out, when I feel myself getting jittery or upset, I must of necessity take time out to talk to God and he will show me the thing to do and give me the calm I need. God never interferes with our lives unless we ask Him. He never fails us when we ask Him for help. I should take time out more often to thank God for those blessings which I have received and not always ask God for things. I am sure that the good things in my life would far outnumber the bad things. Keeping this in my mind, I know that I will be a much happier and pleasanter wife. Too, I should help others to see this way of thinking and in so doing will increase my own happiness.

God Produces Harmony

I shall end this little discourse with a section taken from "Our Southern Friend" as given in the 12th Step. "God produces harmony in those who receive His Spirit and follow its dictates. There are disturbances, but I have learned that if I seek patience and open-mindedness, understanding will come. And with it, direction of God." If I can just keep this marvelous philosophy in mind then with God's help I can be



the kind of a wife that I should be and a help and inspiration to my husband and to others.—*Wife of an A.A.*

Group Meeting

The Birmingham Group held an enthusiastic discussion recently on a problem presented by a new member.

The husband of this new member is bitterly opposed to her membership in A.A. It is a bone of contention and a cause for his heaping abuse each meeting she attends. The member's husband, himself, drinks often and to excess, but says he doesn't need A.A., and furthermore uses A.A. as the excuse for violent abusive scenes.

To Keep Peace

Recently, for the sake of peace, the wife stopped coming to meetings. Last week she had a slip. Now she's back with us again. The abuse at home continues.

The Birmingham Group discussed the problem, trying to offer helpful suggestions. We'd like very much to see it discussed further, in *The A.A. Grapevine*. How to meet this unreasonable attitude on the part of wife or husband of a member?

MF said: "Just sit tight, stick to A.A., keep sober, and let time be on your side."

A member objected: "But living in constant turmoil makes it so hard to make the Program" (especially when the husband also drinks).

Someone asked: "Have you tried an appeal to reason, and to explain to him A.A. so he will appreciate it?" (She said he won't listen.)

A new member said: "Why not let one of our older members talk to the husband?"

Birmingham Group would welcome further suggestions on this difficult problem.

—*L. F., Birmingham, Ala.*

Educational Lecture

In an effort to acquaint the public with A.A. the Midland, Mich., Group has recently completed a series of five educational lectures. These lectures were presented by five psychiatrists and a member of A.A. Midland, Mich.

Awarding Marbles

The Artesia, N. Mex. Group is now awarding marbles to all members of the group. These marbles are to be carried at all times and if, at any time, a member is unable to present his marble, he is fined 25 cents. This money goes into the "Foundation Fund."—*N. L. Artesia, N. Mex.*

EDITORIAL:

On the 9th Tradition

By Bill

Each A.A. Group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large Metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The Trustees of The Alcoholic Foundation are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the receivers of voluntary A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office in New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our over-all public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, "The A.A. Grapevine." All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

The least possible organization, that's our universal ideal. No fees, no dues, no rules imposed on anybody, one alcoholic bringing recovery to the next; that's the substance of what we most desire, isn't it?

But how shall this simple ideal best be realized? Often a question, that.

We have, for example, the kind of A.A. who is for simplicity. Terrified of anything organized, he tells us that A.A. is getting too complicated. He thinks money only makes trouble, committees only make dissension, elections only make politics, paid workers only make professionals and that clubs only coddle slipees. Says he, let's get back to coffee and cakes by cozy firesides. If any alcoholics stray our way, let's look after them. But that's enough. Simplicity is our answer.

Quite opposed to such halcyon simplicity is the A.A. promotor. Left to himself he would "bang the cannon and twang the lyre" at every crossroad of the world. Millions for drunks, great A.A. hospitals, batteries of paid organizers and publicity ex-

perts wielding all the latest paraphernalia of sound and script; such would be our promoters dream. "Yes sir," he would bark "My two year plan calls for one million A.A. members by 1950!"

For one, I'm glad we have both conservatives and enthusiasts. They teach us much. The conservative will surely see to it that the A.A. movement never gets over organized. But the promoter will continue to remind us of our terrific obligation to the newcomer and to those hundreds of thousands of alcoholics still waiting all over the world to hear of A.A.

We shall, naturally, take the firm and safe middle course. A.A. has always violently resisted the idea of any general organization. Yet, paradoxically, we have ever stoutly insisted upon organizing certain *special services*; mostly those absolutely necessary to effective and plentiful 12th Step work.

If, for instance, an A.A. group elects a secretary or rotating committee, if an area forms an intergroup committee, if we set

up a Foundation, a General Office or a *Grapevine*, then we are organized for service. The A.A. book and pamphlets, our meeting places and clubs, our dinners and regional assemblies—these are services too. Nor can we secure good hospital connections, properly sponsor new prospects and obtain good public relations just by chance. People have to be appointed to look after these things, sometimes paid people. Special services are performed.

But by none of these special services, has our spiritual or social activity, the great current of A.A. ever been really organized or professionalized. Yet our recovery program has been enormously aided. While important, these service activities, are very small by contrast with our main effort.

As such facts and distinctions become clear, we shall easily lay aside our fears of blighting organization or hazardous wealth. As a movement, we shall remain comfortably poor; for our service expenses are trifling.

With such assurances, we shall without doubt, continue to improve and extend our vital lifelines of special service; to better carry out our A.A. message to others; to make for ourselves a finer greater society, and, God willing, to assure Alcoholics Anonymous a long life and perfect unity.

