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This fourteenth new issue of the CA&SQ (since its revival in October 2004) is Volume III, no. 6. After “News and Notes” with News on an AHA/ADHS panel in New York in January 2009 and two “Notes” on early AA, we summarize more of our research on the Messengers to Ebby (Rowland, Shep, Cebra) – who lie *behind* the early days of A.A. This issue was going to report on Shep C. – though he appears to have been neither alcoholic nor a member of AA, we’re here referring to him by initial, having been given access to a letter from him in the AA Archives. But a letter from Jack G., Cebra’s son, to the Editor, on the (forthcoming) History & Archives Gathering in Lebanon PA on June 21, 2008, seems important enough in this context to be printed as soon as possible, and it is printed here. Then comes a new installment on a narrative of giving up drinking, by Samuel G. Blythe (1868-1947), beginning his book *The Old Game* (1914). This is followed by an excerpt (related to AA) from a book on prayer, *Answer Without Ceasing*, by the author of the 1954 *Good Housekeeping* “Letter to a Woman Alcoholic,” for a half century – but no longer – distributed by AA. We conclude with number 20 in our series of “Washingtonian Notes and Queries.” Our next issue (III, 7) will again see contributions on current work at Brown, plans for future work, and results of past work, from the collections and by those on the KirkWorks listserv. All who receive CASQ are invited to contribute notes, queries, studies, and information on work in progress. – Jared Lobdell, *March 31, 2008*

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NEWS AND NOTES

News (AHA/ADHS Panels Jan 2009): There is at least one ADHS Panel at the AHA Meeting in January 2009 (New York). Although the titles given here are provisional (indeed are not all supplied by the authors) and not all the abstracts are formal abstracts, what is printed here should give some idea of the papers.

Chair of Panel: Albert Acena, College of San Mateo

Papers:

Jared Lobdell, Eastern University (Harrisburg) and Harrisburg Area C.C., "The Globe and the Mermaid, Cassio and Falstaff: William Shakespeare, Alcoholic Soldier and Writer"

This paper, making some use of J.-C. Agnew's work on stage and marketplace 1550-1750, is the first of a planned (short) series on literary/public perceptions of drinking, taverns as public places (including taverns as marketplaces and stages), the dramaturgy of drinking and the stage as public place. Michael Cassio is an alcoholic drawn from individual experience, Sir John Falstaff a more traditional figure (akin to Langland's Gluttony), but both are presented on stage as in a tavern, and both are public (military) men – which speaks to an underlying theme of public consciousness, public places, and states of altered consciousness. (A subsequent paper in the series is planned on the tavern as stage, from T. S. Arthur to Eugene O'Neill.)

Bradley Kadel, Fayetteville State, "Irish Pubs and Irish Nationalism: Secret Societies and Public Places"

[From a letter from Brad Kadel to the Editor] "I've been conducting research this summer on the role of pubs and publicans in Irish secret societies in the nineteenth century. I'd like to present some of my research at the AHA/ADHS meeting, focusing on the dominance in these societies of publicans and their businesses. The authorities seemed always to have been torn between whether to crush the public house traders who involved themselves in supporting ribbonism and Fenianism or to allow such meetings in these public places so as to be able to monitor them easily through informants."

Howard Padwa, UCLA, "Opium and Treason: Public and Literary Perception in the Belle Époque"

This paper analyzes the strong discursive connections between opium use, the army, and treason in the French imagination in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. French colonial literature was rife with stories of servicemen picking up the opium habit while serving in Indochina, and then descending down a road towards madness or betrayal. These narratives transcended fiction in 1907, when a sailor in the French navy tried to sell military secrets to the Germans, and then blamed his opium habit for his

attempted treason when he was caught. Around the same time, the French government, at the behest of military authorities, instituted the first tight controls over recreational opium use. Clearly, the connection between opium and treason was not just a literary one for the French, but also one that represented a real threat to national security. In this paper, I will put forward some theories as to why opium, and opium in particular, evolved into a drug of treason in the minds of both authors and policy-makers in the Belle Époque.

Lowell Edmunds, Rutgers University (Emeritus), "Conrad Aiken and 'Constructive' Drinking"

Conrad Aiken regularly appears in the list of twentieth-century writers who were problem drinkers. This list is so long and so distinguished that the connection between alcoholism and modernism is unlikely to be an accident. John W. Crowley, in a justly acclaimed book, *The White Logic: Alcoholism and Gender in American Modernist Fiction* (1994), argues that "'Alcoholism' and literary 'modernism' emerged together in a dialectical relationship that produced in the drunk narrative [Crowley's typology for the books he discusses] both a portrait of the modernist as alcoholic and a portrait of the alcoholic as a modernist" (18). Aiken, whom Crowley does not discuss, can be considered a possible counter-example. The references to drinking in his verse, fiction, and letters are for the most part to its "constructive" (i.e. not to its destructive) aspects—to drinking as stylish (in, e.g., the aesthetics of the drink itself and its paraphernalia), as inspirational and as convivial. There is a distinction to be made between the role of alcohol in Aiken's own (private) life (a subject on which the final word has not, perhaps, been spoken) and in his writing for the public.

News: A Washingtonian Anniversary in Lancaster County PA August 9, 2008:

It came to the Editor's attention that John H. W. Hawkins (1797-1858), the Temperance preacher who sometimes claimed (inaccurately) to be one of the six founders of the Washingtonian Temperance Society of Baltimore, died at Compass, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, on August 9, 1858, the Sesquicentennial of his death being Saturday, August 9, 2008. He was buried at St. John's Episcopal Church Pequea (in Compass), where his son (1826-1908) was Rector, though the site of his grave seems to be unknown. Logistical problems prevented an organized observation of the Anniversary or of Hawkins and the Washingtonians, but the Editor (who is working on a "Washingtonian" study on "John Zug (1818-1843) and his 'Little Book'") believes it is time for further study of the direction of Hawkins's influence in and on the Washingtonians.

Notes: Early AA: Thomas Hayes Uzzell. Thomas Hayes Uzzell (b. Denver Oct 25 1884 d. Los Angeles Nov 11 1975, who m. Camelia Waite) had two children, one of whom, Camelia Uzzell Berry, published a book OKLAHOMA PRAIRIE PLOWED UNDER (Cortez CO: Mesa Verde Press -- I think around 1998). Uzzell was the son of Charles S Uzzell, the "Rocky Mountain Evangelist" (1853-1890), who d. in CA, and Estella Alexander Uzzell (b. 1861?), who remarried, a man named Frank May (or Nay?), the same age she was: they had children Lucile (b. 1893), Lloyd B. (b. 1896?), and John (b. 1899?), and lived in Calumet IL in 1910, Tom Uzzell living with them at that point. (Charles S. Uzzell's older brother, converted with him in 1871, was also Thomas H.

Uzzell.) Our Thomas H. Uzzell graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Minnesota, did graduate work at Harvard and Columbia, was an editor with the government in DC in 1917, living with his wife at 4421 15th St, traveled to Europe on economic investigation in 1919-20 and again in 1920-21, was later with Collier's in NYC, then ran a writer's school, the Thomas H. Uzzell School (actually run, according to Mary Cheever, who was briefly her secretary, by his wife). He wrote a number of books, including NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE (1923), (ed) SHORT STORY UNITS (2 vols 1933/34), TECHNIQUE OF THE NOVEL: A HANDBOOK (1947, 1959), TWILIGHT OF SELF GOVERNMENT (1961/2), and a novel GRANDEE JIM (1973). I have emailed Clancy I in Long Beach/LA to see if he knows if Bill W visited Tom Uzzell at the time of the 1960 Convention. What I don't know is whether there was any particular personal connection between Bill or any of the other early AAs and Tom Uzzell, though Jim B's history suggests it was Hank P. who brought Tom into the equation.

