

(This is another "pre-original manuscript" draft of chapters in the Big Book. Please notice that the order of these first two chapters are reversed. Also, part of the Rowland Hazard/Dr. Carl Jung story is moved to the front of "There Is A Solution", and the end of the same chapter mentions that they were planning for the next few chapters to be personal narratives. God bless and take it easy! - Barefoot Bill)

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
CHAPTER #1
THERE IS A SOLUTION

"I have never seen one single case in which alcohol-mindedness was established in the sense you have it, that ever recovered." These fateful words were spoken to a man we know, some seven years ago. The speaker was a noted doctor and psychologist having world eminence in his specialty. The men to whom he spoke, like many of us before and since, had searched the world for the solution of his alcoholic problem. He was a man of ability, good sense, and high character. For many years before his encounter with this noted doctor, he had floundered from one sanitarium to another. He had consulted several of the best known American psychologists. On their recommendations he had gone to Europe and confined himself for a year in an institution. There he was under the care of this celebrated physician.

Though many bitter experiences had given him ground for skepticism, he left the place with unusual confidence. He felt that his physical and mental condition was unusually good. Above all, he had acquired such a profound knowledge of the inner workings of his mind and its hidden springs, that relapse was unthinkable. Nevertheless, he was drunk in a few weeks. More baffling still, he could give no satisfactory explanation of why he became that way. So he went back to his doctor, whom he admired, and asked him point blank why he could not recover. Why was it that he who wished above all things to regain self control, who seemed quite rational and well balanced with respect to other problems, had proved to be non compos mentis with respect to alcohol? He begged the doctor to tell him the real truth, and he got it. In the doctor's judgment he was utterly hopeless; he could never regain his position in society and he would have to place himself permanently in an institution or hire a bodyguard if he expected to live long. That was a great physician's opinion.

But our friend lives, and is a free man. He does not need a bodyguard, nor is he confined. He can go anywhere on this earth without disaster, provided he remains willing to maintain a certain simple attitude. We, of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, know one hundred men who were as hopeless as our friend. They are free men also. They have an answer for this terrific problem that really works. We are ordinary Americans. All sections of this broad land and many of its occupations are represented. Among us are to be found many political, economic, social and religious backgrounds. We are a crowd of people who normally would mix like oil and water. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after shipwreck has been averted. Comradery, celebration, joyousness and democracy pervade the ship from steerage to Captains table. But unlike the feelings of a ship's passengers at such a time, our joy in escape from disaster does not abate as we go our several ways.

There are potent reasons why this is so. We have been through many shipwrecks and, at long last, there has been the final one at which it seemed we must certainly perish. We have been the victims of a common calamity. We collectively experienced almost every known variety of human misadventure and misery. We have inhabited sanitariums, insane asylums, and occasionally jails. We have felt the pangs of remorse as shadows deepened over our disintegrated lives and homes. We are sure hell promises no more exquisite mental and physical tortures than we have survived. Ask anyone who has flirted with delirium tremens. We have seen undertaking after undertaking, and ambition after ambition, wilted and snuffed out, usually, at the very point of success. Some of us have attempted self-destruction, and have felt sorry we failed in our attempts. In earlier years, most of us thought well of our abilities, our qualities and our futures. It has been hard to bear the dawning realization that there was no bearable future. Those successive smashing blows to our pride and self-sufficiency have been intolerable. Consequently, an important ingredient of the powerful cement which binds us is the feeling we have been victims of a common disaster.

However universal these troubles have been, they of themselves would never have bound us together, as we are now joined. The tremendous fact for every one of us has been the discovery of a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news we are confident this book will bear to those who suffer as we have.

An illness of this sort - and we have come to believe it an illness - involves those about us in a way that no other human sickness can. If a person has cancer, all are sorry for him, and no one is angry or hurt. Presently he dies honorably enough. After the anguish of parting has worn away, people murmur, "Wasn't it too bad about Jim." But with the alcoholic illness, there goes a seeming never-ending annihilation of all the things worth while in life. It encompasses all who are near and dear to the sufferer, the misunderstanding, fierce resentment, and financial insecurity.