Good Reading

The A.A. Grapevine will publish from time to time a list of books worthy of reading and studying. The following are recommended for your bookshelf:

Alcoholics Anonymous, Works Publishing Co.

The Steep Ascent, Anne Morrow Lindbergh.

The Razor's Edge, Somerset Maugham.

Escape the Night, Mignon Eberhart.

No Little Enemy, O. W. Bayer.

Button, Button, Marion Bramhall.

Alcohol Explored, H. W. Haggard and E. M. Jellinek.

The Crack Up, F. Scott Fitzgerald.

The Soul's Sincere Desire, Glenn Clark.

If You Drink, Wilfred Funk.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. A.A. has no dues or fees. It is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, and neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

The A.A. Program of Recovery is incorporated in The 12 Steps. The A.A. book of experience, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other literature, including The 12 Points of Tradition, are available through any group or the General Service Headquarters, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, N. Y.

Easy does it



First Things First and Keep an Open Mind

From Toronto, Canada

Two years ago when I stopped drinking for eight months through the reading of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* I did not attend a single A.A. meeting. I just had a casual chat with the A.A. man who procured the book and sold it to me. At that time I was neither absorbing my religion nor A.A. I read the Bible as I read the A.A. book. In neither case did I study them. And, by not attending any A.A. meetings I did not have those helpful mottoes stamped in my mind—"Take it Easy—But For the Grace of God—First Things First—and Keep an Open Mind."

So, naturally, in my long, hard struggle with liquor and dope—I was not entirely free of resentment and criticism of others.

In my mind I would look on a really bad, sodden alcoholic as somewhat beneath me—for, hadn't I fought a much harder battle—dope?

I figured all who knew of my plight—and there were many—would look upon me with contempt. I even figured my local A.A. groups would look down upon me because I had had a two-month relapse when I "went to town" on dope. I felt that since working with drug addicts was something new, they would not wish me to associate with them!

What nonsense!

All because I was not keeping an open mind. Praying to a Higher Power for strength to face the world (and that means people) on the one hand and being analytical and critical of these same people on the other.

New Groups

The following new groups reported organization to the General Service Headquarters during the month of June:

ALABAMA—Decatur, North Alabama Group; Dothan, Wiregrass A.A. Group.

ARKANSAS—DeQueen.

CALIFORNIA—Los Angeles, 830 Group; Rio Dell; Santa Monica, North Bay Women's Group.

COLORADO—Denver, Group #7.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA—Washington, Friendship Group.

GEORGIA—Douglas; Pearson.

ILLINOIS—Bushnell; Clinton.

INDIANA—Bluffton; Indianapolis.

MAINE—Bath; Houlton.

MASSACHUSETTS—Framingham; Marblehead.

MICHIGAN—Marquette; Three Rivers.

MISSOURI—Tarkio.

NEW JERSEY—Butler; Hoboken.

NEW YORK—Jamestown, Fellowship Group; Syracuse, Pioneer Group.

NORTH CAROLINA—Dunn.

OREGON—Cottage Grove.

PENNSYLVANIA—Warren, Main Group; Waynesboro.

SOUTH CAROLINA—Georgetown.

TENNESSEE—Oak Ridge.

TEXAS—Gladwater; Kermit, Winkler County Group.

VIRGINIA—Lawrenceville, Brunswick Group.

OTHER COUNTRIES:

CANADA—Ontario, Ottawa, Uptown Group.

IRELAND—Belfast.

KOREA—Seoul.

SOUTH AMERICA—Venezuela, Estado Falcon.

Near the end of my long stay in hospital the psychiatrist who was assigned to me pointed out that I would find that people would forget and forgive far more quickly than I believed. Not keeping an open mind, I did not believe him. I formed my own opinion of what people were thinking about me.

Mind you, I am not horsewhipping myself too much for this way of thinking but I am only saying that I am, oh, so grateful that I have adopted the motto of keeping an open mind for I know now how wrong I was.

I know how impossible it is to invoke Divine aid when one has not cultivated an open mind. And by this I mean an open mind on people—ideas—advice—reading—everything.—*Hugh*

News Circuit of A.A.s from All Parts of The World

NYU Inaugurates Health Series—An announcement has been made of a series of annual Health Education Institutes under the sponsorship of the School of Education of New York University. The first of these Institutes will be held from August 16 to September 3. Professor Morey R. Fields, Institute co-ordinator said, "The recognition by New York University of the importance of the problems of alcohol is another of the many undertakings evidenced in recent years that the solution of the problem of 4,000,000 neglected people in the United States and many more millions of their friends, family and associates can be achieved only through adequate undertaking of their problems." This Institute, one of the first of its kind to be established in a school of education and a large university, is the first major recognition of education's responsibility towards a more complete understanding of the problems of alcohol. Under the Department of Physical Education and Health, School of Education, in co-operation with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Research Council on Problems of Alcohol and other national agencies, the Institute will be staffed by many authorities in the field.

