

NOW WE ARE THOUSANDS



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WHEN this book appeared in April 1939 there were approximately 100 A.A. members. Two thirds of them were at Akron, Ohio, or nearby communities in the northern part of that state. Most of the remainder were in or near New York City and a few others were scattered along the Atlantic Seaboard. The work had then been in existence over four years. It had been satisfactorily demonstrated that at least two out of three alcoholics who wished to get well could apparently do so, notwithstanding the fact that their chance of recovery upon any other medical or spiritual basis had been

almost nil-a small percentage at best.

Publication of the book, which set down our experience and methods at length, opened a new and unexplored phase which meant an attempt to carry the work to other localities, widespread publicity, and the exposure of our methods to the test of approval or disapproval by religion, medicine, and the general public-an uncharted field indeed. Would theologians complain of our lack of orthodoxy? Would physicians frown upon the idea of banding together great numbers of alcoholics for mutual aid through a spiritual common denominator? Would reviewers and columnists ridicule the spiritual content of the work, thus prejudicing the men and women we were trying to help? Would

alcoholic men and women and their families be convinced by the book and the attendant publicity that here at last was a solution? Such were the uncertainties of April 1939.

Remarkable as it may seem none of these anticipated difficulties has materialized. Clergymen of all faiths, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish, have united in generous approval of our activities. The Christian Science Monitor gave this book a favorable editorial review. Physicians who have observed us at close range are almost unanimous in their opinion that our methods are sound and the results most promising.

Best of all is the fact that alcoholics and their families seize upon this book, perceive its practical application to their problems, and often take action by writing to The

Alcoholic Foundation Office (Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17) inquiring how they may get in touch with the nearest A.A. center, or asking directions for starting groups in their own communities. Innumerable inquiries have been answered by personal letter, relating those anxious to get well to the nearest A.A. membership. In notable instances The Alcoholic Foundation* has fostered the creation of new centers about enthusiastic alcoholics who have derived their inspiration from the book alone. In some cases the book has acted as a specific for alcoholism , for we are in touch with men who have worked out their own recovery by simply following out the suggestions of the book.

Besides maintaining a correspondence with new people,

our central office keeps in touch with men who have recovered in established centers, who travel to other communities, or who find employment in new places. Such individuals turn up sooner or later where new groups are in process of formation contributing to their success and relating them to the older memberships.

When it is considered that we have increased one hundred fold in the last five years and when it is remembered that we are growing by a sort of geometrical progression, each alcoholic as a part of his own treatment working with others, one begins to ask how far A.A. may go. Though we alcoholics are plagued with over active imaginations, we shall surely have thousands of new members every year.

Then, too, it should be remembered that for each alcoholic three or four other persons are vitally affected spiritually as well as economically. Even now it is evident that these collateral benefits of our work are large.

Cleveland, Ohio, is an interesting example. In the Fall of 1939 approximately 25 Cleveland alcoholics were attending meetings with the already large group at Akron, Ohio. The Cleveland Plain Dealer ran a series of articles on A.A. featuring them upon its editorial page. A rapid and successful growth ensued. This community has many active groups totaling hundreds of alcoholic men and women. This activity includes perhaps thousands of additional individuals-families, employers, and friends, who say

they have been vitally touched and benefited. Suppose several thousand alcoholics, most of them able and energetic men and women coming from all walks of life, eventually recover. Surely the effect upon this city would be potent.

There is another aspect of our activity which has often been overlooked. Though no accurate census has been taken, it is probable that 90% of active A.A. members are now employed. Most of them reestablished themselves economically with no other help than we give each other. We believe we have demonstrated that when an individual commences to think straight and elects a sound spiritual basis for his life, he will presently find a way to maintain himself. This spiritual principle, which looks to

many people like threadbare rationalization, seems to be practically proven by our employment record. The simple arithmetic of the situation tells the story.

One might elaborate for pages upon what has taken place in the past few years. Stories of spectacular recoveries, of intense spiritual experiences, of happy social contacts, of regained health, of hundreds who have returned to their churches, of families reunited, of seemingly impossible differences composed, of renewed business success; such narratives might be set down by scores. Nor should we fail to mention other hundreds who have quietly stopped drinking and resumed normal life. We could also tell of heartbreaking failures, of

seeing those for whom we have formed great attachments continue to disintegrate before our eyes. Such is the warp and woof of A.A. everywhere.

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