Therefore we are certain this volume should attempt to inform, instruct and comfort all of those who are, or may be affected. This is pretty much everyone. As a group, we have had four years of intensive and unique experience on which to draw. During this time we have intimately touched some two hundred cases of acute alcoholism. The approach to these situations has been unusual. It has always consisted of men who have found the answer for themselves. They carry the message to others as a part of their own cure. Hardly a day passes that we are not in contact with those who are trying to rid themselves of an appalling state of affairs. We have found great satisfaction in the knowledge that we may be so happily and peculiarly used. Where one alcoholic approaches another upon the basis we are about to discuss, things happen and results follow which were formerly impossible. Highly competent psychologists who have dealt with us - often fruitlessly we are afraid - complain it is almost impossible to persuade an alcoholic to discuss his or her situation without reserve. Strangely enough, wives, parents and intimate friends usually find us more unapproachable than do the psychologist and the doctor.

On the contrary, an ex-alcoholic who has found this solution, who is properly armed with certain medical and psychiatric information, can generally win the complete confidence of another in a few hours. Until that high degree of understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished. The fact that the man who is making the approach has had the same difficulty, that he obviously knows what he is talking about, that his whole deportment shouts at the new prospect that here is a man with a real answer, that there are no fees to pay, no axes to grind, nor people to please, no lectures to be endured, no attitude of holier than thou, nor anything whatever except the sincere desire to be helpful; these are the conditions we have found necessary. After such an approach many take up their beds and walk again.

None of us makes a sole vocation of this work, nor do we think it would increase its effectiveness if we did. We feel that elimination of the liquor problem is but a beginning. A much more important demonstration of the principles upon which we became well lies before us in our respective homes, occupations and affairs. Every one of us spends much of his spare time in the sort of effort which we are going to describe to you. A few are fortunate enough to be so situated that they can give nearly all of our time. If we keep on the way we are going there is little doubt that much good will result. But the problem would hardly be scratched. Those of us who live in large cities are overcome by the reflection that within gunshot of us hundreds are dropping into oblivion this very minute. Many could surely recover if they had the opportunity we have enjoyed. How then shall we present the thing which has been so freely given us?

More harm than good might be done should a description of our work get into the ordinary channels of publicity in such a way as to involve our personal identities. We might be besieged by numbers of people who only imagine they wish to give up drinking, whose families think they ought to stop, who are badly impaired mentally or whose alcoholism is complicated by other difficult states. Though we dealt only with those cases who really want to recover we could not begin to handle them on a personal basis. There are not enough of us, nor have we accumulated the experience that would be necessary. Yet, the desire to get this message to the thousands who can use it bears down with much weight upon us all.

We have concluded it might be helpful to publish an anonymous volume such as you are about to read, setting forth the problem as it appears to us. We shall bring to bear upon it our combined experience and knowledge, which ought to suggest a useful program of action and attitude for everyone concerned in a drinking situation. Of necessity there must be much discussion in these pages of matters medical, psychiatric, social, and religious. We are aware that these subjects, from their very nature, are controversial. Nothing would please us so much as to write a book which would contain no basis for contention or argument. We shall do our utmost to achieve that ideal. Certain activities and attitudes have proved vital to the successful solution of our drinking problem. These, we think, ought not conflict with the views of honest men the world over, whatever their race, creed or color. This is the spirit in which we shall try to proceed, remembering always that we may be mistaken here and there on matters concerning which there can be honest differences of opinion. We are most anxious not to appear in the role of those who would preach or reform. We deem such attitudes ill befit the kind of people we have been and, to some extent, still are.

For example, it is surprising that most of us have not developed a downright hatred for John Barleycorn and all his works; that we have not become intolerant and impatient with those who like to drink. Many people sincerely believe that they should not be deprived of an age-old privilege and pleasure just because a lot of people are softened and made sick by it. Perhaps they are right. Some of us may differ but we all respect their views. We are sure we have a way of life which, if adopted generally, would render excessive drinking a stupid and impossible practice. Most of us sense strongly that real tolerance of other people's shortcomings and viewpoints, and a sincere respect for the opinions of mankind, are attitudes which enhance our usefulness to others. In the last analysis our very lives, as ex-alcoholics, depend upon the constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs.

