

Editor's comments.

It is my intention with this edited version of the first 164 pages of the Big Book to retain the flavor and spirit that was intended when Bill W. (and the others who made their contributions) wrote these pages.

There are declarations, logical leaps, and outright misstatements that I have changed because I believe that they make it more difficult for a newcomer to swallow the foundational basis of the program of recovery.

There are references that are chauvinistic, biased, and irrelevant 80 years later, in my opinion, and I have made the changes I believe make the pages more palatable.

I have not changed any of Bill's story, because it is Bill's story and I think any person's story is a precious possession and should not be tampered with by anyone else.

The authorship of the Big Book in its original form still belongs to Bill W. and is an historic work that deserves its significant place in history...

And, finally, I have removed all references to God and a Higher Power, as well as most references to spirituality. There are millions of us who recover because of a personal and important relationship with a "power greater than ourselves" which many refer to as God. And there are millions more who do not have a connection with such a power and, it is my opinion, that the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, is equally as effective and powerful with or without that connection. There are athletes who believe that their prowess and success is delivered to and through them by a God of their understanding, but it is not necessary for everyone who pursues that particular sport to be told that such a connection is required for success. It is simply not relevant and, again in my opinion and observation, the same applies to the AA program.

Linda Clough
Costa Mesa, California
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Chapter 1

BILL'S STORY

War¹ fever ran high in the New England town to which we young officers from Plattsburg were assigned, and we were flattered when the first citizens took us to their homes, making us feel heroic. Here was love, applause, war; moments sublime with intervals hilarious. I was part of life at last, and in the midst of the excitement I discovered liquor. I forgot the strong warnings and the prejudices of my people concerning drink. In time we sailed for "Over There." I was very lonely and again turned to alcohol.

We landed in England. I visited Winchester Cathedral. Much moved, I wandered outside. My attention was caught by doggerel on an old tombstone:

"Here lies a Hampshire Grenadier
Who caught his death
Drinking cold small beer.
A good soldier is ne'er forgot
Whether he dieth by musket
Or by pot."

Ominous warning—which I failed to heed.

Twenty-two, and a veteran of foreign wars, I went home at last. I fancied myself a leader, for had not the men of my battery given me a special token of appreciation? My talent for leadership, I imagined, would place me at the head of vast enterprises, which I would manage with assurance.

I took a night law course and obtained employment as investigator for a surety company. The drive for success was on. I'd prove to the world I was important. My work took me about Wall Street and little by little I became interested in the market. Many people lost money—but some became very rich. Why not I? I studied economics and business as well as law. Potential alcoholic that I was, I nearly failed my law course. At one of the finals I was too drunk to think or write. Though my drinking was not yet continuous, it disturbed my wife. We had long talks when I would still her forebodings by telling her that men of genius conceived their best projects when drunk; that the most majestic constructions of philosophic thought were so derived.

By the time I had completed the course, I knew the law was not for me. The inviting maelstrom of Wall Street had me in its grip. Business and financial leaders were my heroes. Out of this alloy of drink and speculation, I commenced to forge the weapon that one day would turn in its flight like a boomerang and all but cut me to ribbons. Living

¹ World War I

modestly, my wife and I saved \$1,000². It went into certain securities then cheap and rather unpopular. I rightly imagined that they would some day have a great rise. I failed to persuade my broker friends to send me out looking over factories and managements, but my wife and I decided to go anyway. I had developed a theory that most people lost money in stocks through ignorance of markets. I discovered many more reasons later on.

We gave up our positions and off we roared on a motorcycle, the sidecar stuffed with tent, blankets, a change of clothes, and three huge volumes of a financial reference service. Our friends thought a lunacy commission should be appointed. Perhaps they were right. I had had some success at speculation, so we had a little money, but we once worked on a farm for a month to avoid drawing on our small capital. That was the last honest manual labor on my part for many a day. We covered the whole eastern United States in a year. At the end of it, my reports to Wall Street procured me a position there and the use of a large expense account. The exercise of an option brought in more money, leaving us with a profit of several thousand dollars for that year.

For the next few years fortune threw money and applause my way. I had arrived. My judgment and ideas were followed by many to the tune of paper millions. The great boom of the late twenties was seething and swelling. Drink was taking an important and exhilarating part in my life. There was loud talk in the jazz places uptown. Everyone spent in the thousands and chattered in the millions. Scoffers could scoff and be damned. I made a host of fair-weather friends.

My drinking assumed more serious proportions, continuing all day and most of the night. The remonstrances of my friends terminated in a row and I became a lone wolf. There were many unhappy scenes in our sumptuous apartment

In 1929 I contracted golf fever. We went at once to the country, my wife to applaud while I started out to overtake Walter Hagen³. Liquor caught up with me much faster than I came up behind Walter. I began to be jittery in the morning. Golf permitted drinking every day and every night. It was fun to carom around the exclusive course which had inspired such awe in me as a lad. I acquired the impeccable coat of tan one sees upon the well-to-do. The local banker watched me whirl fat checks in and out of his till with amused skepticism.

Abruptly in October 1929⁴ hell broke loose on the New York stock exchange. After one of those days of inferno, I wobbled from a hotel bar to a brokerage office. It was eight o'clock—five hours after the market closed. The ticker⁵ still clattered. I was staring at an inch of the tape which bore the inscription XYZ-32⁶. It had been 52 that morning. I

² 2019 equivalent: \$15,000

³ Considered at the time to be the world's greatest golfer.

⁴ Wall Street Crash started on October 24 and ended on October 29, 1929 and started the Great Depression which lasted for 12 years.

⁵ Ticker tape was the earliest electrical dedicated financial communications medium, transmitting stock price information over telegraph lines; used until the 1960s.

⁶ XYZ stock listed at Minus \$32 a share...had been Plus \$52 that morning.

was finished and so were many friends. The papers reported men jumping to death from the towers of High Finance. That disgusted me. I would not jump. I went back to the bar. My friends had dropped several million since ten o'clock—so what? Tomorrow was another day. As I drank, the old fierce determination to win came back.

Next morning I telephoned a friend in Montreal. He had plenty of money left and thought I had better go to Canada. By the following spring we were living in our accustomed style. I felt like Napoleon returning from Elba⁷. No St. Helena⁸ for me! But drinking caught up with me again and my generous friend had to let me go. This time we stayed broke.

We went to live with my wife's parents. I found a job; then lost it as the result of a brawl with a taxi driver. Mercifully, no one could guess that I was to have no real employment for five years, or hardly draw a sober breath. My wife began to work in a department store, coming home exhausted to find me drunk.

I became an unwelcome hanger-on at brokerage places.

Liquor ceased to be a luxury; it became a necessity. "Bathtub"⁹ gin, two bottles a day, and often three, got to be routine. Sometimes a small deal would net a few hundred dollars, and I would pay my bills at the bars and delicatessens. This went on endlessly, and I began to waken very early in the morning shaking violently. A tumbler full of gin followed by half a dozen bottles of beer would be required if I were to eat any breakfast. Nevertheless, I still thought I could control the situation, and there were periods of sobriety which renewed my wife's hope.

Gradually things got worse. The house was taken over by the mortgage holder, my mother-in-law died, my wife and father-in-law became ill.

Then I got a promising business opportunity. Stocks were at the low point of 1932, and I had somehow formed a group to buy. I was to share generously in the profits. Then I went on a prodigious bender, and that chance vanished.

I woke up. This had to be stopped. I saw I could not take so much as one drink. I was through forever. Before then, I had written lots of sweet promises, but my wife happily observed that this time I meant business. And so I did.

Shortly afterward I came home drunk. There had been no fight. Where had been my high resolve? I simply didn't know. It hadn't even come to mind. Someone had pushed a drink my way, and I had taken it. Was I crazy? I began to wonder, for such an appalling lack of perspective seemed near just that.

Renewing my resolve, I tried again. Some time

⁷ Emperor of France, returning from several years in exile.

⁸ Island where Napoleon was exiled.

⁹ During "prohibition" many people made their own, illegal alcoholic beverages. The tall bottles preferred for illegal spirits were too tall to be topped off with water from the sink tap and were therefore topped off from the bathtub spigot. As distillation required a closed apparatus, tales of gin being made in an open container like a bathtub are probably untrue.

passed and confidence began to be replaced by cocksureness. I could laugh at the gin mills¹⁰. Now I had what it takes! One day I walked into a café to telephone. In no time I was beating the bar asking myself how it happened. As the whisky rose to my head I told myself I would manage better next time, but I might as well get good and drunk then. And I did.

The remorse, horror and hopelessness of the next morning are unforgettable. The courage to do battle was not there. My brain raced uncontrollably and there was a terrible sense of impending calamity. I hardly dared cross the street, lest I collapse and be run down by an early morning truck, for it was scarcely daylight. An all night place supplied me with a dozen glasses of ale. My writhing nerves were stilled at last. A morning paper told me the market had gone to hell again. Well, so had I. The market would recover, but I wouldn't. That was a hard thought. Should I kill myself? No—not now. Then a mental fog settled down. Gin would fix that. So two bottles, and—oblivion.

The mind and body are marvelous mechanisms, for mine endured this agony two more years. Sometimes I stole from my wife's slender purse when the morning terror and madness were on me. Again I swayed dizzily before an open window, or the medicine cabinet where there was poison, cursing myself for a weakling. There were flights from city to country and back, as my wife and I sought escape. Then came the night when the physical and mental torture was so hellish I feared I would burst through my window, sash and all. Somehow I managed to drag my mattress to a lower floor, lest I suddenly leap. A doctor came with a heavy sedative. Next day found me drinking, both gin and sedative. The combination soon landed me on the rocks. People feared for my sanity. So did I. I could eat little or nothing when drinking, and I was forty pounds under weight.

My brother-in-law is a physician, and through his kindness and that of my mother I was placed in a nationally-known hospital for the mental and physical rehabilitation of alcoholics. Under the so-called belladonna treatment¹¹ my brain cleared. Hydrotherapy and mild exercise helped much. Best of all, I met a kind doctor who explained that though certainly selfish and foolish, I had been seriously ill, bodily and mentally.

It relieved me somewhat to learn that in alcoholics the will is amazingly weakened when it comes to combating liquor, though it often remains strong in other respects. My incredible behavior in the face of a desperate desire to stop was explained. Understanding myself now, I fared forth in high hope. For three or four months the goose hung high¹². I went to town regularly and even made a little money. Surely this was the answer—self knowledge.

But it was not, for the frightful day came when I drank once more. The curve of my declining moral and bodily health fell off like a

¹⁰ Bar, saloon

¹¹ *Atropa belladonna*, henbane, plus prickly ash, given every hour day and night for 50 hours.

¹² 1800's superstition: when geese flew low, it meant that evil spirits were present; when geese flew (or "hung") high in the sky, the evil spirits were gone and all was well.

ski-jump. After a time I returned to the hospital. This was the finish, the curtain, it seemed to me. My weary and despairing wife was informed that it would all end with heart failure during delirium tremens, or I would develop a wet brain, perhaps within a year. She would soon have to give me over to the undertaker or the asylum.

They did not need to tell me. I knew, and almost welcomed the idea. It was a devastating blow to my pride. I, who had thought so well of myself and my abilities, of my capacity to surmount obstacles, was cornered at last. Now I was to plunge into the dark, joining that endless procession of sots who had gone on before. I thought of my poor wife. There had been much happiness after all. What would I not give to make amends. But that was over now.

Trembling, I stepped from the hospital a broken man. Fear sobered me for a bit. Then came the insidious insanity of that first drink, and on Armistice Day¹³, 1934, I was off again. Everyone became resigned to the certainty that I would have to be shut up somewhere, or would stumble along to a miserable end. How dark it is before the dawn! In reality that was the beginning of my last debauch. I was soon to be catapulted into what I like to call the fourth dimension of existence. I was to know happiness, peace, and usefulness, in a way of life that is incredibly more wonderful as time passes.

Near the end of that bleak November, I sat drinking in my kitchen. With a certain satisfaction I reflected there was enough gin concealed about the house to carry me through that night and the next day. My wife was at work. I wondered whether I dared hide a full bottle of gin near the head of our bed. I would need it before daylight.

My musing was interrupted by the telephone. The cheery voice of an old school friend¹⁴ asked if he might come over. *He was sober*. It was years since I could remember his coming to New York in that condition. I was amazed. Rumor had it that he had been committed for alcoholic insanity. I wondered how he had escaped. Of course he would have dinner, and then I could drink openly with him. Unmindful of his welfare, I thought only of recapturing the spirit of other days. There was the time we had chartered an airplane to complete a jag! His coming was an oasis in this dreary desert of futility. The very thing—an oasis! Drinkers are like that.

The door opened and he stood there, fresh-skinned and glowing. There was something about his eyes. He was inexplicably different. What had happened?

I pushed a drink across the table. He refused it. Disappointed but curious, I wondered what had got into the fellow. He wasn't himself.

"Come, what's all this about?" I queried.

He looked straight at me. Simply, but smilingly, he said, "I've got religion."

¹³ Celebrated on November 11 to commemorate the cessation of hostilities between the Allies and Germany at 11:00 a.m. on the 11th day of the 11th month, ending what later became the "first" world war. Armistice Day is now called Veteran's Day.

¹⁴ Ebby T.

I was aghast. So that was it—last summer an alcoholic crackpot; now, I suspected, a little cracked about religion. He had that starry-eyed look. Yes, the old boy was on fire all right. But bless his heart, let him rant! Besides, my gin would last longer than his preaching.

But he did no ranting. In a matter of fact way he told how two men¹⁵ had appeared in court, persuading the judge to suspend his commitment. They had told of a simple religious idea and a practical program of action. That was two months ago and the result was self-evident. It worked!

He had come to pass his experience along to me—if I cared to have it. I was shocked, but interested. Certainly I was interested. I had to be, for I was hopeless.

He talked for hours. Childhood memories rose before me. I could almost hear the sound of the preacher's voice as I sat, on still Sundays, way over there on the hillside; there was that proffered temperance pledge I never signed; my grandfather's good natured contempt of some church folk and their doings; his insistence that the spheres really had their music; but his denial of the preacher's right to tell him how he must listen; his fearlessness as he spoke of these things just before he died; these recollections welled up from the past. They made me swallow hard.

That wartime day in old Winchester Cathedral came back again.

I had always believed in a Power greater than myself. I had often pondered these things. I was not an atheist. In my opinion, few people really are, for that seems to mean blind faith in the proposition that this universe originated in a cipher and aimlessly rushes nowhere. My intellectual heroes, the chemists, the astronomers, the evolutionists, suggested vast laws and forces at work. Despite contrary indications, I had little doubt that a mighty purpose and rhythm underlay it all. How there could be so much of precise and immutable law with no intelligence.

