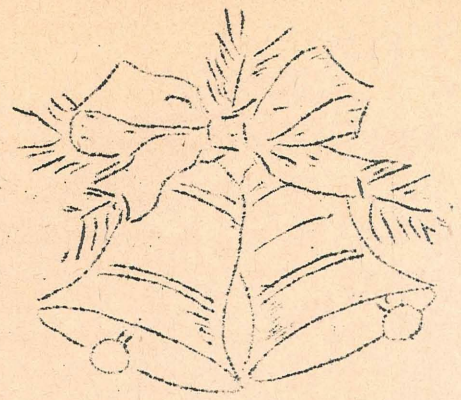
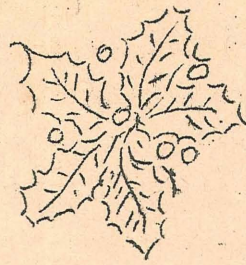


Merry



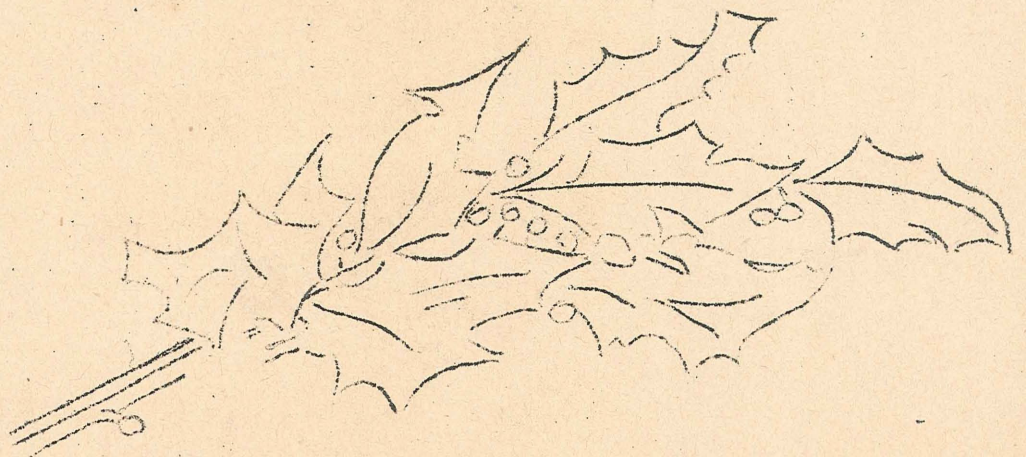
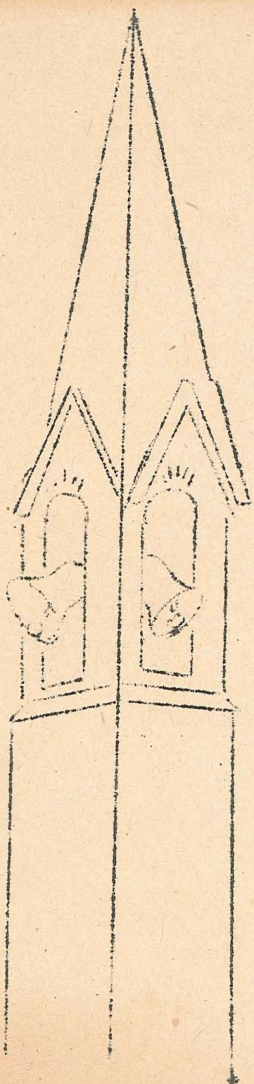
Christmas

MAINSTAY

December 1955.

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Count your garden by the flowers
Never by the leaves that fall;
Count your joys by golden hours,
Never when life's worries call;
Count your nights by stars not shadows,
Count your days by smiles not tears;
And on every Christmas morning,
Count your age by friends not years.



A Christmas Message.

Throughout Christendom at this time, the emphasis is placed on friendship and fellowship - "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men". To the more religious of us it is a time of humble thankfulness that God still loves Man, in spite of his headstrong misuse of the gift of choice between right and wrong. For the Christian, Christmas rejoicing is rightly tempered with humility - that elusive quality that we AA's are forever searching - of which the circumstances of the birth of Christ are an object lesson.

Unfortunately, in spite of the name, Christendom seems to be forgetting the soul of Man, with the result that Christmas rejoicing seems to be ever more of a Bacchanalian festival with no thought of God. Churchmen in the U.S.A. have shown the concern of right-thinking people with the plea to Christians to 'put Christ back into Christmas'. Even in our own small way, we AA's can give the assurance that such a return to recognising the spiritual life is certainly conducive to 'peace on earth'. Even our one time agnostics and atheists, even if they do not admit belief in Christ, soon admit to the existence of a Higher Power, a Divinity, which I recognise as the True and Living God.

For me now, Christmases are no longer passed in an alcoholic fog. It is truly a time when I can kneel in humble thankfulness that I am sober to enjoy the love and friendship of kith and kin. It is a time for serene rejoicing in the wonder of the love of God and his lesson in humility in the story of His Son.

I wonder sometimes if the innate need of the human mind for a deity, is not reflected in the popular songs. Perhaps the popularity of such songs as 'It is no secret what God can do' and 'If you know the Lord you'll need nobody else' which I have just heard on a request session, shows acknowledgement of a spiritual essence in our way of life.

The insecure AA looking forward apprehensively to his first Christmas in AA, could perhaps gain heart from the next words of the second song; 'Take time to pray every day'. Remember your honest desire to stop drinking, remember to maintain an open mind, and even if you haven't faith, act as if you have. Don't worry about Christmas coming, just think of today, pray, and before you know it Christmas will have passed in happy sobriety.

