distilleries followed, often on higher ground less subject to flooding from the river, but still near enough to the wharves for carting the imported molasses. Enough came out of Medford's stills that fishermen complained that the waste dumped in the river wiped out the oyster beds. If true, it was an early instance of industrial pollution destroying a natural resource.

Medford rum became known for its superior quality compared to most New England rums (an advantage that could have been had with the barest attention to quality control), becoming one of the first brand names to emerge from the northern colonies, along with the United Company of Spermaceti Chandler's candles and some milled grains branded with the “best marks.” Published recipes in the nineteenth century often call specifically for “Medford Rum.”

Medford rum's superior quality was rumored to stem from the excellence of the water—but if that was the secret, it was not one the distillers would have been eager to promote. The spring that gave rise to Medford's first rum distillery couldn't accommodate the expanding industry, and water had to be piped in from Pasture Hill, north of the village, and might well have been infused with cow dung. As the West Indians proved, however, that extra ingredient might actually have aided fermentation and imbued a certain zest.

Whatever its secret, word of Medford rum spread far, some of it less than truthful. Boosters said that it never left the bonded warehouse “until it had passed a severe test, and was shipped across the Atlantic and back again, in wood, to age it.” The most noted was Old Medford Rum, produced well into the nineteenth century by the Lawrence family. Local fans claimed, rather grandly, that it “carried the name and fame of the early town to the snowcapped region of the Rockies and to India's coral strand,” and improbable accounts have been published of barrels turning up atop mountains in Switzerland.

It was during the peak of Medford's rum boom that Paul Revere rode through on that fateful night. It was an era of ubiquitous social drinking: a dollop of rum, downed with little ceremony or palaver, was an everyday way of enhancing the bonds of friendship and

cementing common purpose in the Republic of Rum. Revere was a typical colonial, fond of playing cards and backgammon at public houses, and his regular lairs in Boston included two taverns, the Green Dragon and The Salutation. His famous midnight ride wasn't novel; the flowery poems and high-blown legends exalting his ride were to come much later. The year earlier he had ridden to Philadelphia to inform Pennsylvanians about the Boston Port Bill, and twice in the two weeks prior to his famous ride he had galloped off with messages—to Concord with word that the redcoats were coming (they weren't), and to Lexington to report that the British grenadiers and light infantry were shifting duties and were evidently up to something. (They were, as the march on Lexington two nights later would prove.) So this particular latenight ride might not have struck Revere as particularly momentous. He might have figured he had time to share a dram with Captain Hall.

Only this much remains certain, as Thomas Convery assured me: Paul Revere did *not* have a Pepsi-Cola.

DISTILLERS IN THE early eighteenth century could acquire molasses from any number of West Indian plantations—British, Spanish, and Dutch islands all had excess to export, as did Portuguese and Dutch colonies along the mainland of South America. (New England merchants had been fond of Dutch molasses from Surinam since at least the late 1600s.) But when New England traders set off in search of West Indian molasses, they increasingly headed for the French islands.

The reason was simple: French molasses was astoundingly cheap. The French were slower than the British to develop great sugar estates, but they hastily made up for their late start, and production was bountiful on their vast acreages of virgin soils. By the 1720s, the French sugar industry was expanding at an impressive clip; at the time of the American Revolution, Haiti alone could produce more sugar than all of the British islands combined. At the same time, the French sugar islands—which also included Guadeloupe,

Grenada, and Martinique—had a limited home market for their molasses, since French winemakers and brandy distillers had blocked exports of molasses and rum, fearful that cheap liquor would undermine their monopoly on drink. As a result, molasses was practically free for the taking if you but troubled to stop by one of the French islands

The New England traders and the French sugar estates thus developed a nicely symbiotic relationship. The New Englanders had barrel staves, horses, and dried trash fish, the last of which was impossible to sell in Europe. The French had molasses. While figures on French imports are hard to come by, it's known that Boston in 1688 imported 156,000 gallons of British island molasses. By 1716, with the North American rum industry growing rapidly, imports from the British islands had dropped by more than half, to 72,000 gallons. That gap was undoubtedly made up by the French. It was a similar story elsewhere; one New Yorker reported that the city's distilleries appeared to be “wholly supplied with molasses from Martinique.”

The British islands' planters watched balefully as northern merchants sailed past. As a further affront, New England traders who called at the British islands often refused to accept molasses in trade, knowing they could do better elsewhere. This did not escape notice of mercantilists in England. The general theory of colonies at the time was that they existed for the sole purpose of enriching the mother country. And yet here were colonial ships sailing to French ports to purchase molasses to make rum that would likely be traded for other non-British goods. How did England benefit from all this? This was easy to answer: It didn't.

British mercantilists and irritated planters—notably those from Barbados and Antigua—trudged to Parliament and agitated for laws to remedy their situation. The first weapon they suggested was too large and blunt: the outright banning of trade with the French islands. This failed, so instead they asked for heavy tariffs to be imposed on all French sugar products shipped to the northern

colonies. Parliament went along and passed the Molasses Act of 1733.

This act did not please the North American merchants. It permitted the northern colonies to continue to ship outbound loads of grain, timber, and horses to non-British markets, but the sugar or molasses they returned with were slapped with hefty duties. This made French molasses far more expensive than British molasses. (Imports of all French-made rum were banned under the act.) New England rum was, in effect, sacrificed to appease the politically powerful British sugar planters. Some fifty thousand white British island residents would benefit at the expense of a half-million northern colonists.

The North American colonists had a choice: They could openly rebel against the assault on this vital colonial industry, or they could simply ignore it and continue business as usual. They chose the latter path: The Molasses Act was the fifty-five-mile per hour speed limit of the era. Molasses continued to flow north into the colonies from the French islands, and New England rum was distilled, consumed, and traded. Duties collected on all molasses imported into the northern colonies in 1735—two years after the act was passed—amounted to the unprincely sum of £2. During the entire three-decade period in which the act was on the books, the Crown collected just £13,702 on a half-million gallons of officially imported foreign molasses. Meanwhile, the French molasses trade was abetted by corrupt British customs officers, who could convert it to British molasses through the alchemy of paperwork. Although these extralegal measures made molasses slightly more costly, avoidance of the act wasn't nearly as expensive as compliance. The New England rum trade continued to flourish. And the planters of the British sugar islands continued to fume.

The Seven Years War (called the French and Indian War in North America), which pitted European countries in elaborate conflicts among one another between 1756 and 1763, is often regarded as the first of the great world wars. Longtime foes England and France were especially bitter enemies, and their enmity carried over into

the colonies. This had an impact on New England's traditional West Indian trade, since traders were now fearful that their ships might be seized in French harbors. Instead of sailing directly to the French islands, New England traders now headed for free-trade ports like the Dutch colony of St. Eustatius and the Spanish port of Monte Cristi. This inconvenience didn't last long. The powerful British navy quickly overran the poorly defended French and added Martinique and Guadeloupe to the constellation of British-controlled West Indian islands.

This was good news for the northern traders. Merchants could now, under generous terms of surrender extended by the British, trade legally with French suppliers and avoid both high tariffs *and* the hassles of smuggling. The celebration was short-lived, however. The war drew to a close, and the islands were returned to France under the Treaty of Paris. (This was in part the doing of the British sugar barons. The last thing they wanted was a flood of new sugar into London markets driving down prices, so they encouraged negotiators to give back the islands and keep control of Canada, widely considered the lesser prize.) The New England ship captains, watching from afar, figured that in a few months they could return to the smuggling trade with their old French partners.

It was not to be. To understand why, consider England's mood. The country had just concluded a long and pricey war that had drained the treasury and now found itself saddled with the added expense of managing the vast new territories in Canada. What's more, England believed, no doubt rightly, that North American colonists were the prime beneficiaries of the war, since the threat of French invasion from the north had been vanquished, opening up the possibility of expanded westward settlement. And the British were still peeved about the colonial smuggling that had helped the French finance their army. The newly installed British prime minister, George Grenville, concluded that England's global finances needed revamping and that the northern colonies should pay more of the freight. England discarded the ineffectual Molasses Act, and replaced it with the Sugar Act.

While the old Molasses Act was an attempt to restrict trade among the New World colonies, the new imperial law was designed chiefly to raise revenues. In fact, the new law actually *lowered* colonial tariffs on imported molasses, from six pence to three pence per gallon, with the English figuring they could make up on volume what they lost in price. In contrast to its lassitude on the Molasses Act, England enforced the Sugar Act with uncommon zeal. The admiralty courts were given authority to prosecute offenders. The navy was given orders to pursue violators on the high seas. The Crown diverted twenty-seven navy ships to the task of enforcement. And British customs officers who failed to demonstrate sufficient vigor were abruptly dismissed. After decades of turning a blind eye to New England smuggling, England set about clamping down.

In late september 1763, news of the Sugar Act began to circulate through the colonies. It traveled along the coast by schooner and scow, and into the backlands by horseback. It was carried by newspapers and pamphlets. And it whipped like wildfire through the taverns in the Republic of Rum—first prompting lively banter, then forging a comity of purpose. The Crown had announced that it would, in effect, apply a tourniquet to the lifeblood of the colonies.

At first, the colonists did not direct their venom at Parliament, but at the West Indian planters whose fingerprints were all over the Sugar Act. The islands had suffered deeply during the Seven Years War, because trade dropped off as traders stayed at home. To jump-start the island economies, planters worked to expand their rum trade. This could be done in two ways: eliminating exports from the French and Dutch colonies and squeezing the New England rum industry by raising the cost of molasses. As a letter writer to the *Providence Gazette* noted in 1764, "in the present declining State of the Sugarislands, nothing could tend more effectually to restore the West India Trade from Ruin, than putting a Stop to the further Distillation of Rum in the British Colonies of North America." Two weeks later, another of the paper's correspondents lamented: "The

Northern Colonies are to be made the Dupes, Hewers of Wood, and Drawers of Water to a few West-India planters!"

The Sugar Act of 1764 met with wide disapproval in the north. In Massachusetts (where a paltry 3 percent of imported molasses came from the British islands the year before the Sugar Act was passed), the governor wrote that the news of the Sugar Act "caused greater alarm … than the taking of Fort William Henry did in 1757." (The bellicose French had captured this Champlain Valley fort just northwest of western Massachusetts.) Rhode Island had imported some fourteen thousand hogsheads of molasses annually before the Sugar Act, less than 20 percent of it from the British islands. A customs officer noted that "everybody with us wears a most heavy Countenance, things being in a much worse way than when the war continued."The act even brought despair to Philadelphia, where a prominent merchant lamented that "nothing but ruine seems to hang over our heads."

A handful of colonial rum distillers went out of business under the burden of the newly enforced tariffs. But most managed to bump along, absorbing higher expenses and the increased costs of smuggling. Yet throughout the colonies, from major metropolises to upriver towns, the Sugar Act was viewed as a great injustice. It was clear that the "rich, proud, and overbearing Planters of the West Indies," were behind it, and the clamor to act grew from whispers to a din.

The assemblies of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania took their complaints directly to Parliament. They drew up petitions and circulated pamphlets, including one published in Boston in 1764 with a comprehensive title: *Reasons Against the Renewal of the Sugar Act as It Will Be Prejudicial to the Trade Not Only of the Northern Colonies But to Those of Great Britain Also.*

The most damning argument in favor of repealing the Sugar Act, as the pamphlet's title suggested, was that the loss of New England's trade with foreign islands would boomerang and cause economic hardship to old England. Without cheap molasses, the thriving New

England distilleries would be shuttered. Without income from rum, the newly impoverished northern colonies would purchase fewer manufactured goods from England. The northern colonies would begin manufacturing their own goods, further spoiling profits of British manufacturers and merchants. This argument found an unusually attentive audience among English manufacturers, who were already casting a wary eye abroad. English hat manufacturers, for instance, were grousing about the expanded production in New York, where enterprising hatmakers had an endless supply of beaver pelts for fashionable felt hats.

Against the odds, the arguments of the colonials eventually prevailed. The English Parliament revised the Sugar Act in 1766, and the tariffs on foreign molasses dropped to one penny per gallon, or so low that smuggling was more expensive than obeying the law. The Sugar Act had been watered down before any open resistance or rebellion surfaced. No one died over efforts to control molasses or rum. The dispute had been resolved with quiet but determined politicking.

In the process, however, a colonial Rubicon had been crossed. The resistance to the Sugar Act marked the first time the North American colonies, which were administered as separate entities, had effectively joined together to resist British meddling. Resistance went from amorphous to organized. In 1763, a letter writer to the *Boston Post* called for the creation of a new committee “to open a correspondence with the principal merchants in all our sister colonies, endeavoring to promote a union, and a coalition of all their councils.” This network was soon established, laying the foundation for the influential Committees of Correspondence that would play such a central role leading up to the Revolution.

England feared that the colonial success in rolling back the Sugar Act would be viewed as a wholesale victory for the colonists and embolden them further. So the Crown was quick to assert its right to impose other taxes. In one of history's more striking instances of political tone deafness, England replaced the Sugar Act with new taxes on imported tea, a product chosen in part to help out the

financially troubled and politically well-connected East India Company. Worse yet, the English passed an even more reviled bit of legislation: the Stamp Act, which put an onerous tax on all printed matter, from newspapers to liquor licenses to legal papers to almanacs. While the Sugar Act chiefly affected the New England colonies—the center of rum production—the Stamp Act antagonized all colonists, forging an even more encompassing coalition. And so was born "No taxation without representation."

When the British officials moved to enforce the Stamp Act, the colonies were primed to resist. Colonists launched a boycott of British goods. The tea went into Boston harbor. Paul Revere set off on his ride. In Lexington, a shot was heard 'round the world. And the thirteen North American colonies declared as one their independence from England and took up arms to defend it. The scattered colonial militias became an army of resistance.