With ministers, and the world's religions, I parted right there. When they talked of a God personal to me, who was love, superhuman strength and direction, I became irritated and my mind snapped shut against such a theory.

To Christ I conceded the certainty of a great man, not too closely followed by those who claimed Him. His moral teaching—most excellent. For myself, I had adopted those parts which seemed convenient and not too difficult; the rest I disregarded.

The wars which had been fought, the burnings and chicanery that religious dispute had facilitated, made me sick I honestly doubted whether, on balance, the religions of mankind had done any good. Judging from what I had seen in Europe and since, the power of God in human affairs was negligible, the Brotherhood of Man a grim jest. If there was a Devil, he seemed the Boss Universal, and he certainly had me.

¹⁵ [Members of the Oxford Group.](#)

But my friend sat before me, and he made the pointblank declaration that God had done for him what he could not do for himself. His human will had failed. Doctors had pronounced him incurable. Society was about to lock him up. Like myself, he had admitted complete defeat. Then he declared that he had, in effect, been raised from the dead, suddenly taken from the scrap heap to a level of life better than the best he had ever known!

Had this power originated in him? It appeared to me that it had not. There seemed to me to have been no more power in him than there was in me at that minute; and that was none at all.

That floored me. It began to look to me as though religious people may have been right after all. Was there something at work in a human heart which had done the impossible? My ideas about miracles were drastically revised right then. Never mind the musty past; there certainly seemed to be a miracle sitting directly across the kitchen table. He shouted great tidings.

I saw that my friend was more than inwardly reorganized. He appeared to be on a different footing. His roots seemed to have grasped a new soil.

Despite the living example of my friend¹⁶ there of course remained in me the vestiges of my old prejudice. The word God still aroused a certain antipathy. When the thought was expressed there might a God personal to me this feeling was intensified. I didn't like the idea. I could go for such conceptions as Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind or Spirit of Nature but I resisted the thought of a Czar of the Heavens, however loving His sway might be. I have since talked with scores of men who felt the same way.

My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, "*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*"

That statement hit me hard. I felt as if I could step out of an icy intellectual mountain's shadow and could stand in the sunshine at last.

It was only a matter of being willing to surrender to something other than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make a beginning.

At the hospital I was separated from alcohol for what I hoped would be the last time. Treatment seemed wise, for I showed signs of delirium tremens.

There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without help I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to let them go, root and branch. I have not had a drink since¹⁷.

¹⁶ Ebby had been sober for two months. He never put together any lasting sobriety—which strictly speaking means that whatever Ebby did, did not really work for Ebby, but Bill takes this statistical sample of one, and runs with it because he can make a theory about it which enables him to write a book about it. This is a fallacy called "hasty generalization." Also, Ebby had found religion and gotten sober so Bill presumed that religion was the cause of his sobriety, though it may very well have been something else, co-occurring with religion, such as plain human help and interest.

¹⁷ Although Bill insists on the (fallacious) logic that because Ebby found religion and Bill has found a god he can rely on, "the doctor" (Carl Jung) is quoted on page 27 of the Big Book with an irreligious explanation of what spiritual experiences might alternatively look like: "*They appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once guiding*

My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment. I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability.

I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense. I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems. Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others. Then only might I expect to receive. But that would be in great measure.

I believed my friend when he promised that when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems. Belief in the power of God, plus enough willingness, honesty and humility

to establish and maintain the new order of things, seemed to be the essential requirements.

Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid. It seemed to mean a destruction of self-centeredness. For me it meant I had to turn in all things to the Father of Light-

These were revolutionary and drastic proposals, but the moment I fully accepted them, the effect was electric. There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though a clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. God comes to some men gradually, but this impact was sudden and profound.

For a moment I was alarmed, and called my friend, the doctor,¹⁸ to ask if I were still sane. He listened as I talked.

Finally he shook his head saying, "Something has happened to you I don't understand. But you had better hang on to it. Anything is better than the way you were." The good doctor tells me that now he sees other men who have had such experiences. He believes that they are real.

While I lay in the hospital the thought came that there were thousands of hopeless alcoholics who might be glad to have what had been so freely given me. Perhaps I could help some of them. They in turn might work with others.

My friend ¹⁹ had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs. Particularly was it imperative, he said, to work with others as he had worked with me.

forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them." There are conclusions, other than Bill's assumptive logic, based in sound psychological experience and observation, both then and now, that can explain the experience Bill had.

¹⁸ Dr. William Duncan Silkworth: Bill said "From him we learned the nature of our illness: the obsession of the mind that compels us to drink and the allergy of the body that condemns us to go mad or die." (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age*, p. 13) "For the first time in his life, Bill was hearing about alcoholism not as a lack of willpower, not as a moral defect, but as a legitimate illness." (*Pass It On*, p. 102)

¹⁹ Ebby, was practicing the principles of the Oxford Group, which thoroughly disavowed the idea of alcoholism as a disease.

Faith without works is dead, he said. And how appallingly true, I thought, for me! For if I failed to perfect and enlarge my spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, I probably could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If I did not work, I would surely drink again, and if I drank, I would surely die. Then my faith would be dead indeed. With me it is just like that.

My wife and I abandoned ourselves with enthusiasm to the idea of helping other alcoholics to find a solution of their problem with alcohol. I had the time because my old business associates remained skeptical about my recovery and abilities for a year and a half, during which time I found little work. I was not too well at the time, either, and was plagued by waves of self-pity and resentment. This sometimes nearly drove me back to drink, but I soon found that when all other measures failed, work with another alcoholic would save the day. Many times I have gone to my old hospital in despair. On talking to a man there, I would be amazingly lifted up and set on my feet. For me it is a design for living that works in rough going.

My wife and I commenced to make many fast friends and a fellowship has grown up among us of which it is a wonderful thing to feel a part. The joy of living we really have, even under pressure and difficulty. I have seen hundreds of families set their feet in the path that really goes somewhere; have seen the most impossible domestic situations righted; feuds and bitterness of all sorts wiped out. I have seen people come out of asylums and resume a vital place in the lives of their families and communities. Business and professional people have regained their standing. There is scarcely any form of trouble and misery which has not been overcome among us. In one western city and its environs there are one thousand of us and our families. We meet frequently so that newcomers may find the fellowship they seek. At these informal gatherings I often see from 50 to 200 persons.

An alcoholic in his cups is an unlovely creature. Our struggles with them are variously strenuous, comic, and tragic. One poor chap committed suicide in our home. I believe he could not, or would not, see our way of life.

There is, however, a vast amount of fun about it all. I suppose some ~~would~~ will be shocked at our seeming worldliness and levity. But just underneath there is deadly earnestness. I believe faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish.

I feel I need look no further for Utopia. I have it with me right here and now. Each day my friend's simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men.

I FOUND A SOLUTION

I know that the members of Alcoholics Anonymous have known thousands of men and women who were once just as hopeless as I was. Many have recovered. They have solved their drink problem.

I see that we are average people. Almost all sections of this world and many of its occupations are represented, as well as many political, economic, social, and religious backgrounds. We are often people who would not mix. But there appears to exist among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are much like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, I know that my joy in escape from disaster has not subsided as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one powerful element in the cement which binds us. But I don't believe that in itself would have held us together as we are now joined.

The tremendous fact for me is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book attempts to carry to those who suffer from alcoholism.

An illness of this sort—and I have come to believe it an illness—involves those about us in a way no other human sickness can. If a person has cancer all are sorry for him and no one is angry or hurt. But not so with the alcoholic illness, for with it there goes annihilation of all other things worth while in life. It engulfs all whose lives touch the sufferers. It brings misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad wives, husbands and parents—anyone can increase the list.

I hope this volume will inform and comfort those who are, or who may be affected. There are many.

Highly competent psychiatrists who have dealt with us and countless others have found it virtually impossible to persuade us to discuss our situation without reserve. And strangely enough, spouses, parents and intimate friends usually find us even more unapproachable than do the psychiatrist and the doctor.

But the ex-problem drinker, who is properly armed with facts about himself, can often win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished.

My experience has been that when I am making an approach to a new prospect, if he is convinced that I have had the same difficulty, that I obviously know—what he is talking about, that my whole deportment shouts at the new prospect that I am a man with a ~~answer~~ solution, that I have no Holier Than Thou attitude, nothing whatever except the sincere desire to be helpful; that there are no fees to pay, no

axes to grind, no people to please, no lectures to be endured—these are the conditions I and many others have found most effective. After such an approach many have found a way out.

None of us makes a sole vocation of this work, nor do we I think its effectiveness would be increased if we did. We believe that elimination of our drinking is but a beginning. A much more important demonstration of these ~~our~~ principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations and affairs. I and many of the rest of us spend much of our spare time in the sort of effort which I am going to describe. I and a few others are fortunate enough to be so situated that we can give nearly all our time to this work.

If we keep on the way we are going there is little doubt that much good will result, but the surface of the problem would hardly be scratched. Those of us who live in large cities are overcome by the reflection that close by hundreds are dropping into oblivion every day. I believe that many could recovery if they had the opportunity we have enjoyed. So, how then shall can we present that which has been do freely given us?

I have concluded to publish an anonymous volume setting forth the problem as I see it. I shall bring to task our combined experience and knowledge as best I know it so far. I hope this will suggest a useful program for anyone concerned with a drinking problem.

In my opinion there will have to be discussion of matters medical, psychiatric, social, and religious. I am aware that these matters are, from their very nature, controversial. Nothing would please me so much as to write a book which would contain no basis for contention or argument. I shall do my utmost to achieve that ideal. I sense that real tolerance of other people's shortcomings and viewpoints and respect for their opinions are attitude which make us more useful to others. Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs.

I have often asked myself why it is that all of us became so very ill from drinking. I have always been curious to discover how and why, in the face of expert opinion to the contrary, I and many others have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body. If you are an alcoholic who wants to get over it, you may be asking—"What do I have to do?"

It is the purpose of this book to share with you the answers ~~to~~I have found to the best of my ability. I shall tell you what I have done. But before going into a detailed discussion, it may be well to summarize some points as I see them.

How many times people have said to me: "I can take it or leave it alone. Why can't you?" "Why don't you drink like a gentleman or quit?" "You can't handle your liquor." "Why don't you try beer and wine?" "Lay off the hard stuff." "Your will power must be weak." "You could stop if you wanted to." "She's such a sweet girl, I should think you'd stop for her sake." "The doctor told you that if you ever drank again it would kill you, but there you are all lit up again."

These are commonplace observations on drinkers which I have heard often. Back of them, of course, is a world of ignorance and misunderstanding. I see that these expressions refer to people whose relationship to liquor is very different from mine.

My observation is that moderate drinkers have little trouble in giving up liquor entirely if they have a good reason for it. They can take it or leave it alone.

Then there is a certain type of hard drinker. It seems as though he or she may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair ~~him~~ them physically and mentally. It may cause them to die a few years before their time. If a sufficiently strong reason—ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor—becomes operative, it appears that this drinker seems to be able to stop or moderate, although it may be difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention.

But what about the real alcoholic? He may start off as a moderate drinker; he may or may not become a continuous hard drinker; but at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink.

Here is a general outline of my own experience and perhaps others can relate: I was a puzzle to those around me, especially in my lack of control. I did absurd, incredible, and tragic things while drinking. I was a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. I was seldom mildly intoxicated. I was always more or less insanely drunk. My disposition while drinking resembled my normal nature but little. I might have been thought one of the finest fellows in the world by some. Yet let me drink for a day, and I frequently became disgustingly, and even dangerously anti-social. I seemed to have had a positive genius for getting tight at exactly the wrong moment, particularly when some important decision had to be made or engagement kept. I was often perfectly sensible and well balanced concerning almost everything except liquor, but in that respect I was incredibly dishonest and selfish. I, like so many other alcoholics, possessed certain abilities, skills, and aptitudes, and had a promising career ahead of me. I used those gifts to build up a bright outlook for my family and myself, and then I pulled the whole structure down on our heads by a senseless series of sprees. I was the fellow who went to bed so intoxicated he ought to sleep the clock around. Yet early next morning I was searching madly for the bottle I misplaced the night before. When I could afford it, I had liquor concealed all over our house to be certain no one got my entire supply away from me to throw down the wastepipe. As matters grew worse, I began to use a combination of high-powered sedative and liquor to quiet nerves so I could go to work. Then came the day when I simply could not make it and I got drunk all over again. There were even times when I went to a doctor who gave me morphine or some sedative with which to taper off. Then I began to appear at hospitals and sanitariums.

This is my experience and, although typical, is by no means a comprehensive picture of the true alcoholic as our behavior patterns vary.

Why did I behave like this? If hundreds of experiences had shown me that one drink meant another debacle with all its attendant suffering and humiliation, why is it I took that one drink? What had become of the common sense and will power that I still sometimes displayed with respect to other matters?

Perhaps there never will be a full answer to these questions. Opinions vary considerably as to why the alcoholic reacts differently from normal people. I am not sure why, once a certain point is reached, little can be done for him. I cannot answer the riddle.

I do know that while I stay away from drink, as I may do for months or years, I react much like other people. I am equally positive that once I take any alcohol whatever into my system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for me to stop. My experience of the many alcoholics I have known has abundantly confirmed this.

These observations would be academic and pointless if I had never taken the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, it would certainly appear that my main problem centers in my mind rather than in my body. If you had asked me why I started on that last bender, the chances are I would have offered you any one of a hundred alibis. Sometimes these excuses had a certain plausibility, but none of them really made sense in the light of the havoc my drinking bout created. They sounded like the philosophy of the man who, having a headache, beats himself on the head with a hammer so that he can't feel the ache. If you had drawn this fallacious reasoning to my attention, I would have laughed it off, or become irritated and refused to talk.

Once in a while I may have told the truth. And the truth, strange to say, is that I had no idea why I took that first drink. I had some excuses with which I was satisfied part of the time. But in my heart-I really did not know why I did it. Once this malady had a real hold on me, I was baffled. There was the obsession that somehow, someday, I would beat the game. But I often suspected that I was down for the count.

How true this is, I certainly didn't realize. In a vague way my family and friends sensed that I was abnormal, but everybody hopefully awaited the day when I would rouse myself from my lethargy and assert my power of will.

The tragic truth is that I was and am a real alcoholic, and that happy day would not ever arrive. I had lost control. At a certain point in my drinking, I passed into a state where the most powerful desire to stop drinking was of absolutely no avail. This tragic situation had already arrived long before I even suspected it.