Notes: Early AAs: Kathleen R. and Thomas Kean B. Recorded [GSO Archives]

Two recordings in the GSO Archives contain particular information on the formation of the Big Book – an interview with Kathleen R. (widow of Bill R., died June 9 1961, first alcoholic chairman of the Board) in the 1970s and Thomas Kean B. telling his story and the story of early AA ca 1963 in North Carolina. Unfortunately, Tom's account is short on his own history, not mentioning his first marriage (to another AA – which may have been the first “boy meets girl on AA campus” – they were married before mid-1944 and divorced apparently by 1946). Tom came to 182 Clinton in 1938 in answer to a letter from Bill R., written to him because Bill (who first got sober ca 1935-6) had heard from Tom's brother-in-law (husband of Isabelle D B), who worked in the same office, of the problems Tom was having with drinking. (“Dear Tom – Please excuse the informality but I believe we are brothers under the skin ...”) It is from Tom we have a picture of Bill W. lying on his back on the floor at 182, head toward the dining-room double doors, reading out what he had written since the last meeting, and then jotting down notes and comments on his yellow legal pad. It is from Kathleen we learn that Bill sometimes brought his notes out to her at Hackettstown to be typed. Bill R. died twenty-plus years sober, working at his office, despite his wasting illness, until two days before his death. He was sixty (b. August 25, 1900). Bill and Kathleen's older daughter, Margaret (b. 1939), was the “first AA baby,” according to Kathleen. It is from Kathleen we learn that Bill and Lois came out to their house at Hackettstown in 1938, and from there they, with others, made a caravan out to Akron, where they attended the big meeting with 68 present, where they met Dr. Bob. On the way, they picked up Fitzhugh M. in Pittsburgh? – no, it was Philadelphia (in 1938!). Dr. Bob stayed with the R's at Hackettstown his next time east, and Kathleen recalls that his day could not start properly without his reading “Little Orphan Annie.” It is also from Kathleen we learn of the AA New Year's Celebration at Hank P's where at midnight they stood (and linked hands?) and instead of singing “Auld Lang Syne” said the Lord's Prayer. It is from Tom we learn of the contributor to the first edition whose story was dropped when he demanded a share of royalties. It is from Tom we learn that Bill told him at his first meeting he had been institutionalized 17 times – and others at that meeting mentioned 130-140-160 times and 87 times. Tom remembers a girl in a red dress playing the piano at his first meeting. Kathleen remembers Paul K. playing the piano and Bill W. playing the fiddle. Tom recalls average attendance at 15-

20, wives included; Kathleen recalls average attendance at 16-20, wives included. Tom recalls frankfurters and sauerkraut or spaghetti and meatballs being served at 182, before the coffee and cake. (Tom, by the way, died twenty-five years sober, at the early age of 63, in December 1964. He was an alcoholic Trustee in 1944-45. When asked what they called themselves in the early days, he once answered, "We called ourselves a bunch of screwballs meeting in Brooklyn – which is what we were.")

PROGRESS REPORT: THE MESSENGERS TO EBBY: LETTER FROM JACK G.

The letter following was sent by Jack G. to the Editor in connection with the History and Archives Gathering held in Lebanon PA June 21 2008.

Dear Jared –

Here is something I've written about my father. Sorry I could not come down, but June 21-22 will be my first weekend at home for a while. I'm also enclosing a copy of a statement as to what he believed (undated) – Jack

My father, Cebra Quackenbush G[-----], who was born on August 26, 1898, once told me that if I wanted to know what his upbringing had been like, I should read Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, the satire on Victorian ways. Being the eldest of Collins Millard and Florence Quackenbush G[-----]'s four sons, who lived in Bennington, Vermont, he was, I suppose, Ernest Pontifex, though the parallel is by no means exact. As with Ernest, though, things ended happily for him. His last 28 years were spent with the love of his life, Lucette Caron, in France, a country that because of its intellectual bent and broad-mindedness, he far preferred to America.

He was classically educated, at the Westminster preparatory school, and was a fine teacher, scholar, and linguist, though he was also a soldier, in France in World War One, a Naval officer in World War Two, an actor on Broadway, in the 1920s, and a State's Attorney and State Senator in Vermont in the '30s. Concerning his many-sided career, he told me that once he learned the ropes, he became bored.

His "greatest trick" was to have completed, in just a few years following World War Two, two years of undergraduate work – he studied at Williams in 1916, before enlisting, and spent a year at Columbia in 1924 – and his Master's and Doctorate requirements, while teaching Greek, Latin, and the Humanities in Columbia's Classics Department. Had he had his druthers, he told me, he would gladly have been a professional student his entire life.

He did not make much of his drinking, nor of his work with A.A., with me. I only saw him drunk once in my life, when I was twelve, on a summer visit to Bennington. As I told you, Jared, I had inveigled him into playing catch and, nursing a hangover, after a few minutes of this, he had to excuse himself to lie down. As he lay there, he asked, "What do you think of your old man?" I put a cold washcloth on his forehead, and I said I simply thought he was sick. It's probably the best thing I've ever done.

It was his view, too, that he was sick. I've learned that in going through some of his papers. There was wine on the table whenever I visited him and my stepmother in Paris and Urrugne, in the Basque country, where they had a house. Everyone drank it but he. In fact, he said he thought that I drank more than he did, day in and day out.

He was of a religious bent, throughout his life, persuaded, as I think he was, by St. Thomas Aquinas's logic, and enamored, as he was, of Latin, from an early age. He was interested in Buddhism, too, but, in the end, he said that when it came to religious matters, he was "a Westerner."

His religiosity played a large part in his battle with alcoholism. He converted to Roman Catholicism while in a clinic at Dax over the Christmas holidays in 1954. In the end, he said, it was "the sight of Sister Marie Joseph standing over my bed and smiling down at me" that had accomplished it.

"I feel it impossible for me to describe that smile," he wrote in an account he wrote at the time. "It was not the smile of a professional greeter; it was not one of amusement at the plight into which I had gotten myself; but it was one of compassion, sweetness, and perhaps, above all, it was a smile of perfect confidence that I would get well, and gave me a feeling of hope that I shall not attempt to describe. I have been to many hospitals and sanitariums to recover from alcoholism, and, on several occasions, have been treated in a perfectly kindly fashion, but I am not conscious that I have ever been received as above...."

"I am certain that everyone who has been converted towards or away from any belief or way of life has a strong desire to understand what has happened to him and to tell others of the great event, to the end that they, too, may be brought to peace, happiness, and a useful life. I have read many such accounts and, though it never occurred to me to doubt the fact of the conversion, I have never been able to see how it was accomplished: i.e., the one converted seems never to have had anything to do with his change of heart. At least, so it was in my case.

"Not for one minute were all my problems solved, but from Christmas Day I was convinced that, despite all my sins, (1) I could be saved, and also (2) all hatreds and resentments vanished in a moment. I wish to emphasize that, in so far as I was conscious, my will played no part in either of these feelings. I am certain that the first was largely inspired by a terrible fear, but I have not felt it before; and, as for the second, it was as automatic as the love that one suddenly experiences for a person towards whom one is unconsciously drawn. I wish to emphasize that I endeavored to strike no bargain with my Maker: I did not say, feel, or promise, actually on in effect, "Lord, if you will save me from a living death, I will give up my dislikes and hatreds." I merely knew that the people whom I felt had offended me acted as they had because they could not help it, and I no longer considered them blameable in any way...."

"Nevertheless, if it can be said that one person converts another, it was not the logic of Thomas Aquinas, but the smile of Sister Marie Joseph and my subsequent treatment by my Catholic brothers and sisters that melted and changed my heart and mind...."

