

Help for Drunkards

Medicine Column

Two members of Alcoholics Anonymous recently shed their anonymity. Alcoholics Anonymous is a fast-growing national organization of ex-drinkers pledged to help other alcoholics get well. They count chiefly on constant social intercourse among alcoholics who want to be cured. The two members are convinced that most of the estimated 600,000 alcoholics in the U.S. (there are 3,000,000 estimated drinkers) can't get over their drinking.* The two:

Mrs. Marty Mann, 39, a tall, smart-looking blonde who last week became executive director of the newly established National Committee for Education on Alcoholism, with offices in Manhattan's Academy of Medicine. The daughter of an executive of Marshall Field's Chicago department store, she married a drunkard and became one herself. Her husband, meanwhile, got over it. In 1939, after psychiatrists had failed to cure her, she became the first woman member of Alcoholic Anonymous. She still goes to parties where drinks are served, but her drink is a horse's neck (ginger ale with lemon in it).

Her committee is sponsored by the Yale Plan for Alcohol Studies (*Time*, May 31, 1943), the outstanding U.S. center in the field. Last winter Yale established the first free clinics in the U.S. for inebriates, in New Haven and Hartford, which have already had amazing success: 84% of those treated are now on their feet (there have been temporary relapses). Chief Yale methods: careful diagnosis to determine the needs of each case, followed, as needed, by psychiatric treatment, sanatorium care, contacts with Alcoholics Anonymous or the Salvation Army, social service to solve home problems, job finding, repeated reports

back to the clinic.

Under Yale's eyes, Mrs. Mann's job is to lecture throughout the U.S. on the text: "Alcoholism is a disease and the alcoholic is a sick person; the alcoholic can be helped and is worth helping and this is a public health problem."

Edward McGoldrick, 39, is head of a special New York City bureau to assist the city's estimated 12,000 drunks. New York is the first big U.S. city to do more for alcoholics than throw them in jail.

McGoldrick, lawyer son of a onetime New York State Supreme Court Justice, got over drinking with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous four years ago. Last year, when Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia wanted to appoint him an assistant corporation counsel, he refused, asked to be allowed to work with drunkards instead.

McGoldrick's patients were 100 bums who had been drinking for years--onetime lawyers, doctors, actors, a hansom-cab driver, engineers, chemists, printers, clerks, laborers. Most were helped by Alcoholics Anonymous meetings; others by long talks with McGoldrick aimed at overcoming their feelings of inadequacy.

By May, the Mayor was convinced that McGoldrick's methods were sound--75 of the patients now support themselves.

*Alcoholics Anonymous definition of an alcoholic: "A person to whom alcohol is a problem in any department of his life and who is unable to stop drinking." A chronic alcoholic: a person "who has been harmed either physically or mentally through alcohol." An excessive drinker: "A potential alcoholic."