Here's what I have learned from experts and observed in myself and many, many others: *Most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.*

I know for myself that the almost certain consequences that followed taking even a glass of beer did not crowd into my mind to deter me. If these thoughts occurred, they were hazy and readily supplanted with the old threadbare idea that this time I could handle ~~ourselves~~ myself like other people. There ~~is~~ was a complete failure of the kind of defense that ~~keeps~~ kept ~~one~~ me from putting ~~his~~ my hand on a hot stove.

I often might have said to myself in the most casual way, "It won't burn me this time, so here's how!" Or perhaps I didn't think at all. How often have I begun to drink in this nonchalant way, and after the third or fourth, pounded on the bar and said to myself, "For God's sake, how did I ever get started again?" Only to have the thought supplanted by, "Well, I'll stop with the sixth drink." Or "What's the use anyhow?"

When this sort of thinking was fully established in me I believed sincerely that I was beyond human aid, and unless locked up, I thought I would die or go permanently insane.

I was one of many thousands wanted to stop but could not

I found a solution. I certainly did not like the self-searching, the leveling of my pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process seems to require for its successful consummation. But I saw it really worked in others, and I had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as I had been living it. When, therefore, I was approached by those in whom the problem seemed to have been solved, I believed there was nothing left for me but to pick up the simple kit of tools laid at my feet. I have found much of heaven and I seem to have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which I had not even dreamed.

The great fact for me is just this, and nothing less: That I had a deep and effective spiritual experience²⁰ which has revolutionized my whole attitude toward life, toward my fellows and toward the universe. The central fact of my life today is the absolute certainty that my Creator has entered into my heart and lives in a way that is, for me, indeed miraculous. I believe He has commenced to accomplish those things for me which I could never do by myself.

If you are as seriously alcoholic as I was, I ~~we~~ believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. I was in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if I had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, I had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of my intolerable situation as best I could; and the other, to accept help. This I did because I honestly wanted to, and was willing to make the effort.

Following is a personal account by one of the men²¹ who has followed this proposal: "I was an American business man who, I believed, had ability, good sense, and high character. For years I had floundered from one sanitarium to another. I had consulted the best known American psychiatrists. Then I had gone to Europe, placing

²⁰ Fully explained—Appendix II

²¹ Roland H.

myself in the care of a celebrated physician (the psychiatrist, Dr. Karl Jung) who prescribed for me. Though experience had made me skeptical, I finished my treatment with unusual confidence. My physical and mental condition were unusually good. Above all, I believed I had acquired such a profound knowledge of the inner workings of my mind and its hidden springs that relapse was unthinkable. Nevertheless, I was drunk in a short time. More baffling still, I could give myself no satisfactory explanation for my fall.

“So I returned to this doctor, whom I admired, and asked him point-blank why I could not recover. I wished above all things to regain self-control. I thought myself quite rational and well-balanced with respect to other problems. Yet I had no control whatever over alcohol. Why was this?

“I begged the doctor to tell me the whole truth, and I got it. In the doctor’s judgment I was utterly hopeless: I could never regain my position in society and I would have to place myself under lock and key or hire a bodyguard if I expected to live long. That was great physician’s opinion.

“But I still live, and am a free man. I do not need a bodyguard, nor am I confined. I can go anywhere on this earth where other free men may go without disaster, provided I remain willing to maintain a certain simple attitude.”

“The doctor told me: ‘You have the mind of a chronic alcoholic. I have never seen one single case recover, where that state of mind existed to the extent that it does in you.’ I felt as though the gates of hell had closed on me with a clang.

“He I said to the doctor, ‘Is there no exception?’

“‘Yes,’ replied the doctor, ‘there is. Exceptions to cases such as yours have been occurring since early times. Here and there, once in a while, alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences. To me these occurrences are phenomena. They appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them. In fact, I have been trying to produce some such emotional rearrangement within you. With many individuals the methods which I employed are successful, but I have never been successful with an alcoholic of your description.’²²

“Upon hearing this, I was somewhat relieved, for I reflected that, after all, I was a good church member. This hope, however, was destroyed by the doctor’s telling me that while my religious convictions were very good, in my case they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience.

“Here was the terrible dilemma in which I found myself when I had the extraordinary experience, which as I have already told you,

²² For amplification—see Appendix II

made me a free man.” So recounted one of my friends who has since followed this plan.

I, in my turn, sought the same escape with all the desperation of a drowning man. What seemed at first a flimsy reed, has proved to me to be the loving and powerful hand of God. A new life has been given me or, if you prefer, “a design for living” that really works.

The distinguished American psychologist, William James, in his book “Varieties of Religious Experience,” indicates a multitude of ways in which men have discovered God. I have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired, or, indeed needs to be acquired at all. Those having religious affiliations or none at all will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. There is no friction among us over such matters.

In the following chapter, there appears an explanation of alcoholism as I understand it.

Further on, clear-cut suggestions are given showing how I recovered. These are followed by several stories of other people’s personal experiences.

Each individual, in the personal stories, describes in their own language and from their own point of view their understanding of a spiritual experience leading to a sober life. These give a fair cross section of our membership and a clear-cut idea of what has actually happened in their lives.

I hope no one will consider these self-revealing accounts in bad taste. My hope is that many alcoholic men and women, desperately in need, will see these pages, and we believe that it is only by fully disclosing ourselves and our problems that they may be persuaded to say, “Yes, I am one of you, too; I want to have this thing.”

MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM

I was unwilling to admit I was a real alcoholic I don't think anyone likes to think they are bodily and mentally different from their fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that my drinking career was characterized by countless vain attempts to prove I could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday I would control and enjoy my drinking is probably one of the great obsessions of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion was astonishing. I almost pursued it into the gates of insanity and death.

I learned that I had to fully conceded to my innermost self that I was an alcoholic. This was the first step in my recovery. The delusion that I was like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.

I discovered that no alcoholic like I am ever recovers control. I felt at times that I was regaining control, but such intervals—usually brief—were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. I am convinced that alcoholics of my type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better.

I am like a man who has lost his legs; he never grows new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics of my kind like other men. I have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances there was brief recovery, but followed always by a still worse relapse. Physicians I have talked with who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't done so yet.

Despite all I can say, many who are real alcoholics like I am are not going to believe they are in this class. I know that by every form of self-deception and experimentation, I tried to prove myself an exception to the rule, therefore nonalcoholic. If anyone who is showing inability to control his drinking can do the right-about-face and drink like a gentleman, my hat is off to him. Heaven knows, I have tried hard enough and long enough to drink like other people.

Here are some of the experiments methods I and others I know have tried: Drinking beer only, limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning, drinking only at home, never having it in the house, never drinking during business hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy, drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with and without a solemn oath), taking more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and sanitariums, accepting voluntary commitment to asylums—I could increase the list ad infinitum.

I do not think it appropriate to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the

nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. I don't think it will take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may even be worth a bad case of the jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.

Though there is no way of proving it, I believe that early in my drinking career I could have stopped drinking. But the difficulty is that few of us have enough desire to stop while there is yet time. I have heard of a few instances where people, who showed definite signs of alcoholism, were able to stop for a long period because of an overpowering desire to do so. Here is one.

A man of thirty was doing a great deal of spree drinking. He was very nervous in the morning after these bouts and quieted himself with more liquor. He was ambitious to succeed in business but saw that he would get nowhere if he drank at all. Once he started he had no control whatever. He made up his mind that until he had been successful in business and had retired, he would not touch another drop. An exceptional man, he remained bone dry for twenty-five years and retired at the age of fifty-five, after a successful and happy business career. Then he fell victim to a belief which practically every alcoholic has—that his long period of sobriety and self-discipline had qualified him to drink as other men. Out came his carpet slippers and a bottle. In two months he was in a hospital, puzzled and humiliated. He tried to regulate his drinking for a while, making several trips to the hospital meantime. Then, gathering all his forces, he attempted to stop altogether and found he could not. Every means of solving his problem which money could buy was at his disposal. Every attempt failed. Though a robust man at retirement, he went to pieces quickly and was dead within four years.

This case contains a powerful lesson for me. I know that I believed that if I remained sober for a long stretch, I could thereafter drink normally. But here was a man who at fifty-five years found he was just where he had left off at thirty. I have seen the truth demonstrated again and again: "Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic." Commencing to drink after a period of sobriety, we seem to be, in a short time, as bad as ever. If we are planning to stop drinking, I believe there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol.

I'm afraid young people may be encouraged by this man's experience to think that they can stop, as he did, on their own will power. I doubt if many of them can do it, because few will really want to stop, and hardly one any of them, because of the apparent peculiar mental twist already acquired, will find they can win out. Several of our crowd, people of thirty or less, had been drinking only a few years, but they found themselves as helpless as those who had been drinking twenty years or more.

To be gravely affected, one does not necessarily have to drink a long time nor take the quantities some of us have. This seems to be particularly true of women. Potential female alcoholics often turn into

the real thing and are gone beyond recall in a few years. I have known certain drinkers who would have been greatly insulted if called alcoholics and are astonished at their inability to stop. I see large numbers of potential alcoholics among young people everywhere

As I look back, I feel I had gone on drinking many years beyond the point where I could quit on my will power. If anyone questions whether they have entered this dangerous area, let them try leaving liquor alone for one year. In my opinion if they are real alcoholics and very far advanced, there is scant chance of success. In the early days of my drinking I occasionally remained sober for a year or more, becoming a serious drinker again later. Even though you may be able to stop for a considerable period, you may yet be a potential alcoholic. I think few, to whom this book will appeal, can stay dry anything like a year. Some will be drunk the day after making their resolutions; most of them within a few weeks.

For those who are unable to drink moderately the question is how to stop altogether. I am assuming of course that the reader desires to stop. It is my belief that whether you can quit upon a nonspiritual basis may depend upon the extent to which you have already lost the power to choose whether you will drink or not. I certainly felt that I had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to stop forever. Yet I found it impossible. This is a baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it—this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish.

How then can I help you determine, to your own satisfaction, whether you are an alcoholic? The experiment of quitting for a period of time may be helpful, but I think I can render an even greater service to alcoholic sufferers and perhaps to the medical fraternity. So I shall describe some of the mental states that often precede a relapse into drinking, for it seems to me this is the crux of the problem.

What sort of thinking dominates an alcoholic who repeats time after time the desperate experiment of the first drink? Friends who have reasoned with them after a spree which has brought them to the point of divorce or bankruptcy are mystified when they walk directly into a bar or liquor store. Why do they? Of what are they thinking?

My first example is a friend I shall call Jim. Here is his story in his own words:

“I have a charming wife and family. I inherited a lucrative automobile agency. I had a commendable military record. I am a good salesman. As far as I know, everybody likes me. I am a reasonably intelligent man, normal so far as anyone can see, except for a nervous disposition. I did no drinking until I was thirty-five. In a few years I became so violent when intoxicated that I had to be committed. On leaving the asylum I came into contact with this group.

“I was told what they knew of alcoholism and the answer they had found. I made a beginning. My family was re-assembled, and I began to work as a salesman for the business I had lost through drinking. All went well for a time, but apparently I failed to enlarge my spiritual life sufficiently. To my consternation I found myself drunk half

a dozen times in rapid succession. On each of these occasions, they worked with me, reviewing carefully what had happened. I agreed I was a real alcoholic and in serious condition. I knew I faced another trip to the asylum if I kept on. Moreover, I would certainly lose my family for whom I had a deep affection.

"Yet I got drunk again. I came to work on Tuesday morning. I remember I felt irritated that I had to be a salesman for a concern I once owned. I had a few words with the boss, but nothing serious. Then I decided to drive into the country and see one of my prospects for a car. On the way I felt hungry so I stopped at a roadside place where they have a bar. I had no intention of drinking. I just thought I would get a sandwich. I also had the notion that I might find a customer for a car at this place which was familiar for I had been going to it for years. I had eaten there many times during the months I was sober. I sat down at a table and ordered a sandwich and a glass of milk. Still no thought of drinking. I ordered another sandwich and decided to have another glass of milk.

"Suddenly the thought crossed my mind that if I were to put an ounce of whiskey into my milk it couldn't hurt me on a full stomach. I ordered a whiskey and poured it into the milk. I vaguely sensed I was not being any too smart but felt reassured as I was taking the whiskey on a full stomach. The experiment went so well that I ordered another whiskey and poured it into more milk. That didn't seem to bother me, so I tried another.

"Thus started one more journey to the asylum for me. Here was the threat of commitment, the loss of family and position, to say nothing of that intense mental and physical suffering which drinking always caused me. *I had much knowledge about myself as an alcoholic. Yet all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside in favor of the foolish idea that he could take whiskey if only I he mixed it with milk!*

"Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we I call this plain insanity. How can such a lack of proportion, of the ability to think straight, be called anything else?"

You may think this an extreme case. To me it is not far-fetched, for this kind of thinking seems to be a characteristic of every single one of us. I have sometimes reflected more than Jim did upon the consequences. But there was always the curious mental phenomenon that parallel with our sound reasoning there My sound reasoning failed to hold us me in check. The insane idea won out. Next day I would ask myself, in all earnestness and sincerity, how it could have happened.

In some circumstances ~~we~~ I have gone out deliberately to get drunk, feeling myself justified by nervousness, anger, worry, depression, jealousy, or the like. But even in this type of beginning I was obliged to admit that my justification for a spree was insanely insufficient in the light of what always happened. I now see that when I began to drink deliberately, instead of casually, there was little serious or effective thought during the period of premeditation of what the terrific consequences might be.

My behavior is as absurd and incomprehensible with respect to the first drink as that of an individual with a passion, say, for jaywalking. He gets a thrill out of skipping in front of fast-moving vehicles. He enjoys himself for a few years in spite of friendly warnings. Up to this point you would label him a foolish chap having queer ideas of fun. Luck then deserts him and he is slightly injured several times in succession. You would expect him, if he were normal, to cut it out. Presently he is hit again and this time has a fractured skull. Within a week after leaving the hospital a fast-moving trolley car breaks his arm. He tells you he has decided to stop jaywalking for good, but in a few weeks he breaks both legs.

On through the years this conduct continues, accompanied by his continued promises to be careful or to keep off the street altogether. Finally, he can no longer work, his wife gets a divorce and he is held up to ridicule. He tries every known means to get the jay-walking idea out of his head. He shuts himself up in an asylum, hoping to mend his ways. But the day he comes out he races in front of fire engine, which breaks his back. Such a man would be crazy, wouldn't he?