If you have read this far, you have commenced to ask yourself why it is that all of us became so desperately ill from drinking. Doubtless you are still more curious to discover how and why, in the face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from an utterly hopeless condition of mind and body. If you are an alcoholic who wants to get over it, you are already beginning to say to yourself, "What do I have to do?" The main purpose of this book is to answer such questions specifically. We shall tell you what we have

done. Before going into a detailed discussion it may be well to summarize some points as we see them. How many time people have said to us: "I can take it or leave it alone." - "Why don't you drink like a gentleman or quit?" - "That fellow can't handle his liquor." - "Why don't you try beer and wine?" - "Lay off the hard stuff." - "His will power must be weak." - "He could stop it if he wanted to." - "She's such a sweet girl, I should think he'd stop for her." - "The doctor told him that if he ever drank again it would kill him, but there he is all lit up again."

Now these are commonplace expressions with respect to drinkers which we hear all the time. Back of them is a world of ignorance and misunderstanding. We see that those expressions pertain to people who react very differently to alcohol. We observe in them the moderate drinker who has little trouble in abandoning liquor altogether, if any good reason appears why he should do so. Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have only a bad habit which will gradually impair him physically and mentally. Perhaps it will cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason, such as ill health, falling in love, change of environment, the warning of a doctor becomes operative, this fellow can also stop. He may find it difficult and troublesome, and may discover it advantageous to get medical or psychiatric aid.

But what about the real alcoholic who may have started off as a moderate drinker, who may or may not become a continuous hard drinker, but who, at some stage of his drinking career, begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink? Here is a fellow who has been puzzling you, especially in his lack of control. He does absurd, incredible, tragic things while drinking. He is so often Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He is seldom pleasantly intoxicated. Almost always, he is more or less insanely drunk. His disposition while drinking does not square with the man you know when sober. When normal he may be one of the finest fellows in the world. Yet let him drink for a day, and he frequently becomes disgustingly, and even dangerously anti-social. He has a positive genius for getting tight at exactly the wrong moment, particularly when some important decision or engagement must be met. He is often perfectly sensible and well balanced concerning everything in the world, save liquor. With respect to that, he is incredibly dishonest and selfish. He often has ahead of him a promising career. No matter what his station in life, or his educational or intellectual rank, he often possesses special abilities, skills, and aptitudes. How many times have we seen him use these gifts to build up a promising prospect for his family and himself, then pull the

structure down on his head by a senseless series of sprees. He is the fellow who goes to bed so intoxicated he ought to sleep the clock around. Yet we find him feverishly searching early next morning for the bottle he misplaced the night before. If he can afford it, he may have liquor concealed all over his house to be absolutely sure no one gets his supply away from him to throw down the waste pipe.

Every business man's convention presents a like spectacle. Certain individuals are always found, going about from room to room in the early morning, shaking like the proverbial aspen leaf. They tell you they are dying for a drink, and can't wait until the bar opens. This is very annoying to their brother businessmen who may have been twice as indiscreet the night before. The average tired delegate wants to sleep. On awakening he has no more inconvenience than a headache and the foolish feeling he was much too skittish last evening. But not so with alcoholics, no matter how drunk when they get to bed.

As matters grow worse for our alcoholic friend, he begins to use a combination of high-powered sedative and liquor to quiet his nerves so he can go to work. Then comes those days when he simply cannot make it, and he gets drunk all over again. Finally he begins to appear at hospitals and sanitariums, or he gets in with his doctor who may give him a dose of morphine or some high voltage sedative to taper off with. This is by no means a comprehensive picture of the true alcoholic, as our behavior patterns vary considerably.

Perhaps this description should identify him roughly in the reader's mind.

But you are asking yourself, "Why does he behave like this? If hundreds of experiences have shown him that one drink means another debacle with all its attendant suffering and humiliation, how is it he takes that one drink? What has become of the common sense and will power that he sometimes displays with respect to other matters?" Perhaps there never will be a full answer to your questions. Psychiatrists and medical men vary considerably in their opinions as to why the alcoholic reacts differently than other people. No one is sure why, once a certain point is reached, all of the king's horses and all of the king's men can seem to do nothing about it whatever. We cannot answer that riddle. But we have, out of our experience and observations of each other, arrived at some pretty definite conclusions, which in the main, we think correct. While they may not entirely square with what others say, they do meet our needs, and they do make sense to us. We are positive that nine out of ten serious drinkers who honestly review their own histories will agree with us.