Treatment Needed — *Chicago, (INS)* "There are more than 750,000 who are 'sick persons' in need of competent treatment, Dr. Robert V. Seliger told members of the American Medical Association. Dr. Seliger is chief psychiatrist of the Neuropsychiatric Institute, Baltimore, Md. Terming alcoholism a symptom of emotional or nervous illness Dr. Seliger said that the alcoholic cannot stop drinking or handle alcohol at will because it handles him. This domination,' Dr. Seliger continued, 'is shown by alcohol's interference with one or more of his important life activities, such as his job standing and ability, his reputation or the harmony of his home. For any or all of these reasons, the alcoholic should be recognized as being a sick person who needs competent treatment.' Workers in all fields of public health and welfare are finding that alcoholism creates turmoil of all types. The psychiatrist also sounded a warning to the more than 3,000,000 'heavy social drinkers in the U.S.A.' He said, "The dangers of heavy social drinking should be more thoroughly understood. In industry, heavy social drinking produces inefficiency, absenteeism and serious errors in judgment.' "

Successful Prison Meetings—For the past 18 months the Upper Derby, Pa. Group has been conducting weekly A.A. meetings at the county prison farm. In addition to being a benefit to the men behind the walls, this meeting has proven an excellent testing ground for new speaker material. Embryo orators appear to have fewer qualms over addressing 40 or 50 inmates than half that number of fellow A.A.s.

Honolulu Calling—After a slow beginning the members of the Honolulu Group report that the group is now well organized and rounded out. A big step forward in educating the public about A.A. was an open meeting held recently. Much of the success of this gathering was due to the help of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. The group is now co-operating with other civic organizations in order to gain the recognition that A.A. enjoys in other parts of the world.

Growing Up—The Bronxville, N. Y. Group recently celebrated its second anniversary. An active membership growth from 12 original members to 60 is reported. Open meetings have trebled and it is planned eventually to split the group and organize a new one in the nearby Cedar Knolls section.

Banquet Marks Anniversary — The Alano Club, Spokane, Wash., recently observed the third anniversary of its founding with a banquet and open house. From the original four members the group has grown to nearly 300 and is steadily gaining.

Dedicate New Club Rooms—The high spot in the recent dedication of the new club rooms of the North Side Group, Louisville, Ky., was a funeral service for John Barleycorn. The "funeral" was complete with casket and flower offerings. Other neighborhood groups in Louisville are planning headquarters which may serve as social centers as well as meeting places.

News Notes—The Lawrence, Kansas Group reports a growing membership. They now have seven members. From Portland, Maine, comes the word that a raffle is held at each meeting. The prize to the winner is a choice of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* or a year's subscription to *The A.A. Grapevine*.

Another N.A.A. Group—A Non-Alcoholic Anonymous group has recently been organized in Pasadena-Altadena, Calif. The group meets weekly in the homes of the members.

Celebrate Eighth Anniversary

Approximately 200 members and guests were present at the eighth anniversary dinner meeting of the Harrisburg, Pa., group held recently. The meeting was addressed by an attorney from New York, N. Y.

Vacation Invitation — The Edmonton Group, Alberta, Canada, extends a hearty welcome to any members of A.A. who may be passing that way while on vacation, Edmonton's "House" is open 24 hours a day and a call will insure the visitors of being met and personally escorted to the group headquarters. The members also volunteer to give any information wanted regarding that section of the country.

Sponsor Picnic—The Birmingham Service Guild sponsored a July 4th picnic for all Birmingham A.A. members. The Service Guild is composed of wives and relatives of A.A. members. Its aim is to promote the growth of A.A.

Unsuccessful

"Remember this, wavering A.A. friend, if you used to get drunk to build up the feel that you were a "big shot" you never really succeeded, and you won't the next time. As a matter of strict truth, you (all of us) came nearer to being a full-fledged "rat" when we were in our cups—and we'd accomplish no more if we got drunk again this very day."—*The Screwball, Nacagdoches, Texas.*

Calendar Of A.A. Events

September 3-4—Southeastern Regional Convention, Jacksonville, Fla.

October 23-24—Iowa Conference, Des Moines, Iowa.

November 5-6-7—North Carolina Groups; First Annual Convention, Charlotte, N. C.

The morning after a hard night a souse named Oscar went into a barbershop, "Gimme a shave, haircut, massage an' the works, pal. . . I gotta git in shape for a big day," blurted Oscar. "Hurry, 'cause I need my pants pressed, too."

"Slip 'em off an' I'll hand your pants to the presser next door," volunteered the barber. "This big bib will cover-up while you're in the chair."

"Good idea," approved our hero, handing over his trousers.

A few minutes later, in the midst of the shave, the wail of fire sirens sounded outside. Down the street roared the red wagons; dogs and small boys giving chase.

"It's Sweeney's house," shrieked a small lad, sticking his head in the door. "Goin' like blazes . . . come on see it **burn!**"

The drunk in the chair let out a roar of alarm and fled through the door. Down the street he ran, pants forgotten, face lathered, stumbling over the barber's bib. For three heroic blocks Oscar trailed the fire engines; then he tripped and crashed flat on his face. He sat up slowly, with a dazed and dawning expression. A happy smile came over his face. "Whattim I chasing the fire for?" he muttered. "My name isn't Sweeney."

She Raises Cain

"Havin' a awful time at home," complained a Stew to his bar companion. "M'wife raises Cain whenever I come home late. She hears me takin' off my shoes in the bedroom, an' the riot starts."

"S'no problem," scuffed his friend. "Do what I do. Get shoes off at the bottom of the steps. Take your clothes, off, too—saves time. Roll your shoes inside the bundle an' creep upstairs quiter'n a mouse."