"If a man who is truly religious is guided by God to say the right thing to those in need of help – and I firmly believe this – le Chanoine Gayan could not have struck a more sympathetic chord in me than he did in his counsel after my confession. He did not give me one bit of specific advice about avoiding the sins I had confessed, but spoke to

me only of the Grace of God and that I must always remember I was completely dependent on it. Intellectually, I must have known this doctrine for years and have even lectured on it, but I never understood it, as I did when le Chanoine Gayan spoke to me for two or three minutes on the afternoon of January 1 [1955].”

He read from the prayer book he received from Sister Marie Joseph every day. He died at the age of 81 on December 31, 1979, in a hospital in Bayonne (near Urrugne) as the result of a hole in a lung that caused him to suffocate. Undoubtedly he would have lived longer in America. His younger brother, Van, who lives in Bennington, is 102! But he was, he said, ready to get off the merry-go-round. When I last saw him, he was sitting in bed having some chocolate. “Don’t worry about me – I’ve got a good thing going,” he said with good cheer.

While I’m sure Sister Marie Joseph’s smile played a big part, I think he was really saved by Lucette Caron, his fifth wife. Their story is fascinating. He met her in St. Moritz while fishing for champagne bottles in the mid-‘20s, through the instance of her brother, Claude, who had admired my father’s dexterity. When it came time to leave Paris – he and his first wife had been footed to a trip there by her father – he told Lucette that he’d look her up in twenty-five years. Twenty-five years later – and without a word having been exchanged between them in that time – he sent her a telegram, “J’arrive” [“I’m coming”].

Having lived an interesting life after a brief marriage in the ‘20s to another American, she was beguiled, but worried too, on receiving his telegram. He had been very handsome, yes, but that was twenty-five years ago. Would he still have his hair, his teeth? She asked her son, Teddy Culbert, what she should do, and he advised that she meet the bus at Les Invalides, which she did. My father and she took up where they left off, and soon were off to Mont St Michel and a life together.

Even *France Dimanche*, generally a scandal magazine, was touched, and wrote it up. In that article, I think, Lucette was quoted as saying that while she went out with Frenchmen, she always married Americans. They were a compelling couple: he, the handsome, worldly intellectual whose encyclopedic knowledge of history was much admired in France, and she, the mercurial journalist (*Paris-Soir*, *Paris Match*, *Mademoiselle*) who had been a Captain in the Resistance, and who was described once as “one of the five tyrants of the fashion world.”

My father loved it that she was not a reformer, as apparently some of his American wives had been. With nothing to rebel against, the decision was up to him. Give it up or die in a *crise alcoolique*. When my father told her he would give up drinking if she would return to the church, Lucette said she would, and off she went to confession – her first in many, many years. With a smile, he told me she had said, when the priest asked what she would like to confess, “Well, I haven’t done anything that anyone else hasn’t done ...”

Text of Carbon Copy of Document [Undated]:

I believe in an all-powerful and benign force that has ordained a system of immutable laws by which the universe is governed. When these laws do not seem to operate, it is merely because they are not at all, or imperfectly, understood.. I believe that

our well-being, mental, physical and spiritual, proceeds from a conformance with these laws, consciously or unconsciously.

I do not believe in sin in the sense that it is an offence against some deity, but that it consists of a refusal or inability to keep the laws, that govern our every thought and action. I do not believe in a personal God who takes an Interest in our individual behaviour, regardless of our own attitude in the matter, but I do believe that by an act of will or desire we can make ourselves a part of the orderly harmonies of the universe, and that by so doing, the ears of some of us will be attuned to a celestial music. It is by this conscious desire to accept the universe that we draw to ourselves those qualities and conditions which can result in the good life for each of us.

I believe that the measure of each human action should be whether or not our lives tend to be permanently enhanced thereby.

I believe that the past should be without regard, except for whatever pleasant memories it may hold for us, or warnings with respect to our future conduct, and that regret is a luxury that the human race can ill afford. I believe that all men are brothers and that this is a fact unwise to ignore.

I believe that there are many errors but no sins, and that repentance should be limited to a decision to act in a wiser and maturer manner in the future, should a similar occasion of error arise.

I believe in an afterlife of some sort, the details of which I am unable to understand, but whether individual or collective survival, I dare not speculate. I believe neither in salvation or damnation in the conventional sense, except in so far as they are self-decreed. The duration of each is a matter of individual choice. I also believe that the form which our after life will take will be largely determined by the use we make of the one we have.

Note: Lucette Caron was the translator for at least one French film made in Morocco in the early 1920s and also of Michael Arlen's *Le Feutre Vert* (1928). She was born February 17, 1898. Her brother Claude married an American dancer, Margaret Petit, and their daughter is Leslie Claire Margaret Caron (b. July 1931). Lucette's son by her first marriage still lives in France.

SAMUEL G BLYTHE (1868-1947), *THE OLD GAME* (1914)

In *CA&SQ*, Vol. 3. no. 3 we briefly rehearsed the life of Samuel George Blythe, born of English emigrant parents in upstate New York in 1868, newspaper editor, journalist, frequent contributor to the *Saturday Evening Post*, political correspondent and in the 1930s a foreign correspondent before he settled permanently in Carmel, California, where he was living when he died in 1947. We noted that his best-known book is probably *The Fun of Getting Thin, How To Be Happy and Reduce the Waist Line*, and he was considered by the humorist Irvin S. Cobb as one of the three funniest authors in America. Last issue's selection was from his *Cutting It Out*, Chapter IV (pp. 45-55), "When I Quit," and Chapter V (pp. 57-60), "After I Quit." Here we go on to the sequel, *The Old Game* (1914), Chapters I-III (pp. 9-25):

Introductory

In a few minutes it will be three years and a half since I have taken a drink. In six years; six months, and a few minutes it will be ten years. Then I shall begin to feel I have some standing among the chaps who have quit. Three years and a half seems quite a period of abstinence to me, but I am constantly running across men who have been on the wagon for five and ten and twelve and twenty years; and I know, when it comes to merely not taking any, I am a piker as yet. However, I have well-grounded hopes. The fact is, a drink could not be put into me except with the aid of an anesthetic and a funnel; but, for all that, I am no bigot.

I look at this non-drinking determination of mine as a purely individual proposition. Let me get the stage set properly at the beginning of my remarks. I have no advice to offer and no counsel to give. Most of my best friends drink and I never have said and never shall say them nay. It is up to them—not up to me. I have no prejudices in the matter. If my friends want to drink I am for that—for them.

These things are mentioned to establish my status in the premises. I have no sermon to preach—no warning to convey. I have no desire to impress my convictions on the subject of drinking liquor on any person whatever. That is not my mission. So far as I am concerned, all persons are hereby given full and free permission to eat, drink and be merry to such extent as they may prescribe for themselves. I set no limit, suggest no reforms, urge no cutting down or cutting out. Go to it—and peace be with you! And for an absolute teetotaler I reckon I buy as many drinks for others as anyone in my class.

Pardon me for inserting these puny details. in what I have to say. Triflingly personal as they are they seem necessary in order to establish my viewpoint. So far as drinking is concerned I look at it with a mind that is open and tolerant—except in one instance. That one instance concerns myself personally and individually: My mind is closed and intolerant in my own case. I have quit—and quit forever; but that does not make me go round urging others to quit, or preaching at them, or trying to reform them. They can reform or not, as they dad-blamed please.

To be sure I have my own interior ideas on what some of them should do; but I never have and never shall do anything with those ideas but keep them closely to myself. Therefore, to resume: In a few minutes it will be three years and a half since I have taken a drink. There is no more alcohol in my system than there is in a glass of spring water. The thought of putting alcohol into my system is as absent from my mind as is the thought of putting benzine into it, or gasoline, or taking a swig of shoe polish. It never occurs to me. The whole thing is out of my psychology. My palate has forgotten how it tastes. My stomach has forgotten how it feels. My head has forgotten how it exhilarates. The next-morning fur has forsaken my tongue. It is all over!