To begin with, it is self evident that the reaction of our bodies and nervous systems to alcohol has become radically different, in fact abnormal as compared with the ordinary person; or with even many hearty drinkers. It may take ten or fifteen years of stiff drinking to bring about this condition in a body predisposed to alcoholism, though a very short period does the trick sometimes. Most of us now realize that our reaction to alcohol was somewhat abnormal from the very beginning; that we were actually "hooked" and sickened by it long before grave symptoms, or incapacity to attend to business put in an appearance. The nature of these symptoms, and the bodily conditions we think lie back of them, we shall cover later on. It is enough

now to say that we believe ourselves to have been sick, and not just foolish, when we have been drinking. We know that while the alcoholic keeps away from drink as he may do for months or years, he does not suffer from a bodily malady. Equally positive are we, that once he takes any alcohol whatever into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop. We believe the experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confirm that.

These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink, thereby setting in motion the terrible cycle that everyone has seen so many times. Therefore, the real problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body. If you ask him why he started on that last bender the chances are he will offer you

any one of a hundred alibis, many of which we shall list further on. Sometimes these excuses have a certain plausibility, but none of them really makes sense in the light of the havoc an alcoholic's drinking bout creates. They sound to you like the philosophy of the man who, having a headache, beats himself on the head with a hammer so that he couldn't feel the ache. If you draw this fallacious reasoning to the attention of an alcoholic, he will laugh it off, or become irritated and refuse to talk. Once in a great while he may tell the truth. And the truth, strange to say, is usually that he has no more idea why he took that first drink than you have. It is true that numbers of drinkers have excuses with which they are satisfied some of the time. But in their hearts they really do not know why they do it. Once this malady has a real hold, they are a baffled lot. Nearly all of them have the obsession that somehow, some day, they will beat the game. But deep down in them, they often suspect they are down for the count.

How surely they have already gone with the wind, few of them realize. In a vague way their families and friends sense that these people are abnormal. But everybody hopefully waits the day when the sufferer will rouse himself from his lethargy and assert his power of will.

The tragic truth is that, if the man be a real alcoholic, the happy day will never arrive. In the early part of this chapter, we cited the case of a man who was frankly told of his utter hopelessness by a physician who is possibly the world's leading authority on the subject. At a certain point in the drinking of every alcoholic, he passes into a state where the most powerful desire to stop drinking is of absolutely no avail. Let us again emphasize that this unhappy situation has already arrived in virtually every case, long before it is suspected. The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice with respect to drink. Our so-called will power with respect to that area of thinking and action becomes practically non-existent.

We are unable at certain times, no matter how well we understand ourselves, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. The almost certain consequences that follow taking a glass of beer do not crowd into the mind and deter us. If these thoughts occur, they are hazy, and become readily supplanted with the old threadbare idea that this time we shall handle ourselves like other people. There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that would keep one from putting his hand on a hot stove. The alcoholic says to himself in the most casual way: "It won't burn me this time, so here's how." Or perhaps he doesn't think at all. How many times have some of us begun to drink in this nonchalant way, and then after the third or fourth, pounded on the bar and said to ourselves, "For God's sake, how did I ever get started again," only to have that thought supplanted by

"Well, I'll stop with the sixth drink," or "What's the use anyhow?"

When this sort of thinking is fully established in an individual with alcoholic tendencies, he has become, in our opinion, just like our friend who consulted the great doctor. He has placed himself beyond all human aid, and unless locked up, is virtually certain to die, or go permanently insane. It is a grim business indeed. These stark and ugly facts which have been confirmed by legions of alcoholics throughout history. But for the grace of God, there would have been one hundred more convincing demonstrations among us. It is amazing how many want to stop, but cannot.

There is a solution, and how glorious to us was the knowledge of it. Almost none of us liked the self searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much of heaven right here on this good old earth, and have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence that none of us dreamed could be a fact.

And the great fact is just this, and no less; that we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences, which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. It works! The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that the Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is to us a marvel. He has commenced to accomplish those things, which by no stretch of the imagination could we do by ourselves.

If by chance you are, or have begun to suspect that you are, an alcoholic, we think you have no middle-of-the-road solution. You are in a position where life is becoming impossible, and if you have passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, you have but two alternatives. One is to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best you can. Or you can surely

find what we have found, if you honestly want to, and are willing to make the effort. After years of living on a basis which now seems wholly false, we did not become rightly related to our Creator in a minute. None of us have found God in easy lessons, but He can be found by all who are willing to put the task ahead of all else.