You may think my illustration is too ridiculous. But is it? I, who have been through the wringer²³, have to admit if I substituted alcoholism for jaywalking, the illustration would fit me exactly. However intelligent I may have been in other respects, where alcohol was involved, I was strangely insane. It's strong language—but isn't it true?

Perhaps you are thinking, "Yes, what you tell me is true, but it doesn't fully apply. I admit I have some of these symptoms, but I have not gone to the extremes you did, nor am I likely to, for I understand myself so well after what you have told me that such things cannot happen again. I have not lost everything in life through drinking and I certainly do not intend to. Thanks for the information."

That may be true of certain nonalcoholic people who, although drinking foolishly and heavily at the present time, are able to stop or moderate, because their brains and bodies have not been damaged as mine was. But the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception, will be *absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge*. This is a point I wish to emphasize and re-emphasize, to smash home upon our alcoholic readers as it has been revealed to me and so many others out of bitter experience. Let me take another illustration.

Fred is partner in a well-known accounting firm. His income is good, he has a fine home, is happily married and the father of promising children of college age. He has so attractive a personality that he makes friends with everyone. If ever there was a successful businessman, it is Fred. To all appearance he is stable, well-balanced individual. Yet, he is alcoholic. I first saw Fred about a year ago in a hospital where he had gone to recover from a bad case of jitters. It was his first experience of this kind, and he was much ashamed of it. Far from admitting he was

²³ A device for wringing water from wet clothes, mops, or other objects.

alcoholic, he told himself he came to the hospital to rest his nerves. The doctor intimated strongly that he might be worse than he realized. For a few days he was depressed about his condition. He made up his mind to quit drinking altogether. It never occurred to him that perhaps he could not do so, in spite of his character and standing. Fred would not believe himself an alcoholic and was certainly not ready to accept any kind of remedy for his problem. I told him what I knew about alcoholism. He was interested and conceded that he had some of the symptoms, but he was a long way from admitting that he could do nothing about it himself. He was positive that this humiliating experience, plus the knowledge he had acquired, would keep him sober the rest of his life. Self-knowledge would fix it.

I heard no more of Fed for a while. One day I was told that he was back in the hospital. This time he was quite shaky. He soon indicated he was anxious to see me. The story he told is most instructive, for here was a chap absolutely convinced he had to stop drinking, who had no excuse for drinking, who exhibited splendid judgment and determination in all his other concerns, yet was flat on his back nevertheless.

Let him tell you about it: "I was much impressed with what you said about alcoholism, and I frankly did not believe it would be possible for me to drink again. I rather appreciated your ideas about the subtle insanity which precedes the first drink, but I was confident it could not happen to me after what I had learned. I reasoned I was not so far advanced as you, that I had been usually successful in licking my other personal problems, and that I would therefore be successful where you failed. I felt I had very right to be self-confident, what it would be only a matter of exercising my will power and keeping on guard.

"In this frame of mind, I went about my business and for a time all was well. I had no trouble refusing drinks, and began to wonder if I had not been making too hard work of a simple matter. One day I went to Washington to present some accounting evidence to a government bureau. I had been out of town before during this particular dry spell, so there was nothing new about that. Physically, I felt fine. Neither did I have any pressing problems or worries. My business came off well, I was pleased and knew my partners would be too. It was the end of a perfect day, not a cloud on the horizon.

"I went to my hotel and leisurely dressed for dinner. *As I crossed the threshold of the dining room, the thought came to mind that it would be nice to have a couple of cocktails with dinner. That was all. Nothing more.* I ordered a cocktail and my meal. Then I ordered another cocktail. After dinner I decided to take a walk. When I returned to the hotel it struck me a highball would be fine before going to bed, so I stepped into the bar and had one. I remember having several more that night and plenty next morning. I have a shadowy recollection of being in an airplane bound for New York, and of finding a friendly taxicab driver at the landing field instead of my wife. The driver escorted me about for several days. I know little of where I went or what I said and did. Then came the hospital with unbearable mental and physical suffering.

“As soon as I regained my ability to think, I went carefully over that evening in Washington. *Not only had I been off guard, I had made no fight whatever against the first drink. This time I had not thought of the consequences at all.* I had commenced to drink as carelessly as though the cocktails were ginger ale. I now remembered what my alcoholic friend had told me, how he prophesied that if I had an alcoholic mind, the time and place would come—I would drink again. He had said that though I did raise a defense it would one day give way before some trivial reason for having a drink. Well, just that did happen and more, for what I had learned of alcoholism did not occur to me at all. I knew from that moment that I had an alcoholic mind. I saw that will power and self-knowledge would not help in those strange mental blank spots. I had never been able to understand people who said that a problem had them hopelessly defeated. I knew then. It was a crushing blow.

“Two of the members of Alcoholics Anonymous came to see me. They grinned, which I didn’t like so much, and then asked me if I thought myself an alcoholic and if I were really licked this time. I had to concede both propositions. They piled on me heaps of evidence to the effect that an alcoholic mentality, such as I had exhibited in Washington, was a hopeless condition. They cited cases out of their own experience by the dozen. This process snuffed out the last flicker of conviction that I could do the job myself.

“Then they outlined the program of action which a hundred or so of them had followed successfully. Their proposals were not, intellectually, hard to swallow. The program of action, though entirely sensible, was pretty drastic and meant I would have to throw several lifelong conceptions out of the window. That was not easy. But the moment I made up my mind to go through with the process, I had the curious feeling that my alcoholic condition was relieved, as in fact it proved to be.

“I have since been brought into a way of living infinitely more satisfying and, I hope, more useful than the life I lived before. My old manner of life was by no means a bad one, but I would not exchange its best moments for the worst I have now. I would not go back to it even if I could.”

Fred’s story speaks for itself. I hope it strikes home to thousands like him. He had felt only the first nip of the wringer. Most alcoholics have to be pretty badly mangled before they really commence to solve their problem.

Many doctors and psychiatrists agree with our conclusions. One of these men, staff member of a world-renowned hospital, recently made this statement to some of us: “What you say about the general hopelessness of the average alcoholic’s plight is, in my opinion, correct. As to two of you men, whose stories I have heard, there is no doubt in my mind that you were 100% hopeless. Had you offered yourselves as patients at this hospital, I would not have taken you, if I had been able to avoid it. People like you are too heartbreaking. Once more: The

alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink.

HOW IT WORKS

Rarely have I seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who apparently cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There *are* such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They seem to be incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances seem to be less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them *do* recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want sobriety and are willing to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us.

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point.

Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol; that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that we had to turn the management of our lives over to someone other than ourselves.
3. Made a decision to turn our will over to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.
4. Made a searching a fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to accept help in letting go of all our defects of character.
7. With humility and openness sought to eliminate our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through quiet contemplation and reflection each day to live a life of service and compassion.

12. Having had a psychic change as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Being convinced, *I was at Step Three,*

The first requirement was that I be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis I was almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though my motives were good. It is my observation that most people try to live by self-propulsion. Many people are like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery, and the rest of the players in his own way. If his arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as he wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including himself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful. In trying to make these arrangements our actor may sometimes be quite virtuous. He may be kind, considerate, patient, generous, even modest and self-sacrificing. On the other hand, he may be mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest. But, as with most humans, he is more likely to have varied traits.

What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well. He begins to think life doesn't treat him right. He decides to exert himself more. He becomes, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit him. Admitting he may be somewhat at fault, he is sure that other people are more to blame. He becomes angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is his basic trouble? Is he not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind? Is he not a victim of the delusion that he can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if he only manages well? Is it not evident to all the rest of the players that these are the things he wants? And do not his actions make each of them wish to retaliate, snatching all they can get out of the show? Is he not, even in his best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?

Our actor is self-centered—ego-centric, as people like to call it nowadays. He is like the retired businessman who lolls in the Florida sunshine in the winter complaining of the sad state of the nation; the minister who sighs over the sins of the century; politicians and reformers who are sure all would be Utopia if the rest of the world would only behave; the outlaw safe cracker who thinks society has wronged him; and the alcoholic who has lost all and is locked up. Whatever our protestations, are not most of us concerned with ourselves, our resentments, or our self-pity?

Selfishness-self-centeredness! That, I think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate.

Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but in my experience, I have invariably found that at some time in the past ~~we~~I have made decisions based on self which later place me in a position to the hurt.

So our troubles, I think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and alcoholics like me are extreme examples of self-will run riot, though they usually don't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of the self without help. I had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but I could not live up to them even though I would have liked to. Neither could I reduce my self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on my own power. I had to have help.

This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing god. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, we would seek guidance from outside of ourselves. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

When I sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. Those who had gone before me provided what I needed if we kept close to them. Established on such a footing I became less and less interested in myself, my little plans and designs. More and more I became interested in seeing what I could contribute to life. As I felt new power flow in, as I enjoyed peace of mind, as I discovered I could face life successfully, I began to lose my fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter.

We were now at *Step Three*. Many of us "May I be relieved of the bondage of self that I may bear witness to those I would help:" We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly.

We found it very desirable to take this step with an understanding person, such as our spouse, best friend, or spiritual advisor. The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. This was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, was felt at once.

Next we launched on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.

Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. *This is Step Four*. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them

promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values.

We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.

In my opinion and experience, resentment is the number one offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. In dealing with resentments we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions, or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex), were hurt or threatened. So we were angry.

On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?

We were as definite as this example:

<i>I'm resentful:</i>	<i>The Cause:</i>	<i>Affects my:</i>
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife. Told my wife of my mistress. Brown may get my job at the office.	Sex relations Self-esteem (fear) Sex relations. Self-esteem (fear) Security Self-esteem (fear)
Mrs. Jones	She's a nut—she snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking. He's my friend she's a gossip.	Personal relationship. Self-esteem (fear)
My employer	Unreasonable—Unjust—Overbearing—Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account.	Self-esteem (fear) Security.
My wife	Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.	Pride—Personal sex relations—Security (fear)

We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. When we were finished, we considered it carefully. The first thing apparent was that this world and its people were often quite wrong. To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got. The usual outcome was that people continued to wrong us and we stayed sore. Sometimes it was remorse and then we were sore at ourselves. But the more we fought and tried to have our

own way, the worse matters got. As in war, the victor only *seemed* to win. Our moments of triumph were short-lived.

It is apparent to me that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that I permit these, do I ~~we~~ squander the hours that might have been worthwhile. But with an alcoholic like I am, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. I and many others have found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feelings, we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the spirit. The insanity of alcohol returns, and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die.

If I was to live, I had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm²⁴ were not for me. They may be the dubious luxury of normal people, but for alcoholics these things were poison.

We turned back to the list, for it held the key to the future. We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrongdoing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill. How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We could not wish them away any more than alcohol.

I discovered that this was a good course for me: I wondered if the people who wronged me were perhaps sick in some way.

Though I did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed me, they, like me was sick too. I asked for help to show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that I would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended, I said to myself, "This is a sick person. How can I be helpful to him? May I find the strength not to be angry."

We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn't treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our change of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people, but at least we can do our best to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one.

Referring to our list again. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely. The inventory was ours, not the other person's. When we saw our parts in each situation, we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters right.

Notice the "fear" is bracketed alongside the difficulties with Mr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, the employer, and the wife. This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn't deserve. But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling?

²⁴ The word "brainstorm" has come to mean a process of finding solutions to problems, but in the 1930s the word was used for extreme agitation and resentment.

Sometimes we think fear out to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble.

We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse.

Perhaps there is a better way—we think so. For we are now on a different basis.

We never apologize to anyone for depending upon help from others. We can laugh at those who think we might go it alone. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that unity means courage. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.

Now about sex. Many of us needed an overhauling there. But above all, we tried to be sensible on this question. It's so easy to get way off the track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes—absurd extremes, perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust of our lower nature, a base necessity of procreation. Then we have the voices who cry for sex and more sex; who bewail the institution of marriage; who think that most of the troubles of the race are traceable to sex causes. They think we do not have enough of it, or that it isn't the right kind. They see its significance everywhere. One school would allow man no flavor for his fare and the other would have us all on a straight pepper diet. We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them?

We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what might we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.

In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relation to this test—was it selfish or not? We identified our ideals and vowed to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were natural and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.

Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem. In meditation, we ask what we can do about each specific matter. The right answer will come if we want it.

Counsel with other people is sometimes desirable, but we realize that some people are as fanatical about sex as others are loose. We avoid hysterical thinking or advice.

Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble? Does this mean we are going to get drunk? Some people tell us so. But I believe

this is only half true. It depends on us and on our motives. If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to change our ways, we believe we will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. I am not theorizing. These are facts out of our experience.

To sum up about sex: We earnestly seek to define the right ideal, to seek for wise guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache.

If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience, and good will toward all persons, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.

If you have made a decision to take these steps seriously, and taken an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself.

INTO ACTION

Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude and to discover the obstacles in our path. We have admitted certain defects; we have ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is; we have put our finger on the weak items in our personal inventory. Now these are about to be cast out. This requires action on our part, which, when completed, will mean that we have admitted to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our defects. This brings us to *the Fifth Step* in the program of recovery mentioned in the preceding chapter.

This is perhaps difficult—especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that. In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient. Many of us thought it necessary to go much further. We will be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first: It has been our experience and my observation that if we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably they got drunk. Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only thought they had lost their egoism and fear; they only thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness, and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else *all* their life story.

More than most people, an alcoholic like I am leads a double life. I was very much the actor. To the outer world I presented my stage character. This is the one I liked my fellows to see. I wanted to enjoy a certain reputation but knew in my heart I didn't deserve it.

The inconsistency is made worse by the things I did on my sprees. Coming to my senses, I was revolted at certain episodes I only vaguely remembered. These memories were a nightmare. I trembled to think someone might have observed me. As far as I could, I pushed these memories far inside myself. I hoped they would never see the light of day. I was under constant fear and tension—that made for more drinking.

Psychologists are inclined to agree with us. We have spent thousands of dollars for examinations. We know but few instances where we have given these doctors a fair break. We have seldom told them the whole truth, nor have we followed their advice. Unwilling to be honest with these sympathetic doctors, we were honest with no one

else. Small wonder many in the medical profession have a low opinion of alcoholics and our chance for recovery!

We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world. Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it. Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion. We often find such a person quick to see and understand our problem. Of course, we sometimes encounter people who do not understand alcoholics.

If we cannot or would rather not do this, we search our acquaintance for a close-mouthed, understanding friend. Perhaps our doctor or psychologist will be the person. It may be one of our own family, but we cannot disclose anything to our spouses, parents, or children which will hurt them and make them unhappy. We have no right to save our own skin at another person's expense. Such parts of our story we tell to someone who will understand, yet be unaffected. The rule is we must be hard on ourselves, but always considerate of others.

