

BOOK REVIEW
NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE
Vol. 221(15), October 12, 1939

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: The story of how more than one hundred men have recovered from alcoholism. 400 pp. New York Works Publishing Co., 1939, \$3.50.

The psychological aspect of alcoholism taxes the entire skill and intuition of the therapist, and the authors of this book claim that in the long run the ex-alcoholic patient who is properly trained in psychological method is an extremely effective person to bring about the cure of the neurotic alcoholic individual.

The first part of the book discusses methods, with particular stress on twelve steps in the recovery program. This program includes the general principles of psychotherapy found in such books as those by Durfee and Peabody. There is, however, an essentially new note, namely, that the alcoholic individual should be helped to admit to God, to himself and to another human being (preferably an ex-alcoholic patient) the exact nature of his personality deficit. Some will perhaps shy from the emphasis on God and religion until it is realized that the alcoholic patient is asked in this relation to believe sincerely in a power greater than himself. He then sees that his life is really unmanageable without this power.

The second part contains the stories of twenty-nine individuals who were cured by the method of working out their character problems in relation to God, themselves and another human being. All these individuals were "convinced by an ex-alcoholic therapist". Those who at some time must deal with the problem of alcoholism are urged to read this stimulating account.

The authors have presented their case well, in fact, in such good style that it may be of considerable influence when read by alcoholic patients.

BOOK REVIEW

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Vol. 113(16), October 14, 1939

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. The story of how more than one hundred men have recovered from alcoholism. Cloth. Price \$3.50. 400 pp.. New York: Works Publishing Company. 1939.

The seriousness of the psychiatric and social problem represented by addiction to alcohol is generally underestimated by those not immediately familiar with the tragedies in the families of victims or the resistance addicts offer to any effective treatment. Many psychiatrists regard addiction to alcohol as having a more pessimistic prognosis than schizophrenia. For many years the public was beguiled into believing that short courses of enforced abstinence and catharsis in "institutes" and "rest homes" would do the trick, and now that the failure of such temporizing has become common knowledge, a considerable number of other forms of quack treatment have sprung up. The book under review is a curious combination of organizing propaganda and religious exhortation. It is in no sense a scientific book, although it is introduced by a letter from a physician who claims to know some of the anonymous contributors who have been "cured" of addiction to alcohol and have joined together in an organization, which would save other addicts by a kind of religious conversion. The book contains instructions as to how to intrigue the alcoholic addict into the acceptance of divine guidance in place of alcohol in terms strongly reminiscent of Dale

Carnegie and the adherents of the Buchman ("Oxford") movement. The one valid thing in the book is the recognition of the seriousness of addiction to alcohol. Other than this; the book has no scientific merit or interest.