The war had begun.

In february 1775, two months before the battles at Lexington and Concord, a group of British soldiers approached Salem from Boston. Their plan was to seize munitions stored in Salem that might eventually be used against them. At a bridge just outside town, an impassioned group of colonists gathered in front of the advancing troops and stood their ground, barring the way and taunting the British for being cowards, "lobster coats," and "red-jackets." In the heat of the encounter, a man named Joseph Whicher, the foreman of a local rum distillery, pushed to the front of the crowd and challenged the troops to attack him. One British soldier obliged by lunging forward with a bayonet, nicking the colonist's chest and drawing blood.

It was the first blood spilled in a long and bloody war.

It's no coincidence that distillers and rum merchants were in the forefront of the political and armed resistance. As we've seen, taverns had become de facto community centers, virtual petri dishes for the breeding of a discontent that taverners learned to channel.

About ninety taverns were licensed in Boston in 1769; of these, twenty license holders were members of the Sons of Liberty, the rebel group behind the Boston Tea Party. Tavern keepers had allies among the wealthy merchant-distillers, who were among those with the most to lose if the English overseers were to dictate terms of their trade. Of Boston's twenty-eight distillers and wine merchants, only seven remained loyal to the Crown, while nearly half were involved with the Sons of Liberty. As historian David Conroy notes, “The manufacturers and importers of the most controversial commodity in the province and the colonial world stood at the very helm of the resistance movement.”

In backing this rebellion, the tavern keepers and, more so, the distillers put their livelihoods at risk. As British troops blockaded the harbors against colonial trade, West Indian rum and molasses dried up. One colonial estimated that distillers in the city of Boston alone lost £6,000 in income each week. As a result, rum was increasingly unavailable—unless one had connections to the British military, which continued to import goods from the West Indies though British-held New York and other ports.

This would prove to be not a small matter for the Continental Army. Rum was currency, and its disappearance made it even more difficult for the Continental Congress to fund an army. (Continental specie was in a state of constant crisis and distrusted by local farmers and merchants.) In one small example of rum's role in the American Revolution, prominent New Hampshire politician John Langdon donated to the state some 150 hogsheads of rum to raise a militia. That militia defeated the British forces advancing from Canada under General John Burgoyne and dashed their strategy of dividing the colonies and conquering each half in turn. So at this turning point in the war, rum put the militia in motion.

On a more practical level, rum was a provision of war, as essential in the field as black powder or barrels of salt pork. In November 1775, the Continental Congress in Philadelphia established rules for the newly formed American Continental Navy and followed the British model in issuing a “halfpint of rum per man every day, and a

discretionary allowance for extra duty and in time of engagement." Foot soldiers were also to get rum, to be distributed by mess officers. In 1778, one observer suggested that "the moment your army enters an enemy's country, you must seize on all the brewers of beer and spirituous liquor in your neighborhood … that the army may never stand in need of a beverage which it cannot do without."

As the six-year war dragged on, from the late 1770s into the 1780s, rum became increasingly hard to come by, which undermined the morale and effectiveness of the struggling troops. In December 1778, even before the lashing snows and rains had begun at the winter encampment at Valley Forge, a soldier lamented in his diary that rum was always in short supply, and was sorely needed. The poorly clothed and ill-fed troops slowly starved and lost their feet to frostbite. General George Washington sent out imploring appeals for supplies, noting that critical absence of vegetables, salt, vinegar (a poor substitute for vegetables), and drink: "… beer or cyder seldom comes within the verge of the camp," he wrote, "and rum in much too small quantities."

The lack of rum even had small consequences on the battlefields. In 1780, the colonial forces under Brigadier General Horatio Gates positioned themselves to attack a British encampment under General Charles Cornwallis in South Carolina. Then the commanders made an unfortunate discovery: Their rum casks were dry. The mess officers, bizarrely, decided to pass out quantities of raw molasses, apparently unaware of its properties as a laxative. The following day, instead of girding for battle, the men scrambled into the bushes grabbing their guts. The British took advantage and routed the colonials.

A year later in South Carolina, at the Battle of Eutaw Springs, colonial troops surprised a British encampment in an early morning raid. The redcoats fled with breakfast uneaten. The hungry and illdisciplined colonial troops found quantities of food and rum, and wasted little time in availing themselves of both. The British merely

waited for the rum to take effect and then counterattacked, driving the colonials back into the forest in disarray.

Among those who suffered from the molasses shortages was Captain Isaac Hall, the Medford militia captain who might have tippled with Paul Revere. Hall provisioned the Continental Army with rum as best he could, accepting debased currency in exchange. His rum business scarcely survived a flood in 1777, which wiped out his stocks of molasses. Sales continued to falter as the war dragged on and molasses remained scarce. In 1787, Isaac sold the distillery to his brother, Ebenezer, and quit the business. (By 1830, Hall's was the only distillery to produce rum in once-redolent Medford. Under various owners, the distillery managed to continue producing traditional New England rum until 1905, when it was finally shuttered.)

Out of the war, a new republic was born. But the old Republic of Rum had begun to totter.

[PUNCH]

Squeeze juice of *one-half* LIME into glass. Add *one tablespoon* sugar, *one-and-one-half ounces* RUM, and *two ounces* WATER. Mix well. Add ice. Grate NUTMEG lightly on top, and *make festive* with one or more additions: lemon slice, papaya chunks, fresh mint, pomegranate, pineapple spears, cherries, orange peel or slice, lime wedge, dash of bitters.

chapter 5

[Planter's Punch]

New England I know little about, except it be the trade and people.... They import large quantities of molasses from the West Indies, which they distill and sell to Africa and the other Colonies, which goes by the name of Yankee rum or Stink-e-buss.

—Nicholas Cresswell, ca. 1777

The most popular and most democratic beverage in colonial America —consumed in more seasons and in more places than flip—was rum punch. Punch could be found wherever rum was found—which is to say, everywhere in America within horse cart distance of the West Indian trade. As early as 1682, John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony, noted in his records the sale of a punch bowl, which turned out to be a harbinger of the great era of West Indian rum imports and later domestic manufacture. Accounts of eighteenthcentury travelers suggest that punch was especially popular in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. William Penn said that the consumption of punch in his colony rivaled that of beer, and when William Black of Virginia traveled to Philadelphia in 1744, he marveled that local dignitaries feted him with "a Bowl of fine Lemon Punch big enough to have Swimm'd a half a dozen of young Geese."

Benjamin Franklin, who periodically fretted about the overly exuberant drinking habits of his countrymen, penned a small ode to the pleasant ritual of punch drinking:

Boy, bring a bowl of China here, Fill it with water cool and clear:

Decanter with Jamaica right

And spoon of silver, clean and bright.

Sugar twice-fin'd in piece cut, Kni[f]e, sieve and glass in order put, Bring forth the fragrant fruit and then.

We're happy till the clock strikes ten.

Before the melting pot, America had the punch bowl. A bowl would be ceremonially placed on the table with sufficient cups and a ladle, which in the better homes was crafted with a handle of whalebone or wood. Early punch bowls were typically ceramic, although those wealthy enough might commission a silversmith to fashion an intricate and gleaming bowl. (After 1780, the cheaper glass punch bowls became more common than the ceramic.) Some punch bowls even achieved a small bit of celebrity. The most famous was made by Paul Revere in 1767 to honor a group of rebellious Massachussetts colony legislators. The local legislature had been ordered by the British Crown to rescind a letter they had sent protesting the onerous Townshend Acts. By a vote of 92 to 17, the legislators refused. The “Glorious 92” were honored with an elegant and graceful silver punch bowl, which is today enshrined at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.

Punch wasn't only for swells who could afford the fancy trappings; it was also a drink of ruffians and commoners. Pirates and their hangers-on enjoyed a nice bowl of punch between sackings and pillagings. When Captain Kidd and Captain Hewetson met up in 1689, they prepared a punch of “rum, water, lime-juice, egg yolk, sugar with a little nutmeg scrap'd on top.” The owners of the most rustic North American taverns in the eighteenth century concocted proprietary recipes for rum punch, which they touted, like their flip, to gain a marketing edge. Early tax inventories suggest that at taverns, punch bowls and cups were almost as common as benches and tankards.

Punch was the first global cocktail, a concoction born in the distant ports of India, England, and the West Indies. Some say the name *punch* evolved from *puncheon*, the small barrel from which sailors received grog rations. But it's more likely that the word came

from the Hindustani word *panch*, meaning “five.” John Fryer, a British traveler suggested why in 1673: The “English on this coast [of India] make their enervating liquor called Paunch from five ingredients.” These five were traditionally tea, lemon, sugar, water, and arrack. The last was a liquor distilled from fermented palm sap and was generally considered nasty enough to make even the most fiery rum taste like cognac. Arrack screamed for dilution and sweetening. Punch was the answer.

As the recipe for punch worked its way westward along trade routes, to Europe and on to the New World, an astonishing number of variations surfaced. Sailors substituted new ingredients when they couldn't obtain the old, and so punch was made with Madeira wine in the eastern Atlantic islands and with rum in the West Indies and North America. The traditional five-part punch was adapted to local conditions; punch recipes called for as few as three or as many as six ingredients. Punch was sometimes made with milk, sometimes with a mix of green and pekoe tea, sometimes with egg yolks, and almost always with citrus. Fresh batches of imported lemons, limes, and oranges were advertised in North American cities for use as punch “sowrings.” On Barbados as early as 1694, Father Labat noted that punch consisted of two parts rum, one part water, sugar, lemon or lime juice, cinnamon, clove, and nutmeg. A nineteenth-century recipe for “the established corrective of West Indian languor” was to mix “a compound of rum, sugar, lime juice, and Angostura bitters,” which accordingly would be “frisked into effervescence by a stick”—a precursor to the swizzle stick. Pineapple often made it into punch, and at least one Barbados planter preferred his punch made with guava juice.

The most streamlined and enduring recipe for punch called for just four basic ingredients, the recipe distilled to a compact quatrain: “One of sour, two of sweet, three of strong, four of weak.” The sour was usually lemon or lime juice; the sweet, sugar; the strong, rum; and the weak, water. This recipe was then modified to taste with spices (nutmeg is especially good) or enjoyed as is. It's a

timeless concoction, and still the basis of the best rum punches you'll be served at Caribbean resorts.

The ships that carried sailors and their rum-punch recipes to the New World didn't travel just one way. Once emptied of their westbound freight in the ports of North America, they loaded up with fresh cargo, including locally distilled rum, and set off for the southern mainland colonies and beyond. Rum had found a comfortable and prosperous home from New England to Delaware, but shrewd colonists were certain that if a market could be cultivated in distant lands, America's fortunes could only grow.

This is the story of where rum went when it left New England, and what happened when it got there.

THE SUMMER OF 1764 was busy for the Brown brothers of Providence, Rhode Island. John and Nicholas had recently become signatories on the charter for the new Rhode Island College in Warren. (It later moved to Providence and, in 1804, was renamed Brown University.) And much of the summer was given over to preparing the brig *Sally* for a trading voyage to the African coast. Nicholas—the head of Nicholas Brown and Company—oversaw business in Providence, but sent frequent instructions to John and their two other brothers, Joseph and Moses, who were at Newport helping to outfit the ship. Among the stores loaded aboard were tobacco, brown sugar, tar, candles, and rice. The ship's manifest also suggests the human cargo it planned to collect when it arrived: a cask of gunpowder, seven swivel guns, eight small arms, thirteen cutlasses, a pair of blunderbusses, a dozen padlocks, three chains, and forty pairs each of handcuffs and shackles. The chief cargo aboard the *Sally* on the outbound voyage to the West African coast was rum, and dozens of casks were rolled aboard—some 159 hogsheads, plus another six smaller barrels, for a total of 17,274 gallons.

This wasn't the Brown family's first venture in the slave trade. Nearly three decades earlier, in 1736, the family patriarch, James Brown, was the first merchant in Providence to sign on with a

consortium that backed a slaving voyage to Africa, then onward to the West Indies to trade for coffee and other goods. In 1759, the Browns sent another schooner to Africa, but it was lost, most likely captured by French privateers. At any rate, the Browns certainly had company that summer in the harbors of Rhode Island, where local sea captains were near the peak of their reputation in the booming slave trade.

Rhode Island had little choice but to develop into a trading entrepôt. The southern colonies had their tobacco plantations, and cities like Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York had great rivers and bays that opened to fertile farmlands, making them centers for the export of grain and produce. But like the rest of New England, Rhode Island had long, bitter winters and rocky, inhospitable soils. So Rhode Islanders turned to the thick forests that provided wood for ships and found the sheltered harbors were perfect for warehouses and anchorages. Rhode Island merchants soon became the Dutch of the English colonies, the masters of trade, first to the West Indies and then beyond.

Merchants or their agents on the islands might have gotten the idea to trade rum for slaves after noticing how much of the West Indian liquor was destined for Africa's coast. The Royal African Company shipped 182,347 gallons of rum from Barbados, Antigua, and Jamaica to Africa between 1700 and 1727. And Rhode Island traders were no doubt aware that rum costing a shilling on the islands could fetch five times that when sent to West Africa.

So the rum and slave trade began to bend northward, as if through some implacable economic magnetism. New England had plenty of rum to trade, and abundant ships to move it. By 1772, about 75 percent of rum exported to Africa came from Boston and Rhode Island.

The Browns had signed a longtime employee (and later Revolutionary War hero), Esek Hopkins, as captain of the *Sally* and, as was customary on such voyages, had given him a free hand in trading. He was instructed to exchange rum for African slaves or any other goods that he thought might net a profit and then sail for the

West Indies— precisely which island was left to his own judgment—where he would sell the slaves and other cargo for “hard cash or good bills of exchange.” (The Browns also requested that Hopkins return with four slaves for their own use.) They asked Hopkins to “dew as you Shall Think Best for our Interest.”