Notwithstanding the great necessity for discussing ourselves with someone, it may be one is so situated that there is no suitable person available. If that is so, this step may be postponed, only, however, if we hold ourselves in complete readiness to go through with it at the first opportunity. We say this because we are very anxious that we talk to the right person. It is important that they be able to keep a confidence; that they fully understand and approve what we are driving at; that they will not try to change our plan. But we must not use this as a mere excuse to postpone.

When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We have a written inventory, and we are prepared for a long talk. We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do. We have told them that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence.

We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly.

Returning home, we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk free at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have

we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at *Step Six*. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let go of all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can we let go of them all—every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we at least try to remain willing.

When ready, we say something like this: “I am now willing to acknowledge and embrace all of me, good and bad. I am willing to do everything I can to let go of every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to my fellows. We have then completed Step Seven.

Now we need more action, without which we find that “Faith without works is dead” or, said another way, “Willingness with action is meaningless.” Let’s look at *Steps Eight and Nine*. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we keep trying until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning *we would go to any length for victory over alcohol*.

Probably there are still some misgivings. As we look over the list of business acquaintances and friends we have hurt, we may feel diffident about going to some of them.—We are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service. They are almost sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrongs. They are going to be very interested in a demonstration of good will.

The question of how to approach the people we hated will arise. It may be they have done us more harm that we have done to them and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward them, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a people we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to them in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret.

Under no condition do we criticize such people or argue. Simply we tell them that we will never get over drinking until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past. We are there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing that nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell them what they should do. Their faults are not discussed. We stick to our own. If our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result.

In nine cases out of ten the unexpected happens. Sometimes the person we are calling upon admits their own fault, so feuds of years’ standing melt away in an hour. Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress. Our former enemies sometimes praise what we are doing and

wish us well. Occasionally, they will offer assistance. It does not matter, however, if someone does throw us out of their office. We have made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam.

Most alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors. Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our drinking; they usually know it anyway, whether we think so or not. Nor are we afraid of disclosing our alcoholism on the theory it may cause financial harm. Approached in this way, the most ruthless creditor will sometimes surprise us. Arranging the best deal we can we let these people know we are sorry. Our drinking has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them.

Perhaps we have committed a criminal offense which might land us in jail if it were known to the authorities. We may be short in our accounts and unable to make good. We have already admitted this in confidence to another person, but we are sure we would be imprisoned or lose our job if it were known. Maybe it's only a petty offense such as padding the expense account. Most of us have done that sort of thing.

Maybe we are divorced and have remarried but haven't kept up the alimony to number one. They are indignant about it and has a warrant out for our arrest. That's a common form of trouble too.

Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to stay sober, we look for the strength to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.

Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit. A man we know had remarried. Because of resentment and drinking, he had not paid alimony to his first wife. She was furious. She went to court and got an order for his arrest. He had commenced our way of life, had secured a position, and was getting his head above water. It would have been impressive heroics if he had walked up to the Judge and said, "Here I am."

We thought he ought to be willing to do that if necessary, but if he were in jail he could provide nothing for either family. We suggested he write his first wife admitting his faults and asking forgiveness. He did, and also sent a small amount of money. He told her what he would try to do in the future. He said he was perfectly willing to go to jail if she insisted. She did not, and the whole situation has long since been adjusted.

Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, sincerely and honestly searched our conscience and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink.

This brings to mind a story about one of our friends. While drinking, he accepted a sum of money from a bitterly hated business rival, giving him no receipt for it. He subsequently denied having received the money and used the incident as a basis for discrediting the man. He thus used his own wrong doing as a means of destroying the reputation on another. In fact, his rival was ruined.

He felt that he had done a wrong he could not possibly make right. If he opened that old affair, he was afraid it would destroy the reputation of his partner, disgrace his family, and take away his means of livelihood. What right had he to involve those dependent upon him? How could he possibly make a public statement exonerating his rival?

After consulting with his sponsor, his wife, and his partner he came to the conclusion that it was better to take those risks than to face and live with himself guilty of such ruinous slander.

The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with someone in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised. We doubt if, in this respect, alcoholics are fundamentally much worse than other people. But drinking does complicate sex relations in the home. After a few years with an alcoholic, a spouse gets worn out, resentful and uncommunicative. How could they be anything else? The alcoholic begins to feel lonely. In fairness we must say that they may, in fact, understand, but what are we going to do about a thing like that? A person so involved often feels very remorseful at times, especially if they are married to a loyal and courageous partner who has literally gone through hell for them.

Whatever the situation, we usually have to do something about it. If we are sure our spouse does not know, should we tell them? Not always, we think. If they know in a general way that we have been wild, should we tell them in detail? Undoubtedly we should admit our fault. They may insist on knowing all the particulars. They will want to know who the person is and where they are. We feel we ought to say what we have done and, it shall not be repeated. More than that we cannot do; we have no right to go further. Though there may be justifiable exceptions, and though we wish to lay down no rule of any sort, we have often found this the best course to take.

Our design for living is not a one-way street. It is as good for the wife as for the husband. If we can forget, so can they. It is better, however, that one does not needlessly name a person upon whom they can vent jealousy.

Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost frankness is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation. It may be that both will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let bygones be bygones. Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind. Keep it always in sight that we are dealing with that most terrible human emotion—jealousy. Good generalship may decide that the problem be attacked on the flank rather than risk a face-to-face encounter.

If we have no such complication, there is plenty we can do at home. Sometimes we hear an alcoholic say that the only thing they need

to do is to keep sober. Certainly, they must keep sober, for there will be no home if they don't. But they are yet a long way from making good to the spouse or parents or children whom for years they have so shockingly treated. Passing all understanding is the patience parents and spouses have had with alcoholics. Had this not been so, many of us would have no homes today, would perhaps be dead.

The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring its way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil. We feel an alcoholic is unthinking when saying that sobriety is enough. It would be like a farmer who comes up out of his cyclone cellar to find his home ruined. To his wife, he remarks, "*Don't see anything that matters here, Ma. Ain't it grand the wind stopped blowin'?*"

Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We think it is a good idea to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible. So, we clean house with the family, sincerely seeking in ourselves the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.

We think it best not to lecture or promise what we intend to do or how we intend to do it. Our behavior will convince them more than our words. We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone.

There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter. And there may be a valid reason or postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided. We strive to be sensible, tactful, considerate, and humble without being servile or scraping.

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and fear of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

This thought brings us to *Step Ten*, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes

as we go along. We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.

And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has ~~been~~ happened without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we are in a position of neutrality—safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. It seems that the problem does not exist for us anymore. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we stay close to this way of life.

It is easy to let up on the program of action and rest on our laurels. Our experience shows that we are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism.

But now we must go further and that means more action.

Step Eleven suggests that we seek through quiet contemplation and reflection, each day, to live a life of service and compassion. This is a large order. It works if we have the proper attitude and work at it. It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions.

When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest, or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which needs to be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life? But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse, or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask ourselves honestly what corrective measures we can take.

On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day and remind ourselves that we want them to be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance. Our life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.

In thinking about our day, we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask for inspiration, an intuitive thought on a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we

have tried this for a while. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely on it.

If circumstances warrant, we ask our spouse wives or friends to join us in morning meditation. If we belong to a religious denomination which requires a definite morning devotion, we attend to that also.

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and search our conscience for the right thought or action. We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were drinking.

It works—it really does.

We alcoholics have been exceptionally undisciplined. So we are learning how to discipline ourselves in the simple way we have outlined.

But this is not all. There is action and more action. The next chapter is entirely devoted to *Step Twelve*.

Chapter 6

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill.

Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

Perhaps you are not acquainted with any drinkers who want to recover. You can easily find some by asking a few doctors, ministers, priests, or hospitals. They will be only too glad to assist you. Don't start out as an evangelist or reformer. Unfortunately, a lot of prejudice exists. You will be handicapped if you arouse it. Ministers and doctors are competent and you can learn much from them if you wish, but it happens that because of your own drinking experience you can be uniquely useful to other alcoholics. So, cooperate; never criticize. To be helpful is our only aim.

When you discover a prospect for Alcoholics Anonymous, find out all you can about them. If they do not want to stop drinking, don't waste time trying to persuade them. You may spoil a later opportunity. This advice is given for the family also. If possible, they should try to be patient, realizing they are dealing with a very sick person.

If there is any indication that they want to stop, have a good talk with the person most interested in them—usually the spouse or partner. Get an idea of their behavior, their problems, their background, the seriousness of their condition, and their religious leanings. You need this information to put yourself in their place, to see how you would like them to approach you if the tables were turned.

Sometimes it is wise to wait till they go on a binge. The family may object to this, but unless they are in a dangerous physical condition, it is better to risk it. Don't deal with them when they are very drunk, unless they are wild and the family needs help. Wait for the end of the spree, or at least for a lucid interval. Then let their family or a friend ask them if they want to quit for good and if they would go to any extreme to do so. If they say yes, then their attention can be drawn to you as a person who has recovered. You can be described to them as one of a fellowship who, as part of their own recovery, try to help others and who will be glad to talk with him them if they care to see you.

If they do not want to see you, never force yourself upon them. Perhaps you could leave this book or other AA literature with them. Here no specific rule can be given. The family must decide these things. But urge them not to be over-anxious.

Usually the family should not try to tell your story. When possible, avoid meeting the person through their family. Approach through a doctor or an institution is a better bet. If they need hospitalization, they should have it, but not forcibly unless they are violent. Let the doctor, if they will, say there may be something in the way of a solution.

When they are better, the doctor might suggest a visit from you. Though you have talked with the family, leave them out of the first discussion. Under these conditions your prospect will see there is no pressure. They will feel they can deal with you without being nagged. Call on them while they are still jittery. They may be more receptive when depressed.

See them alone, if possible. At first engage in general conversation. After a while, turn the talk to some phase of drinking. Tell enough about your drinking habits, symptoms, and experiences to encourage them to speak of themselves. If they wish to talk, let them do so. You will thus get a better idea of how you may want to proceed. If they are not communicative, give them a sketch of your drinking career up to the time you quit. But say nothing for the moment, of how that was accomplished. If they are in a serious mood dwell on the troubles liquor has caused you, being careful not to moralize or lecture. If their mood is light, tell humorous stories of your escapades. Get them to tell some of theirs.

When they see you know all about the drinking game, commence to describe yourself as an alcoholic.

Tell them how baffled you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give an account of the struggles you made to stop. Show the mental twist which leads to the first drink of a spree. We suggest you do this as we have done it in the chapter on alcoholism. If they are alcoholic, they will understand you at once. They will match your mental inconsistencies with some of their own.

If you are satisfied that they are a real alcoholic, begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady. Show them, from your own experience, how the strange mental condition surrounding that first drink prevents normal functioning of the will power. Don't, at this stage, refer to this book, unless they have seen it and wishes to discuss it. And be careful not to brand them as an alcoholic. Let them draw his own conclusion. If they stick to the idea that they can still control their drinking, tell them that possibly they can—if they are not too alcoholic. But insist that if they are severely afflicted, there may be little chance they can recover alone.

Continue to speak of alcoholism an illness, a fatal malady. Talk about conditions of body and mind which accompany it. Keep attention focused mainly on your personal experience. Explain that many are doomed who never realize their predicament. Doctors are rightly loath to tell alcoholic patients the whole story unless it will serve some good purpose. But you may talk about the hopelessness of alcoholism because you offer a solution. You will soon have your friend admitting many, if not all, of the traits of the alcoholic. If their own doctor is

willing to say that he is they are alcoholic, so much the better. Even though your protégé may not have entirely admitted their condition, they have probably become very curious to know how you got well. Let them ask you that question if they will. *Tell them exactly what happened to you.* If they are agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that they do not have to agree with your conception of god or any at all. *The main thing is that they be willing to take an honest and thorough look at themselves by working the steps of the program and consider adopting and living by a set of principles of truthfulness and open mindedness.*

When dealing with such a person and if you feel it necessary to express your own spiritual experience, do so in general terms. There is no use arousing any prejudice they may have against certain theological terms and conceptions.

Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, how you straightened out your past and why you are endeavoring to be helpful to them. It is important for them to realize that your attempt to pass this on to them plays a vital part in your own recovery. *Tell them they may be helping you more than you are helping them.* Make it plain they are under no obligation to you, that you hope only that they will try to help other alcoholics when they escape their own difficulties. Suggest how important it is that they place the welfare of other people ahead of their own. Make it clear that they are not under pressure, that they needn't see you again if they don't want to. You need not be offended if they want to call it off, for they have helped you more than you have helped them. If your talk has been sane, quiet, and full of human understanding, you have perhaps made a friend. Maybe you have disturbed them about the question of alcoholism. This is all to the good. The more hopeless they feel, the better. They will be more likely to follow your suggestions.

Your candidate may give reasons why they need not follow all of the program. They may rebel at the thought of a drastic housecleaning which requires discussion with other people. Do not contradict such views. Tell them you once felt as they do, but you doubt whether you would have made much progress had you not taken action. On your first visit tell them about the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. If they show interest, lend them a copy of this book.

Unless your friend wants to talk further about themselves, do not wear out your welcome. Give them a chance to think it over. If you do stay, let them steer the conversation in any direction they like. Sometimes a new person is anxious to proceed at once, and you may be tempted to let them do so. This is sometimes a mistake. If they have trouble later, they are likely to say you rushed them. You will be most successful with alcoholics if you do not exhibit any passion for crusade or reform. Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop; simply lay out the kit of tools that have helped you for their inspection. Show them how they worked with you. Offer them friendship and fellowship. Tell them if they want to get well you will do anything to help.

If they are not interested in your solution, if they expect you to act only as a banker for their financial difficulties or a nurse for their sprees, you may have to drop them until they change their mind. This they may do after they get hurt some more.

If they are sincerely interested and want to see you again, ask them to read this book in the interval. After doing that, they must decide for themselves whether they want to go on. If they are sincere about getting sober, the desire must come from within.

If they think they can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other approach, encourage them to follow their own conscience. We have no monopoly on getting sober; we merely have an approach that worked with us. But point out that we alcoholics have much in common and that you would like, in any case, to be friendly. Let it go at that.

Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another alcoholic and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing someone who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, they may soon become convinced that they cannot recover alone. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy. Some of our Fellowship have failed entirely with their first prospects. Most agree that if they had continued to work on them they might have deprived many others, who have since recovered, of their chances.