Some of our alcoholic readers may think they can do without God. Let us complete the conversation our friend was having with the European man of medicine. As you will recall, the doctor was saying, "I have never seen one single case in which alcohol mindedness was established in the sense you have it that ever recovered." Naturally our friend felt at that moment as though the gates of hell had closed on him with a clang. He said to the doctor, "Is there no exception?" The doctor answered, "Yes, there is just one.

Exceptions to cases such as yours have been occurring now and then since early times. Sporadically, here and there, once in a while, alcoholics have had what are called vital religious 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 have been employing are successful, but they are never successful with an alcoholic of your type."

Upon hearing this, our friend was somewhat relieved, for he reflected that after all he was a good church member. His hope was promptly dashed by the doctor, who told him that his faith and his religious convictions were very good as far as they went, but that in his case they did not spell the vital experience so absolutely imperative to displace his insanity with respect to matters alcoholic.

Our friend found himself in a hideous dilemma. So have we, when it began to look to us as though we must have something or go off the deep end. Our friend finally had such an experience. We in our turn sought the same happy outcome, with all of the ardor of drowning men clutching at straws. But what seemed at first a flimsy reed has proved to be the loving and powerful hand of God. A new life has been given us. Or, if you prefer, a design for living that really works.

The distinguished American psychologist, William James, once wrote a book, "Varieties of Religious Experience", which indicates a multitude of ways in which men have found God. As a group, or as individuals, we have no desire to convince anyone that God can be discovered only in some particular way. Anyone who talked with us would soon be disabused of the idea. If what we have learned, and felt, and seen, means anything at all, it indicates that all of us, whatever our race, creed or color, are the children of a living Creator, with whom we may form a new relationship upon simple and understandable terms the moment any of us become willing enough and honest enough to do so. For those having religious affiliations there is nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. All such testify to that effect. Hence there is no friction in our simple common denominator.

We have concluded that it is no concern of ours as a group with what religious bodies we shall identify ourselves as individuals. We feel that this should be an entirely one's own affair, which one is bound to decide for the best in the light of his past associations, or his present choice. Not all of us have joined religious bodies, but we are mostly agreed that by so joining, one would be taking a step toward new growth and availability for God's purpose.

In the next few chapters are personal narratives. Each individual in these stories describes in his own language and from his own point of view the way in which he found or rediscovered the living God. We shall tell a number of these, that the reader may get a fair cross section, and a clear cut idea of what has really happened. We hope no one will be disturbed that these accounts contain so much self revelation of the kind some people might feel in bad taste. Non-alcoholic readers should consider that many men and women desperately in need may see these pages. It is only by disclosing ourselves and our problems to complete view that any of them will be persuaded to say, "Yes, I am one of them; I must have this thing."

CHAPTER #2 BILL'S STORY

At the age of ten I went to live with my grandfather grandmother - their ancestors settled the section of Vermont in which I was to grow up. Grandfather was a retired farmer and lumberman; he nurtured me on a vigorous pioneering tradition. I see, now, that my grandfather was the kind of man who helped make America.

Little did anyone guess I was to be of the war generation, which would squander the savings, the pioneering traditions and the incredible stamina of your grandfather and mine. Ambitious but undisciplined - that I was. There was a genius for postponing, evading and shirking; but a certain dogged obstinacy persistence drove me to succeed at special undertakings upon which my heart was set.

Especially did I reveal in attacking the difficult or the impossible. Grandfather, for instance, that no one but an Australian could make and throw the boomerang. No school work was done, no wood box filled and little sleep was there, until a boomerang had circled the church steeple, returning to almost decapitated him.

Have accomplished this, my interest ceased.

So it was with my ambition to be a ball player, for I was finally elected captain of the team at the little Seminary I attended after leaving country school. Someone told me I could never sing, so I took up voice until I had appeared in a recital, then, as with the boomerang, my interest ended abruptly. I had commenced to fuss with the violin. This became such an obsession that athletics, school work, and all else went by the board much to everyone's consternation. I carried fiddling so far I failed to graduate. It was most embarrassing, for I was president of the Senior Class. So collapsed a certain legend of infallibility I had built around myself. Repairing this failure, I attempted to enter a leading technical school. Because of fierce enthusiasms I had displayed for matters chemical and electrical, it was assumed I was destined to become an engineer. At Boston, I failed the entrance examinations dismally. My people were heartbroken and my self sufficiency got another severe deflation.