Hopkins and his cargo of rum arrived on the African coast in early November 1764. He discovered he was not alone—it was a busy year for slave traders, hustling to load their cargo because provincial duties on slaves were soon to be imposed in some of the North American colonies. Hopkins had at least one advantage. New England rum had been popular with African chieftains for two decades. “Guinea rum,” as it was called, was produced in New England specifically for the African trade, and was usually double-distilled and sometimes tripledistilled. As with Jamaican rum produced for England, the higher proof made it cheaper to ship. Guinea rum was meant to be watered down before being sold. Watering rum was an art, for too much water would make it of little interest to the Africans. Another trader, a Captain Burton, noted that African traders would visit with his ship between seven and ten each morning for negotiations and drinking rum. “If a glass of watered rum, which they detect more easily than we do watered milk, be offered them,” wrote the captain, “it will be thrown in the donor's face.”

Hopkins spent nine months trading along the African coast—a long time, but not unusually so.(It commonly took six to twelve months to fill a ship with slaves.) His first trade was on November 10, when he swapped one gallon of rum for some wood. The next day, Hopkins brought three gallons of rum to the local tribal official to begin talks, and three days later he traded one hundred fifty-six gallons of rum and some flour, taking a pair of slaves in return. From then on, the ship's trade manifest shows that rum left the *Sally* by the gallon and the hogshead. One hundred ninety-five gallons were traded for a boy and a girl slave in early December. Seventy-five were delivered as a tribute to an African king whom he met “under the palaver tree.” One hundred twelve gallons were traded

with the king for a single slave; forty-eight gallons for a girl slave; fifty-two gallons for a boy slave; ten flasks for “country cloths;” three flasks as a reward for the return of a runaway slave; three hundred twenty-eight gallons for three slaves, some cloth, and one hundred sixty-five pounds of beeswax. And rum was distributed liberally as gratuities—a flask to the man who owned a spring and four flasks provided to another functionary to expedite an unspecified task.

As Hopkins learned, slaves could be acquired singly or in lots. Trading along the southern coast of west Africa was often quick and efficient, and enough slaves for a westward voyage to the islands could be acquired within a month or two. Other captains in other years might have acquired slaves in lots of a hundred or more at a single trade. But these tended to be weaker, less desirable slaves. The slaves that brought the best prices in the West Indies were found along the Gold Coast—roughly between Cape Verde and the Bight of Benin— where captains might spend as long as a year trading before the ship was full and readied for the West Indies.

Rum wasn't the only product in demand at African trading posts. Slave sellers also wanted hardware—copper basins, tankards, and unworked brass—and kegs of tallow. Bolts of cloth were much esteemed, and for some reason African traders clamored for red blankets. Guns and gunpowder—the role of which is often overblown in modern accounts of the slave trade—were useful in tribal raids and for capturing more slaves. Guns were not of the highest quality, as the French learned in 1759. They had purchased a lot of muskets from traders on the island of St. Eustatius to defend against an anticipated British invasion. About three-quarters of the guns exploded violently upon the first shot—the French had made the novice's error of buying munitions intended for barter in Africa.

Hopkins sold nine of his slaves before he left the African coast, believing he could fetch a better profit with other goods. He traded four young slaves for 270 bars of iron one month, and four old slaves for 240 bars the next; he also traded away a “man slave with his foot bitt of by a shark.” Hopkins hoisted his sails and departed

the African coast in late August. He had on board 167 slaves along with his miscellaneous cargo.

New England sailors hated the Africa trade. Malaria, yellow fever, and dysentery were endemic along the Guinea coast, with the summer months especially fatal. While at anchor, the New England ships were a target for vengeful Africans and roaming pirates. And when the trading was completed, the outbound voyages were full of hazard; the chances of slaves rising in revolt in the first few days was considerable. Some slaves were convinced that their fate was to be fed, fattened, and devoured, and they had little incentive to remain docile. At least fifty-five slave uprisings on slave ships were recorded during the slave trade era, with possibly another hundred that went unremarked. Slave ships often departed the African coast with mounted guns aimed inboard and loaded with loose shot, ready to quell unrest. Not until the sight of land vanished over the horizon did the prisoners lose hope. Then the guns were swiveled around for action against pirates.

The *Sally* was among those ships struck by revolt. A week after departure, the captain and crew had to put down an uprising, when, Hopkins recorded, “Slaves Rose on us [and we were] obliged to fire on them and Destroyed 8 and several more wounded badly.” Another slave died of the wounds he received during a second, smaller revolt three weeks later.

The voyage, of course, was far more dreadful for the captives than the crew. The shortest crossing, from western Africa to Barbados, could be done in as little as three weeks, but it was the rare ship that could arrive with such haste. If hampered by slack winds and dismal conditions, the crossing might take three months. Slave ship captains at first debated whether tight packing or loose packing worked best. The tight packers had higher fatalities during the voyage owing to the less healthful conditions, but a trip with relatively little disease could yield a greater profit. By the middle of the eighteenth century, tight packing was the norm. The space allotted the slaves below deck was cramped beyond imagination. (“Not so much room as a man in his coffin,” wrote a ship's doctor

about a ship in 1788.) On average, about one in eight slaves died on the crossing; many deaths were ascribed to “fixed melancholy,” in which slaves simply lost the will to live and could not even be forced to eat.

Hopkins's crossing took about a month and a half, and conditions were worse than average. His slaves had been dying for months—about twenty succumbed before he even left Africa. And the voyage was uncommonly deadly—scarcely a day passed that he didn't record another fatality. After the failure of the revolts, many of the slaves simply gave up hope. Hopkins wrote that “some drowned themselves, some starved, and others sickened and died.” On at least two days, Hopkins recorded four deaths each. In all, some eighty-eight slaves perished during the voyage—about half his cargo. Those who survived were reported to be in a “very sickly and disordered manner.”

And for them, their arrival in the islands meant one nightmare would end and another would begin.

IF NOT FOR slavery, sugar might have been a minor economic footnote in the rise of North America. Growing, harvesting, and processing sugar demanded an army of laborers, and planters wouldn't have cultivated as many fields or reaped a fraction of the profits if they'd had to pay their workers. In any event, the indentured servants shipped over from England and other European countries proved ill-suited for dreary field work under the harsh tropical sun. Africans were less prone to tropical diseases (they died at one-quarter the rate of European immigrants), could be forced to work long hours and, while more expensive than indentured servants to acquire, cost less over time. Without the slaves, sugar would not have been produced in such heroic quantities; and without the molasses from the sugar, rum would not have become such a vital instrument of exchange between the colonies and Africa. Slaves made the rum, and rum made the slaves.

The number of slaves imported to the islands was staggering. They outnumbered Europeans immigrating to the New World throughout the whole of the eighteenth century and nearly half of the nineteenth. The population of Europeans on Barbados peaked at about 20,000 from 1650 into the 1770s. The number of slaves, meanwhile, grew to about 50,000 by the 1680s—about 2 per arable acre—a number that would hold steady for more than a century. The typical West Indian sugar plantation had at least 50 slaves, but more commonly had 200 to 300. (Compare that to the United States: In the 1850s, fewer than half worked on plantations with more than 30 slaves.)

For the planters, life on a sugar plantation was, not surprisingly, very agreeable. Father Antoine Biet visited Barbados in 1654 and noted that a great bowl of punch was often brought out after the midday meal, and toasts were offered all around until the punch bowl was dry. “The afternoon passes thus, in drinking and smoking, but quite often one is so drunk that he cannot return home,” Biet reported. “Our gentlemen found this life extremely pleasant.”

Life was not so pleasant outside the walls of the great houses. (The perimeter was often planted with lime trees, which not only provided fruit for punch, but had thorns that kept the slaves at a distance.) Slaves planted and harvested the sugar fields and ran the boiling houses and distilling operations, working long hours in conditions that ranged from almost tolerable to beyond wretched. Slaves on Jamaica typically had Saturday and Sunday off, but they were expected to farm their own food during those days. On Barbados, they had only one day off, but at least got most of their food from their overseers. That food, however, was dreadful. Slaves were often fed the worst of the salt cod from Newfoundland (the best went to Europe), and the salted pork from the southern mainland colonies was generally ill prepared. It was customary on the English islands for slaves to get the carcasses of cattle and horses that had died of disease. They were also given about a gallon and a half of molasses each year, although that ration was gradually

eliminated as molasses became more valuable for export and distillation.

For the slaves, rum provided nutrition, currency, and entertainment. At some plantations, they were expected to barter their allowance of rum for food, but many typically drank it and suffered, as a result, from malnutrition. Rum could also be a reward. Slaves that turned in other slaves for stealing might be paid, as one plantation visitor noted in 1833, a "trifle in money, flesh, fish or rum." At Codrington Plantation on Barbados, a captured runaway slave would earn the capturer a gallon of plantation rum.

The rum rations given to the slaves varied from plantation to plantation, and from island to island. If the weather was especially disagreeable or the work unusually hard (such as digging the holes for cane planting), an overseer with a reputation for some humanity might take pity and provide an extra ration or two. Among the more generous plantations was Worthy Park, in St. John's Parish on Jamaica. Each week some of the slaves—including the three drivers, three carpenters, four sugar boilers, the cooper, the blacksmith, and the watchman—were given a full quart of rum. The children's field nurse, the midwife, and the potter got a pint each week. In 1796, some 922 gallons went to Worthy Park slaves over the Christmas season—about two quarts each, which might have made for a merrier Christmas than usual. (Frederick Douglass, who grew up a slave in eastern Maryland in the early nineteenth century, observed that holiday debauches in which liquor was liberally provided to slaves were "useful in keeping down the spirit of insurrection" by allowing the slaves to equate freedom with an incapacitating hangover. "When the holidays ended, we staggered up from the filth of our wallowing, took a long breath, and marched to the field—feeling upon the whole rather glad to go, from what our master had deceived us into a belief was freedom.")

While a little rum might keep the slaves content, a lot could have the opposite effect, provoking rebellion. And island colonists, who were greatly outnumbered by Africans, lived in constant fear of being awakened in their bedrooms by a band of slaves bent on

retribution. Among the early laws on Barbados was one that required a planter to hire one white servant for every ten slaves, to ensure that enough free men were available to respond to uprisings. One of the great reasons the British West Indies didn't join their cousins to the north in rebelling against the English Crown—after all, they, too, labored under heavy-handed taxation without representation—was the planters' desperate need of the British navy. Whereas the northern colonists resented the redcoats on their soil, the planters knew that without a heavily armed navy prowling the islands, slaves would be more liable to rise up against their European masters.

And rebellions did occur—they're listed and dated in island histories like notable hurricanes: in Barbados in 1685, 1692, 1702, and 1818; in Antigua in 1736; at Demerara in 1823 (twice); in Jamaica in 1831 and 1832. As many as seventy-five rebellions broke out in the British West Indies before 1837.

The year 1736, for instance, was uncommonly dry in the Caribbean, and this resulted in shortages of water and food on Antigua. The slaves suffered most, naturally. Outnumbering the whites eight to one—24,000 to 3,000—slave leaders plotted to pack gunpowder beneath the floor of a ballroom, then, during the king's birthday ball on the evening of October 20, blow the island's elite into the blue Caribbean sky. The explosion that echoed around the island would serve as a signal to slaves on other plantations to slay all the whites they encountered.

October came and a bloodbath ensued, but it wasn't the one slaves had envisioned. Planters got wind of the conspiracy and launched a brutal campaign of torture to root out every slave involved. Slaves were wrapped in chains and left to die, broken on the rack, and burned alive. In all, eighty-eight slaves were killed. More would likely have died had not the island treasury exhausted its funds to reimburse planters for slaves who were executed or died during questioning.

The great arrows of the Triangle Trade depicted in history textbooks—New England to Africa to the West Indies and back to

New England again—serve as a simple illustration of how the rum trade kept the great mechanism of colonial economic development humming along. The rum-to-slaves-to-molasses trade brought untold fortunes to merchants and sugar planters, as well as African chieftains selling captured slaves. H. F. Willkie noted the triangle's perpetualmotion-like quality in 1947, when he wrote, “Slaves worked in the sugar-cane plantations, preparing the molasses from which rum was made to buy more slaves.” Another historian called the trade “the backbone of New England prosperity,” and yet another wrote that it's “probably not an exaggeration to say that the slave trade was the lubricating oil that kept the machinery of the colonial [New England] economy moving smoothly.” The Triangle Trade even left its mark on popular culture, most memorably in the 1969 Broadway musical *1776*, whose hit song was “Molasses to Rum.” (“Molasses to rum to slaves, Oh what a beautiful waltz, You dance with us, We dance with you, Molasses and rum and slaves …”)

The Triangle Trade was horrifically elegant, easy for teachers to explain to students, and readily comprehended by sixth-graders. As an historical fact, it lacks only one thing: truth. The smooth-running and sinister New England Triangle Trade is, in large part, an overblown myth.

For starters, no New England traders are known to have completed a single circuit of that triangle. Historian Clifford Shipton spent years of sifting through hundreds of New England shipping records, yet couldn't recall “a single example of a ship engaged in such a triangular trade.” (Another historian drew the same conclusion after an exhaustive review of Philadelphia shipping records.) Even the *Sally* was engaged in just two legs of the trade. She failed to load up on molasses in the West Indies. Instead, the Browns demanded cash.

An historian taking a longer view might look at the larger picture and conclude that a variation of the Triangle Trade did exist. After all, some ships brought New England rum to Africa to trade for slaves, other ships brought slaves to the West Indies to trade for

molasses, and some other ships—many, actually—traded for molasses to bring back to New England. But did this amount to a powerful economic engine that fueled the emerging economy?