Suppose you are making your second visit. They have read this volume and say they are prepared to go through with the Twelve Steps of the program of recovery. Having had the experience yourself, you can give them much practical advice. Let them know you are available if they wish to make a decision and tell their story, but do not insist upon it if they prefer to consult someone else.

They may be broke and homeless. If they are, you might try to help them about getting a job or give them a little financial assistance. *But, do not deprive your family or creditors of money they should have.*

Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be. It may mean the loss of many nights' sleep, great interference with your pleasures, interruptions to your business. It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling frantic relatives, innumerable trips to police courts, sanitarium, hospitals, and jails. Your telephone may ring at any time of the day or night. Your family may sometimes say they are neglected. Sometimes you will have to call a doctor. Another time you may have send for the police or an ambulance. Occasionally you will have to meet such conditions.

Though an alcoholic does not respond, there is no reason why you should neglect the family. You may wish to continue to be friendly to them. The family can be offered your way of life through Al-Anon. If they accept and practice these principles, there is a much better chance

that the alcoholic will recover. And even though they continue to drink, the family will find life more bearable.²⁵

For the type of alcoholic who is able and willing to get well, little charity, in the ordinary sense of the word is needed or wanted. The alcoholics who cry for money and shelter before conquering alcohol, are on the wrong track.

It is not a matter of giving that is in question, but when and how to give. That often makes the difference between failure and success. The minute we stop putting our work on a service plane, the alcoholic commences to rely upon our assistance rather than upon their own resources. They clamor for this or that, claiming they cannot master alcohol until material needs are cared for. Nonsense. Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: Job or no job—spouse or no spouse--we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people.

Burn the idea into the consciousness of every person that ~~he~~ they can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he clean house and pass their recovery experience on to others.

Now, the domestic problem: There may be divorce, separation, or just strained relations. When your prospect has made such reparation as they can to the family and has thoroughly explained to them the new principles by which they are living, they may be encouraged to proceed to put those principles into action at home. Though the family be at fault in many respects, they do not have to be concerned about that. Argument and fault-finding are to be avoided. In many homes this is a difficult thing to do, but it must be done if results are to be expected. If persisted in for a few months, the effect on a family is sure to be great. The most incompatible people discover they have a basis upon which they can meet. Little by little the family may see their own defects and admit them. These can then be discussed in an atmosphere of helpfulness and friendliness.

After they have seen tangible results, the family will perhaps want to go along. These things will come to pass naturally and in good time provided, however, the alcoholic continues to demonstrate that they can be sober, considerate, and helpful, regardless of what anyone says or does. Of course, we all fall much below this standard many times. But we must try to repair the damage immediately lest we pay the penalty by drinking.

If there be divorce or separation, there need be no undue haste for the couple to get together. The alcoholic needs to be sure of their recovery. The spouse also needs to understand this new way of life. If their old relationship is to be resumed it must be on a better basis, since

²⁵ *The fellowship of Al-Anon Family Groups was formed about thirteen years after **the original Big Book** was written. Though it is entirely separate from Alcoholics Anonymous, it uses the general principles of the A.A. program as a guide for husbands, wives, relatives, friends, and others close to alcoholics. Alateen, for teen-aged children of alcoholics, is a part of Al-Anon.*

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the former did not work. This means a new attitude all around. Sometimes it is in the best interests of all concerned that a couple remains apart. Obviously, no rule can be laid down. Let the alcoholic continue the program day by day. When the time for living together has come, it will be apparent to both parties.

Let no alcoholic say they cannot recover unless they have their family back. This just isn't so. In some cases, the spouse will never come back for one reason or another. Remind the prospect that their recovery is not dependent upon people. It is dependent upon maintaining a new way of life. We have seen alcoholics get well whose families have not returned at all. We have seen others drink when the family came back too soon.

Both you and the new person must walk day by day in the path of progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen. Follow the dictates of the program and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances.

When working with an alcoholic and family, take care not to participate in their quarrels. You may spoil your chance of being helpful if you do. But you may share with the family that they have been a very sick person. You may point out that the alcoholic's unpleasant behaviors are not likely to disappear overnight. Show them that a period of growth has been entered upon.

If you have been successful in solving your own domestic problems, tell the newcomer's family how that was accomplished. In this way you may be able demonstrate success without becoming critical of them. The story of how you and your family settled your difficulties is worth any amount of criticism.

We can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink; we must avoid media which shows drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn't think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not so.

We meet these conditions every day. The only chance for sobriety would be someplace like the Greenland Ice Cap, and even there an someone might turn up with a bottle of scotch and ruin everything! Ask anyone who has sent an alcoholic to distant places on the theory they would escape the alcohol problem.

In our belief, any scheme of combating alcoholism which proposes to shield the alcoholic from temptation is doomed to failure. If the alcoholic tries to shield himself, they may succeed for a time, but they usually wind up with a bigger explosion than ever. We have tried these methods. These attempts to do the impossible have always failed.

So, our rule is not to avoid a place where there is drinking if *we have a legitimate reason for being there*. That includes bars, nightclubs, receptions, concerts, weddings, even plain ordinary parties.

You will note that we made an important qualification. Therefore, ask yourself on each occasion, "Have I any good social,

business, or personal reason for going to this place? Or am I expecting to steal a little vicarious pleasure from the atmosphere of such places?" If you answer these questions satisfactorily, you need have no apprehension. Go or stay away, which ever seems best. But be sure you are on solid ground before you start and that your motive in going is thoroughly good. Do not think of what you will get out of the occasion. Think of what you can bring to it. But if you are shaky, you had better work with another alcoholic instead!

Why sit with a long face in places where there is drinking, sighing about the good old days. If it is a happy occasion, try to increase the pleasure of those there; if a business occasion, go and attend to your business enthusiastically. If you are with a person who wants to eat in a bar, by all means go along. Let your friends know they are not to change their habits on your account. At a proper time and place explain to all your friends why alcohol disagrees with you. If you do this thoroughly, few people will ask you to drink. While you were drinking, you were withdrawing from life little by little. Now you are getting back into the social life of this world. Don't start to withdraw again just because your friends drink liquor.

Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You need not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and you will not be tempted.

Many of us keep liquor in our homes. We often need it to carry green recruits through a severe hangover. Some of us still serve it to our friends provided they are not alcoholic. But some of us think we should not serve liquor to anyone. We never argue this question. We feel that each family, in the light of their own circumstances, ought to decide for themselves.

We are careful never to show intolerance or hatred of drinking as an institution. Experience shows that such an attitude is not helpful to anyone. Every new alcoholic looks for this spirit among us and is immensely relieved when they find we are not witch-burners. A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of temperate drinking any good, for not one drinker in a thousand likes to be told anything about alcohol by one who hates it.

Some day we hope that Alcoholics Anonymous will help the public to a better realization of the gravity of the alcoholic problem, but we shall be of little use if our attitude is one of bitterness or hostility. Drinkers will not stand for it.

After all, our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody or anything. We have to!

THE FAMILY AFTER²⁶

Henry Ford once made a wise remark to the effect that experience is the thing of supreme value in life. That is true only if one is willing to turn the past to good account. We grow by our willingness to face and rectify errors and convert them into assets. The alcoholic's past thus becomes their principal asset.

This painful past may be of infinite value to alcoholics. We think each alcoholic who has been relieved owes something to those who have not, and when the occasion requires, each should be only too willing to bring former mistakes, no matter how grievous, out of their hiding places. Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worthwhile to us now. Cling to the thought that, the dark past is the greatest possession the alcoholic has—the key to life and happiness for others. With it one can avert death and misery for them.

It is possible to dig up past misdeeds so they become a blight, a veritable plague. For example, we know of situations in which the alcoholic or spouse has had love affairs. In the first flush of sober experience they forgave each other and drew closer together. The miracle of reconciliation was at hand. Then, under one provocation or another, the aggrieved once would unearth the old affair and angrily cast its ashes about. A few of us have had these growing pains and they hurt a great deal.

A principle we observe carefully is that we do not relate intimate experiences of another person unless we are sure he would approve. We find it better, when possible, stick to our own stories. People may criticize or laugh at themselves and it will affect others favorably, but criticism or ridicule coming from another often produces the contrary effect. We alcoholics are sensitive people. It takes some of us a long time to outgrow that serious handicap.

Many alcoholics are enthusiasts. We run to extremes. At the beginning of recovery we will take, as a rule, one of two directions. We may either plunge into a frantic attempt to get on our feet, or may be so enthralled we talk think of little else. In either case certain-problems will arise. With these we have had experience galore.

We think it dangerous if the alcoholic rushes headlong at problems. The family will be affected also, pleasantly at first as they feel their ~~money~~ troubles are about to be solved, then not so pleasantly as they find themselves neglected. ~~Dad~~ The alcoholic may be tired at night and preoccupied by day. They ~~He~~ may take small interest in the family

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and may show irritation when reproved for their delinquencies. If not irritable, they may seem dull and boring, not happy and affectionate as the family would like them to be. Others may complain of inattention. They are all disappointed, and often let them feel it. Beginning with such complaints, a barrier arises. The alcoholic is straining every nerve to make up for lost time. They are striving to recover reputation and may feel feels ~~he is~~ they are doing very well.

Sometimes others don't think so. Having been neglected and misused in the past, they think the alcoholic owes them more than they are getting. They want to have a fuss made over them. They expect be given the nice times they used to have before the drinking got out of hand, and to show contrition for what they suffered. But the alcoholic doesn't give freely of himself. Resentment can grow. The alcoholic needs to remember that they are probably mainly to blame for what befell the home and can scarcely square the account in a lifetime.

Since the home has suffered more than anything else, it is well that an alcoholic exert effort there. They are not likely to get far in any direction if they fail to show unselfishness and love under their own roof. We know there are difficult families, but the alcoholic who is trying to stay sober must remember they did much to make them so. Giving, rather than getting can become the guiding principle.

We have been speaking to you of serious, sometimes tragic things. We have been dealing with alcohol in its worst aspect. But we aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life. We try not to indulge in cynicism over the state of the nations, nor do we carry the world's troubles on our shoulders. When we see a man sinking into the mire that is alcoholism, we give him first aid and place what we have at his disposal. For his sake, we do recount and almost relive the horrors of our past. But those of us who have tried to shoulder the entire burden and trouble of others find we are soon overcome by them.

So we think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness. Outsiders are sometimes shocked when we burst into merriment over a seemingly tragic experience out of the past. But why shouldn't we laugh? We are recovering and have been given the tools to help others.

Everybody knows that those in bad health, and those who seldom play, do not laugh much. So let each of us play together or separately, as much as our circumstances warrant. We are sure we can be happy, joyous, and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for most of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. Others didn't do it. Avoid then, the deliberate manufacture of misery, but if trouble comes, cheerfully capitalize it as an opportunity.

Now about health: A body badly burned by alcohol does not often recover overnight nor do twisted thinking and depression vanish right away. We are convinced that a compassionate mode of living is a most powerful health restorative. But we have seen remarkable transformations in our bodies. Hardly one of our crowd now shows any mark of dissipation.

But this does not mean that we disregard human health measures. This world is abundantly supplied with fine doctors, psychologists, and practitioners of various kinds. *Do not hesitate to take your health problems to such persons.* They give of themselves, that their fellows may enjoy sound minds and bodies. Try to remember that we must never belittle a good doctor or psychiatrist. Their services are often indispensable in treating a newcomer and in following his case afterward.

Alcoholics may find it hard to re-establish friendly relations with their children. Their young minds were impressionable while they were drinking. Without saying so, they may cordially hate them for what they have done to them. The children are sometimes dominated by a pathetic hardness and cynicism. They cannot seem to forgive and forget. This may hang on for months or longer.

In time they may see that the alcoholic parent is a new person and in their own way will let them know it. When this happens, they can be invited to take part in the discussions without rancor or bias. From that point on, progress will almost certainly be rapid. Marvelous results often follow such a reunion.

We have three little mottoes which are apropos. Here they are:

First Things First

Live and Let Live

Easy Does It.

TO EMPLOYERS

Among many employers nowadays, we think of one member who has spent much of his life in the world of big business. He has hired and fired hundreds of men. He knows the alcoholic as the employer sees him. His present views may to prove exceptionally useful to businesspeople everywhere.

But let him tell you:

"I was at one time assistant manager of a corporation department employing sixty-six hundred men people. One day my secretary assistant came in saying that Mr. B--- insisted on speaking with me. I told her to say that I was not interested. I had warned him several times that he had but one more chance. Not long afterward he had called me from Hartford on two successive days, so drunk he could hardly speak. I told him he was through—finally and forever.

My secretary assistant returned to say that it was not Mr. B--- on the phone; it was Mr. B---'s brother, and he wished to give me a message. I still expected a plea for clemency, but these words came through the receiver phone: "I just wanted to tell you Paul jumped from a hotel window in Hartford last Saturday. He left us a note saying you were the best boss he ever had, and that you were not to blame in any way."

Another time, as I opened a letter which lay on my desk, a newspaper clipping fell out. It was the obituary of one of the best salesmen I ever had. After two weeks of drinking, he had placed his toe on the trigger of a loaded shotgun—the barrel was in his mouth. I had discharged him for drinking six weeks before.

Still another experience: A woman's voice came faintly over the phone from Virginia. She wanted to know if her husband's company insurance was still in force. Four days before he had hanged himself. I had been obliged to discharge him for drinking, though he was brilliant, alert, and one of the best organizers I have ever known.

Here were three exceptional men lost to this world because I did not understand alcoholism as I do now. Ad but for the intervention of an understanding person, I might have followed in their footsteps. My downfall cost the business community unknown thousands of dollars, for it takes real money to train a man for an executive position. This kind of waste goes on unabated. We think the business fabric is shot through with a situation which might be helped by better understanding all around.

Nearly every employer feels a moral responsibility for the well-being of their help, and they try to meet these responsibilities. That they have not always done so for the alcoholic is easily understood. To them the alcoholic has often seemed a fool of the first magnitude. Because of the employee's special ability, or of their own strong personal attachment, the employer has sometimes kept such a person at work long beyond a reasonable period. Some employers have tried every known remedy. In only a few instances has there been a lack of

patience and tolerance. And we, who have imposed on the best of employers, can scarcely blame them if they have been short with us.

Here, for instance is a typical example: An officer of one of the largest banking institutions in America knows I no longer drink. One day he told me about an executive of the same bank, who, from his description, was undoubtedly alcoholic. This seemed to me like an opportunity to be helpful, so I spent two hours talking about alcoholism, the malady, and described the symptoms and results as well as I could. His comment was, "Very interesting. But I'm sure this man is done drinking. He has just returned from a three-months' leave of absence, has taken a cure, looks fine, and to clinch the matter, the board of directors told him this was his last chance."