A Backward Glance from a Hillock of Abstinence

Looking back at the old game from this hillock of abstinence—it is not an eminence like those occupied by the twelve and fifteen year boys—looking back at the old game from this slight elevation, it is perhaps excusable for a man who put in twenty years at the old game to set the old game off against the new game and make up a debit and credit account just for the fun of it.

Just for the fun of it! My kind of drinking was always for the fun of it— for the fun that came with it and out of it and was in it—and for no other reason. I was no sot and no souse. All the drinks I took were for convivial purposes solely, except on occasional mornings when a too convivial evening demanded a next morning conniver in the way of a cocktail or a frappé, or a brandy-and-soda, for purposes of encouragement and to help get the sand out of the wheels.

Wherefore, what have I personally gained by quitting and what have I personally lost? How does the account stand? Is it worthwhile or not? Is there anything in convivial drinking that is too precious and too pleasant to be sacrificed for whatever pleasures or rewards there are in abstinence? What are the big equations? These are questions that naturally occur in a consideration of the subject; and these are the questions I shall try to answer, answering them entirely from my own experience and judging them from my own viewpoint, leaving the application of my conclusions to those who care to apply them to their own individual cases.

It takes two years for a man who has been a convivial drinker to get any sort of proper perspective on both sides of the proposition. Three years is better, and five years, I should say, about right. Still, after three years and a half I think I can draw some conclusions that may have a certain general application—though, as I have said, I make no pretense of applying them generally. So far as I am able to judge, a man who has been a more or less sincere drinker for twenty years does not arrive at a point before two years of abstinence where he can take an impartial and nonalcoholic survey.

At first he is imbued with the spirit of the new convert, fired with zeal and considerable of a Pharisee. Also, he is inhabited by the lingering thoughts of what he has renounced—the fun and the frolic of it; and he has set himself aside, in a good measure, from the friends he has made in the twenty years of joyousness.

Getting the Alcohol Out of One's System

A scientist who has made a study of the subject told me, early in my water-wagoning, that it takes eighteen months for a man to get the alcohol entirely out of his system—provided, of course, he has been a reasonably consistent consumer of it for a period of years. I think that is correct. Of course he did not mean—nor do I—that the alcohol actually remains in one's system, but that the subacute effects remain—that the system is not entirely reorganized on the new basis before that time; that the renovation is not complete.

I do not know exactly how to phrase it; but, as nearly as I can express it, the condition amounts to this: After a man has been a reasonably steady drinker for a period of years, and quits drinking, there remain within him mental and some physical alcoholic tendencies. These are acute for the earlier stages, and gradually come to be almost subconscious—that is, though there is no physical alcoholization of his body, the mental alcoholization has not departed. I do not mean that his mind or mental powers are in any way affected to their detriment. What I do mean is that there remains in every man a remembrance, the ghost of a desire, the haunting thoughts of how good a certain kind of a drink would taste, and a regret for joys of companionship with one's fellows in the old way and in the old game, which takes time—and a good deal of time—to eradicate.

It becomes a sort of state of mind. The body does not crave liquor. All that is past. There is no actual desire for it. Indeed, the thought of again, taking a drink may be physically repugnant; but there is a sort of phantom of renounced good times that hangs round and worries and obtrudes in blue hours and lonesome hours and letdown hours—a persistent, insistent sort of ghost-thought that flits across the mind from time to time and stimulates the what's-the-use portion of a man's thinking apparatus into active, personal inquiry, based on the *dum vivimus, vivamus* proposition.

I know this will be disputed by many men who have quit drinking and who beat themselves on the chests and boast: "I never think of it! Never, I assure you! I quit; and after a few days the thought of drinking never entered my mind." I have only one reply for these persons; and, phrasing it as politely as I can, I say to them that they are all liars. Moreover, they are the worst sort of liars, for they not only lie to others but commit the useless folly of lying to themselves. They may think they do not lie; but they do.

There is not one of them—not one—who is not visited by the ghost of good times, the wraith of former fun, now and then; or one who does not wonder, whether it is worth the struggle and speculate on what the harm would be if he took a few for old time's sake. The mental yearn comes back occasionally long after the physical yearn has vanished. My compliments to you strong-minded and iron-willed citizens who quit and forget—but you don't! You may quit, but it is months and months before you forget.

The ghost appears and reappears; but gradually, as time goes on, the visits are less frequent—and finally they cease. The ghost has given you up for a bad job. If any man has quit and has stuck it out for two years he can be reasonably sure he will not be haunted much after he enters his third year.

Mental impressions and desires last far longer than physical ones, and by that time the mind has been reorganized along the new lines. Then comes the sure knowledge that it is all right; and after that time any man who has fought his fight and falls can be classed only as an idiot. What, in the name of Bacchus, is there to compensate a man in drinking again—after he has won his fight—for all the troubles and rigors of the battle from which he has emerged victorious? If he had nerve enough to go through his novitiate and get his degree, why should he deliberately return to the position he voluntarily abandoned? What has he been fighting for? Why did he begin?

MARGIE LEE RUNBECK, *ANSWER WITHOUT CEASING*

The recent removal of Margie Lee Runbeck's *Letter to a Woman Alcoholic* from the current pamphlet literature of AA has led the editor to reprint here her earlier account of AA in the Los Angeles area in Chapters 26 and 27 of her *Answer Without Ceasing* (1949). Note that the word "experience" in the Twelfth Step points to the first edition, first printing (1939), of the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. There may be some question whether Margie Lee was an alcoholic writing as though she were a non-alcoholic. Her name as a writer was well-known – she created the "fictional" character "Miss Boo" – though there was a real "Miss Boo," her adopted daughter – and as far back as her days as a juvenile contributor to Auntie Ann's (AA's) column in the *Washington Post*, she mixed reality and fiction rather neatly – when she was ten years old!

CHAPTER 26: Raised to the Nth Power

Over a hundred thousand persons in this country have gone completely all-out for God. They aren't among us in any recognizable garb or sect; they aren't preaching on street corners or passing out tracts, or doing anything else fanatical. You may very likely be acquainted with one or more of them without realizing they are dedicated to one great spiritual aim. Probably you'd be completely surprised if you did discover that one of your friends belongs to this group, saying to yourself, Why, he's the last person on earth I'd ever suspect of becoming religious. Last time I saw him, he was

If they have any distinguishing mark it is the print of worldliness, for one and all they have "seen life," and have enjoyed the world a little too much. They live and function usefully on every plane and state of society in America, from the very lowest to the highest levels of wealth, intellect, and talent. Yet all of them are alike in one thing; they begin and end everything they do with a sincere though often unconventional prayer. They keep the thought of God as close as their very hands and feet, for they are convinced this is the only way they are safe. They know they are walking on a private volcano which only the acknowledged power of God can control.

They are, of course, Alcoholics Anonymous, about whom the general public has only the haziest notion. The movement was started in 1935 by a New York stockbroker and an Akron physician, both of whom were problem drinkers. They "worked" on each other, and fumbled their way through to a program. As late as 1939, there were only a hundred Alcoholics Anonymous in the world, and two thirds of those were in Akron, Ohio. At present, although nobody knows exactly how many there are, it has been estimated there are a hundred and fifty thousand, returned to usefulness and normalcy. In most cases they have attained a higher brand of individual contentment than the majority of human beings ever experience,

Yet few of us, beyond the families of the A.A.'s themselves, have any appreciation of the real nature of this thing, and what it means for the present and the future. Without officers, chapters, or rosters, this virtually unorganized non-profit-making group has become a tremendous factor of rehabilitation in practically every city and village in America and in many countries abroad. Their numbers are multiplying literally to the nth power – for these prodigiously dedicated men and women are constantly at work bringing in new-recruits. In fact, their own therapy demands that they always be working for somebody else's sobriety.