Not likely. Compared to overall global trade, between the colonies and with the greater world beyond, the value of the rum-for-slaves trade was minimal. It didn't come close to providing an economic engine for early New England. More molasses went into pudding, beer making, and baked beans than into rum for the slave trade. As rum historian John McCusker puts it, “the involvement of the Continental Colonies in the slave trade [during the later colonial period] was insignificant by every measure we can apply but a human one.”

Rum, it turns out, was welcome but not terrifically esteemed at African slave stations. It was useful in African ceremonies commemorating the dead and in tribal rites where it was poured down the throat of the corpse. (This was typically followed by a three-day celebration in which the tribesmen would consume it freely to remember—or forget—the past.) But there's little evidence that the Africans took to guzzling rum with anything like the zeal of their North American counterparts. If rum had been the central engine of the slave trade, the quantities exported would have turned the African coast into an alcoholic swamp. As it was, traders complained about temporary rum surpluses on the slave coast, as in 1777 when the price went so low as to make trade untenable. (This was during the Revolutionary War and was likely the result of West Indian rum being diverted to Africa after North American markets were largely closed off.) In the end, exports from New England to Africa accounted for less than 4 percent of all rum produced in and imported to the northern colonies.

Even if one takes rum out of the triangle, the New England involvement in the slave trade was relatively limited. Historian Jay Coughtry identified 934 voyages, carrying more than 106,000 Africans, from Rhode Island to Africa between 1709 and 1807. That's a large number, but still less than 1 percent of all the slaves brought across the Atlantic. British ships alone carried 2.5 million.

Rhode Island was a bit player. Indeed, fewer than 1 percent of cargo ships sailing from the northern colonies were destined for Africa and the slave trade.

The simple truth is that the slave trade wasn't very profitable, with or without rum. It was risky, and the money made from a successful voyage wasn't enough to compensate. Rhode Island's Nicholas Brown sent two other ships to Africa in addition to the money-losing *Sally*. One was lost at sea and the other managed only a very slight profit. Brown abandoned the slave trade and looked for business elsewhere.

So where did this notion of a vast, smoothly ticking Triangle Trade originate, and how did it become so ingrained in popular history? As with many legends, it started small, first suggested (vaguely and inconclusively) in an 1866 book by George H. Moore on the history of slavery in Massachusetts. In 1872, it was picked up by another historian, George C. Mason. But the idea didn't come into full flower until 1887, when American businessman and historian William B. Weeden presented a lecture that creatively interpreted the previous two studies. Weeden held up a few isolated examples of the New England slave trade and, in the absence of other records, extrapolated from them aggressively.“We have seen molasses and alcohol, rum and slaves, gold and iron, in a perpetual and unwholesome round of commerce,” Weeden wrote. “All society was fouled in this lust; it was inflamed by the passion for wealth …” His argument found a receptive audience, and McCusker suspects this was because of a “morbid and somewhat flagellant fascination on the part of late nineteenth century New Englanders with the sins of their forefathers.”

The myth found further traction thanks to various political and social movements of the time. Southerners who fought against the abolition of slavery hauled out the idea of the Triangle Trade to show the rank hypocrisy of New England abolitionists. Their argument went like this: Northerners could criticize slavery and call for its end, but only because they had already made *their* fortunes with slavery and the rum trade. Abolition was thus only a matter of

economic selfishness. One southern magazine in 1855 referred to the "morbid sensibility evinced in the northern section of our Union upon the subject of slavery," noting that northerners liked to ignore "the substantial fact" that Rhode Islanders were as late as 1808 "trading rum on the coast of Africa for negroes!"

The temperance movement later exploited the Triangle Trade in its crusade against Demon Rum. Booze could be presented as the instrument of enslavement for millions of unfortunates. An investigator with the Church Missionary Society in Africa in the 1880s reported solemnly that he'd seen churches with pews made of liquor boxes, and "canoes in hundreds coming down by river laden with the most precious products of the interior and returning with nothing but filthy drink."

Rum is not untarnished in the long, sour history of the slave trade, but neither is it the kill-devil so often portrayed. As so often is the case, the shadow proved more alarming than the object that cast it.

LIKE FLIP, THE classic punch—whether made from rum, brandy, or wine—began to fall out of fashion in the nineteenth century and was consigned to live out its retirement at regimental reunions and college dances. The working class increasingly took up beer, and the upper classes became enamored of a new breed of sophisticated cocktail that included the Manhattan, the sidecar, and the whiskey oldfashioned. The punch bowl was stashed away in the closet, to be replaced by collins and fizz glasses.

But punch wasn't out yet. A small punch craze surfaced in the 1930s, following Prohibition, when planter's punch emerged as a wildly popular new drink. It actually wasn't all that new; variants of it had appeared decades earlier. The Planter's Hotel (now defunct) in St. Louis claimed credit for the invention of planter's punch based, not implausibly, on its connection with Jerry Thomas, head bartender at the hotel in the mid-1800s and the author of the first bartender's manual. But the hotels' proprietors also claimed credit

for the Tom Collins, forcing one to discount their credibility. In fact, Thomas included a great many punch recipes in his early cocktail books, but none for planter's punch. (Another Planter's Hotel in South Carolina has also claimed credit for the punch.)

At any rate, planter's punch is a class of drink rather than a single cocktail, with hundreds of variations floating around, and more invented daily. Each bartender and each generation has variously added to, subtracted from, improved, and spoiled the drink.

Here's the starting point. The *New York Times* ran this ditty in 1908 under the title “Planter's Punch,” providing a somewhat modified classic punch recipe.

This recipe I give to thee,

Dear brother in the heat.

Take two of sour (lime let it be)

To one and a half of sweet.

Of Old Jamaica pour three strong,

And add four parts of weak.

Then mix and drink. “I do no wrong—

I know whereof I speak.”

The drink had been around long enough that as early as 1920, a writer in a Jamaican paper groused that the planter's punch “has fallen off in strength from what it was in the great days of old when it comes to drinking.” Yet few agreed on what went into one. During Prohibition, a writer insisted planter's punch needed to have grenadine and should be topped off with soda water and served in a tall, frosted glass. Most recipes called for lime juice. Others called for the addition of grapefruit juice, orange juice, or both. Varied and assorted fruits have joined the parade. Charles Baker's cocktail guide (1939) abandons any pretense of sorting it all out and lists ten recipes for planter's punch. Island resorts today have their own recipes, and many are quick to claim their own as the original.

If there's a standard planter's punch, I'm guessing it can trace its origins back to the 1920s and to the Myrtle Bank Hotel in Kingston, Jamaica, arguably the most elegant hotel on the island in its day. “I soon found myself in the Myrtle Bank Hotel, and a planter's punch soon found itself in me,” wrote a theater columnist for the *New York World* of his visit to Kingston in 1921. He went on: “A planter's punch is made of pure Jamaica rum, a little cane syrup, cracked ice along with a slice of native pineapple and orange to make it more attractive. If one is at all fussy one can have a cherry in it too. The price is the same with or without the cherry at the Myrtle Bank bar.”

The drink was popular enough that the Jamaican distiller who made Myers's rum went on to label its as “Planter's Punch Rum,” words still emblazoned on some bottles today. The popularity of dark Jamaican rum was such that even distillers in Puerto Rico and Cuba, famous for their lighter rums, started producing a dark rum specifically to meet the demand for planter's punch cocktails.

To my mind, the final word on planter's punch appeared in 1936 in the *New York Times.* “For many people seem to feel that there are only two recipes—the right one and the wrong,” wrote Jane Cobb of the ongoing controversy. “In the Ritz-Carlton [in New York], for example, Planter's Punch may appear made with lime juice or lemon juice, white sugar or brown, a dash of brandy or a dash of Angostura bitters, all depending on which of the three bars it is served at. The chances are ten to one that most people who drink the punches like them very much, no matter which version is served. Anyway the sensible thing to do is to drink slowly and stop fussing.”

If rum is the archetypal New World drink—protean, varied, inconsistent—planter's punch is its cocktail equivalent. Try inventing one yourself. Start with something basic—one of sour, two of sweet, three of strong, four of weak. Then adapt it: Give it a college degree and better clothes. Try exotic fruit or maybe some bitters. It doesn't really matter what you do. Planter's punch can be constantly reinvented. It's owned by whomever wants to claim it.

[PRUNE WATER]

In three cups of water, *cook slowly* for one half-hour *one-quarter pound* of PRUNES and a thin strip of LEMON PEEL. Add JUICE of one-half LEMON. *Strain* and *sweeten* to taste. Do *not* add RUM.

[FROM *On Uncle Sam's Water Wagon*, A 1919 GUIDE TO "DELICIOUS, APPETIZING, AND WHOLESOME DRINKS, FREE FROM THE ALCOHOLIC TAINT."]

chapter 6

[Demon Rum]

Hear the happy voices ringing, As "King Rum" is downward hurled, Shouting vict'ry and hosanna, In their march to save the world.

—WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION SONG, LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

IN OCTOBER 1884, a small but vocal group of Protestant clergymen gathered at a rally in New York City to show their support for the Republican presidential candidate, James G. Blaine of Maine. It was an impromptu meeting without an official sponsor or much of an agenda, and Blaine attended mostly to show his face and make a few encouraging comments to the pious group. Before Blaine rose to speak, though, an elderly, unremarkable Presbyterian minister named Samuel Burchard made his way to the podium. Little is known about Burchard, and by some accounts he didn't even have the full attention of the assembled when he spoke. But one of Burchard's lines would enter the lexicon. "We are Republicans," he said, "and don't propose to leave our party and identify ourselves with the party whose antecedents have been rum, Romanism, and rebellion."

What came to be known as the "Burchard Alliteration" was not atypical for the times: Politicians and temperance leaders loved to set off a string of rhetorical firecrackers to get the attention of a crowd. In 1888, a temperance crusader attacked liquor dealers as those who destroyed society with "bombast, beer, and bombs,"and who were happy to substitute "anarchy for order, lawlessness for law, license for liberty."

Burchard's remarks caught the ear of at least one man, a journalist from the *New York World*. He jotted down Burchard's remark and published it the next day in his account of the meeting.

"Rum, Romanism, and rebellion" turned out to be a hand grenade, an unexpected gift from Burchard to the Democratic Party. Blaine did not instantly distance himself from the comment, lending the impression that the Republican candidate would bring to Washington his elitist and bigoted friends who had little tolerance for Catholics—those Romanists—and their drinking, rabble-rousing ways. Large numbers of Catholics had immigrated in recent years, and most were fervent Democrats. The comment had the effect, in modern terms, of motivating the party's base. Blaine struggled to control the damage, claiming that he had been weary after a long campaign swing through the West, that his attention was focused on preparing his own remarks during Burchard's talk. He never even heard Burchard make his comment, Blaine said. The tepid disavowals didn't slow the thunderhead of Democratic criticism from building. Three days later, Blaine finally stepped forward to loudly repudiate the remark, saying, "I am the last man in the United States who would make a disrespectful allusion to another man's religion."

His response came too late, and offered up too little. When voters went to the polls a few weeks later, James G. Blaine lost New York to Grover Cleveland by a little more than a thousand votes. The electoral college race was extremely close nationally—a situation familiar to those who voted in 2000 and 2004. Had Blaine won New York, he would have moved into the White House.

The meek Burchard was ever after known as "the man who opened his mouth and swallowed a presidency."

To the drink historian, the most interesting question is, exactly *what rum* was Burchard referring to? Because by the late nineteenth century, rum had fallen so far out of fashion as to be all but forgotten. It was rarely found in a proper home; and when it was, it was likely stashed in a hallway closet or under the front stairs,

hunted up only when someone had bronchitis, or for holiday mince pie or eggnog.

By the late 1800s, rum was no longer just the stuff made from sugarcane and its leavings. It was a name used to describe all drink — whiskey and gin and cordials and beer and Madeira wine. Anything that got you drunk was "rum."

And "rum" was much, much more. It was evil in a glass—a dark force that infiltrated families and tore them asunder, that broke good men and left them derelict, that had seeped into the underpinnings of American democracy and was working to rot it from below.

In the nineteenth century, rum had become the devil incarnate.

IN TRUTH, RUM hadn't been quite itself since the American Revolution. The conclusion of the rebellion in 1783 and the return to a fitful peace was at first good news for the war-ravaged rum industry. Trading ships could resume their West Indian trade routes, and distillers could again import barrels of molasses to feed their stills. Rum soon flowed out of the northern distilleries, headed to taverns in the new nation and to traders sailing for coastal West Africa. Rhode Island, in particular, wasted little time in reclaiming its role as a center for the rum trade, and the treacly aroma of fermenting molasses again filled the seaports.

Rum's recovery was brief. The chief problem was molasses—or the lack of it. Molasses proved harder to get after the war than before, and more expensive when it could be had. The trade with the British colonies never fully recovered after hostilities ended. The West Indian planters, who had remained loyal to the Crown when their northern compatriots rebelled, were still bound by the Navigation Acts, which prohibited direct trade between British colonies and nations other than England—which now included the newly minted United States. U.S. distillers could at first direct ships to obtain molasses from French and Spanish islands, but these doors, too, began to close. In 1783, Spain abruptly shut its Cuban ports to

Americans and seized two U.S. ships in a spat over American settlers in Spanish Florida. French ports were also soon off limits, the fallout of Byzantine political intrigue involving the British. In any event, the French islands had by then invested more in its own rum industry, and molasses was no longer viewed as something to be cheaply bartered away for a few sticks of lumber. In what must have sounded like a death knell to North American rum distillers, in 1807 the United States passed the Embargo Act, which banned American trade with England and France. The rum industry couldn't catch a break.