The only answer I could make was that if the man followed the usual pattern, he would go on a bigger bust than ever. I felt this was inevitable and wondered if the bank was doing the man an injustice. Why not bring him into contact with some of our alcoholic crowd? He might have a chance. I pointed out that I had had nothing to drink whatever for three years, and this in the face of difficulties that would have made nine out of ten people drink. Why not at least afford him an opportunity to hear my story? "Oh no," said my friend, "this man is either through with liquor, or he is minus a job. If he has your will power and guts, he will make the grade."

I wanted to throw up my hands in discouragement, for I saw that I had failed to help my banker friend understand. He simply could not believe that his brother-executive suffered from a serious illness. There was nothing to do but wait.

Presently the man did slip and was fired. Following his discharge, we contacted him. Without much ado, he accepted the principles and procedure that had helped us. He is undoubtedly on the road to recovery. To me, this incident illustrates lack of understanding as to what really ails the alcoholic, and lack of knowledge as to what part employers might profitably take in salvaging their sick employees.

If you desire to help it might be well to disregard your own drinking, or lack of it. Whether you are a hard drinker, a moderate drinker or a teetotaler, you may have some pretty strong opinions, perhaps prejudices. Those who drink moderately may be more annoyed with an alcoholic than a total abstainer would be. Drinking occasionally, and understanding your own reactions, it is possible for you to become quite sure of many things which, so far as the alcoholic is concerned, are not always so. As a moderate drinker, you can take your liquor or leave it alone. Whenever you want to, you control your drinking. Of an evening, you can go on a mild bender, get up in the morning, shake your head and go to business. To you, liquor is no real problem. You cannot see why it should be to anyone else, save the spineless and stupid.

When dealing with alcoholics, there may be a natural annoyance that person could be so weak, stupid and irresponsible. Even when you understand the malady better, you may feel this feeling rising.

A look at alcoholics in your organization is many times illuminating. Are they not usually brilliant, fast-thinking, imaginative and likeable? When sober, do they not work hard and have a knack of getting things done? If they had these qualities and did not drink would they be worth retaining? Do you think that they should have the same consideration as other ailing employees? Are they worth salvaging? If your decision is yes, whether the reason be humanitarian or business or both, then the following suggestions may be helpful.

Can you discard the feeling that you are dealing only with habit, with stubbornness, or a weak will? If this presents difficulty, re-reading chapters two and three, where the alcoholic sickness is discussed at length might be worthwhile. You, as a businessperson, want to know the necessities before considering the result. If you concede that your employees are ill, can they be forgiven for what they have done in the past? Can the past absurdities be forgotten? Can it be appreciated that they have been victims of crooked thinking, directly caused by the action of alcohol on their brain?

I well remember the shock I received when a prominent doctor in Chicago told me of cases where pressure of the spinal fluid actually ruptured the brain. No wonder an alcoholic is strangely irrational. Normal drinkers are not so affected, nor can they understand the aberrations of the alcoholic.

Your employee has probably been trying to conceal a number of scrapes, perhaps pretty messy ones. They may be disgusting. You may be at a loss to understand how such a seemingly above-board person could be so involved. But these scrapes can generally be charged, no matter how bad, to the abnormal action of alcohol on the mind. When drinking, or getting over a bout, an alcoholic, sometimes the model of honesty when sober, will do incredible things. Afterward, the revulsion will be terrible. Nearly always, these antics indicate nothing more than temporary conditions.

This is not to say that all alcoholics are honest and upright when not drinking. Of course, that isn't so, and such people often may impose on you. Seeing your attempt to understand and help, some will try to take advantage of your kindness. If you are sure they do not want to stop, they may as well be discharged, the sooner the better. You are not doing no favors by keeping them on. Firing such individuals may prove a blessing to them. It may be just the jolt they need. I know, in my own particular case, that nothing my company could have done would have stopped me for, so long as I was able to hold my position, I could not possibly realize how serious my situation was. Had they fired me first, and had they then taken steps to see that I was presented with the solution contained in this book, I might have returned to them six months later, a well man.

But there are ~~men~~ those who want to stop, and with them you can go far. Your understanding treatment of their cases will pay dividends.

Perhaps you have such a person in mind. They want to quit drinking and you want to help them, even if it be only a matter of good

business. You now know more about alcoholism. You can see that they are mentally and physically sick. You are willing to overlook past performances. Suppose an approach is made something like this:

State that you know about their drinking, and that it must stop. You might say you appreciate their abilities, would like to keep them, but cannot if they continue to drink. A firm attitude at this point has helped many of us.

Next they can be assured that you do not intend to lecture, moralize, or condemn; that if this was done formerly, it was because of misunderstanding. If possible, express a lack of hard feelings. At this point, it might be well to explain alcoholism, the illness. Say that you believe they are a gravely ill, with this qualification—being perhaps fatally ill, “Do you want to get well?” You ask, because many alcoholics, being warped and drugged, do not want to quit. Will they take every necessary step, submit to anything to get well, to stop drinking forever?

If the answer is yes, do they really mean it, or down inside do they think they are fooling you, and that after rest and treatment they will be able to get away with a few drinks now and then? We believe your employee should be thoroughly probed on these points. Be satisfied they are not deceiving themselves or you.

Whether you mention this book is a matter for your discretion. If they temporize and still think they can ever drink again, even beer, they might as well be discharged after the next bender which, if an alcoholic, they are almost certain to have. They should understand that emphatically. Either you are dealing with a person who can and will get well or you are not. If not, why waste time? This may seem severe, but it is usually the best course.

After satisfying yourself that they want to recover and will go to any extreme to do so, you may suggest a definite course of action. For most alcoholics who are drinking, or who are just getting over a spree, a certain amount of physical treatment is desirable, even imperative. The matter of physical treatment needs, of course, to be referred to your own doctor. Whatever the method, its object is to thoroughly clear mind and body of the effects of alcohol. In competent hands, this seldom takes long nor is it very expensive. An alcoholic will fare better if placed in such physical condition to think straight and no longer craves liquor. If you propose such a procedure, it may be necessary to advance the cost of treatment, but we believe it be made plain that any expense will later be deducted from their pay. It is better for them to feel fully responsible.

If your offer is accepted, you can point out that physical treatment is but a small part of the picture. Though you are providing the best possible medical attention, it should be understood that a change of heart is needed also. To get over drinking will require a transformation of thought and attitude. We all had to place recovery above everything, for without recovery we would have lost both home and business.

Can you have every confidence in their ability to recover? While on the subject of confidence, can you adopt the attitude that so far as

you are concerned this will be a strictly personal matter, that their alcoholic derelictions, the treatment about to be undertaken, will never be discussed without their consent? It might be well to have a long chat upon their return.

To return to the subject matter of this book: It contains full suggestions by which employees may solve their problem. To you, some of the ideas which it contains are novel. Perhaps you are not quite in sympathy with the approach we suggest. By no means do we offer it as the last word on this subject, but so far as we are concerned, it has worked with us. After all, are you not looking for results rather than methods? Whether your employees like it or not, they will learn the grim truth about alcoholism. That won't hurt them a bit, even though they do not go for this remedy.

We suggest you draw the book to the attention of the doctor who is to attend your patient during treatment. If the book is read the moment the patient is able, while acutely depressed, realization of his condition may come.

We hope the doctor will tell the patient the truth, whatever that happens to be. When presented with this volume it is best that no one tell them they must abide by its suggestions. That they must decide for himself.

You are betting, of course, that your changed attitude plus the contents of this book will turn the trick. In some cases it will, and in others it may not. But we think that if you persevere, the percentage of successes will gratify you. As our work spreads and our numbers increase, we hope your employees may be put in personal contact with some of us. Meanwhile, we are sure a great deal can be accomplished by the use of the book alone.

On your employees' return, talk with them. Ask them if they think they have the answer. If they feel free to discuss their problems with you, if they know you understand and will not be upset by anything ~~he wishes~~ they wish to say, they will probably be off to a fast start.

In this connection, can you remain undisturbed you are told shocking things? For example, a padded expense account or plans to take your best customers away from you. In fact, you may hear almost anything upon acceptance of our solution which, as you know, demands rigorous honesty. Can you charge this off as you would a bad account and start fresh? If you are owed money you may wish to make terms.

If his home situation comes up, you can undoubtedly make helpful suggestions. Can they talk frankly with you so long as they do not bear business tales or criticize associates? With this kind of employee such an attitude will command undying loyalty.

The greatest enemies of us alcoholics are resentment, jealousy, envy, frustration, and fear. Wherever men people are gathered together in business there will be rivalries and, arising out of these, a certain amount of office politics. Sometimes we alcoholics have an idea that people are trying to pull us down. Often this is not so at all. But sometimes our drinking will be used politically.

One instance comes to mind in which a malicious individual was always making friendly little jokes about an alcoholic's drinking exploits. In this way he was slyly carrying tales. In another case, an alcoholic was sent to a hospital for treatment. Only a few knew of it at first but, within a short time, it was billboarded throughout the entire company. Naturally this sort of thing decreased the man's chance of recovery. The employer can many times protect the victim from this kind of talk. The employer cannot play favorites but can always defend an employee from needless provocation and unfair criticism.

As a class, alcoholics are usually energetic people. They work hard and they play hard. Your alcoholic employees should be on their mettle to make good. Being somewhat weakened and faced with physical and mental readjustment to a life which knows no alcohol, they may overdo. You may have to curb their desire to work sixteen hours a day. You may need to encourage them to play once in a while. They may wish to do a lot for other alcoholics and something of the sort may come up during business hours. A reasonable amount of latitude will be helpful. This work is necessary to their sobriety.

After going along without drinking for a few months, you may be able to make use of their services with other employees who are giving you the alcoholic run-around—provided, of course, they are willing to have a third party in the picture. An alcoholic who has recovered, but holds a relatively unimportant job, can talk to another alcoholic with a better position. Being on a radically different basis of life, they will never take advantage of the situation.

Your recovering employees may be trusted. Long experience with alcoholic excuses naturally arouses suspicion. When next you get a "sick" call, you might jump to the conclusion that they are drunk. That is understandable. However, if they are, and are still trying to recover, they will tell you about it even if it means the loss of their job. For they know they must be honest if they would live at all. They will appreciate knowing you are not bothering your head about them, that you are not suspicious nor are you trying to run their lives so they will be shielded from temptation to drink. If they are conscientiously following the program of recovery they can go anywhere your business may call them.

In case they stumble, even once, you will have to decide whether to let them go. If you are sure they don't mean business, there is no doubt you should discharge them. If, on the contrary, you are sure they are doing their utmost, you may wish to give them another chance. But there is no need to feel under any obligation to keep them on, for your obligation has been well discharged already.

There is another thing you might wish to do. If your organization is a large one, your junior executives might be provided with this book. You might let them know you have no quarrel with the alcoholics of your organization. These juniors are often in a difficult position. Employees under them are frequently their friends. So, for one reason or another, they cover for them, hoping matters will take a turn for the better. They often jeopardize their own positions by trying to help

serious drinkers who should have been fired long ago, or else given an opportunity to get well.

After reading this book, a junior executive can go to such an employee and say approximately this, "Answer me this: Do you want to stop drinking or not? You put me on the spot every time you get drunk. It isn't fair to me or the firm. I have been learning something about alcoholism. If you are an alcoholic, you are mighty sick. You act like one. The firm wants to help you get over it, and if you are interested, there is a way out. If you take it, your past will be forgotten and the fact that you went away for treatment will not be mentioned. But if you cannot or will not stop drinking, I think you ought to resign."

Your junior executive may not agree with the contents of our book. That's not necessary, and often need not show it to the alcoholic prospect. But at least they may understand the problem better and will no longer be misled by ordinary promises. They will be able to take a position with such a person which is eminently fair and square. They will have no further reason for covering up an alcoholic employee.

It boils right down to this: No one need be fired just because they are alcoholic. If they want to stop, they can be afforded a real chance. If they cannot or do not want to stop, it is best for them to be discharged. The exceptions are few.

We think this method of approach will accomplish several things. It will permit the rehabilitation of good people. At the same time you will feel no reluctance to rid yourself of those who cannot or will not stop. Alcoholism may be causing your organization considerable damage in its waste of time, employees, and reputation. We hope our suggestions will help you plug up this sometimes-serious leak. We think we are sensible when we urge that you stop this waste and give your worthwhile employees a chance.

The other day an approach was made to the vice president of a large industrial concern. He remarked: "I'm mighty glad you fellows got over your drinking. But the policy of this company is not to interfere with the habits of our employees. If a man drinks so much that his job suffers, we fire him. I don't see how you can be of any help to us for, as you see, we don't have any alcoholic problem." This same company spends millions for research every year. Their cost of production is figured to a fine decimal point. They have recreational facilities. There is company insurance. There is a real interest, both humanitarian and business, in the well-being of employees. But alcoholism—well, they just don't believe they have it.

Perhaps this is a typical attitude. We, who have collectively seen a great deal of business life, at least from the alcoholic angle, had to smile at this gentleman's sincere opinion. He might be shocked if he knew how much alcoholism is costing his organization a year. That company may harbor many actual or potential alcoholics. We believe that managers of large enterprises often have little idea how prevalent this problem is. Even if you feel your organization has no alcoholic problem, it might pay to take another look down the line. You may make some interesting discoveries.

Of course, this chapter refers to alcoholics, sick and deranged people, deranged men. What our friend, the vice president, had in mind was the habitual or party drinker. As to them, his policy is undoubtedly sound, but he did not distinguish between such people and the alcoholic.

It is not to be expected that an alcoholic employee will receive a disproportionate amount of time and attention. They should not be made favorites. The right kind of employee, the kind who recovers, will not want this sort of thing. They will not impose. Far from it. They will work like the devil and thank you to their dying day.

Today I own a little company. There are two alcoholic employees, who produce as much as five normal salespeople. But why not? They have a new attitude, and they have been saved from a living death. I have enjoyed every moment spent in getting them straightened out.²⁷

²⁷ See Appendix VI—We shall be happy to hear from you if we can be of help.

A VISION FOR YOU

For most normal folks, drinking means conviviality, companionship, and colorful imagination. It means release from care, boredom, and worry. It is joyous intimacy with friends and a feeling that life is good. But not so with us in those last days of heavy drinking. The old pleasures are gone. They were but memories. Never could we recapture the great moments of the past. There was an insistent yearning to enjoy life as we once did and a heartbreaking obsession that some new miracle of control would enable us to do it. There was always one more attempt—and one more failure.

