

COCKTAILS

By

ROBERT VERMEIRE *)

Mixer of the Embassy Club

Cocktails were first introduced in America more than a hundred years ago; but their exact origin is rather a mystery. Many stories are told to account for the bulk of the cocktail. The one generally accepted is:

The squire of a little country inn was very proud of his beautiful daughter, and he was equally fond of a magnificent prize-fighting cock. The bird suddenly disappeared and could not be found anywhere. Weary of searching the country round, he swore and told everybody in the village that the man who brought the cock back alive would be allowed to marry his daughter.

Many days passed, until one summer morning a young cavalry officer rode into the village, stopped in front of the inn, and handed the cock back to its owner.

The squire, full of joy, produced drinks that all might toast the tail of the cock, who had not lost a single feather. His daughter, either by accident, or from excitement at the sight of her future husband, mixed whisky, vermouth, bitters and ice together. Everybody liked this delicious concoction so much that it was christened on the spot "Cocktail."

The officer introduced the "cocktail" amongst his fellow officers, and soon it became known to the entire American Army. Gradually its reputation grew, and the cocktail became famous all over the world.

The cocktail habit is now well established. Men started to drink them first, women took to them afterwards, and, as they are more difficult to please, expert mixers have to invent all kinds of new drinks to satisfy the feminine taste. The war has also helped a great deal to make cocktails popular in England and Europe. Our Canadian friends and American allies wanted their cocktail over here just as in their "own home town," and they are as good judges of cocktails as the Frenchman is of wine, or the Englishman of whisky or beer.

Doctors say that excessive cocktail-drinking stimulates a false appetite and is ruinous to the health. Experienced bar-tenders admit that it is the excess of cocktail drinking that is dangerous. One or two cocktails before a meal form an excellent stimulant; but it is just as well to remember the old French saying: "*Il ne faut jamais abuser des bonnes choses.*" ("Never abuse a good thing.")

The mixer, either amateur or professional, should always bear in mind that no standard measures or glasses exist for cocktails and other mixed drinks. The author has adopted certain measures and glasses, the capacities of which are here explained beforehand.

Gill or Noggin. The standard measure adopted in this book is the Gill or Noggin (= 0.142 litre), a recognised measure when dealing in wines or spirits. Four gills = one pint = 0.568 litre.

The glasses described in the numerous recipes are:

The cocktail-glass, which contains about half a gill of liquid. The mixer should be very careful when $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{5}$, $\frac{1}{6}$ or $\frac{1}{8}$ are mentioned in a

*) Vorwort zu dem Buche "Cocktails how to mix them, by Robert of the Embassy Club", London, Herbert Jenkins, 1922.