Trade opened up between the United States and the West Indies after the War of 1812, but by then the soils on the British islands were worn and depleted after two centuries of sugar production, and great amounts of manure were needed to maintain a decent yield. What's more, the British had begun emancipating its slaves. Without a ready supply of forced labor, the once immensely profitable sugar plantations became uneconomical and tipped into a long decline. Rum soon lost its historic role as the cheap spirit that fueled international commerce and returned to its roots: a local commodity, produced by islanders and for islanders. By the mid-nineteenth century, a melancholy traveler to the British West Indies colonies wrote of the abandoned sugar estates, “It is difficult to exaggerate, and yet more difficult to define, the poverty and industrial prostration….” The islands at the center of the world for two centuries were consigned to the forgotten margins.

FINDING ENOUGH MOLASSES to keep the North American stills running was only part of the problem. There was also the matter of changing tastes, fueled by an animated American nationalism. American consumers had come to regard rum as an artifact of the ancient régime, a product associated with the imperious British, their fussy teas, and their high-handed ways. Rum had little role in the shaping of a new national political culture. Prior to the Revolution, drinking rum was a sign of the growing affluence and independence of the

colonists. It demonstrated they were prosperous enough to purchase rum made abroad—and later to manufacture their own rum from raw materials acquired through trade of their lumber and livestock. But following the war, rum took on a whiff of national weakness and vulnerability, and became a small emblem of financial imprisonment. Why drink an imported product that aided one's enemy when you could purchase a local product and advance your own economy?

Throughout the colonies, drinkers made the switch to other drinks. Some shrewdly saw opportunity for gain. Boston brewer Samuel Adams ran advertising that noted, “It is to be hoped, that the Gentlemen of the Town will endeavor to bring our own October Beer into Fashion again, by that most prevailing Motive, Example, so that we may no longer be beholden to Foreigners for a Credible Liquor, which may be as successfully manufactured in this Country.”

New Englanders in the business of distilling rum did what Americans often do best in times of economic change: They retooled. The more adept distillers switched to other products. In Providence, the illustrious Brown family had constructed a new rum distillery after the war in an attempt to revive their business. But they abandoned that endeavor by 1791, and regrouped to open one of the nation's first gin distilleries, placing ads in newspapers to reach growers of rye, barley, buckwheat, and juniper berries. Rum, they concluded, was a relic of the old economy, like sperm whale candles or coarse red-clay pottery.

Rum makers who lacked the capital or desire to retool simply shuttered their distilleries and walked away. By 1794, the number of distilleries in once-thriving Boston had dwindled to a handful, and of those not many were operating at even half capacity; by 1800, American distilleries were producing only 45 percent of rum made just a decade earlier. The trend was inexorable; by 1888, Boston was down to three rum distilleries.

If rum was of the spirit of the past, what was the spirit of the future? Without question, it was whiskey.

WHISKEY WASN'T WHOLLY unfamiliar to the taverngoers of the early nineteenth century, but it was rare compared to rum. The first native whiskey had been produced in the northern colonies in the seventeenth century, but was made out of valuable grain that had to be transported by inefficient wagons from inland farms. Molasses was produced a much greater distance away, but cheap shipping ensured that it was far less expensive.

After the Revolution, Americans emigrated in increasing numbers from crowded seaboard cities, across the Appalachians, to the Ohio River Valley and beyond. Here they found fertile soils and ideal growing conditions for grains and corn. Forests fell, crops blossomed, and the new settlers found they could produce more than they could consume or sell locally. This presented a logistical problem. Americans had two markets for agricultural commodities such as wheat and corn. One was east of the Appalachians at the seaboard cities. The other was far downriver in New Orleans. Shipping barrels of wheat or corn by buckboard overland across the mountains was expensive and impractical. (This was ameliorated somewhat in 1825, when the Erie Canal opened between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic.) New Orleans was a much greater distance away, but it was cheaper to ship bulk products by boat.

One other alternative existed. With a modest investment, farmers could convert their grain to a commodity that could be more affordably shipped east.

The arithmetic was appealing. One horse might be able to haul four bushels of wheat milled into flour. But if that grain or corn were run through a still and the whiskey put in casks, the same horse could haul the equivalent of twenty-four bushels. So farmers bought and built stills in great number. One traveler in western Pennsylvania observed that at least one farm in thirty had an operating still. Great torrents of whiskey flooded across the mountains and began to inundate the cities along the eastern coast.

THE SURPLUS OF grain and corn was an essential ingredient in the nineteenth-century whiskey boom, but the new liquor was greatly aided by technology. As America embarked on its industrial revolution, inventors tinkered endlessly to improve the old ways of doing things. Americans were especially keen to advance the science of distillation. Between 1802 and 1815, more than a hundred patents were granted by the government for distillation devices—or about one in every twenty patents issued. Printers published articles and pamphlets to aid journeyman distillers, with titles like the 1824 "Essay on the Importance and the Best Mode of Converting Grain into Spirit."

The most radical change came with the invention of new stills that could run continuously. The process and equipment used to separate alcohol from water had been largely unchanged for five hundred years. A distiller placed a fermented, low-alcohol brew into a pot, boiled it, captured the steam, condensed it, emptied out the pot, and then ran another batch. This was time-consuming and slow, since the pot had to be cleaned between each batch to avoid spoiling the spirit.

The new stills changed all that. The first variation was the "perpetual still," an ingenious device involving a condensing globe (rather than a copper cooling coil) housed *inside* a sealed tank. The wash was continually piped into the tank and around the globe. This still not only could be run nonstop, but it used the wash to cool the condensate, thereby preheating it and reducing the need for fuel in boiling off the alcohol.

The perpetual still was a precursor to an even more magnificent breakthrough—the continuous column still. Around 1826, Aeneas Coffey, a distillery worker in Dublin, Ireland, separated alcohol from water using two tall copper columns, each divided horizontally by a series of perforated plates. Steam was piped into the bottom of each column, and this heated the upper plates enough to boil off alcohol but not water. So the wash was pumped in to the top of the first column, and then trickled down through the heated plates. Vapors rich with alcohol evaporated first and were piped into the second

column, where it went through the process again. The highly alcoholic steam was then captured and condensed. The less-alcoholic water vapors would condense lower in the column and would flow as waste out the bottom.

One problem arose with the brilliant efficiency of this process. The alcohol that emerged from the column still was so astoundingly pure, and so devoid of the trace elements that lent each liquor its distinctive taste, that whiskey and rum and other spirits from these stills proved all but impervious to aging. A distiller could put the liquor into a barrel and age it, and five years later it came out as hot and harsh as it went in. Coffey had, it turned out, invented the process for distilling neutral spirits—pure alcohol. All but the most committed topers found it medicinal and unpleasant. Some years later, a workaround was devised when a distiller figured out that he could mix the pure alcohol from a column still with a smaller amount of heavier, and more aromatic, pot-stilled liquor and put the blend up in barrels. The resulting liquor aged nicely. This discovery gave the ancient pot still a new lease on life. To this day, many rums are made with a blend of rums from pot stills and column stills. (Modern column stills have also been fine-tuned so that more of the spirit's essential elements can be captured, reducing the need for the pot still.)

THE YEAR 1802 was a good one for American liquor, especially whiskey. An ill-advised whiskey tax imposed some years earlier by Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton—which triggered the shortlived Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania—was at last repealed. Americans now had the tacit blessing of their government to produce and consume more liquor. The United States was home to an estimated eighteen thousand distilleries, and over the next three decades American consumers found themselves awash in whiskey. It was available everywhere, from country stores to city taverns, and made by everyone from large producers to one's neighbors. Ever pragmatic, Americans made an even stronger

commitment to drink than their besotted colonial ancestors. And few Americans were too poor to drink. “During the first third of the nineteenth century the typical American annually drank more distilled liquor than at any other time in our history,” writes liquor historian W. J. Rorabaugh. Americans of the era outdrank the English, the Irish, and the Prussians. (They fell short, however, of the Swedes.) By conservative estimates, the average American in 1830 drank the equivalent of five gallons of absolute alcohol annually—close to three times current levels. The average American didn't really exist, of course. Those doing the drinking were mostly over fifteen years old, and mostly male. And even within this group, not all drank. So the drinkers *really* drank. Rorabaugh estimates that half of the adult males in the nation were responsible for downing about two-thirds of the spirits. Historian Norman Clark estimates that in the early nineteenth century, drinkers actually swilled about ten gallons of pure alcohol each year—or more than two bottles of 90 proof liquor each and every week.

America's love affair with strong drink fascinated and scandalized visiting Europeans. An Englishman who traveled down the Mississippi in the 1820s noted that in every corner he visited, “north or south, east or west,”he found “the universal practice of sipping a little at a time, but frequently.” In 1824, essayist Samuel Morewood noted the impact of inexpensive whiskey: “From the extraordinary cheapness with which spirits can be procured in the United States, averaging scarcely more than thirty-eight cents the gallon, the people indulge themselves to excess, and run into all the extravagancies of inebriety.” Drink permeated all levels of society, from the gutter to the ballroom. At Andrew Jackson's 1829 inaugural gala, the guests guzzled booze with such ardor that the White House staff feared the official residence would be trampled into a ruin. They devised a simple solution: The staff hauled the whiskey out to the lawn, and when the great herd of guests followed, closed and bolted the doors behind them. Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, first published in 1832, noted that for all the exalted talk of democracy's promise, she most

often heard it “in accents that breathe less of freedom than onions and whiskey.”

Liquor-fueled troubles swelled in small towns and large cities alike, from drunken street clashes to heads of households abandoning wives and children. Drinking invaded hallowed churches; one New England magazine was compelled to note in 1812 that “the selling of spirituous liquors at a place of worship should be discouraged and that a man who indulges in the use of ardent spirits is in a poor situation to either hear or preach the gospel.”

The unseemly and unproductive behavior of drunkards was increasingly at odds with a new generation of can-do Americans, who saw their nation as full of promise and plenty. Drink was a tax on the sober, stuck with the tab for the wreckage left by drinkers in their wake. Upright citizens began organizing to reform the morals of their neighbors. Amid a besotted society, a backlash started to brew.

And while rum now served as second fiddle to whiskey in all aspects of American life, from economic to cultural, in one sphere rum remained supreme: the temperance movement.

In 1785, the great patriot named Benjamin Rush published a small book on the perils of drink. Rush was a Philadelphia doctor, as learned as he was restless. A signer of the Declaration of Independence, he had served as the first surgeon general of the Continental Army, opposed the ownership of slaves, and advocated the development of a large-scale maple sugar industry to create “a source of sugar that would be free from the taint of slavery.” He distributed watermelons to Philadelphia prisoners in summer. But most notably, Rush was the first physician to challenge the medicinal benefits of alcohol—no small feat given distillation's long alliance with alchemists and apothecaries, and the persistent belief that alcohol was the cure for nearly every disease. While Rush allowed that beer and wine consumed moderately were good for

one's health, his observations of his countrymen led him to wonder about the merits of consuming “ardent spirits.” Indeed, Rush was among the first to identify alcoholism as a disease, one in which drinkers became victim to a “craving” or “appetite” that lured them to the edge of a cliff and then pushed them over. Rush was nothing if not a careful observer. In his *Inquiry into the Effect of Ardent Spirits*, Rush outlined the eight stages of drunkenness with unsettling accuracy: First, “unusual garrulity.” Second, “unusual silence.” Third, “a disposition to quarrel.” Fourth, “uncommon good humor and an insipid simpering, or laugh.” Fifth, “profane swearing and cursing.”Sixth,“a disclosure of his or other people's secrets.” Seventh, “a rude disposition to tell those persons in company whom they know, their faults.” And eighth, “certain immodest actions.” Rush called for Americans to resist the siren song of liquor as they built their new nation.

At first, the sentiments in Rush's tract found only a small audience. But with alcohol consumption at historic highs in the early nineteenth century, the scattered brigade of concerned Americans began to coalesce. Individual protests against drink in isolated communities grew into small but organized units, which in turn became broader campaigns. The Union Temperance Society of Moreau and Northumberland, founded in Saratoga, New York, in 1808, prohibited members from drinking “rum, gin, whiskey, wine, or any distilled spirits” except when sick or at public dinners. The following year the Total Abstinence Society was founded in nearby Greenfield, New York. The Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance, which would become one of the most influential groups nationally, was founded in 1813. Dozens of other societies would follow, among them the powerful Washington Temperance Society, the American Temperance Society, the Congressional Total Abstinence Society, the Sons of Temperance, the United Order of the Golden Cross and Sons of Jonadab, the Marblehead Union Moral Society, the Order of the Templars of Honor and Temperance, the National Temperance Society and Publication House, and Catholic Total Abstinence. By 1833, a

million Americans had signed pledges for temperance through six thousand temperance associations around the nation.

The attack on intoxicating liquors was more than a crusade in name—it had the trappings of a full-out war. Books like Charles Jewett's *Forty Years' Fight with the Drink Demon* (1877), and J.A. Dacus's *Battling with the Demon* (1872) urged followers to take up arms against an insidious foe. Rev. W. W. Hicks said of drink, “It has no regard for honor. It knows no truce. It hears no cry of remonstrance— no appeal for quarter.” A letter to the *New York Tribune* following the Civil War noted that “the people in this part of Ohio honestly think the next war in this country will be between women and whiskey; and though there may not be much blood shed, you may rest assured rum will flow freely in the gutter.”

The most powerful weapon in the temperance arsenal, at least in its crude firepower, were the temperance tracts—the booklets and pamphlets that decried drink and urged the reader to follow the more righteous path of sobriety. Crusaders embraced the doctrine of overwhelming force, as if the weight of the printed word could overcome the evils of alcohol. Between 1829 and 1834, temperance societies in New York—the most active state in the nation in the war on drink— churned out 5.5 million tracts; by 1839, fifteen temperance journals were published in the United States; in 1851, the American Tract Society alone had distributed another 5 million tracts nationwide. Other temperance groups published their own screeds, or ordered them in bulk from National Temperance Society, which had dozens of titles available at wholesale for between $4 and $8 per thousand.

