

THE ALCOHOLIC FOUNDATION

For many years now the Prohibition movement has been dear to the hearts of the Christian community, but the desire has been unattained. Without going into the pros and cons of that, it might be very worthwhile, and interesting to think of another Movement which is quietly, but successfully, reforming many drunkards.

It arose in America through the conversion of a man whose life was given to drink and who decided that others would have the same sort of freedom he had attained. In November, 1934, he and a few other reformed drunkards established what is now well known as the Alcoholic Foundation—the membership is limited to those who have been completely hopeless about their recovery. The membership is now over 12,000 and there are branches in 325 American communities. The basis on which cures are made is a spiritual one and the Movement has the support of all the churches. In 1939 two hospitals in New Jersey released 17 alcoholics—11 had no relapse whatever and none returned to hospital for treatment.

Probably the most interesting feature of the Movement is that a condition of membership requires those who have been converted to set to work to free others from the curse. In doing so they make their own recovery permanent. At a meeting of the Medical Society in New York in May, 1944, one of the originators gave a talk on the work of the Foundation and showed how religion and medicine co-operated to obtain excellent results.

He explained the 12 steps which were laid down as part of the cure—here they are:—

1.—We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

2.—Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3.—Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God **as we understood Him.**

4.—Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5.—Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6.—Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7.—Humbly asked Him to remove 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 persons 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 prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God **as we understood Him**, praying only for knowledge of

His will for us and the power to carry that out.

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

This doctor concluded his address with these words—"God grant us the serenity to accept things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference." One of the leading doctors said they had heard a truly moving and eloquent address and paid tribute to the influence of religion in achieving what medicine alone could not do. Other doctors described how branches of the Foundation were working in conjunction with doctors.

Dr. Harry Tiebout, a well-known American psychiatrist, described his amazement at the successful cure of a woman who was still remaining dry after four years.

Many of those who are cured experience highly emotional conversion—in others the change takes place more gradually. All are agreed that without a strong religious element permanent cure is not possible.

There are many stories of the struggle men and women have had in the battle against alcohol. They have tried everything, promised again and again not to touch any more liquor—but again and again they have fallen victims. The Alcoholics Anonymous does not get discouraged but sticks close to the men and women till they find the answer in God and get the victory. There is one story of a woman who was brought up in a home where every material advantage was given her. She married a man who was an alcoholic and soon had only contempt for him. Then she decided to go her own way, and that meant a life of selfishness and gay parties with plenty of alcohol. She had been a quiet, shy and sensitive girl, but drink made her the very opposite. She went into a business of her own but soon found that she was having to drink in the daytime and her business was slipping away from her. At last she had a mental breakdown and she was told by the doctor that she must never touch drink again. To use her words she said she "couldn't afford to believe him." One day while in a sanitarium something happened which roused her anger to raging point. While she was fuming her eyes lighted on a page of a book lying on her bed and the words "We cannot live with anger" seemed to hit her. She says "Something crumpled—and the light streamed in. I wasn't trapped. I wasn't helpless. I was **free.**" Later she went to a meeting to meet some of the Alcoholics Anonymous and, to use her words, "I went trembling into a house in Brooklyn filled with

strangers . . . and found I had come home at last, to my own kind. There is another meaning for the Hebrew word that in the King James version of the Bible is translated "salvation." It is "to come home." I had found my salvation. I wasn't alone any more."

She went on to say, "I had found friends, understanding friends who often knew what I was thinking and feeling better than I knew myself, and didn't allow me to retreat into my prison of loneliness and fear over a fancied slight or hurt. We all had hundreds of character traits, of fears and phobias, likes and dislikes, in common . . . They knew what to do about those black abysses that yawned ready to swallow me when I felt depressed or nervous. . . . I put into practice more and more of the twelve steps. **It worked!**"

From such a story it is easy to see how much more effectively an ex-alcoholic who has found the answer through a spiritual experience can give a practical helping hand to a drunkard who really does want to be freed from the curse of drink. Let us remember that an ex-alcoholic knows the pitfalls and temptations and in his dealing with a drunkard can hold out, not only a helping hand, but give understanding which is unknown by the majority of people.

Alcoholics are sick people and are in need of care, just as much as the person with a broken leg—more so, probably, because in the larger number of cases it is a sickness of the mind—a cover up of inferiority, anxiety, worry, frustration and other things, and so much more difficult to aid. Christ came to "heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised." Let us encourage then, the converted drunkard to follow out the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, and go out into the world seeking out his fellow victims, presenting Christ the Saviour to them as a Victor who can and will, help them to be overcomers of the evil of the drink trade.



ALCOHOL AND GENIUS.

Edgar Allan Poe drank, to his own ruin, but he did his work during periods of sobriety. One of his friends said of him, "one drink with him was like hitting a fine Swiss watch with a hatchet."

Edwin Booth was a periodical drinker but he was incapable of mental concentration after one drink of brandy.

Jack London drank himself into despair and a suicide's grave.

Burns, the poet, was a victim of alcoholism.

No wonder that Upton Sinclair says, "Alcohol is the greatest trap which life has set for the feet of a genius."

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