That's about all most people know about them, In the early years their active assistance to each other was most stressed, and was generally believed to be the principle force in the redemption, at least by non-alcoholics who wrote on the subject. You helped another man to keep his balance, and that helped you keep yours, This was a kind of "gimmick" or device which kept the alcoholic so creatively busy that he couldn't be tempted. That in itself would be wonderful. But the program is infinitely broader than that, and in recent years no one apologizes for considering the transformations as spiritual phenomena.

The fact is, many alcoholics have recovered through using the twelve-step program even without the assistance of another alcoholic. One active A.A. got his "cure" from a newspaper column. This man did his bar-crawling on a world-wide scale,

staggering from port to port. About six years ago he was dumped off a boat in Shanghai. An old copy of the *Los Angeles Times* was delivered to his hotel room, wrapped around a bottle of whiskey. Lee Shippey for many years has written a column in this newspaper, and in that addition he had used an item about A.A., printing the twelve steps of the Program for Recovery. The derelict, all by himself, got on the program and stayed sober. Later, he found other A.A.'s and now spends most of his life cheerfully carrying on this work.

It is probable that the two originators had no idea how far their plan would extend either geographically or spiritually. They were interested only in rescuing men and women from that "incurable" physical illness called alcoholism. But as the purely human methods were seen to be superseded by divine assistance, the scope has enormously increased. Men might have worked exclusively on the drunkenness in each other, but when they took God into their program, that remade everything in their lives. "As soon as we saw God was anything. He became everything," they say themselves.

Their "new design for living" will solve *all* problems, they believe, and they remind each other that they must enlarge their spiritual life all the time. If they were not too busy with their own ever-increasing work among pathological alcoholics, they might very easily be founding a world-wide religion which dispenses with theology and is concerned only with inner and outer results. But the adapting of the program for other unhappy, maladjusted persons might not be so spectacularly successful, unless there was equal stress of utter desperation.

For alcoholics, fortunately, the situation is open and shut. Even after they have found their own sobriety, there is no chance of becoming complacent and apathetic. They never allow themselves or each other to forget there are but two choices: they are either doomed to an alcoholic's death, or they must live out their lives on a spiritual basis.

Medical science has bluntly told them there is no permanent cure for alcoholism. Until his last day on earth, an alcoholic is as close to plunging back into the pit as he is to his next drink. Yet the A.A. record is about seventy-five percent successful. All types of medical treatment and psychiatry have been only three per cent successful. So the alcoholic knows he must look to a "Power higher than himself" and also higher than medicine. The craving is beyond mere will -power to control. It can be held in check by nothing short of what sobered him at the beginning of this experience. He stays sober only by keeping his contact with that Power alive in himself.

Some of the alcoholics on the program have proved this is distressingly true, for some have gone through the agony of "slipping back" and then having it all to do again. Fifty per cent have never "slipped." Interestingly enough, no one praises or blames either group. Praise or blame is simply outside the focal distance of Alcoholics Anonymous' judging. I venture to declare that these are probably the most radically God-relying persons in our country today. The crux of the difference between them and others who are sincerely striving for religious reality seems to me to be this: they did not begin and do not end with a spiritual *belief*, but with spiritual experience.

Intellectually, God comes to most men gradually. But when the need is as crucial as the need the abject alcoholic knows, the coming of God is often instantaneous and always unmistakable.

The psychology of the alcoholics' situation is uniquely perfect for spiritual experience. To begin with, an alcoholic is at the very lowest level of self-reliance. As one

of them said to me, "Most people try to live by self-propulsion. We have to be God-propelled." The second point of their program says, "We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore our sanity."

The broad wisdom of the wording of this point cannot be over estimated. The common danger of spiritual impulse being short-circuited by theological quibbling is forever prevented in the choosing of that word 'Power.' What that Power is, is left to the beginner's own interpretation. Nobody quarrels over *how* this Power works. That it does, is all that matters. One man said, "There have been thousands of ways this thing happened. There'll be an entirely new way it will happen to you, if you let it."

Anyone who shies away from conventional religion, and even the most bitter agnostic like Cy Barton's friend Grover, who prayed to Nobody, finds no quarrel over terms, because whatever word he uses he chooses for himself. Among the words I find being used by the A.A.'s are: The Spirit of Nature, the Great Reality, My Inner Self, Universal Mind, Life, Something, He, and even more "familiar" and less pretentious names which might shock those who allow reverence to exclude intimacy.

One youngish woman said, 'Why *not* choose your own conception of God? If God is Mind, then your conception must come from Mind ... couldn't come from anywhere else, could it? It's as if Mind helped you pick a nickname you both loved.'

These "nicknames" are the individual's own business, for his worshipping is all done in privacy. There is no one to criticize or judge him; he is accountable to nobody but God. So he may be as "familiar" as he pleases, with no fear of offending anybody and certainly not God, who has already indicated that He is on *his* side.

A.A. 's belong to churches of practically all denominations, though some frankly say that modern religion just doesn't expect enough of God. Some say Alcoholics Anonymous, with its opportunity for strenuous belonging, is all the church they need. In Los Angeles alone there are a hundred and thirty-eight groups, some with an attendance as large as five hundred, some as small as twenty. Every night of the week there are numerous meetings held, sprinkled about the city, so that an alcoholic need never be alone unless he wishes to be.

Sanitariums, hospitals, jails, and even bars frequently telephone for A.A. members to come and help, so everyone has his hands as full as he *wants them* to be. Help isn't theoretical. It often means taking a drunk to your own home, caring for him like a brother or a baby, and when he is sobered up enough to listen, telling him the facts. Facts about alcoholism, himself . . . but mostly about God.

"This stuff is demonstrable," a man said to me. "When you saw it work in the big danger spot of your life, you just naturally stopped doubting the power of God. Our ideas didn't work. But the God-Idea did."

Many employees and some unions have taken cognizance of what A.A. can mean in the industrial picture of our country, where absenteeism and inefficiency and accidents are being recognized as part of problem drinking. *Time Magazine* of April 18, 1949, tells how E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company have attacked this serious situation among their employees. Five years ago, they hired an Alcoholic Anonymous to work with the Du Pont medical director, Doctor G. H. Gehrman, who lately reported to a conference of industrial physicians that the A.A. program has been successful in sixty-five per cent of the cases turned over to them by the company. At this time, there are fifty-two A.A. units functioning in communities where Du Pont plants or offices are.

Side by side at an A.A. Meeting will be obviously well-to-do men and women, domestic help, factory workers, housewives, and salesmen. A few still look rocky and shabby; those are the beginners.

An airport or railway terminal crowd offers a similar cross section of humanity. Except that the AA group has a bond of spiritual democracy, as visible as a uniform. Sitting in the row in front of me at the first meeting I attended was a wealthy man whose face I recognized, and his Nisei butler, who brought him into A.A. about three years ago. The man who presided at that particular meeting said that five years ago he was on skid row." Now he is chairman of a civic-improvement committee in a very prosperous section of our city. A-A.'s are encouraged not only to return to normal lives of their own, but to become influential citizens in their communities.

Their meetings are like nothing else on earth. Everyone is having a fine time. There's one big scrubbed and polished youngster in a cracklingly starched blue shirt and a playful plaid sports coat, hurrying around from group to group. "Look't me, Bud . . . remember seeing me last week? Drunk as the mischief . . . remember? Well, I been sober for six days now!" He pounds his big chest and an aroma of bay rum and innocence seems to come from him. "First week I been sober since I was twenty or twenty-one. Gawsh."