"Smart idea," agreed Stew. "I'll try it."

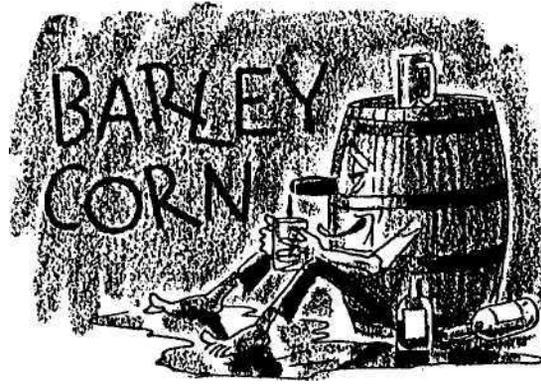
Next afternoon, the friend walked into the same bar and found Stew at the rail, glass in hand, sadly shaking his head. "Lousy advice," muttered Stew, "no good at all."

"S'matter?" inquired the advice-giver, "didn't you undress at the bottom of the stairs, roll your shoes inside your clothes and git upstairs without wifey hearing?"

"Oh, I did everything you tol' me, but I onny made one big mistake," complained Stew.

"What was the mistake, pal?"

"Wrong stairs; I got on an elevated platform."



* * *

Arriving home from a gay celebration, a stewed gentleman discovered a helpless citizen slumped outside the apartment house door.

"S'mutter, my good man?" inquired the stew. "Do you need a boost up the stairs?"

The helpless one nodded. "Yessir, please, jus' help me into the third floor apartment."

Up the stairs they tottered. On the third floor our Good Samaritan pushed his companion through the door with a cheery good-night and returned outside to pick up his hat which had fallen off.

Another drunk was lying on the ground.

"Goodness me," marveled the stew, "these fellows must have both come from the same party." So he obligingly toted the second drunk upstairs, "fourth floor, you said," he gasped, and pushed the drunk through the door. "Nighty, night." And down he went to retrieve his hat which had fallen off again.

As our helpful hero approached the bushes, a weaving figure stumbled to his feet and began retreating down the path. "Oh, no, you don't . . . this time I'll hafta tell y'u t' try the fifth floor, an' if y'u push me outa the fire escape up there, I'll break a bone when I land!"

* * *



"Two souls with but a single thought... two hearts that beat as one"

Fatties Anonymous

"Several months ago Mrs. Edna H. McBride of Seattle, Wash., invited five of her women friends to have lunch with her. Because the guests, like their hostess, were all overly plump, they suspected that they were the victims of a good-natured gag.

"But when Mrs. McBride and her hefty colleagues reluctantly refused a second dessert and rose from the table, they were the founders and charter members of an organization called Fatties Anonymous.

"The idea for the organization came to Mrs. McBride while she was sitting in the waiting room of a doctor's office thumbing idly through the pages of a medical magazine. She was worried about her weight and was there for a physical check-up.

Article Attracted

"An article on obesity attracted her attention and she read that most fat people get that way, not because their glands are out of whack, but because they eat too often and too much. "The mental makeup of overweight people," she read, 'closely resembles that of the chronic alcoholic. They stuff themselves with food in much the same way that a drunkard soaks himself with liquor.'

"The doctor was kinder with his words. He told Mrs. McBride that 'faulty eating habits' were to blame for her increasing bulk. That—and the article in the medical magazine—did it. She went home and called five of her most obese acquaintances.

"At their organization meeting the women agreed that, if Alcoholics Anonymous can keep heavy drinkers away from the bottle, a similar set-up called Fatties Anonymous might restrain gluttons and nibblers from overstuffing themselves. And that the problem would be easier if women banded together for mutual support in solving it."—*The American Weekly*.

Take Note

"If you happen to be an animal lover, better note that Dog Week begins Sept. 19 and Cat Week Nov. 7. The dog and cat people haven't seen eye to eye about staging a joint Dog and Cat Week with a view to easing the overburdened calendar. On the contrary, they're placed them as far apart as possible. There is also a report that Alcoholics Anonymous will select one of the intervening periods for Be Kind to Pink Elephants Week."—*Globe Democrat, St. Louis, Mo.*

Mail Call For A.A.s At Home and Abroad

Let Us Not Be Weary

From Rome, Ga.

"Let us not be weary in well doing—"
Gal. 6:9

If we are striving to live the A.A. Program every day we should not become weary because things do not just happen, or turn out as we expected, or as we wanted them to.

We should strive the harder to overcome our weaknesses, our fears and our weariness. There is a weariness of spirit predominant in the world today. People are tired, full of fear and skeptical. Now we should remember that the Power greater than ourselves still sits upon His throne. All is well with the world but the peoples in it are sick in body, mind and soul.

Great Test

One of the great tests of human character comes when there is a call to push forward even though one is tired.

The weariness of spirit is experienced most often when conditions appear to make impossible the accomplishment of worthy ends. The discouragement sets in and there is a tendency to give up and find rest in the abandonment of purpose.

All persons possessed of noble ambitions experience such moments. Vast significance attaches to the attitude that finally is caused to govern in such a crisis.

Those who surrender lose much.

By Defiance

Most all great advances and achievements are gained by defiance of weariness; by the exercise of the unsundering spirit. We must refuse to be diverted from our goal by weariness and fear.

