

THE SEVEN MONTH SLIP



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AT FOURTEEN years of age, when I should have been at home under the supervision of my parents, I was in the United States army serving a one year enlistment. I found myself with a bunch of men none too good for a fourteen year old kid who passed easily for eighteen. I transferred my hero-worshipping to these men of the world. I suppose the worst damage done in that year in the army barracks was the development of an almost unconscious admiration for their apparently jolly sort of living.

Once out of uniform I went to Mexico where I worked for an oil company. Here I learned to take on a good

cargo of beer and hold it. Later I rode the range in the Texas cow country and often went to town with the boys to "whoop it up on payday." By the time I returned to my home in the middle west I had learned several patterns of living, to say nothing of a cock-sure attitude that I needed no advice from anyone.

The next ten years are sketchy. During this time I married and established my own home and everything was lovely for a time. Soon I was having a good time getting around the law in speakeasies. Oh yes, I outsmarted our national laws but I was not quite successful in evading the old moral law.

I was working for a large industrial concern and had been promoted to a supervisory job. In spite of big

parties, I was for three or four years able to be on the job the next morning. Then gradually the hangovers became more persistent and I found myself not only needing a few shots of liquor before I could go to work at all, but finally found it advisable to stay at home and sober up by the taper-off method. My bosses tried to give me some good advice. When that didn't help they tried more drastic measures, laying me off without pay. They covered up my too frequent absences many times in order to keep them from the attention of the higher officials in the company.

My attitude was that I could handle my liquor whenever I wanted to go about it seriously, and I considered my absences no worse than those of other employees and officials who

were getting away with murder in their drinking.

One does not have to use his imagination much to realize that this sort of drinking is hard on the matrimonial relationship. After proving myself neither faithful nor capable of being temperate, my wife left me and obtained a judicial separation. This gave me a really good excuse to get drunk.

In the years 1933 and 1934 I was fired several times, but always got my job back on my promises to do better. On the last occasion I was reduced to the labor gang on the plant. I made a terrific effort to stay sober and prove myself capable of better things. I succeeded pretty well and one day I was called into the production chief's office and told I had met with the approval of the

executive department and to be ready to start on a better job.

This good news seemed to justify a mild celebration with a few beers. Exactly four days later I reported for work only to find that they too knew about the "mild" celebration and that they decided to check me out altogether. After a time I went back and was assigned to one of the hardest jobs in the factory. I was in bad shape physically and after six months of this, I quit, going on a drunk with my last pay check.

Then I began to find that the friends with whom I had been drinking for some time seemed to disappear. This made me resentful and I found myself many times feeling that everybody was against me. Bootleg joints became my hangouts. I sold my books, car, and even clothing in

order to buy a few drinks.

I am certain that my family kept me from gravitating to flophouses and gutters. I am eternally thankful to them that they never threw me out or refused me help when I was drinking. Of course, I didn't appreciate their kindness then, and I began to stay away from home on protracted drinking spells.

Somehow my family heard of two men in town who had found a way to quit drinking. They suggested that I contact these men but I retorted "If I can't handle my liquor with my own will power then I had better jump over the viaduct."

Another of my usual drinking spells came on. I drank for about ten days with no food except coffee before I was sick enough to start the battle

back to sobriety with the accompanying shakes, night sweats, jittery nerves, and horrible dreams. This time I felt that I really needed some help. I told my mother she could call the doctor who was the center of the little group of former drinkers. She did.

I allowed myself to be taken to a hospital where I took several days for my head to clear and my nerves to settle. Then, one day I had a couple of visitors, one man from New York and the other a local attorney. During our conversation I learned that they had been as bad as myself in this drinking, and that they had found relief and had been able to make a come-back. Later they went into more detail and put it to me very straight that I'd have to give over my desires and attitudes to

a power higher than myself which would give me new desires and attitudes.

Here was religion put to me in a different way and presented by three past-masters in liquor guzzling. On the strength of their stories I decided to give it a try. And it worked, as long as I allowed it to do so.

After a year of learning new ways of living, new attitudes and desires, I became self-confident and then careless. I suppose you would say I got to feeling too sure of myself and Zowie! First it was beer on Saturday nights and then it was a fine drunk. I knew exactly what I had done to bring myself to this old grief. I had tried to handle my life on the strength of my own ideas and plans instead of looking to God for the

inspiration and the strength.

But I didn't do anything about it. I thought "to hell with everybody. I'm going to do as I please." So I floundered around for seven months refusing help from any quarter. But one day I volunteered to take another drunk on a trip to sober him up. When we got back to town we were both drunk and went to a hotel to sober up. Then I began to reason the thing out. I had been a sober, happy man for a year, living decently and trying to follow the will of God. Now I was unshaven, unkept, ill-looking, bleary-eyed. I decided then and there and went back to my friends who offered me help and who never lectured me on my seven month failure.

But that was a long time ago. I don't say now that I can do anything. I

**only know that as long as I seek
God's help to the best of my ability,
just so long will liquor never bother
me.**

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