Finally I commenced electrical engineering at an excellent military college, where it was fervently hoped I would get disciplined. No such thing happened. As usual I had good grades when interested but often failed when not. There was an illuminating instance concerning my calculus teacher. Not one formula would I learn, until all of the theory underlying the subject was made clear. At the library, I pored over the researches of Leibnitz and Newton, whose genius had made calculus possible. Loving controversy, I argued much with my instructor, who quite properly gave me a zero, for I had solved only the first problem of the course. At this juncture, and quite conveniently for me, the United States decided to go to war.

We students bolted, almost to a man, for the First Officers Training Camp at Plattsburgh. I was commissioned second lieutenant of artillery, electing that branch rather than aviation or infantry. For when I lay in my bunk at night, I had to confess I did not want to be killed. This suspicion of cowardice bothered me, for it couldn't be reconciled with the truly exalted patriotism which took possession when I hadn't time to think. Later, under fire abroad, I was relieved to learn I was like most men: scared enough, but willing to see it through. I was assigned to a post on the New England coast. The place is famous for its Yankee trading and whaling traditions.

Two far reaching events took place here. I married; had my first drink and liked it. My wife was city bred. She represented a way of life for which I secretly longed. To be her kind meant fine houses, servants, gay dinners, cultivated conversation and a much envied sophistication. I often felt a woeful lack of poise and polish. These inferiorities were later to drive me cityward in quest of success, as I suppose they have many a country boy.

War fever ran high, and I was flattered that the first citizens of town took us to their homes and made me feel comfortable and heroic. So here was love, applause, adventure, war; moments sublime with intervals hilarious. I was part of life at last.

My gaucheries and ineptitudes magically disappeared, as I discovered the Siphon and the Bronx Cocktail. Strong warnings and the prejudices of my people concerning drink evaporated.

Then came parting, with its bizarre mixture of sadness, high purpose, the strange elation which goes with adventure having fatal possibilities. Many of us sailed for 'Over There'. Loneliness seized me, only to be whisked away by my charming companion, Prince Alcohol.

We were in England. I stood in Winchester Cathedral with head bowed, in the presence of something I had never felt before. Where now was the God of the preachers? Across the Channel thousands were perishing that day. Why did He not come? Suddenly in that moment of darkness - He was there! I felt an enveloping comforting Presence. Tears stood in my eyes. I had glimpsed the great reality.

Much moved, I wandered through the Cathedral yard. My attention was caught by a 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."

My mood changed. A squadron of fighters roared overhead. I cried to myself, "Here's to Adventure". The feeling of being in the great presence disappeared.

Homecoming arrived at last. Twenty two and a veteran of foreign wars! I fancied myself a leader, for had not the men of my battery given me a special token of appreciation? Leadership, I imagined, would place me at the head of vast enterprises which I would manage with the assurance of a great pipe organist at his stops and keys.

Soon enough, I was brought to earth. A position at half the army pay, from which I was presently discharged as a poor and rebellious bookkeeper, was the first salutation of unsentimental industry. My resentment was so great I nearly turned Socialist; which in Vermont is downright treason. Humiliation and more came when my wife got a much better job and commenced to pay the bills. I fancied my new city friends were snickering at my predicament. Unwillingly, I had to admit, that I was not trained for anything. What then to do?

Characteristically, I nearly failed my law course. At one of the finals I was too drunk to think or write. Though drinking was not continuous, it frequently disturbed my wife. We had long talks, when I would still her forebodings by saying men of genius conceived their vast projects when jingled; that the most majestic constructions of philosophic thought were so derived.

When the law course was done, I knew the profession was not for me. The inviting maelstrom of The Street had me in its grip. Business and financial leaders were my heroes. Reminiscent of the boomerang episode, I became wholly absorbed and fascinated. Out of this tissue of drink and speculation I commenced to forge the weapon that one day would turn in its flight, and all but cut me to ribbons.

Both at work, and living modestly, my wife and I saved \$1,000.00. It went into utility stocks then cheap and unpopular. I rightly imagined that they would some day have a great rise. Failing to persuade my broker friends to send me out looking over factories and managements, my wife and I decided to go anyhow. I had a theory people lost money in stocks by not knowing markets, managements and the ideas at work in a given situation. I was to discover lots more reasons later on.

