

NEW OUTLOOK

EDITORIAL

JANUARY, 1935

Aids to Drinking

CHRISTMAS, THE ONE JUST PAST, coincided with another anniversary, the first birthday of Repeal. The coincidence was not exact, of course, since some twenty-odd days separated the two events, but near enough for those vast and imponderable agencies that concoct Christmas gifts for America to buy. High up in office skyscrapers, deep down in interestingly decorated studios, they had been at work for weeks and months producing a flood of utensils, mechanisms, gadgets, devices and general accessories to the noble old art of public drinking, legal for the first twelvemonths since 1920. Thousands of designers, artists and plain inventors have been burning midnight oil and/or electricity to create a flood of aids to intoxication such as never before seen on this earth.

This department for some days now has been making quiet research into the number and complexity of things offered for the social drinker. We can only report the utmost amazement at their extent. And some slight dismay—do we really need so much engineering assistance on our way down the primrose path? An earlier, more rugged America managed to down its brandy and its rye without the aid of six different kinds of glasses for the one and five for the other. Grandpa's jollities over the Christmas board, as we dimly recall them, came out of the one simple style of glassware—a sizable tumbler that held everything from hot toddy to hard cider to apple brandy to cherry bounce. And grandpa, when the occasion warranted it, knew how to make himself and his guests feel thoroughly at ease, mellow, even hilarious. His wines, which were sometimes made at home but more often came from the big grocery on State Street, were imbibed all from the one wineglass (to be sure, there was more than one to the family), not from twenty-seven utterly different sizes, styles and shapes. Drinking, in grand-

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pa's time, was never *de rigueur*—you did it for the fun of the thing.

You may say, this earlier, more rugged America didn't have the complex of strange and exotic liquors we must deal with now. True enough, they had no cocktails. The *Angel's Kiss*, *Satan's Whiskers*, *Paris Nights* and even the more simple *Dry Martini*, *Manhattan* and *Old Fashioned* were unknown. If you wanted a little spot of something before dinner you took it straight from the bottle, with perhaps a small glass of plain water on the side. But would grandpa, even if he had known modern alcoholic compounds, have needed one-tenth the paraphernalia a more decadent age seems to require?

Would he have needed no less than fifty-two different mechanical devices for recording and preserving the recipes of cocktails? We counted that many. The most elaborate we saw was electrically operated; at the touch of numbered buttons it flashed the desired ingredients in colored lights, a little bell ringing when your formula came up. Another permitted you to twirl a roulette wheel for your choice, lucky number voting himself a drink according to the way the ball stopped rolling. A simpler affair twisted the recipes up for you on a species of radio dial, for two dollars extra you could have the dial illuminated. Many were cunningly embossed on the sides of cocktail shakers. With these, you could not escape the agony of choice; a shift of the lid to the proper name was required to bring the prescription into view. (We, whose only choice is a *Martini*, would go surely insane if night after night we saw repeated; One Part Dry Vermouth, Two Parts Gin.)

Then there are the hundreds of cocktail shakers, designed with every possible and impossible drinking contingency in mind. A very handsome specimen, smooth and shining in chromium plate, offers a concealed thermometer to announce just the exquisite split second when the cocktail behind it can properly be absorbed; not a minute later, not a minute sooner. What your guests must do for thermostatic control while the glass lies in their hands is not revealed.