The tracts informed readers exactly what would happen to those who succumbed to drink. The best they could hope for was impeded digestion or clogged brains. At worst, they could expect cheerless haggardness, physical collapse, and, in the final stages, the horrors of the delirium tremens. In libraries and reading rooms, visitors could peruse *Sewall's Stomach Plates*, a set of eight lithographs nearly twoby-three-feet each, which showed the deterioration of the stomach of a drunk. “Not the production of mere fancy,” the

promotions claimed, but “the result of actual scientific research and investigation.” One 1877 tract noted that “scientific men agree … that all diseases arising from intoxicating drinks are liable to become hereditary to the third generation, increasing, if the cause be continued, till the family becomes extinct.” The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, founded in 1874, oversaw its own Department of Scientific Temperance Instruction, which produced schoolbooks detailing the effect of alcohol on the body, such as the thinning of the walls of blood vessels, which could result in abrupt bursting. (The WCTU didn't limit its antipathy to drink; they also had a Department of Suppression of Social Evil that promoted blue laws, a department to end bigamy among Mormons, and a department that advocated the eating of bland foods, since spicy foods were believed to provoke a thirst for strong drink.)

Violent deaths were a natural by-product of drink in the temperance tracts, an early variant of the “scared-straight” approach to dissuasion. Children were left destitute by swilling fathers, and young men once brimming with promise died early. M. L. Weems, best known for inventing the legend of George Washington and the cherry tree, wrote in *The Drunkard's Looking Glass* (1812) of a young Dred Drake, who, in his cups, agreed to a horseback race through a piney wood. He scarcely made it a hundred yards before falling from his horse and dashing out his brains. “There was not a sign of a nose remaining on his face,” Weems wrote, “the violence of the blow had crushed it flat, miserably battering his mouth and teeth, and completely scalping the right side of his face and head—the flesh, skin, and ear torn off to the back of his skull. One of his eyes, meeting a snag on the trunk of a tree, was clearly knocked out of its socket; and held only by a string of skin, there lay naked on his bloody cheek.”

If the trees didn't get you, the literal fires of damnation would. Temperance tracts reported that the blood or perspiration of a drunk would flare up when he or she got near an open flame. Even if no flame were present, there was the distinct possibility of spontaneous combustion. The first reports of boozers coming to an abrupt and

fiery end surfaced in Europe and found a keen audience among Americans, who already had a large appetite for spectacle. Vanishing in a puff of smoke crossed from rumor into popular culture in 1853 when Charles Dickens, in *Bleak House*, depicted a character reeking of gin abruptly dematerializing into “a smouldering suffocating vapor in the room, and a dark and greasy coating on the walls and ceilings.” In a subsequent edition, Dickens defended the veracity of the scene in a preface that cited nearly three dozen cases of spontaneous combustion among heavy drinkers.

If the prospect of a fiery end didn't frighten one off drink, there was always the relatively mundane fear of poisoning. Temperance leaders averred that distillers weren't content merely to poison their customers with alcohol alone; they added toxic ingredients to encourage addiction and slowly kill off the drinker. (No explanation was offered as to why a liquor vendor would want to kill off his client base.) “The adulteration and manufacture of villainous and maddening decoctions have become common,” wrote one temperance sympathizer. Another fretted that the “addition of some actively poisonous substances to alcohol, in order to produce a new luxury, is the evil most disastrous.” The new liquors “do not satisfy as the genuine liquors of the past were wont to do,” wrote an oddly nostalgic third, “but instead to incite further indulgence.”

Some of these reports of poisonings took root in the thin soil of a partial truth—the less scrupulous rum sellers were long known to stretch a supply of Jamaican rum by wiles and deceit, cutting it with harsh domestic rum and more. An 1829 work entitled *Wine and Spirit Adulteration Unmasked* included several recipes for making “old Jamaican rum” with nontraditional ingredients including birchoil tincture, oak bark, “new-scraped leather,” tar, and oil of clove. A later account noted even less appetizing ingredients to give freshmade alcohol the sophistication of mature liquor: logwood, brazilwood, green vitriol, opium, tobacco, aloes, bitter orange, henbane, nux vomica, sugar of lead, oil of bitter almonds, poison hemlock, bark of tartar. Spirit sellers, increasingly under attack,

defended the wholesomeness of their products by advertising that their wines and liquors were, in the words of one Philadelphia tavern keeper, “warranted pure and unadulterated.”

THE TEMPERANCE CRUSADE was more of a guerrilla uprising than a traditional battle with a well-defined front. Scattered, far-flung groups went after the local and state liquor trade in isolated skirmishes; group leaders came together at conclaves and conventions to exchange ideas and beat the drums to maintain the fervor. The enemy was always out there, in kegs and bottles and tankards. Crusaders often railed against “intoxicating liquors” when among themselves, but that terminology was ungainly and lacked punch on pennants and posters and in podium-pounding speeches. “Ardent Spirits,” another favorite, seemed too genteel, and “King Alcohol”lacked absoluteness— alcohol, after all, was useful in industry and for medical reasons. The Drys needed a villain, one that had resonance, was memorable, and could command the attention of distracted crowds.

And so was born Demon Rum. The omnipresent liquor of the colonial era was now back, a symbol of everything odious that plagued the new republic, the windmill at which temperance crusaders would tilt.

By what curious process did rum come to exemplify the worst elements of liquor? In the 1830s, whiskey was by far the dominant drink. Why didn't temperance leaders put whiskey squarely in their crosshairs? (To be fair, some tracts did go after whiskey, like the 1878 *National Temperance Almanac*, which asked, “What key will unlock the door to hell? Whis-*key.”*)

Whiskey was inconvenient in small ways, not the least that it was hard to rhyme. Yet anyone could find a rhyme for rum. In the 1900 presidential campaign, Republican supporters of William McKinley were given to chanting, “McKinley drinks soda water, Bryan drinks rum; McKinley is a gentleman, Bryan is a bum.” Rum was also pliable and could append itself nicely to other words. The mid-

nineteenth century was the glory days for rum words: *Rummy* surfaced in 1834, *rum-hole* in 1836, *rum-mill* in 1849, and *rum-dealer* in 1860. Orators assailed the "rum interests" and made references to the "rum tax."

Samuel Smith, a temperance poet, put this informal use of rum into more formal terms:

> *Hail, mighty rum! and by this general name*
>
> *I call each species—whiskey, gin or brandy:*
>
> *(The kinds are various—but th' effect's the same, And so I choose a name that's short and handy;*
>
> *For reader, know it takes a deal of time*
>
> *To make a crooked word lie smooth in rhyme…*

This sturdy, three-letter word—the very epitome of Anglo-Saxon vigor—packed a vast amount of power, lore, and tradition into its small frame. As historian J. C. Furnas noted, rum made for a "fine, short disreputable-sounding syllable, admirable for rhetorical uses." Yet rum could also sound a charge. Its sound was to temperance troops like the sound of a bagpipe to a Scot or a bugle to a western infantryman. It evoked memories of pioneers like Benjamin Rush, or early crusaders in the Republic of Rum. Never mind that few now *drank* rum—it was a name infused with the sacrifice of early heroes.

To fight Demon Rum was to fight the fiercest and most formidable dragon terrorizing the countryside. Some posters featured Demon Rum personified, with horns and a rictus grin, its evil tail wrapped around bodies of the dead and dying drinkers. One tract offered helpful hints on child raising: "If you must some times scare them in the room of telling them that bears will catch them, that hobgoblins or ghosts will catch them, tell them that *Rum* will catch them."

Demon Rum helped pull together a decentralized movement that was often at cross-purposes. Goals varied: some called for complete abstention from drink, others just for moderation. Some wanted all forms of alcohol, including beer and wine, driven from the country; others focused their wrath on ardent spirits. But they all could share

a vivid loathing for the great demon itself. Rum was a uniter, not a divider.

And it had come full circle: In colonial times, rum was a symbol of freedom and independence—not only from the mother country, but also freedom from the dour Puritan elites. Now rum stood in the way of true freedom and so became the focus of one of the most persistent campaigns in American history.

SUCH TECHNIQUES AS public browbeating and extraction of signed sobriety pledges were remarkably successful—for a while. Personal consumption of alcohol dropped, in one estimate, by three-quarters, the boozy 1830s becoming the relatively dry 1840s. But the ocean of temperance pamphlets, plays, and poems failed to have a more enduring effect. A signature on a temperance pledge was hardly binding, and backsliding was endemic. And for every person who signed the pledge, hundreds refused. An influx of European immigrants from Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia brought with them entrenched tippling habits and changed the demographics. By the late 1840s, drinking was again on the upswing. A new approach was needed.

So the temperance crusade turned its attention away from the rum drinker and toward the rum seller. The campaign to shut down the Rum Traffic started small, embracing the “local option” that allowed localities to ban liquor sales. In Massachusetts, for instance, whole counties went dry. Emboldened, the movement went for larger quarry and sought to ban sales at the state level. Success was spotty at first. In 1838, Massachusetts effectively banned the retail sale of liquor with the “fifteen-gallon law,” which permitted sales of liquor only in amounts of fifteen gallons or more—effectively shutting down taverns and dramshops. Creative interpretations of the law cropped up, among them the famous “striped pig.” A liquor dealer painted up a pig with colorful stripes and announced that for a mere six cents a citizen could marvel at this freak of nature—and enjoy a complimentary glass of whiskey while doing so. The fifteen-gallon law, riddled with loopholes, was soon repealed.

In 1851, Maine was the first to pass a state prohibition, thanks to a short, tenacious businessman turned politician named Neal Dow. With its population of fishermen, farmers, and lumbermen, Maine had long been home to serious drinkers, whose habits offended the abstemious and hardworking Dow. His conversion from passive disgust to open activism occurred in the 1840s, when he sought to aid a destitute relative who drank to excess. Dow went into the shop where the besotted relative bought his liquor and asked the rum seller to refuse the poor, broken man. The rum seller curtly brushed off Dow's suggestion by noting that he was licensed by the city and he could sell to whomsoever he pleased. Dow took this as a challenge.

With increasing fanaticism, Dow pursued his vision of a liquorfree society. He agitated successfully for a citywide law banning liquor sales in his hometown of Portland. Drinking slowed but didn't stop. Frustrated by the flow of liquor from adjoining towns, Dow badgered the state legislature into considering a statewide liquor ban. His arguments and sheer personal force proved irresistible, and what came to be known as “Maine law” carried the legislature. Dow brought the document to the governor for his signature and then set about enforcing its provisions. Just months after the law's passage, Dow himself oversaw the destruction of $2,000 worth of liquor in Portland, and boasted that “in Portland there were between three and four hundred rum-shops, and immediately after the enactment of the law not one.” Dow portrayed alcohol as a quarry that needed to be hunted and slain: Liquor “stands in the same category with wild beasts and noxious reptiles,” he said, “which no one can claim as property and which every one may destroy, and in so doing any one is a public benefactor.”

The success of the 1851 law came as a revelation to temperance movements nationwide. Dow traveled widely to promote Maine's triumphs and assisted other states in passing similar laws. Within four years, thirteen states had banned liquor sales, and the trade was passing into its first miniature ice age.

Sadly for temperance leaders, the chill proved temporary. Wets successfully lobbied for amendments to weaken dry laws in several states, making the sale of wine and beer legal. Court challenges in eight states found the liquor bans at odds with the state constitution and repealed them altogether. And Wets in all states soon made a discovery: The laws were easy to evade. The striped pig became a "blind pig," and a nickel bought a viewing of a sightless hog and a dram of free liquor. The first coming of Prohibition stumbled and fell.

The temperance movement faced further setbacks in the run-up to the Civil War and the four-year bloodletting that followed. After the South fired on Fort Sumter, social activists shifted their energies from social betterment to the emancipation of slaves—except for a handful of temperance camp followers who traveled with the troops and forced tracts upon them. (The temperance crusaders marked up one small success during the war: They had a law passed in 1862 that banned liquor aboard "vessels of war, except as medicine and upon the order and under the control of the medical officer and to be used only for medical purposes.") After Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Virginia, and the postwar rebuilding of a nation, liquor prohibition seemed a distant and quaint memory. America resumed drinking habits not from the more moderate 1850s but the harderdrinking 1830s.

Temperance leaders charged, possibly with some accuracy, that the Civil War had changed the social landscape. The country came out of the war with a more dominant masculine culture, in which the ability to hold one's drink became a mark of status. Many states renounced their earlier flings with prohibition, and no states showed any interest in curbing drinking anew. Not one state passed a law banning liquor sales between the years of 1856 and 1879.

DRINK WAS BACK. H. L. Mencken dubbed the decades following the war—roughly from 1865 to 1900—the "Golden Age of American Drinking." Bartenders concocted their own bitters, infused their own

cordials, and brought a high level of skill to their craft. This era saw the invention of such classic cocktails as the Manhattan, the oldfashioned, and the martini. The highball—liquor enlivened with a splash of soda water—came into fashion in 1895, although purists groused that the liquor was "robbed of authority" by diluting it with the "cheap fluid which they put under bridges or use in sprinkling the lawn."The rickey, a cocktail made with a fresh-squeezed lime, surfaced around 1880, possibly at a bar in Washington, D.C. The Tom Collins, basically a rickey with the addition of sugar, followed soon after. Even flip resurfaced, although considerably altered from its colonial incarnation: Hot water was used in the place of the red-hot loggerhead. The cobbler, the fizz, and the sour also appeared in this heady era, and Scotch, brought into fashion by the golf craze that swept the nation in the 1890s, began its decades-long fling with popularity.