The room is full of conversation and laughter, but when the temporary chairman calls order, they all sit down eagerly as if they're going to hear something exciting. It's difficult to imagine people more interested and yet most of them have been to hundreds of meetings like this, and will go to hundreds more.

The chairman is also a terribly clean little guy (in fact, the scrubbed tidiness of this group is one of the things you can't help *noticing*. I suppose there may be something psychological about their conspicuous cleanness). He says pleasantly, "Now, we're going to have a fine time tonight, folks. We've got lots of good news to tell you beginners . . . *are* there any beginners here tonight? If you'd like to stand up, you can. But you don't have to."

There's quite a commotion, as six beginners, four of them pretty seriously intoxicated, try to decide whether or not they want to stand up. Those that make it, look: (1) sullen, (2) amused, (3) sorry for himself. The man who's been sober for a week tries to be everywhere at once. He wants to hug 'em all, and tell 'em not to be discouraged, Bud. He gets around to three of them, and then, realizing he is holding up the meeting, he sits down with alacrity beside one bleary man clutching a wilted bunch of carnations. The matter-of-factness of the confirmed ex's towards these drunks is civilized to see. The drunks are simply sick people who have just taken their first turn toward recovery. Nobody, besides the other beginner, makes any fuss over them at all, except normal friendliness. "Well, now we'll continue," the chairman says, after he's spoken a word of encouragement to the beginners, and also a serious but not too effusive congratulation to the man who, as Cy says, "is still drunk with being sober for a week."

The chairman then introduces Charlie, a well-dressed house painter with a kind of Dale Carnegie charm which, after a few minutes, cannot conceal his great honesty and wit, and an earnestness that casts what he has to say into a kind of rough wonderful free verse (though he would probably melt with embarrassed indignation if anybody said that to him) . He begins by saying that a beginner he's been spending some time with said:

“Charlie, you know why I drink? I don’t guess you could understand the thing that makes me drink.”

“I can understand anything, Hal,” I told him, ‘Anything anybody can dream up on the back of a hot skull, I can understand.’ So he said, ‘Well, I’ve just lost my little Queen, and she meant everything to me.’ I asked him, ‘How long ago did you lose her, Hal?’ He says, ‘Oh, must be two-three months ago.’ I just nod. Course the guy’s been drinking solid for the past ten years, but it wouldn’t be polite to stand that up before him yet. So we blame it on the little Queen. For now, He tells me about her, all the time saying, ‘You wouldn’t understand what it means to lose a little Queen that meant everything to you, Charlie.’ So finally I says, ‘Listen, Hal. I lost two little Queens that meant everything to me. That makes me understand you twice as well as you understand yourself.’ So then he listened.”

When this man spoke about his religion, he said: “God? I used to be my own God. God to my own world. And when a world’s got a drunk God at the head of it, you can imagine what kind of a flying saucer that world is.”

The first time I heard a baby chuckling to itself, I thought it was just a new variety of “beginner’s noise,” But after it happened again, I looked around and sure enough it was a baby, a fat prosperous-looking baby sitting on the lap of a buxom pretty girl, whose hand was being held by a big blonde farmboy, drinking in every word that was being said. In the intermission I went back to speak to the baby who was holding a little reception of his own.

“How old is he?” I asked the beaming mother.

“Seven months,” the father said with a grin. “Two weeks older’n me, Me in my right mind, that is.”

They come every week, the three of them. The father tosses his big thumb into the baby’s ribs boastfully, “A.A. Junior, here, is the only one that brings his bottle regular to the meeting.” Everybody laughs with happy recognition of this joke which probably turns up also “regular” at the meetings.

A very handsome man of about thirty talked. He began like this: “I’m an ex-sailor and an ex-drunk. Sometimes when I say that, somebody cracks back, ‘Maybe you ought to just say—*drunk*.’ But that’s not right. I used to belong to the navy, and then I was a sailor. I used to belong on the wrong end of a bottle, and then I was a drunk. But now I don’t belong to the navy, and I don’t belong to any bottle, so I’m an ex.”

The pattern for these informal talks is to tell what you were, what you are now, and how you made the trip between.

You might expect that the meetings of such widely assorted types of persons would be a bit lugubrious. You might expect them to become maudlin and pious, or even uncomfortably “inspirational.” Nothing could be farther from the fact. In spite of the social and economic range, there is a psychological kinship here, a deep basic understanding. Nobody feels tempted to show off either as a “prize sinner” or a performing saint. They know each other too realistically for that. Exhibitionism never will be- come a danger, because the general public is neither invited nor admitted, and they know they “can’t fool each other.”

The meetings are full of the most robust fun. Everyone present is intimately connected with a problem which no longer has any terror. That, in itself, makes a stimulating atmosphere, for nothing is so exhilarating emotionally as to be in the presence

of an old fear which at last has been unarmed. In trying to explain the unique atmosphere of their meetings, the A.A.'s themselves use an analogy which seems very apt. One feels as if he were in the lounge of a ship which has just been rescued from disaster. Every person present knows he has just escaped almost fatal peril. They have all been joined by a common catastrophe and now they are further united by the rescue in which all have participated admirably. There is complete after-shipwreck camaraderie, with the oilers and the ship's officers and the cooks and the crew all fraternizing with the passengers, and everyone is as wonderful as everyone else, and nobody has anything to conceal or be ashamed of.

The gaiety and honesty of these meetings would melt the heart of the most cynical person on earth. I defy anyone who ever could have the privilege of hearing the Lord's Prayer said in unison by such a roomful ever to be quite the same again.

Perhaps it gives you an idea of the odd blending of the sublime and the pathetic earthiness of one of these meetings when I tell you that I don't know which touched me the most . . . that saying of the Lord's Prayer, or the table laid out with the innocent coffee and doughnuts afterwards.

The book put out by the Alcoholics Foundation, P. O. Box 459, New York City, is one of the most impressive expositions of religion on an utterly workable level that can be found. This book is written almost in Basic English. Yet there are parts which one cannot read without a prickling along the scalp, which means that a fact almost too good to be true is being talked about.

The book was written by the first hundred to join this strangely magnificent fraternity after they had all stayed sober for at least two years. This is why their *Twelve Steps* are written in the past tense, not as mere theory, but as tried experience:

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

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

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

FOUR Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

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

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

SEVEN Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

EIGHT Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

NINE Made direct amends to such persons wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

TEN Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

ELEVEN 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.

TWELVE 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.

I borrow one man's words printed in this book:

I had been sticking my chin out and getting soaked by spiritual law until I was punch drunk. The day I made my first efforts in this direction an entire new world opened up for me. I have never even been tempted to take a drink since. . . . Please do not assume that all this is but an exposition of spiritual pride. A chart of my spiritual progress would look like the 'graph' of a business that had been hit by everything but an earthquake. But there has been progress. It has cured me of a vicious habit. Where my life had been full of mental turmoil there is now an ever increasing depth of calmness. Where there was a hit-or-miss attitude toward living there is now new direction and force.

After my first meeting, Cy Barton thought I should attend another in an entirely different type of neighborhood. He arranged to take me the following Tuesday night. But at the last moment I had to telephone him from a movie theatre and say we'd meet him at the hail where the group gathers.

'We?' he asked me.

'My young neighbor. He's driven me into town and we're seeing a French motion picture . . . it's longer than we expected would it be all right if I bring him?'

'It'll be fine,' Cy said, 'if you want to.'

I intended to tell Jeff what kind of meeting we were going to, but when we came out of the theatre we immediately got into dis. cussing the picture, and then we had to hurry a bit to get even a sandwich for dinner.