We must suppress fear and weariness and remain at the task until our goal has been achieved.

If we expect the ideals of A.A. to cover the earth we must continue to labor in the face of soul-tiring endeavor.

In these things there is encouragement for all whose purposes are high and who would make this world more blessed with the unfolding of the years.—*Anonymous.*

Oh, Yes?

"That guy's not an alcoholic—he's suffering from bottle fatigue!"

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

—The Editors

The Unfinished Symphony

From Birmingham, Ala.

Repeatedly, older members of the Birmingham group have said, "No one ever reaches perfection in the 12 Steps." That does something to lessen the discouragement of the beginner—to know even older members still have far to go.

The perfectionist is victim of overwhelming moods of discouragement. The new member catches a glimpse of the ideal, through hearing A.A. speeches and by association with older members. He sets out on the upward path hopefully. Months later, his taking of moral inventory appalls him. With each step he sees his goal recede further, to unattainable heights.

The idealist tends to be impatient with the motto, "Easy Does It." He wants to overcome in one year of A.A. life the wrong habits of a lifetime.

These growing pains are good. Each man works out his problem in his own way. God watches, and He cares. We surrender our will to Him, then snatch it back. Months later, we offer him the tarnished dream that we first found in A.A., and say, "Please make it shine again."

Then the not-so-new member knows the value of "Easy Does It." Humbly, he acknowledges the real need of honesty and patience. It's not where you are right now that counts, it's *where, you're headed.* Every life is an unfinished symphony.—*L.F.*



Helpful Idea

Wittier, Calif.

Out here in California an idea had developed that seems to make clear a number of things.

First, the idea. On the premise that life is a sequence of actions of every kind and on every plane of being—we can draw the conclusion that each occurrence in our lives is the result of previous action and interaction of ourselves and others.

Most of us, in endeavoring to work the 4th Step, are inclined to overemphasize the *destructive* actions of our past lives, particularly those which occurred during our drinking careers. By "overemphasizing," we mean that we attach more of the guilt feeling to these acts in our judgment of them than is logical.

God knows we have plenty of that guilt to clean out of our being anyway.

Hard to Find

It is hard to find a direct approach to this problem that will enable us to completely avoid making this error. However—and here is the crux—it is the belief of many of us, and with good reason, that, if we will bear one thing continuously in mind it will be of great help in helping us to attain and maintain first—sobriety, then—serenity.

Every *constructive* act, thought, or emotion that we experience counteracts a previous destructive phase of our past. What we do now does not have to be of the same kind or nature as the previous tearing down.

Better to Love

It is true, that to love is better for us than to hate. But the object of the previous hate may be dead. Let us fill the space taken up by that hate with kindness and affection for those now alive. Let us replace carping destructive criticisms with helpful praise or constructive suggestions.

Many times, a smile of encouragement will make up for many a disgruntled frown of the past.

If all this may sound Pollyanish, then make the best of it. But, oddly enough, this philosophy has helped many.

With a different twist, the motto of an old time Prince of Wales may well apply here:

"Honi soit qui mal y pense."—*H.E.*

Mail Call

Egotism

From Dublin, Ireland.

It seems strange that egotism, one of the alcoholic's most common failings, should continue to show itself in two totally opposite ways in the behavior of some A.A. members. Here, already, we have noticed these two types. The A.A. Drone and the A.A. Reformer.

The Drone, although he attends the meetings, makes no other noticeable contribution to the group's work, apart from an intermittent and sometimes underhand attempt at destructive criticism. Obviously, he is under the impression that just by being a member of the group, he is making a major contribution to the success of A.A.

The Reformer, on the other hand, is bursting with ideas for making himself important. After two or three meetings he can see clearly how easily and how well he could organize the group, though oddly enough he finds himself somehow unable to carry out any of the essential but dull and unpublicized spadework. After a time, he usually thinks that he is being intentionally neglected and stops attending the meetings.

Obviously both types are self-centered, but either one is only an extreme development of a tendency which may be present in each one of us, a tendency which we must watch and control if we are to remain efficient members of A.A.—*R.P.*

Grateful to Non-A.A.s

From Mt. Vernon, Wash.

I came to this town about two years ago and began breaking ground for an A.A. group. My first contact with the owner of the newspaper, here, resulted in his voluntary suggestion to run an ad, free.

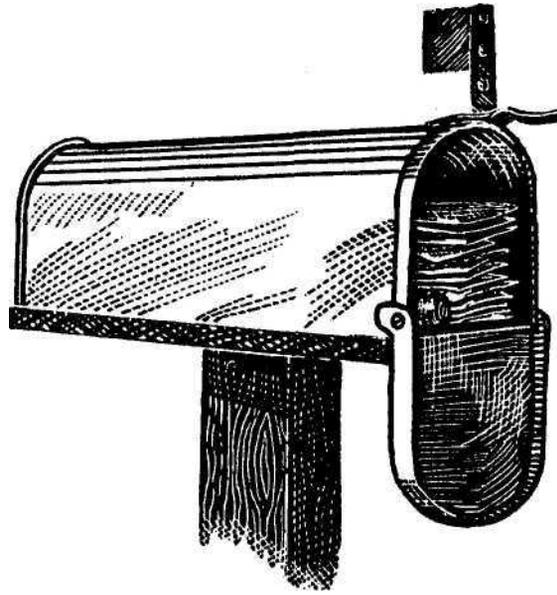
This newspaper has continued to run our advertisement for us and time and again changed the wording. It has run countless stories concerning our activities.