We quit our positions and off we romped on a motorcycle and side car stuffed with a tent, blankets, change of clothes, and three huge volumes of a financial reference service. Our friends almost wanted a lunacy commission appointed. Perhaps they were right. There had been some success at speculation, so we had a little money though we once worked on a farm for a month to avoid drawing on our capital. It was the last honest manual work for many a day. The whole Eastern United States was covered in a year. At the end of it, strangely enough, my reports sent back to Wall Street procured for me a position there, and the use of what seemed to me a large sum of money. The exercise of an option brought in more money and we had several thousand dollars profit.

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 soothing and swelling. Drink was taking an important and exhilarating part in my life. Loud talk in the jazz places uptown - we all spent in thousands, and chattered in millions. Scoffers could scoff and be damned. Of course they didn't, and I made a host of fair weather friends.

My drinking had assumed more serious proportions, going on all day and nearly every night. Remonstrance of my cooler associates terminated in a row, and I became a lone wolf. There were many unhappy scenes in our apartment. This, by the way, was large, for I had rented two, and had the wall between knocked out. There had been no great infidelity. Loyalty to my wife, and sometimes extreme drunkenness, kept me out of those scrapes.

In 1929 I contracted golf fever. That is a terrible illness. We went at once to the country, my wife to applaud while I overtook Walter Hagen. Golf permitted drinking both by day and 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 seen upon the well-to-do. With amused skepticism the local banker watched me whirl fat checks in and out of his till.

Abruptly in October, 1929, the whirling movement ceased. Hell had broken 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 close. The ticker still clattered. I was staring at an inch of the tape. It bore the inscription PFK - 32. It had been 52 that morning. I was dome and so were many friends. The papers said men were already jumping to death from those towers of Babel that were High Finance. That disgusted me. Going back to the bar I felt glad I would not jump. My friends had dropped several millions since ten o'clock - so what? Tomorrow was another day. As I drank, the old fierce determination to win came back.

Next morning I called a friend in Montreal. He had plenty of money left, so he thought I had better come up. By the following spring we were living in our accustomed style. It was like Napoleon returning from Elba. No St. Helena for me. But I soon excelled as a serious and frivolous drinker, and my generous friend had to let me go. This time we stayed broke.

We went to live with my parents-in-law. I found a job; then lost it through a brawl with a taxi driver. Mercifully no one knew I was to have no real employment for five years nor hardly draw a sober breath. My wife began to work in a department store, coming home exhausted to find me drunk. I became a hanger on at brokerage places, less and less desired because of my habits.

Liquor ceased to be a luxury; it became a necessity. "Bathtub" 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 the bars and delicatessen. Endlessly this went on, and I began to wake early, shaking violently. A tumbler full of gin followed by half a dozen bottles of beer would be required if I ate any breakfast. I still thought I could control the situation. There were periods of sobriety which would renew my wife's hope.

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

Then I had 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. I went on a prodigious bender, and that

chance vanished.

I woke up. This had to be stopped. I saw I could not take even 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 pushed a drink my way, and I had taken it. Was I crazy? I began to wonder, for such an appalling lack of perspective came near being just that.

Sticking to my resolve I tried again. Some time passed. Confidence began to be replaced by cocksureness. I could laugh at the bars. Now I had what it takes! One day I walked into a place to telephone. In no time I was beating on 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. I did just that.

The remorse, horror and hopelessness of the next morning is unforgettable. The courage to do battle was not there. My brain raced uncontrollably. 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 is a marvelous mechanism, for mine endured this agony two years more. 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 thru 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 without the usual penalty. This combination soon landed me on the rocks, and my wife saw something had to be done and quickly. People feared for my sanity, and so did I. When drinking, which was almost always, I could eat little or nothing. I was forty pounds under weight.

My brother-in-law is a physician. Through his kindness I was placed in a nationally known hospital for the mental and physical rehabilitation of alcoholics. Under the so-called bella donna treatment my brain cleared. Hydro therapy and mild exercise helped much. Best of all, I met a kind doctor who explained, that though selfish and foolish, I had also been seriously ill, bodily and mentally. It relieved me somewhat to learn that in alcoholism, the will is amazingly weakened concerning drink, though frequently remaining 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 high. I went to town regularly and 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 ski jump. After a time I returned to the hospital. This was the finish, the curtain, so 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 give me over to the undertaker or the asylum. It was not necessary 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 out 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? That career I'd set my heart upon, that pleasant vista, was shut out forever. No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self pity. Quicksand underlay me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. King Alcohol was master.