'Where is this clambake of yours anyway?' Jeff asked, and I said, 'It's that American Legion Hall just above Wilshire.'

'So now you go to Legion meetings. Expect to find God there?'

'Not exactly. You see, this meeting . . . here, you'd better turn here, Jeff.' At any rate, with one thing and another, I must not have mentioned what kind of meeting we were attending.

Cyrus met us at the door, and I introduced them, and Jeff said, 'Why, you're the guy who writes about my pal, Homer McHorrible, aren't you?'

Cy said, 'If I had a jealous nature, I'd be mad at that bird. He always jumps in between me and anybody I'm about to shake hands with!' We went in, and sat down, and only then did Jeff lean over and whisper: 'What kind of a thing *is* this anyway? Looks like a political rally . . . or a meeting of the Screen Writers Guild . . . whatinheck?'

For some reason I felt a little self-conscious about saying the words right out, so I just smiled and whispered back, 'You'll see.'

He kept looking around, and so did I, at all the laughing, friendly people talking like old schoolmates, and in a few minutes the meeting started, and I forgot Jeff. I forgot him for an hour, for I never had listened to anything in my life which stirred me more than this.

Then a short recess was announced. And now, I did look around at him, apologetic because I'd been so lost in what I was hearing. He was sitting beside me with his chin *sunk* on his chest. He straightened up quickly in his chair and looked at me with a strange, defiant look I'd never before seen in his face.

"I don't know what you had in mind bringing me here," he said rudely. "But whatever it was, I'm not especially diverted by it."

"Oh, Jeff!"

"Holy Rollers I could take ... but *this* .." He got up from his chair then. "If you'll just excuse me..."

"Why, Jeff, I can't understand you," I said in utter bewilderment.

"Can't you? I thought you could understand anything! Isn't that the advertised product you peddle?"

I thought wildly, The boy's hurt about something. . . What is it?

"I haven't any patience with this kind of bunk," he said, "You wouldn't have either, if you knew the first thing about being a drunk, We had one in our family you know . . . or did you know? I 'spose not. We never mention him, because he was a filthy disgrace. My father's little brother . . . he was a Jeff also. I saw all of that stuff I wanted to see when I was a youngster, so now, if you don't mind ...

To my utter amazement he crowded over my knees and strode out of the hail. I turned to Cy helplessly, knowing he must have heard, and wondering what I could say to apologize for my guest. "I'm terribly sorry," I said. "I wouldn't have had that happen for anything."

"Don't worry about it," Cy said, "They're often like that, the first time somebody brings them."

"But Cy ..., you don't understand. Jeff's not ..."

"I've seen a lot of beginners slam out of here, mad as the dickens. That means they're just not ready yet.... That youngster's got to suffer a bit longer, and then ...The meeting was called to order again, and Cy smiled reassuringly at me, and we settled back into our seats. Of course Cy might easily believe that Jeff ... he probably thought that was why I had asked to bring him.

I tried to listen to what was being said now. But a terrible numb agony was creeping over me, for now I knew beyond any question what it was that Jeff was suffering from. I had blundered into that desperate secret of his. I felt physically sick, as if I'd just seen a badly maimed person. I thought back over what I knew of Jeff, and things fitted together. His never taking a drink at his father's table . . . his sudden absences, and his blithe way of never explaining them ... the look I had seen unmistakably in his eyes the night on the mountain when he had told me about his "friend ... that unpleasant cuss."

I could barely keep from weeping now. The boy had been groveling in this alone. He thought my bringing him here was my presumptuous, clumsy way of telling him I had found out. He would never want to see me again. But that wasn't important. All that really mattered. And then, like rain coming down quietly on flames, a kind of calm came

over me. For an instant I felt the touch of that very thing I saw in the faces all around me, ineradicable sadness and over it the shimmer of peace. I seemed to have blundered stupidly.

And yet ... if there is a Plan for all of us, as I had been saying over and over in this book . perhaps it was not a blunder. Perhaps it was something else. The moment the meeting was over, I ran out of the building, expecting to find Jeff in the car. But the car was empty, and the chauffeur of one of the cars also waiting, came over and handed me Jeff's keys.

"The young man said for you to drive home, miss," he said kindly, as if he knew all about these things. "He said for me to tell you he just remembered something important he has to do tonight. I'm awfully sorry, lady."

"I'm sorry too. But thank you," I said, taking the keys. "He'll be all right, lady," the chauffeur said compassionately. "Why, my boss used to get so mad when he first started. He'd say, 'George, don't ever take me down to one of those damn meetings again. No matter What I say, don't take me.' But he's fine now. The youngster'll be fine, too. I talked to him a little bit. He's a nice boy, lady."

There was nothing to do but take his car home. And wait. I had to wait nearly a week before I saw him again.

CHAPTER 27

The Black Moment

Jeff had passed beyond the stage of anger by the time he came to see me. Or rather his anger had become that larger impotent rage which is despair. Larger, because this anger is against God Himself, for creating the world as He did, and especially for creating the interpretative phrase of it called Jeffrey Clement. All angers, I suppose, are really against ourselves, which is to say against Whatever made us; just as all joys are psalms of gratitude to the same Whatever.

He came over to my house bringing back all the books he was reading for me. No running up the steps two at a time this morning. He rang the doorbell, and I went downstairs and let him in. I took the armful of books, and put them on a chair, and then, knowing this was no moment to be trusted to words, I put my arms around him, just as I often had when he was a youngster.

"So now you know," he said gruffly, after a few minutes. "You're the first one close to me to know, Missy. You know what I always said to myself?"

I shook my head. "Back there in the East, when the navy had me in a hospital trying to put me through the wringer, I said to myself, Jeff. maybe you can't keep any of the other promises you've been making to yourself about this . . . the liquor, you know . . . But there's one you're going to keep."

"What was that one, Jeff?"

"I said, When one person you really care about finds out, you're going to pack up your toys and leave like a gentleman. You're not going to wait until the whole nasty thing becomes a brawl in the middle of other people's lives. That's what I was talking about, that night up on the hill."

"I know, darling. I've figured it out now," I said in as matter-of-fact a way as I could. "I hadn't before, Jeff. You always said one thing you liked about me was that I'm

not very smart. Well, I'm not even as smart as we thought I was." I tried to laugh at that, but Jeff didn't laugh.

"You mean, when you took me to that silly prayer meeting, you didn't really know I'm what those guys were prettily calling a problem drinker, and I just call a plain *drunk*?"

"I didn't know. It was just ... what we'd call a plain accident and maybe what those guys at the silly prayer meeting would call ..."

He shook his head bitterly, "Don't give me that, Missy. I've been playing around with that stuff for your sake. But I just couldn't get mixed up in religion. I've one problem too many now, thank you."

"All right," I said meekly. "We won't discuss religion any more. Come out in the kitchen and let's have something to eat."

There was a new white coconut cake in the kitchen. It was only eleven o'clock in the morning and the cake had been baked for tonight's dinner guests, but I took a big knife and slashed right down in the middle of it, because it was one absurd useless thing I could do for him.

"Gosh ... that's what I like! Cake in the morning!" he said like the youngster he is. "Nobody'll ever let me eat it when it tastes best ... how'd you happen to suspect that's my weakness ... one of my weaknesses?"

"I suspected because you've been telling me since you were twelve," I said.

"Yes, I suppose I have. I suppose I've told you a lot of stuff, one way and another."

"You have, Jeff. In a presumptuous sort of way, I guess, I consider you partly my own handiwork. Not to be maudlin about it, darling, I think I consider you my major work. When other things aren't going very well with me, I say to myself, Well, at least there's Jeff."

"Yep," he said, his face cracking bitterly into a grin.

"I don't mean, of course, that I've had anything to do with making you," I said. "All I take credit for is the way I've always felt about you — what I've seen in you — and possibly what you've seen in me. That's all we can claim any creativeness about, I suppose."