It has been over three years since I came into A.A. I have been a chronic worrier and a weak sister but nevertheless I have not had one slip. Tonight I am deeply grateful to the help that the non-alcoholics have given me and other members of our now flourishing group.—*J.R.*

With Tolerance, Too

From Jacksonville, Ala.

When an alcoholic comes into A.A. he



does so for one reason alone—to help himself. When his non-alcoholic wife comes into A.A. also, she, too, needs help. A.A. has as much to offer her as it does her alcoholic husband.

Often we hear the importance of the word "humility." Humility is important but, in my opinion, tolerance comes next.

When I think of how much tolerance I require from my husband, my children, my relatives and my friends, I find myself with a large share of humility to begin with.

Certainly the alcoholic husband needs all of the assistance I can give him, but, I do think that equally necessary is help for the wife. Psychologically speaking she has as much to overcome as he.

As the wife of an A.A. I hope and pray that the day will come when I can face life once more without the hidden fears that beset me for so many years. I hope and pray that I may never overlook an opportunity to hold out my hand to one who has suffered as I have and that I always may remember that humility and tolerance go hand in hand.—*V.W.*



Why Is It?

From Jefferson City, Mo.

"Why is it", a member of the Jefferson City, Mo., Group asks, "that so many wives, friends, husbands and relatives do not come out to the open meetings?"

"These same people," the A.A. continues, "would have given anything, when their loved ones were drunk, to have had them sober and industrious. Is it that these people take this new-found sobriety, prosperity and happiness too much for granted, leaving the hard part of the A.A. Program to the other wives and non-alcoholics?"

The Jefferson City Group has 45 members, most of whom are husbands. At open meetings where wives, husbands and friends are urged to attend, the wives serve the refreshments. They have worked out a rotating plan that shifts the burden of the work each week from one group to the other.

"It seems to us," says the A.A., "that the two or three hours a week given in this manner is a very small price to pay for the security and happiness that sobriety in their families can and does give—then again we like to see the wives and friends present at the open meetings because it gives us just that much more encouragement."—*T.W.*

Don't Like It!

St. Petersburg, Fla.

"Have a drink?"

"No thanks! I don't like it!"

"Whadda y'mean, you don't like it?"

"Well in 20 years of liking it, I lost 15 jobs, two good wives, got held up and robbed once, got in jail five times, spent \$250 for a 'cure,' lost hundreds and hundreds of dollars from time out from work with hangovers—couldn't work—too sick, and a judge let me know through my present wife that the next drunk will get me six months straight time—no buying out. I just don't like it anymore. Some fun wasn't it.

"Yeah, some fun. Give the guy a coke."
—*Walt K.*

Live and let live

Mail Call For A.A.s Everywhere

Why Not Today?

From St. Paul, Minn.

All things look good from far away. It is so easy for the human mind to make an Eden of the future. Why the future? Why not today?

I believe that in A.A. man can learn to deal with his own shadow by helping others. We must lift the darkness we carry unconsciously into all our dealings.

It has been said so often that to get the great good things of life one must give. A.A. opens the way for us to give so much to others at such a small cost. What does it cost to give a smile or a kind word? Each of us can be a living demonstration of the power of doing good through A.A. Let us do it today!—*E.J.F.*

Not Enough

It is not for a person to say, "O.K., I've admitted I can't drink." We can't skim over the Steps and regard it as being finished, for there is no end to A.A. Until we have learned to be tolerant with those who do not agree with us, until we have cultivated the habit of saying some kind words of those whom we do not admire, until we have formed the habit of looking for the good instead of the bad there is in others, we will not be either happy or successful.—*Camel Club Chronicle, Marshalltown, Iowa.*



On the 3rd Step

From Prince Edward Island, Canada

In my interpretation of the 12 Steps, I find no particular Step harder than any other, nor easier than any other. They are all hard, yet they are all easy eventually; but to find them easy, we must remember and follow the slogan "Easy Does It"; we should not try to digest or even understand all the Steps too quickly.

We should be certain of the 1st Step, which is a decision we all have to make for ourselves. After we definitely understand and absorb this Step we should take the other Steps in whatever order we feel is most suitable for our own individual benefit, skipping temporarily any we do not fully understand and concentrating on the ones we do understand, until we have thoroughly digested the seemingly easy ones.

As we progress with the easy ones we will simultaneously be building a foundation under the apparently harder ones. This, I believe, will be found much faster and surer in the long run than to endeavor to digest these Steps in any given numerical order.