The less people tolerated us, the more we withdrew from society, from life itself. As we became subject of King Alcohol, shivering denizens of his mad realm, the chilling vapor that is loneliness settled down. It thickened, ever becoming blacker. Some of us sought out sordid places, hoping to find understanding companionship and approval. Momentarily we did—then would come oblivion and the awful awakening to face the hideous Four Horsemen—Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair. Unhappy drinkers who read this page will understand!

Now and then a serious drinker, being dry at the moment says, “I don’t miss it at all. Feel better. Work better. Having a better time.” As ex-problem drinkers, we smile at such a sally. We know our friend is like boy whistling in the dark to keep up his spirits. He fools himself. Inwardly he would give anything to take half a dozen drinks and get away with them. He will presently try the old game again, for he isn’t happy about his sobriety. He cannot picture life without alcohol. Some day he will be unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it. Then he will know loneliness such as few do. He will be at the jumping-off place. He will wish for the end.

We have shown how we got out from under. You say, “Yes, I’m willing. But am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring, and glum, like some righteous people I see? I know I must get along without liquor, but how can I? Have you a sufficient substitute?”

Yes, there is a substitute and it is vastly more than that. It is a fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous. There you will find release from care, boredom, and worry. Your imagination will be fired. Life will mean something at last. The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead. Thus we find the fellowship, and so will you.

“How is that to come about?” you ask. “Where can I find these people?”

You are going to meet these new friends in your own community. Near you, alcoholics are dying helplessly like people in a sinking ship. If you live in a large place, there are hundreds. High and low, rich and poor, these are future fellows of Alcoholics Anonymous. Among them you will make lifelong friends. You will be bound to them with new and wonderful ties, for you will escape disaster together and you will

commence shoulder to shoulder your common journey. Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life. You will learn the full meaning of "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

It may seem incredible that these people are to become happy, respected, and useful once more. How can they rise out of such misery, bad repute and hopelessness? The practical answer is that since these things have happened among us, it can happen. Should you wish it, above all else, and be willing to make use of our experience, we are sure it will happen. The age of miracles is still with us. Our own recovery proves that!

In the chapter "Working with Others" you gathered an idea of how we approach and aid others to find sobriety. Suppose now that through you several families have adopted this way of life. You will want to know more of how to proceed from that point. Perhaps the best way of treating you to a glimpse of your future will be to describe the early growth of the fellowship among us. Here is a brief personal account:

Many years ago, in 1935, I made a journey to a certain western city. From a business standpoint, my trip came off badly. Had I been successful in my enterprise, I would have been set on my feet financially which, at the time, seemed vitally important. But my venture wound up in a lawsuit and bogged down completely. The proceeding was shot through with much hard feeling and controversy.

Bitterly discouraged, I found myself in a strange place, discredited and almost broke. Still physically weak, and sober but a few months, I saw that my predicament was dangerous. I wanted so much to talk with someone, but whom?

One dismal afternoon I paced a hotel lobby wondering how my bill was to be paid. At one end of the room stood a glass covered directory of local churches. Down the lobby a door opened into an attractive bar. I could see the cheerful crowd inside. In there I would find companionship and release. Unless I took some drinks, I might not have the courage to scrape an acquaintance and would have a lonely weekend.

Of course, I couldn't drink, but why not sit hopefully at a table, a bottle of ginger ale before me? After all, had I not been sober six months now? Perhaps I could handle, say, three drinks—No more! Fear gripped me. I was on thin ice. Again, it was the old, insidious insanity—that first drink. With a shiver, I turned away and walked down the lobby to the church directory. Music and chatter still floated to me from the bar.

But what about my responsibilities—my family and the people who would die because they would not know how to get well, ah—yes, those other alcoholics? There must be many such in this town. I would phone a clergyman. My sanity returned.

Selecting a church at random from the directory I stepped into a booth and lifted the receiver.

My call to the clergyman led him me presently to a certain resident of the town, who, though formerly able and respected, was

then nearing the nadir of alcoholic despair. It was the usual situation; home in jeopardy, wife ill, children distracted, bills in arrears and standing damaged. He had a desperate desire to stop, but saw no way out, for he had earnestly tried many avenues of escape. Painfully aware of being somehow abnormal, the man did not fully realize what it meant to be alcoholic.

When our friend I related my experience, the man agreed that no amount of will power he might muster could stop his drinking for long. A complete surrender, he conceded, was absolutely necessary, but the price seemed high upon the basis suggested. He told how he lived in constant worry about those who might find out about his alcoholism. He had, of course, the familiar alcoholic obsession that few knew of his drinking. Why, he argued, should he lose the remainder of his business, only to bring still more suffering to his family by foolishly admitting his plight to people from whom he made his livelihood? He would do anything, he said, but that.

Being intrigued, however, he invited me to his home. Sometime later, and just as he thought he was getting control of his liquor situation, he went on a roaring bender. For him, this was the spree that ended all sprees. He saw that he would have to face his problems squarely and surrender to the fact that he needed help.

One morning he took the bull by the horns and set out to tell those he feared what his trouble had been. He found himself surprisingly well received and learned that many knew of his drinking. Stepping into his car, he made the rounds of people he had hurt. He trembled as he went about, for this might mean ruin, particularly to a person in his line of business.²⁸

At midnight he came home exhausted, but very happy. He has not had a drink since. As we shall see, he now means a great deal to his community, and the major liabilities of thirty years of hard drinking have been repaired in four.

But life was not easy for the two of us. Plenty of difficulties presented themselves. We saw that we must keep passing it on. One day we called up the head nurse of a local hospital. We explained our need and inquired if she had a first-class alcoholic prospect.

She replied, "Yes, we've got a corker. He's just beaten up a couple of nurses. Goes off his head completely when he's drinking. But he's a grand chap when he's sober, though he's been in here eight times in the last six months. Understand he was once a well-known lawyer in town, but just now we've got him trapped down tight."²⁹

Here was a prospect all right, but by the description, none too promising. One of us said, "Put him in a private room. We'll be down."

Two days later, a future fellow of Alcoholics Anonymous stared glassily at the strangers beside his bed. "Who are you fellows, and why this private room? I was always in a ward before."

I said, "We're giving you a treatment for alcoholism."

²⁸ Proctologist.

²⁹ This refers to Bill's and Dr. Bob's first visit to A.A. Number Three See the Pioneer Section. This resulted in A.A.'s first group, at Akron, Ohio, in 1935.

Hopelessness was written large on the man's face as he replied, "Oh, but that's no use. Nothing would fix me. I'm a goner. The last three times, I got drunk on the way home from here. I'm afraid to go out the door. I can't understand it."

For an hour, we told him about our drinking experiences. Over and over, he would say: "That's me. That's me. I drink like that."

We told the man in the bed of the acute poisoning from which he suffered, how it deteriorates the body of an alcoholic and warps his mind. There was much talk about the mental state preceding the first drink.

"Yes, that's me," said the sick man, "the very image. You fellows know your stuff all right, but I don't see what good it'll do. You fellows are somebody. I was once, but I'm a nobody now. From what you tell me, I know more than ever I can't stop." At this both of us burst into a laugh. Said the future Fellow Anonymous: "Damn little to laugh about that I can see."

We each spoke of our experience and told him about the course of action we carried out.

He interrupted: "I used to be strong for the church, but that won't fix it. I've prayed to God on hangover mornings and sworn that I'd never touch another drop but by nine o'clock I'd be boiled as an owl."

Next day found the prospect more receptive. He had been thinking it over. "Maybe you're right," he said. "If it worked for you, maybe it will work for me, too. I sure didn't get very far when I was trying to fight this booze racket alone."

On the third day the lawyer said he was perfectly willing to do anything necessary. His wife came, scarcely daring to be hopeful, though she thought she saw something different about her husband already.

That afternoon he put on his clothes and walked from the hospital a free man. He entered a political campaign, making speeches, frequenting men's gathering places of all sorts, often staying up all night. He lost the race by only a narrow margin. But he had found a way out of his affliction—and in finding a way out had found himself.

That was in June 1935. He never drank again. He too, has become a respected and useful member of his community. He has helped others recover and is a power in the church from which he was long absent.

So, you see, there were three alcoholics in that town who now felt they had to give to others what they had found or be sunk. After several failures to find others, a fourth turned up. He came through an acquaintance who had heard the good news. He proved to be a devil-may-care young fellow whose parents could not make out whether he wanted to stop drinking or not. They were deeply religious people, much shocked by their son's refusal to have anything to do with the Church. He suffered horribly from his sprees, but it seemed as if nothing could be done for him. He consented, however, to go to the hospital, where he occupied the very same room recently vacated by the lawyer.

He had three visitors. After a bit, he said, "The way you fellows put this makes sense. I'm ready to do business. I guess the old folks were right after all." So, one more was added to the Fellowship.

All this time I remained in that town. I was there three months. I now returned home, leaving behind my first acquaintances, the lawyer and the devil-may-care chap. These men had found something brand new in life. Though they knew they must help other alcoholics if they would remain sober, that motive became secondary. It was transcended by the happiness they found in giving themselves for others. They shared their homes, their slender resources, and gladly devoted their spare hours to fellow-sufferers. They were willing, by day or night, to place a new man in the hospital and visit him afterward. They grew in numbers. They experienced a few distressing failures, but in those cases they made an effort to bring the man's family into a new way of living, thus relieving much worry and suffering.

A year and six months later these three had succeeded with seven more. Seeing much of each other, scarce an evening passed that someone's home did not shelter a little gathering of men and women, happy in their release, and constantly thinking how they might present their discovery to some newcomer. In addition to these casual get-togethers, it became customary to set apart one night a week for a meeting to be attended by anyone or everyone interested in a new way of life. Aside from fellowship and sociability, the prime object was to provide a time and place where new people might bring their problems.

Outsiders became interested. One man and his wife placed their large home at the disposal of this strangely assorted crowd. This couple has since become so fascinated that they have dedicated their home to the work. Many a distracted wife has visited this house to find loving and understanding companionship among women who knew her problem, to hear from the lips of their husbands what had happened to them, to be advised how her own wayward mate might be hospitalized and approached when next he stumbled.

Many an alcoholic, yet dazed from their hospital experience, has stepped over the threshold of that home into freedom. Many an alcoholic who entered there came away with an answer. He succumbed to that happy crowd inside, who laughed at their own misfortunes and understood theirs. Impressed by those who visited him at the hospital, they capitulated entirely when, later, in an upper room of this house, they heard the story of some person whose experience closely tallied with their own. The expression the faces of the spouses, that indefinable something in the eyes of the, the stimulating and electric atmosphere of the place, conspired to let them know that here was haven at last.

The very practical approach to their problems, the absence of intolerance of any kind, the informality, the genuine democracy, the uncanny understanding which these people had were irresistible. They and their spouse would leave elated by the thought of what they could now do for some stricken acquaintance and their family. They knew

they had a host of new friends; it seemed they had known these strangers always. They had seen miracles, and one was to come to them.

Now, this house will hardly accommodate its weekly visitors, for they number sixty or eighty as a rule. Alcoholics are being attracted from far and near. From surrounding towns, families drive long distances to be present. A community thirty miles away has fifteen fellows of Alcoholics Anonymous. Being a large place, we think that someday its Fellowship will number many hundreds.³⁰

But life among Alcoholics Anonymous is more than attending gatherings and visiting hospitals. Cleaning up old scrapes, helping to settle family differences, explaining the disinherited son to his irate parents, lending money, and securing jobs for each other, when justified—these are everyday occurrences. No one is too discredited or has sunk too low to be welcomed cordially—if they mean business. Social distinctions, petty rivalries, and jealousies—these are laughed out of countenance. Being wrecked in the same vessel, being restored and united by a common malady, with hearts and minds attuned to the welfare of others, the things which matter so much to some people no longer signify much to them. How could they?

Under only slightly different conditions, the same thing is taking place in many eastern cities. In one of these there is a well-known hospital for the treatment of alcoholic and drug addictions. Six years ago one of our number was a patient there. Many of us have felt, for the first time, the power and unity within its walls. We are greatly indebted to the doctor in attendance there, for he, although it might prejudice his own work, has told us of his belief in ours.

Every few days this doctor suggests our approach to one of his patients. Understanding our work, he can do this with an eye to selecting those who are willing and able to recover. Many of us, former patients, go there to help. Then, in this eastern city, there are informal meetings such as we have described to you, where you may now see scores of members. There are the same fast friendships, there is the same helpfulness to one another as you find among our western friends. There is a good bit of travel between East and West and we foresee a great increase in this helpful interchange.

Some day we hope that every alcoholic who journeys will find a Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous at his destination. To some extent this is already true. Some of us are in sales and go about. Little clusters of twos and threes and fives of us have sprung up in other communities, through contact with our two larger centers. Those of us who travel drop in as often as we can. This practice enables us to lend a hand, at the same time avoiding certain alluring distractions of the road, about which any traveler can inform you.³¹

Thus we grow. And so can you, though you be but one person with this book in your hand. We I believe and hope it contains all you will need to begin.

³⁰ Written in 1939.

³¹ Written in 1939. As of 2019, there are more than 68,000 reported groups in the USA and Canada, with the estimated membership worldwide of over 2,000,000.

I know what you are thinking. You are saying to yourself: "I'm jittery and alone. I couldn't do that." But you can. To duplicate, with our experience, what we have accomplished is only a matter of willingness, patience, and labor.

We know of an A.A. member who was living in a large community. He had lived there but a few weeks when he found that the place probably contained more alcoholics per square mile than any city in the country. This was only a few days ago at this writing (1939). The authorities were much concerned. He got in touch with a prominent psychiatrist who had undertaken certain responsibilities for the mental health of the community. The doctor proved to be able and exceedingly anxious to adopt any workable method of handling the situation. So he inquired, what did our friend have on the ball?

Our friend proceeded to tell him. And with such good effect that the doctor agreed to a test among his patients and certain other alcoholics from a clinic which he attends. Arrangements were also made with the chief psychiatrist of a large public hospital to select still others from the stream of misery which flows through that institution.

So our fellow worker will soon have friends galore. Some of them may sink and perhaps never get up, but if our experience is a criterion, more than half of those approached will become fellows of Alcoholics Anonymous. When a few people in this city have found themselves and have discovered the joy of helping others to face life again, there will be no stopping until everyone in that town has had their opportunity to recover—if they can and will.

Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. More will be disclosed to you and to us. Ask what you can do each day for the alcoholic who is till sick. The answers will come if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that you have a firm foundation, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the great fact for us.

Abandon yourself to your recovery. Admit your faults to yourself and your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We will be with you in the fellowship of the spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the road of happy destiny.