

# Alcoholics Anonymous

## *Science Column*

Medicine usually claims to cure only about 2 per cent of the cases of acute alcoholism it treats. Last week a non-medical group appeared which made the unusual claim that 25 per cent of its cases were cured. Called Alcoholics Anonymous, the group was a club composed of ex-drunkards and men trying to overcome the liquor habit who, for obvious reasons, prefer their names to remain unknown. Not particularly anxious for publicity, it nevertheless came into the limelight last Thursday evening when John D. Rockefeller Jr. gave a dinner party for educators and others interested in the club's work.

The organization has existed for more than four years; yet it has spread its gospel only by word-of-mouth advertising and a free book. It started with two members; today it has something around 500. It has no dues, but it does have a strict membership requirement: an honest desire to stop drinking.

The founder was a commercial traveler who found himself obsessed with liquor and was unable to get cured at any of the sanitariums he tried. Finally, though he was an agnostic, he turned to what for want of a better name might be called faith. Immediately he got help in the form of his own determination to

stop drinking; almost as soon, he was impelled to help another drinker cure himself in the same manner.

From these two men sprang the society and its three principles of (1) telling another person--a friend, a member of the group, perhaps even a priest, in the case of a Roman Catholic--of the trouble that has turned him to drink; (2) resolving to abstain henceforth; (3) helping others to abstain. In short, members subordinate a desire for liquor for something higher--call it God, Buddha, faith, self-determination, or what you will.

Today the society has branches in Akron, Cleveland, Chicago, and the New York metropolitan area. It meets in small groups at various members' houses and keeps the address of its headquarters as secret as its members' names--giving out only two post-office box numbers in New York, one for general inquiries and the other for requests for its book. Through the generosity of men who have conquered alcoholism and of onlookers like Rockefeller, who does not drink but is interested in movements to eradicate drunkenness, it raises a budget for salaries of its directors and stenographers, rent, and stationery.