Cities large and not so large were suddenly home to a surfeit of fancy hotel bars, as famous for their drinks as for the opulence of their surroundings. Among the more notable were the Waldorf, the Hoffman House, and the Knickerbocker in New York City; the Palace in San Francisco; the Antlers in San Antonio; and the Touraine in Boston. The trend was abetted by the invention of the modern icemaker, which could produce ice in bulk and on demand, without the mess of cutting ice from a February pond and packing it in sawdust. Cocktails on the rocks went from a luxury to a necessity. Jerry Thomas became the first modern bartender and authored a nowrevered book for both bartenders and home drinkers. The ungainly word *mixologist* was coined in 1856. By 1870, W. F. Rae noted, "The most delicate fancy drinks are compounded by skillful mixologists in a style that captivates the public."

The embrace of elaborate concoctions, flavored and mixed with an array of bitters and tonics and infusions, was one of America's most visible cultural exports in the 1890s. "American bars" appeared throughout Europe, with the fanciful drinks inspiring curiosity among many and revulsion among a few. *Harper's* magazine in 1890 noted the rise of American bars in London,

dispensing "various mixtures that taste like hair oil, but …cost[ing] twice the price of English liquor." Among the cocktails of note were the Sustainer, the Silent Cobbler, the Square Meal, the Alabazam, the Bosom Caresser, the Flash of Lightning, the Corpse Reviver, the Heap of Comfort, and the Prairie Oyster.

And where was rum in all this? It made the occasional cameo in bar guides but for the most part was relegated to cold-weather drinks and cough medicine. Its most notable incarnation was in the Tom and Jerry cocktail, invented by Jerry Thomas himself: An egg (the yolk and white beaten separately) was mixed in a china mug with Jamaican rum, powdered sugar, and brandy. Hot water was added, and nutmeg grated over the top. This cocktail has not remained in fashion.

WHILE SWELLS IN derbies elbowed their way up to the modern hotel bars, rough-edged drinkers congregated in saloons, which proliferated in the years following the Civil War. Saloons ranged from rank hellholes in urban slums to fancier establishments in prosperous downtowns, complete with hand-carved back bars and brass railings and original artworks, often of female nudes. Saloons could be found on main streets and in back alleys, and various estimates put the number nationwide at one to every three hundred to four hundred Americans. San Francisco might have been the most pickled city, with one saloon for every ninety-six inhabitants. A saloon was not the place for the fancy drinks of hotel bars. Here, patrons ordered their whiskey straight or beer by the tall glass.

Especially beer. Known as "the poor man's clubs," saloons attracted immigrants who brought to their new country a love of malt and hops. German immigrants established breweries in Milwaukee and St. Louis, and beers made by the Coors, Pabst, Schlitz, Schmidt, Anheuser, and Busch families became household names. Whiskey found its popularity eroding against the cheaper, easier-to-quaff beer, the consumption of which increased fourfold between 1880 and 1913. By the turn of the century, more than 60

percent of the alcohol consumed by Americans was beer—a reversal for spirits, which had accounted for 60 percent of the alcohol consumed in 1830.

Saloons were often owned and operated by the largest breweries and boosted their beer sales with aggressive promotions and free (and salty) lunch buffets. The world of the saloon was increasingly seen as one of extravagant excess—not only of drink, but of gambling, sex, and petty crime. While old-fashioned temperance tracts flogged the "rum seller," a new breed of activist turned his or her sights on the saloon as the nation's chief distribution center of evil. The charge had resonance, since Americans increasingly associated saloons with the wave of immigrants that had fetched up on its shores. Their unfamiliar accents sounded a note of alarm to established Americans already unsettled by the social and economic changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Temperance had found a new demon.

IN MAY 1893, Howard Hyde Russell founded the Anti-Saloon League of Ohio, which was soon followed by nine other state chapters. Two years later, these groups and dozens of local affiliates merged to form the Anti-Saloon League of America. Deft at political assassination and ready to carpet bomb with its screeds—the ASL printed and distributed more than 100 million copies of antidrinking tracts in the early twentieth century—the ASL became politically influential in short order. A new wave of state prohibitions on liquor sales soon swept the nation.

This time, temperance leaders—many of whom happened to be women—viewed the battle against drink as more than a metaphor. Perhaps none embraced the fight as fervently as the six-foot-tall and sourpussed Carry Nation, a Kansas resident who lost one husband to alcohol and a second to her activism. She concluded, not incorrectly, that prayer at the doorstep of a saloon did little to reverse the evils of alcohol. It would require weaponry. (Suffrage also played a role: "You refused me the vote," she explained simply

to the Kansas legislature, “and I had to use a rock.”) In the spring of 1900, following the Lord's instructions—conveyed to her in a dream—she loaded a wagon with brickbats, bottles, bits of scrap metal, and chunks of wood, then traveled twenty-five miles from her home in Medicine Lodge to Kiowa and proceeded to lay to waste three saloons, smashing windows, glassware, and artwork. Efforts to arrest her came to nothing, since Kansas was a “dry” state. The mayor and town council needed arresting, Nation thundered, and then continued on her way unmolested. Her armaments grew less cumbersome. She adopted the hatchet as her weapon of choice and ravaged saloons in Kansas and other dry states, smashing bottles and glasses, and hacking at the polished bars. (Her efforts in wet states were limited to loud hectoring, since she didn't have carte blanche to cause actual damage to legal enterprises.)

Carry Nation launched her final crusade in Butte, Montana, in 1910. She was sixty-three. It did not go well. She crossed swords with a woman saloon proprietor whose determination equaled her own. Her cloak of invincibility, already frayed, was in tatters. She died a year later of “nervous trouble,” and was buried, largely forgotten, next to her mother in a small cemetery in Missouri.

The Anti-Saloon League soldiered on, turning its attention to Congress and pushing for a nationwide ban on alcohol sales. They found growing support in Washington. Heavy drink and its attendant problems were again on the upswing. The league proved agile in corralling politicians into supporting its cause, especially through the determined efforts of Wayne Wheeler, who began his career on a bicycle lobbying for antidrinking statutes along Lake Erie in Ohio. Wheeler raised vast amounts of money from the industrial leaders, including Henry Ford, Andrew Carnegie, Pierre du Pont, Cyrus McCormick, and both John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Sr. The corporate titans, who believed that drinking was hurting productivity among their workers, contributed more than money. They were visible supporters of temperance, believing a sober workforce would yield more profits.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, there was a groundswell of support for a broader prohibition. In 1907, another round of state prohibition laws were passed. In 1915, whiskey and brandy were eliminated as medically approved drugs, and the American Medical Association condemned the drinking of spirits. An effort to pass a national prohibition through constitutional amendment in 1914 fell 61 votes short of the two-thirds majority required. The movement regrouped, and in 1916 the ASL succeeded in getting numerous antidrink legislators into office. A constitutional amendment banning the sale of drink was introduced again the following year, and this time quickly passed in both the House and the Senate.

The amendment moved to the states. Thirty-three were dry when the voting began; the Drys had seven years to convince thirty-six states to ratify the amendment and change the Constitution. The Wets had been lax in fighting the amendment, in part because they were convinced that states would refuse to tinker with the constitution over such a small matter. They were wrong. Mississippi was first to ratify the amendment in January 1918, and fourteen other states followed by the end of the year. Then came the deluge. In early January 1919, twenty states signed on to the ban on liquor sales, and on January 16—less than one year after Congress had voted on the amendment—Nebraska became the thirty-sixth state to ratify the amendment. (In all, forty-six states would go along, with only Connecticut and Rhode Island declining.) As saloon historian George Ade saw it, “The non-drinkers had been organizing for fifty years, and the drinker had no organization whatever. They had been too busy, drinking.”

The Volstead Act created the mechanisms that would actually end the liquor trade, and Congress passed it quickly. Americans poured themselves a last legal drink. The temperance crusade, which began in the 1830s, was an eighty-year thunderstorm that concluded with a single thunderclap. On midnight, January 16, 1920, any American involved in the production, transfer, or sale of any liquor, beer, or wine would be jailed and his or her property confiscated.

The Republic of Rum had fallen at last.

[DAIQUIRI]

Mix *two ounces* LIGHT RUM with juice of *one-half* LIME and *one to two teaspoons* of SUGAR or sugar syrup, to taste. Shake in cocktail shaker with *half cubed ice, half crushed ice,* with no la-dee-da, until shaker is *too icy* to hold. *Strain* into chilled cocktail glass.

chapter 7

[Daiquiri]

The moment had arrived for a Daiquiri. It was a delicate compound; it elevated my contentment to an even higher pitch. Unquestionably, the cocktail on my table was a dangerous agent, for it held in its shallow glass bowl slightly encrusted with undissolved sugar the power of a contemptuous indifference to fate; it set the mind free of responsibility; obliterating both memory and tomorrow, it gave the heart an adventitious feeling of superiority and momentarily vanquished all the celebrated, the eternal fears.

—JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER,
SAN CRISTóBAL DE LA HAHABANA, 1920

IT WAS 1932, and Ernest Hemingway was looking for a way to avoid his home in Key West, Florida. His celebrity as a writer had soared after the publication of *Death in the Afternoon,* and a constant stream of friends, well-wishers, and the idle curious flowed to the Whitehead Street house where he lived with his wife, Pauline. Hemingway tried to write in his office off the backyard pool, but the constant splashing and merrymaking put him in a state of great distraction. So he packed his bags, headed to the ferry terminal, and bought a ticket for Cuba. A few hours later, he made his way through narrow streets of old Havana to a small hotel called the Ambos Mundos. Here, he paid for a corner room on the quiet fifth floor and settled in to write. He said that the cool breezes of a Havana morning allowed him “to work as well there … [as] anywhere in the world.”

But then came the stifling Havana afternoons. Hemingway would rise from his desk and set off to explore the city. He went deep-sea fishing, swimming in the Caribbean, and wagering at the jai alai

fronton. And, increasingly, he haunted Havana's bars, of which there were no shortage in the waning years of American Prohibition. He grew fond of one in particular, El Floridita, just a few blocks up Obisbo Street from his hotel. He discovered here a delightful drink and a consummate bartender, both of which he would make famous. The bartender was named Constantino. The drink was called the daiquiri.

Prohibition had a number of far-reaching effects on American society, virtually none of which the antibooze crusaders had anticipated or desired. "The Noble Experiment," in large part, served mostly to prove the law of unintended consequences.

For starters, instead of stigmatizing the drinking of alcohol, Prohibition actually made it more respectable. While the Volstead Act did succeed in shuttering the lower-class saloons, it gave rise to the speakeasy, which soon became the habitat of women and the middle class. As Prohibition historian Thomas Pegram noted, the liquor ban "broke down the saloon culture of male drinking and replaced it with a culture of youthful, recreational drinking which emphasized social contact between men and women." Not every drinker welcomed this change. Hollywood gossip Heywood Broun groused that the old saloons may have been rotten and coarse, but a visit to the bartender didn't require elbowing through a crowd of schoolgirls.

Prohibition also transformed what America drank and how it drank it. In particular, it gave rise to the cloying cocktail, which arose in part to mask the medicinal-tasting homemade liquors that flooded the underground market. "Everyone with a bottle of bathtub gin, a basket of fruit, and some icebox leftovers invented a new cocktail," wrote David Embury in 1948. "Almost any liquid short of gasoline, added to the liquor of that era, would help conceal its raw alcohol taste and would therefore improve it. Eggs and cream, in particular, smooth out the taste and disguise the alcoholic strength of liquor. And so dawned the day of the poultry and dairy cocktails."

And then there was the Dry's influence on West Indian rum. By banning the sale of all beverage alcohol in the United States, prohibitionists did what no island distiller could have dared hope for: They pulled weary old rum out of its shallow grave, not only infusing it with life, but giving it a bit of swagger and a touch of class.

Prohibition, it turned out, was the best thing to happen to rum since the first barrels rolled ashore on the docks of the northern colonies in the mid-seventeenth century.

When the ban on liquor went into effect in January 1920, hundreds of American distilleries went dark. (A few dozen were granted permits to manufacture industrial alcohol.) This, in turn, triggered the largest coast-to-coast home science project in American history. Americans were suddenly fascinated by the obscure habits of yeast. In 1919, even the august Scientific American Publishing Company printed a booklet entitled *Home Made Beverages: The Manufacture of Non-Alcoholic and Alcoholic Drinks in the Household.* Vendors sold small barrels for aging homemade spirits, along with simple stills that could process oneor five-gallon batches. Those who couldn't afford a fancy apparatus adopted a simpler approach: They would ferment a mash from corn (or grain) and sugar, then set it in a large pot on the kitchen stove and bring it to a low simmer. When the mixture reached 180 degrees, above the boiling point of alcohol but below that of water, they draped a cloth over the top and patiently squeezed out the captured vapors. With the addition of a few juniper berries, an almost potable gin could be fashioned from the rag's wringings.

More ambitious moonshiners fired up backcountry stills to meet demand. Small puffs of smoke blossomed like dogwood in rural hills across the country, and white lightning and “corn likker” moved from the hollows to homes and speakeasies under the cover of night. (Federal agents found and destroyed 696,933 stills in the first five years of Prohibition, but the liquor kept on coming.)

The stuff sold in speakeasies often wasn't much better than the stuff wrung out of rags. Enterprising owners would smuggle in perfectly good liquor from Canada or the Bahamas, and then cut one bottle of good liquor to make five bottles of bad. The good stuff would be diluted with whatever cheap industrial-grade alcohol could be bought or stolen. If that wasn't available, antifreeze, hair tonic, and aftershave could be employed. The product could then be colored with caramel and flavored (sometimes with creosote) to hide the raw taste.

The powerful urge to find a drink that wouldn't mercilessly assail the palate led to one other unintended impact of Prohibition. It promoted travel and tourism. In particular, it promoted travel to nations where liquor was still available. This left an impressively large choice—in fact, every country except Finland, which had imposed its own prohibition in 1919. (Canada flirted with prohibition in some provinces early on, but came to its senses when it realized the vast size of the American market for contraband liquor.)