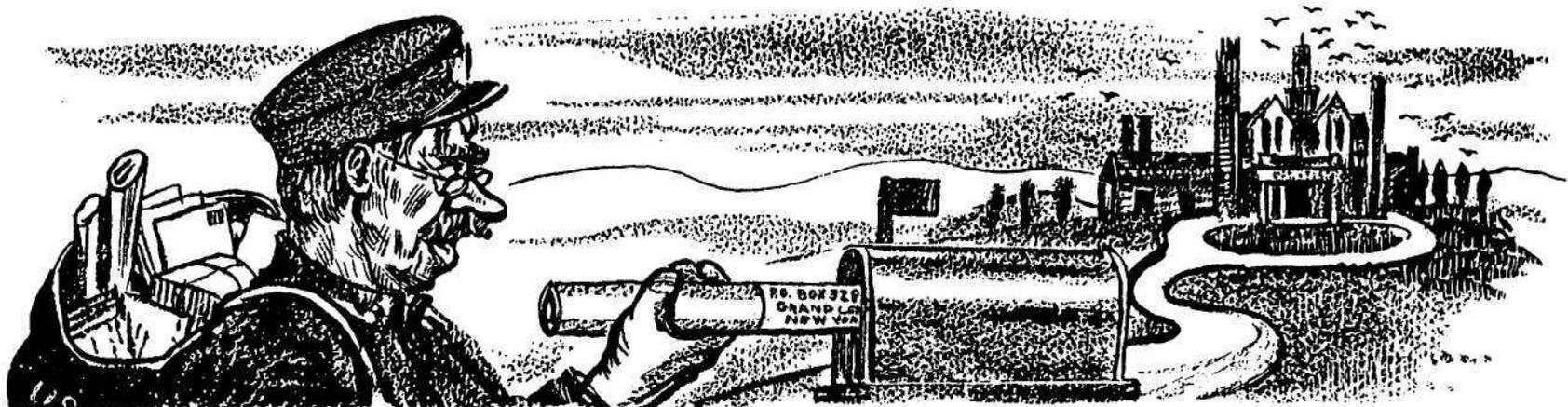
The 3rd Step, "*We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him,*" is considered difficult by those of us who have not an absolutely clear conception of what is meant by God. To those who

have a clear understanding of God it is definitely not a hard Step. but a great many alcoholics, before A.A., were also agnostic, neither affirming nor denying the existence of a personal Deity, but very skeptical, some of us more so than others. We thought of God more or less scornfully, perhaps even humorously, and it is a difficult problem to change an agnostic's views overnight. This is one reason why we must remember "Easy Does It." Therefore, we substitute for God, the term "a Power greater than ourselves," or we modify God by the addition of the phrase "as we understand Him." Better still, we simply call this Power greater than ourselves the X factor, as suggested by one of our co-founders.

All of us remember from our school days that X always represented the unknown quantity, a standard method of solving an unknown equation or problem. The regular procedure was to let X stand for the unknown quantity, assemble all the known factors, then through a process of elimination or supposition, we eventually discovered the true value of the previously unknown X.

Let us then, in attempting to absorb the benefits of the 12 Steps, consider the Power greater than ourselves as the X or unknown factor for the time being, for the purpose of making it easier for us to understand many points of these Steps that would otherwise be impossible for us to digest; then through this "Easy Does It" method, we will eventually solve the unknown X factor as being the one true God, just as we solved the unknown X factor in the easiest school problem.

In conclusion, do not rush to understand God. Take it easy. Let the Power greater than yourself remain as the unknown X factor until the solution is perfectly obvious, then in due course, you will surely recognize the true identity of God.—*Anonymous,*



A Program Where Alcoholics Are Restored to Sanity

From Chicago, Ill.

The Alcoholics Anonymous Program is a simple way of life whereby alcoholic minds are restored to sanity. It operates on a spiritual plane in the knowledge that since God is infinite, he gives us our sanity if we co-operate. I say infinite because we have all experienced failures in our own and other finite efforts to reach sanity. He, then, is the only one to whom we can appeal; He is usually the last.

The success of the treatment depends upon the ability of the Divine Physician and the co-operation of the patient. Now the Physician is infinite. The patient need only be willing. I believe that in many instances this willingness, even, is supplied by the Physician.

Let Us Look

Let us look then at the treatment specifically. It consists in this: that after a prolonged period of being bounced all over the ring of life, having passed through the ropes on several occasions, having been counted out some time ago, the grim thought arises that I may be losing. Can it be that I have lost the fight with reality? If I kid myself that I'm not through, I'm in for some more beatings. I get more punch drunk.

When I admit that I can't live without alcohol and that I can't live long with it, I begin to see the truth. I am an alcoholic.

No high spiritual concept brings me to this admission. I admit it because I can't get off the floor of the ring. I'm whipped.

Without Losing

When I learn that a Higher Power will help me face reality without losing every round, I go along because I've got to and am too punch drunk to think clearly about objections. The Steps unfold and as I meet each one and attempt to put it into operation, I am at first, somewhat disturbed that I may not be doing each one very well. After fretting awhile I soon learn that my sincere effort counts, not just how well I can perform each Step.

My first inventory of defects is very disappointing because I can't find any—well any to speak of—or that I would speak



of. When my sponsor points out that speak of them we do—I dust them off a little, apply a coal of white wash here and there, but I don't feel the so-called "lift." Then I lay them out as they really are and feel real relief. I learn that as time on the Program goes by my inventory gets more specific, my honesty more genuine.

Seeing no defects with each new inventory, I call on God, because it is His Program and I want to stay on it to remove these defects. I do this humbly, lest He not hear me. As this process goes on from day to day, I change. I am still an alcoholic but I can face each day's reality without an anesthetic.

Of these things I am convinced:

One must either progress or go backward on this Program.

There is no other way for me.

I have peace of mind and I can keep it through this Program.

The things that have happened to me and to my life in the past two and one-half years are explainable only through the Higher Power.—J.W.W.



