

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.

Those who generally underestimate the seriousness of a psychiatric and social problem, represented by addiction to alcohol, are 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 a letter introduces it 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.