Our Christmas wish for each and all of you is, through faith in God,

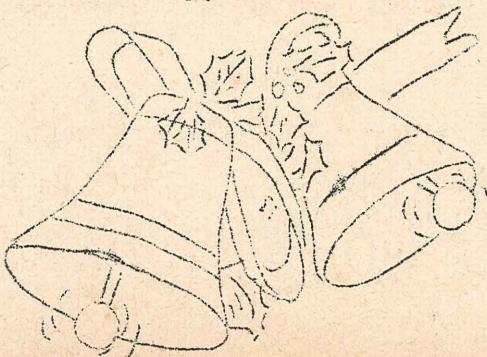
Peace on earth.

Editor.

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I believe in wishing a man good luck. I believe in hoping good things, to anybody, anywhere, anytime. I believe in asking for things. If anything's worth asking for once, it's worth asking for again. On these grounds, I ask that God grant you the Grace and the common sense to see yourself as He sees you, that you may better know yourself and His will, and be enabled to carry it out in your daily life. I ask that He carry on, in you and through you, the gifts of His Grace, and of His goodness give you plenty. His favours reward you. His spirit guide you. His power protect you in what you, in human frailty, cannot attain. Now send one up for me. Just a little quicky.

H.T.B., Dallas, Texas, in the Grapevine.



I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play
And wild and sweet the words repeat
'Of peace on earth, Goodwill to men'.

The Second Step.

'Came to believe a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity'

'Sane' as a word is defined as follows: 'Not to be disordered in mind and body' According to that interpretation an alcoholic 'off the beam' is definitely not sane, because if anybody can be termed 'Disordered' he certainly is that person.

To become restored to an 'ordered state of mind' then becomes the most vital of an alcoholic's problems; hence, I think, how to interpret 'sanity' is of paramount importance. If asked to-day whether I consider myself sane or not, I can only answer "I don't know. I do know however, that I haven't had a drink to-day and need never have one in the future, provided I acknowledge a Power Greater than myself, and humbly adhere to the philosophy of A.A.

To-day I feel I have climbed the road to and crossed the first two Plateaux, and have begun my searching and exploring journey through the third. I don't think my own reflections and conclusions of the period of sobriety I have hitherto enjoyed are of much value, for the simple reason I am only now beginning to reach a balanced state of mind.

Did I believe a Power greater than ourselves could restore me to sanity? Didn't I rather sense that Power? Didn't I strike a contact somewhere in my sub-conscious with that Power when A.A. discovered me? Does a drowning man believe in God when in danger? Doesn't he rather suddenly sense that God IS? Incidentally, the God I'm referring to is not the One of Orthodox Religion - I mean the One of all ages and all peoples. Now when looking back, I'm sure of the fact that realizing such a potent Force actually existed, is what began the work of my rehabilitation.

As during our journey across the First Plateau, so is the case with the Second; we must have help, otherwise hardly any of us would have made the grade. When I look back it strikes me forcibly that while we are active alcoholics, whether we are drunk or sober, we are definitely 'mentally unbalanced', (a polite term for insanity) but we are treated and considered by non-alcoholics as sane people, except during the last stages when the symptoms of the disease become so obvious that no mistake as to our malady can be possible.

The 'Miracle' now becomes more and more vividly pronounced. Hardly a day goes by that I am not in some way reminded of the wondrous blessings which in all kinds of imperceptible ways I am now receiving. One of the greatest is the fact that, realising I was considered incurably insane, I can now face a future in which I can attain the highest forms of sanity possible for a man to achieve; provided I let the Power fight alcohol for me by completely surrendering my own will, and I fight life myself and live according to the rules of A.A. and honour my obligations to my fellow men and women - especially does that include the 'Other Human Being'. When all is said, she or he must have thought sanely for us during the time we were unable to do so ourselves. Hardly anyone has a better standard of comparison than an alcoholic as regards sanity - he knows both sides of the fence.

Bill from Wellington, N.S.W., Australia.

Extract from an article by Kenneth Walker in the English 'Picture Post':-

...A psychiatrist can assist a patient to free himself from the fears, feelings of guilt, and conflicts that are responsible for the breakdown in health; but, ... he is unable to give him any form of spiritual guidance for the future. Yet, according to Jung, the greatest of all living psychiatrists, this is precisely what the patient needs if he is to avoid future breakdowns. Jung writes of his patient's requirements as follows: 'During the last thirty years, people from all the civilised countries have consulted me. Amongst all my patients in the second half of life, there has not been one whose problem, in the last resort, was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given their followers.'

But what spiritual message has the psychiatrist for the patient whom he has brought out of the shadows, and who is still in need of help? The answer is, alas, too simple: he has none at all. That, in short, is the medical dilemma that doctors are beginning to realise: that their patients have spiritual needs, and that they are unable to supply these needs.

I can do all things through faith in God which strengthens me. Through Him I have vitality, dynamic energy, and attain completeness. Cheered by the presence of God, I will do at the moment, without anxiety, according to the strength He shall give me, the work that His Providence assigns me. I will leave the rest, it is not my affair.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. A.A. has no dues or fees. It is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

The A.A. Program of Recovery is incorporated in

The Twelve Steps

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol . . . that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

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

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Step Seven: Humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

Step 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.

Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

THE A.A. PRAYER . . .

God grant me
the **Serenity**
to accept the things
I cannot change.
Courage to change
the things I can,
and **Wisdom**
to know the difference