**Have YOU told a NEWCOMER about
The A.A. Grapevine?**

Helpful Advice To Drinkers

A friend from Dearborn, Michigan, sends the following helpful excerpt which he claims to have gleaned from a newspaper published in Georgetown, S. C.:

POLICE GIVE ADVICE TO DRINKERS

Georgetown, S. C., police have posted on the station wall a sign entitled "A Poster for Boozers." It reads:

If you are a married man who absolutely must drink booze, start a saloon in your own home. Be the only customer, and you won't have to buy a license.

Give your wife \$2 to buy a gallon of whiskey. There are 69 glasses in a gallon. Buy your drinks from your wife. When the first gallon is gone, your wife will have \$8 to put in the bank, and \$2 to start over in business again.

If you live 10 years, continue to buy all your booze from your wife, and then die with snakes in your boots, your widow will have enough to bury you respectably, bring up your children, buy a house and lot, marry a decent man and forget all about you!

The prices in the sign referred to pre-war Southern corn whiskey, policemen said.

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What Causes A Man to Slip? The Program?

From Ponca, Neb.

What is there about a man that causes him to slip? Why, having once accepted something which he so desperately wanted and needed, does he suddenly get drunk? Surely there can be nothing wrong with the Program. It has been effective in too many cases to lay the blame on it; it even proved effective for the slipper for a good period of time. It can and will prove effective for him again if he chooses to use it. If the fault does not lie within the Program then it must be that the fault lies within the man himself. Either he never actually accepted the Program in the first place, or else he accepted it with reservations.

Too Much Attention

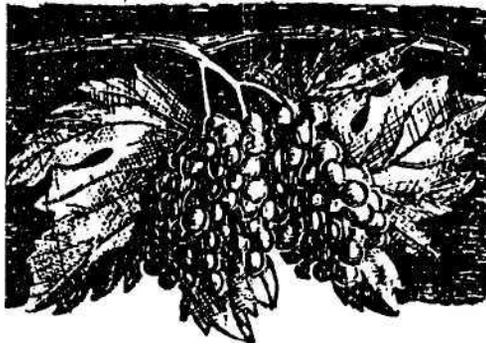
But perhaps, and most likely, he gradually lost sight of the A.A. Program in favor of some other related activities and thus just as gradually began re-inflating an ego that had once been satisfactorily deflated.

Perhaps he began paying too much attention to the related activities that have somehow become attached to A.A. The result being that he began attaching more and more importance to these related activities and his relation to them and less and less importance to the real A.A. Program. Perhaps he began to believe that these activities *were* the Program.

Over-emphasis

Thus the over-emphasis on the attached but basically unrelated activities tended to obscure in his mind his continuing need for the basic A.A. Program. He began to drop his own A.A. in favor of conventionitis and banquetitis to such an extent that what was once recognized as a desperate need gradually came to be considered as no need at all. His ego and self-sufficiency began to build itself up again.

From a program of personal salvation the shift was to a program of personal glorification. Instead of worrying about the problem of alcohol, he began worry-



ing about making his speeches click. Instead of seeking help, he began to seek applause. Pride began to replace humility. He began to lose his salvation because he forgot that he needed it. He no longer needed to be saved because he was saved already. He could now turn his attention to things more important than the search for God.

God Not Important

God was not so important anymore because he had become important in himself. His prayer was no longer "Thy will be done," but "My will be done." The poisonous vapors of self-concern began to cloud his vision. The reliance upon God was over for he had become a self-sufficient alcoholic again, concerned about his own importance and welfare. Then lo and behold—he slipped.

In view of these slips it seems essential that we continue to re-examine ourselves as alcoholics and our relationship as alcoholics to the A.A. Program as our way of life.—L.T.C.

The September issue of The A.A. Grapevine will be pocket size! Every A.A. will want to own this first edition. Tell a friend about it!



Nosedive Was Both Ruin and Rejuvenation

From Toronto, Canada

Seventeen months ago I quit drinking for eight months, through just the reading of the book "Alcoholics' Anonymous." How my ego rose then. I was the big shot. I didn't need the meetings or the fellowship. Only old fogies and weaklings had to attend meetings. I could do it all by myself.

Oh yeah?

And then a ten-week nosedive that was at once my ruin and my rejuvenation. Now that I am really working the program and making unbelievable progress in every way it irks and surprises me to hear the occasional old-timer in A.A. talk like this:—

"You say you've been dry six months? Well you are entering the danger period. Be careful! Watch out! I did so and so and so and so and so and so and so—"

Now the old-timers may mean well. They may intend this for a helpful warning; but it becomes monotonous. I've got God on my side now and I am not worried. Hasn't it been written "If you are afraid of a machine you're bound to get caught in it."—McK.

It Is Not The Liquor—

Two scientifically-minded toppers had been arguing as to the cause of drunkenness, and they decided to apply the principles of logic. One night they drank whiskey and water, and got drunk. The next night they drank brandy and water, and got drunk. The third night it was gin and water. They decided that as water was the constant factor, water was responsible for their drunkenness.

* * *

A blissful souse once discovered that he could walk upside down on the ceiling of his living room. One day his wife arrived home unexpectedly. Our souse grinned his silly, upside-down grin from the ceiling. "Lo honey," he confessed, "see, I can walk upside down."

The little woman found her voice in an instant. "You," she shouted, "you're DRUNK!"

Down from the ceiling crashed the souse. "Spoiled it all," he said, reproachfully, "you an' your big mouth."