Trembling, I stepped from the place a broken man. Fear sobered me for a bit. Then came the insidious insanity of that first drink, and on Armistice Day, 1934, I was off again. Everyone became resigned to the certainty that I would have to be shut up somewhere, or stumble along to a miserable end. How dark it is before morning comes! In reality, this 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 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 friend 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. He had been committed for alcoholic insanity. So rumor had it. I wondered how he had escaped. Of course he would have dinner. Then I could drink openly with him. Unmindful of his welfare, I

thought only of recapturing the spirit of other days. There was that time we had chartered an airplane to complete a jag. Another glass stirred my fancy. His coming was an oasis in this dreary desert of futility. The very thing - an oasis! Drinkers are like that.

The door opened. 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.

"Not now" he said.

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."

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. The old boy was on fire alright. But bless his heart, let him rant! Besides, my gin would last longer.

But he did no ranting. In quite a matter of fact way, he related how two men 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 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. The sound of the preacher's voice which one could hear on still Sundays, way over there on the hillside; the proffered temperance pledge I never signed; my grandfather's good natured contempt of some church fold and their doings; his insistence that the spheres really had their music; 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; such recollections welled up from the past. They made me swallow hard. That war-time day in old Winchester Cathedral came back again. In a power greater than myself I had always believed. I had often pondered these things. I was not an atheist. Few people really are, for that means blind faith in an illogical proposition; that this universe originated in a cipher, and aimlessly rushes nowhere. My intellectual heroes, the chemists, the astronomers, even the evolutionist, suggested vast laws and forces at work. Despite contra indications, I had little doubt that a might purpose and rhythm underlay all. How could there be so much of precise and immutable law, and no intelligence? I simply had to believe in a Spirit of the Universe, which knew neither time nor limitation. But that was as far as I had gone.

With preachers, 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.

Of Christ, I conceded the certainty of a great man, not too much followed by those who claimed Him. His moral teaching - most excellent. 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 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.

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. In effect he 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? Obviously it had not. There had been no more power in him than there was in me at that minute; and this was none at all.

That floored me. It began to look as though religious people were right, after all. Here was 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; here sat a miracle directly across the kitchen table, straight out of the here and now.

I saw that my friend was much more than inwardly reorganized. It went deeper than that. He was on a completely different footing. His roots grasped a new soil.

Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans, when we want Him enough. At long last I saw; I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view.

The real significance of my experience in the Cathedral burst upon me. For a brief moment, I had needed and wanted God. There was a humble willingness to have Him with me - and He came. But soon the sense of His presence had been blotted out by worldly clamors - mostly those within myself. And so it had been ever since. It was simple as that. How blind I had been.

At the hospital I was separated from King Alcohol for the last time. Treatment seemed wise then, for I showed signs of delirium when I stopped drinking.

There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then I 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 Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins of omission and commission, and became willing to have my new-found Friend

take them away, root and branch. 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 as He would have me. 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.

My friend promised when those things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of life 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, were the essential requirements.

Simple but not easy; a price had to be paid. It really meant the obliteration of self. I had to quit playing God. I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all.

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 know. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. God comes to most men gradually, but His impact on me was sudden and profound.

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

He 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 now sees many men have such experiences. He knows 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 had emphasized the absolute necessity of my demonstrating these principles in all my affairs. Particularly was it imperative to work with others, as he had worked with me. Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work he would surely drink again, and if he drank he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that!

My wife and I abandoned ourselves with enthusiasm to the idea of helping other alcoholics to a solution of their problems. It was fortunate, for my old business associates remained skeptical for a year and a half, during which I found little work. I was not too well at the time, and was plagued by waves of self-pity and resentment. This sometimes nearly drove me back to drink. 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 feeling terrible. On talking to a man there, I would be amazingly lifted up and set on my feet. It is a design for living that works in the tough spots.

We 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 one hundred 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 men 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 human misadventure and misery which has not been overcome among us. In a Western city and its environs, there are sixty of us and our families. We often meet informally at our houses, so that newcomers may find what they seek. Gatherings of twenty to sixty are common. We are growing in numbers and power.

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 my home. He could not, or would not see what we beheld.

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

Most of us feel we need look no further for Utopia, nor even for Heaven. We have it with us on this good old Earth, right here and now. Each day that simple talk in my kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men.