For probably the first time in his life he put down his cake, half eaten. "Don't let's talk about this at all. You just take my word for it that I've been over the situation very thoroughly, and that I have quite realistically decided what's the best thing to do about it."

"All right. You decide the things in your department, and I'll decide the things in mine Jeff."

"If that sentence is the edge of the lever trying to lift the whole thing over into your department, Missy — it won't work."

"All right. There'll be no levers," I agreed, and meant it.

"I've seen this caper in all stages. It's something nobody can beat. The stage I'm in now, is where you've got pride and decency and brains enough to keep people from finding out. Drunks are smart that way. At first. Then people do begin finding out, one by one, and pretty soon everybody knows, and the next thing, you're a cheerful sot. We had boys in the hospital in all stages. I used to look at 'em, and say, 'Jeff, there you are in 1950, and there you are in 1952. You see everything was stepped up faster in the war, so

some of these drunks were younger than me in years, but older in alcoholic content. I had a chance to get the long view. And I made up my solemn mind.

I couldn't hear him say it again. He must have seen that in my face.

"You don't need to worry about how I'm going to manage the deal," he said. "I always do things nicely, Missy."

The whole morning was more of the same, getting absolutely nowhere, except that it was a relief for Jeff to talk about it. I know he had talked round and round with other men, those phantom passengers on the tilting shipwrecked deck I'd lately discovered. But he had never talked about it with any of "us" on dry land, so to speak.

"How long's it been, Jeff?" I asked him.

"Since my first drink, I guess. Some people just can't take it. I'm one of those. Lots of alcoholics don't admit it. I do. It's something in my blood, I told you I had an uncle ...

I nodded. I didn't want to hear about him.

"I couldn't keep out of it in the navy. A lot of us couldn't. The normal guys shook it off, and the rest of us ... well ... The vet hospitals are full of us. But I'm not going to wait until I'm a wetbrain."

"You don't have to wait. There's a good way to stop, Jeff."

"So they were telling me," he said bitterly. "Listen, Pet. I didn't make myself the way I am, so why should I go sniveling back and ask that guy who did make me."

When he went home he said, "What say, you and I don't mention this again to each other?"

"If you want it that way, Jeff. Except that when there are things between people that they can't mention, then nothing's any good between them any more. Don't let's agree about it. if we want to talk, let's talk."

"Okay," he said. "But don't let's want to."

The weeks went along then, pretty much as they'd always gone, as far as anyone could see. I tried not to let my eyes pounce on his face too worriedly, whenever we met, But I honestly couldn't see anything which I'd call "a sign." And I couldn't detect in anybody else around him a sign that anyone else knew.

They were pretty ghastly weeks for me. If I had found out about Jeff before I had become acquainted with Cy Barton, I'm sure I should have handled the whole thing differently. I'd have rushed in with all kinds of destructive unktion; I'd have had a good confidential talk with his father, first of all, and then I'd have gone right on doing all the wrong, good-intentioned things that people usually do about this. I'd have appealed to Jeff's will power, and to his pride and to one thing and another. But what I had seen with Cy, and what I had studied about this problem, had really convinced me that the only hope was from within Jeff himself.

The night on the hill when Jeff had given me the first veiled inkling, I had been almost exhilarated because I believed so completely that what I heard in that boy was the "inner knocking on the door," I remembered how I had caught a glimpse of a new interpretation of an old familiar parable from the book of Matthew: "I was .anhungered and ye gave me no bread, naked and ye clothed me not."

I had always read those words as if two actors were in the scene, the beggar at the door, and the rich man within the house, deciding whether or not to feed the beggar. That night I had suddenly seen that it is the Inner Self knocking at the inner door of

consciousness, and saying, I am hungry ... will you give me bread? The crisis comes because the outer self hears this knocking and is overwhelmed with his own emptiness, mistaking it for the final state. If he doesn't know how to give this bread, the door is closed in the sublime inner beggar's face. Perhaps it may be years or a lifetime, before the knocking is heard again.

That night on the hill, I had heard Jeff's inner beggar, and I had been glad because I was sure that between us we could find the bread. Now, under all my fear about the great urgency of what I knew was Jeff's crisis, I was fighting my own sense of failure, because I had not been able to show him fast enough where he could find what he was unconsciously begging for. My blithe confidence then seemed almost frivolous and irresponsible to me, now that I knew the exact dimensions of his hell.

And yet I had no choice but to trust that One knew all this, and was holding the outcome safe. Not easy, not painless ... and perhaps not even immediately visible to our limited judgment. But ultimately and surely, Jeff *was* going to take the inner step, which all men must eventually take. The only way I could help with that was almost ironically simple, since that was what I had been thinking about in an abstract kind of way for many years. I had talked quite a good prayer, as we say in golf. Now all I had to do was *do* it.

It was almost Christmas. I had some very bad weeks, and something I saw in Doctor Clement's eyes made me know that he too was having them. Once when we had just a second alone, he said, Get hold of him if you can, Missy."

"I'm trying to. He's got to do it for himself."

His father said, "He doesn't even want to want to." He told me then that he'd known ever since Jeff had been home. "He'll hold this cave-in off longer if he doesn't know that," he said. "He'll keep up appearances for me, for a while."

"Does Alice know?"

"I don't think so," Doctor Clement said. "But with a plucky little scout like Alice, you can't be sure."

"But there must be something you could do."

"I've had the records from the hospitals. Jeff's had all the treatments. They don't work in cases like this. Nothing works, except ...

"Except?"

"You know the answer," he said.

We touched each other's hand wordlessly, for there is nobody so helpless as strong people who know a job is too big for them.

WASHINGTONIAN NOTES & QUERIES No. 20: Further Queries on John F. Hoss and Francis Gallagher.

Query: Was our John F. Hoss the John F. Hoss who designed the Gazebo still standing in Union Square (constructed in 1851)? As he is described in the Grand Anniversary Parade in 1841 as Captain John F. Hoss, he is almost certainly the Captain John F. Hoss of the Forsyth Company of Volunteers, attached to the Second Regiment of Maryland Infantry, who carried the sword of Colonel Armand, Marquis de la Rouerie, at the memorable visit

of Lafayette to Baltimore October 7-11, 1824. He may be the "Joh. Fredk Has" who was b. Oct 14 1793 and baptized Nov 17 1793 at Zion Lutheran Church, Baltimore, son of Joh. Fredk Has. But why have we no record of his death?

Query: As a Francis Gallagher married Margaret Rynd on October 12 1820, is it possible that the Margaret Gallagher listed (living alone) in Ward 15, Baltimore, in the 1850 Census, b. about 1794, is Margaret Rynd Gallagher, widow of the "Gallagher" listed in the 1840 Baltimore Census without first name? The Gallagher (male) in the 1840 Census is between 50 and 60, the female who is presumably his wife is between 40 and 50, which would match the age of Margaret Rynd (?Ryan?) Gallagher. Francis Gallagher in the 1830 Baltimore Census is between 40 and 50, but the female closest to the right age is not listed as between 30 and 40; also, there is a male 60-70 and a female 70-100, and a male under five. It will be remembered that the Francis Gallagher who died at age fifty in 1866 is listed as the Francis Gallagher who was a member of the Maryland House of Delegates in 1847 (resigned during session). But he cannot be the Francis Gallagher who was an incorporator of the Cordwainers Benevolent Society in 1833. He could have been the Member of the House of Delegates 1839-42 and 1844. Or that could have been an older Francis Gallagher, born, say 1785 and died in the 1840s, leaving his widow Margaret. And which (if there were two) was one of the fifteen incorporators of the Washington Temperance Society of Baltimore in January 1841?