Of the many overseas choices, Cuba stood out. The largest of the Caribbean islands, Cuba was just a short hop from Florida and was redolent of romance, adventure, and fermenting molasses. The *New York Times* noted that not only was the sunshine and the Old World charm of Havana alluring, but that "nowhere … does the Eighteenth Amendment run or the Volstead Act have jurisdiction." The paper added that " "swizzles,' "Daiquiris,' "planters' punches' and other drinks may be consumed without subterfuge or fear of poisoning." Ships soon disgorged thousands of parched American passengers on Cuban shores. At least twenty made weekly runs to Havana, and far more ferries shuttled Americans from Miami and Key West.

Drinking began early in a journey south. When foreign-registered steamships crossed into international waters while still within sight of the American shoreline, armies of stewards invaded the staterooms bearing trays of cocktails. And even before passengers disembarked to fill the nightclubs of Havana, a flotilla of small "bumboats" would besiege arriving ships, with locals offering up

bottles of cheap rum for sale. Ship captains hoping to keep their crews sober (and passengers buying onboard cocktails) turned the fire hoses on the floating vendors. The hapless boats filled and capsized, leaving the liquor salesmen to swim to shore with their bobbing bottles. The flotilla developed techniques to counteract these attacks, including sending out more bumboats than the ship had fire hoses. The craftiest entrepreneurs would dodge under the overhanging stern, from which the conspiring crew would lower a basket and exchange a few dollars for liquor.

New transportation networks arose to meet demand for travel to Cuba. In November 1920, just ten months after Prohibition went into effect, Aeromarine Airways took its first passengers to Cuba in elevenseat “flying boats”—the first international airline service ever offered from the United States. In 1927, Pan American Airways (better known later as Pan Am) first took off: its seaplanes lifted off from the bluegreen waters at Coconut Grove, then banked over the Keys and landed in Cuba an hour later, well in time for afternoon cocktails. Business boomed; Pan Am flew Amelia Earhart to Havana for the gala opening of the airline's new terminal, and in Miami, airline salesmen swarmed the sidewalks, handing out flyers promising passersby they could “bathe in Bacardi tonight.” “Havana,” *Fortune* magazine noted, “became the unofficial United States saloon.”

The city was touted in travel magazines as a sort of licentious Paris with palm trees, a city of smoky nightclubs overflowing with sultry music, liquor, and more than a hint of romance. (Havana's reputation was not new; as early as 1911, the *Cleveland Press* reported that “Havana is World's Wickedest City, Press Man Finds,” noting that naked women actually performed on stage.) Havana had everything you couldn't get at home, including syphilis cures that were advertised in tourist magazines. Even the Shriners and the Elks were drawn here for conventions in the 1920s; the Cubans got along famously with the Shriners, but were puzzled by the more taciturn Elks.

Most of all, Havana attracted the affluent and socially prominent. Basil Woon, writing in *When It's Cocktail Time in Cuba* (1928), insisted that the city's fashionable watering holes were on par with the best of Europe. " "Have one in Havana' seems to have become the winter slogan of the wealthy," he wrote, adding that the city attracted society visitors along the lines of Charles Lindbergh, Anita Loos, Cyrus Curtis, and William K. Vanderbilt. Havana's season ran from the opening of the horse track in early December to the closing of the casino in March. "Havana is not, like Palm Beach, a parrot-cage of ostentation," Woon wrote. "It is rather, like Paris, a city of definite attraction where smart people go to be amused."

American hoteliers scrambled to cater to the new breed of seasonal immigrant, and in 1928 a travel writer reported that "Havana is studded with very new and painfully expensive English-spoken hotels, which are jammed to the billiard tables from January to April." Among them was the Biltmore chain, which already had hotels catering to the well-off in New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Coral Gables. The chain bought the Hotel Sevilla in downtown Havana just before Prohibition took effect, adding a ten-story tower and a roof garden, and rechristening it the Sevilla-Biltmore. They added new services to lure visiting Americans—like long-distance phone calling and two orchestras to play the ballroom—and they ensured that the extensive bar was amply stocked.

Just across from the Sevilla-Biltmore was the Telégrafo Hotel. Inside was Donovan's bar, operated by an Irishman from Newark, New Jersey. When Prohibition was enacted, other bartenders in Newark either padlocked their doors or switched to soft drinks. Donovan had a grander plan. He wrenched out his entire bar—stools and signs and mirrors and chairs—and shipped everything to Havana. He installed it in the Telégrafo and reopened to his new clientele, business as usual.

Among the more popular haunts of visiting Americans was a bar on Zulueta Street called Sloppy Joe's, whose slogan was "Where the Wet Begins." It was originally called La Victoria, but a local newspaper reporter, irked at the owner's refusal to advance him a

$50 loan, penned an editorial attacking the bar and called for local officials to look into its unsanitary conditions. The article snidely suggested that it be called “Sloppy Joe's.” The infamy brought more business, especially with Americans. So the bar's owner officially changed the name of the place and catered increasingly to the tourist trade, even selling belts crafted with holsters to hide small bottles of smuggled rum beneath jackets. The bar became famous among gawking tourists, and infamous among those who sought to avoid them. “It is not a very pretty picture to see a half a dozen grey-haired American ladies clinging to the bar rail in Sloppy Joe's,” reported one traveler in the *New Republic*, “shouting maudlin ditties to the tropic night and their bored and slick-haired gigolos.”

The visitors to Cuba discovered something else that pleased them greatly: a light, crisp rum that tasted nothing at all like the medicinal, rough, dark New England rum of decades past. As Basil Woon put it, “Rum, by the grace of a family named Bacardi and of American prohibition, had become, in fact, a gentleman's drink.”

Rum had been reinvented. Again.

THE NEW RUM traced its history to 1836, the year that a fifteen-yearold Catalonian immigrant named Facundo Bacardi y Maso arrived with his family at the elegant colonial city of Santiago de Cuba on the island's southeast coast. Facundo set himself up as an importer of wines and seller of spirits and, in 1862, purchased with one of his brothers the modest Santiago distillery of an Englishman named John Nunes. Depending on which company legend one subscribes to, a colony of bats either lived in the rafters of the distillery or occupied a tree in the backyard. They fluttered around the distillery in the evenings, and locals started calling Bacardi's rum “the bat drink.” Bacardi smelled opportunity. Rural Cubans were largely illiterate, and a graphic logo allowed the drink stand out among so many incomprehensible words of other brands. So Bacardi introduced the bat trademark, plastering it on his labels. The logo caught on, and never left. One magazine recently ranked it as one of

the ten most valuable logos in the world, in league with those of Kodak, McDonald's, and Cocacola. (There's another explanation for the bat: Bacardi may have lifted the idea from the civic heraldry of his native city of Valencia, which features a bat with wings spread atop a crown. Legend has it that in 1238, moments before King Jaume stormed Valencia to reclaim it from the Moors, a bat hovered overhead and landed atop his standard, and forever after the bat was seen as a harbinger of luck.)

Bacardi's success as a distiller left little to luck and much to technological innovation. He set about looking for a way to make the harsh, often disagreeable spirit lighter, smoother, and more palatable to a broader array of drinkers. His breakthrough was a filtering system, which removed the heavier, oilier impurities that often made rum such a rank bit of business. (The filter, which remains a family secret, probably involved a combination of charcoal and sand.) Bacardi toyed with different woods for his casks and tinkered with the blending process, mixing rums from different batches to create a consistently smooth product. Bacardi entered his rum in international competitions; at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876, Bacardi's light rum won a gold medal.

In 1892, Bacardi was rewarded with another welcome piece of publicity. Spain's ailing six-year-old King Alfonso XIII was faring poorly—feverish and with dim prospects for survival. Not knowing what else to do, the king's keepers administered a dollop of Bacardi's rum, which knocked him into a deep slumber. When Alfonso awoke, his fever had broken and he was on the mend. Spain's royal secretary wrote the distiller to thank Bacardi "for making a product that has saved the life of His Majesty." Bacardi did not keep this letter a secret.

Bacardi's rise was blessed by another accident of history—the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898. The war is remembered mostly for the historic shift in American foreign policy, from isolationism to a more bellicose interventionism. Less well known is the effect the war had in introducing Americans to a new rum. When Teddy Roosevelt charged up Cuba's San Juan Hill with

his Rough Riders, he established a beachhead for a wave of American immigrants, initially in the mining and the sugar industry, and later in tourism. The new arrivals quickly embraced Bacardi's rum. In 1899, a reporter for a New England newspaper concluded that the Santiago region's charms were not overly impressive. (“The country houses around Santiago are infested with mice and lizards.”) But he did commend a restaurant where he was served “a native rum, called bacardi [*sic*], which is made from molasses, and which, well mixed with water and cooled with ice, makes a very smooth sort of beverage and a somewhat insidious one. A quart bottle of this rum costs only fifty cents, and as a good deal of it is usually drunk at the midday meal it is not to be wondered at that a nap immediately follows it.”

Bacardi's light rum, in fact, mixed well with about everything—carbonated water, lime juice, pineapple juice, orange juice—and new cocktails were born, sometimes by design and sometimes not. In 1899, Santiago was swept by a craze for a new drink called the “mismo.” It arose when a group of Cubans and Americans got together at the Cosmopolitan Club, and one of the Cubans ordered a Bacardi and seltzer. The next Cuban said, *“Lo mismo,”* which is to say,“The same.” The Americans, eager to try something novel, also ordered *los mismos*, and found them much to their liking. When they returned to the bar the next day, they ordered another round of mismos. The same waiter was fortunately on duty and served them their mismos without missing a beat.“It spread with remarkable rapidity,”reported the *New York Tribune*, “until now every barkeeper in Santiago knows what you are after if you ask for a “mismo.' In fact, you rarely ever hear Bacardi rum and seltzer spoken of in any other way now.”

Bacardi saw a welcome increase in orders to the United States during World War I, when supplies of European spirits were disrupted. But Prohibition gave Bacardi its greatest windfall: an estimated $50 million in sales to dry Americans. Not only did Bacardi sell vast quantities to Americans visiting Cuba, but its shipments to the smuggling ports of Saint-Pierre—a French island

off Newfoundland—and the Bahamas tripled. In 1924, flush with profits, the Bacardi family commissioned the noted American illustrator Maxfield Parrish to design an office building in Havana, a fanciful construct of modern lines and old world whimsy. The eight-story tower, just a block from the Parque Central and a short walk to the presidential palace, had an oversized ground floor clad in a chocolaty marble, with the upper floors in a pale yellow brick capped by fanciful friezes and colorful cornices and crenellations.

Edificio Bacardi became one of the city's chief attractions for Prohibition pilgrims. Few were interested in the architecture, however. To promote its rum, Bacardi gave away free drinks weekdays to any tourist who wandered up to the second floor bar, where bartenders crafted perfect cocktails. “We took rum, an unsophisticated drink, and made it a sophisticated drink,”company patriarch Jose Argamasilla-Bacardi recalled to the *Wall Street Journal.* “All the people who liked rum but were ashamed to ask for it aren't ashamed anymore.”

Travelers touring the West Indies during Prohibition quickly learned that the world could be wonderfully exotic when viewed through the bottom of a cocktail glass. Adolph Schmitt, a bartender on the Hamburg-American liner *Reliance*, groused about the extra work: “No passenger wanted the same drink twice,” he said. “Instead of ordering Scotch or rye they insisted on clover clubs, orange blossoms, gin fizzes, gin rickeys, mint juleps, and old-fashioned cocktails. Then they learned about Daiquiri cocktails at Havana, rum swizzles at Trinidad, and punch at Kingston. On the way home they wanted all of these. I worked twelve hours a day trying to keep pace with the demand and at night I used to dream that new drinks had been invented.”

AMONG THE NEW drinks, the daiquiri cocktail was a standout. A perfect blend of lime, sugar, rum, and ice, the daiquiri cuts through the humidity, heat, and haze of the tropics with an uncanny precision. It

has an invitingly translucent appearance when made well, as cool and lustrous as alabaster.

How was it invented? Two origin myths have surfaced, both involving Americans. The most common involves an American engineer, Jennings Cox, who managed mines near the town of Daiquirí, not far from Santiago. In one telling, Cox and another foreign engineer spent a dusty afternoon touring abandoned mines near Cobre in 1896. The day's work over, they retired to Cox's home for a drink, where the host was mortified to discover that he lacked imported gin or whiskey to serve his guest. With only local rum that he wouldn't serve straight, he improvised: He put lime juice and sugar into a cocktail shaker and gave it a lively shaking. The result was surprisingly delicious. “What is this cocktail?” asked the marveling visitor. Cox admitted that it hadn't been properly christened, but allowed that it was probably a rum sour or something of the sort. The guest found this name insufficiently laudatory. “This name isn't worthy of such a fine and delicious cocktail,” he exclaimed. “We'll call it a daiquiri!”

Other variants of this story surface now and again. Cox's granddaughter claims that when he served the proto-daiquiri he was entertaining not another engineer, but a group of American dignitaries. In another account, Facundo Bacardi was present and reported that Cox exclaimed, “I'll tell you what, lads—we all work at Daiquirí and we all drank this drink first there. Let's call it a daiquiri!”

The second myth involves an American military officer named William Shafter, who came ashore during the Spanish-American War in 1898 near Santiago. He was not shy of girth and in poor health, and he liked food and drink more than the tedious chore of battle. When he sampled the drink of the Cuban patriot—rum, lime juice, and sugar muddled together—he found it to his liking and declared, “Only one ingredient is missing—ice.” He set about remedying that omission, and, lo, the daiquiri was born.

Which tale is correct? Who knows? Cocktail archives are lamentably scarce. Connoisseurs of spurious tales will appreciate

both stories for the precise, often stilted quotes rendered verbatim (the “lads” is a nice touch). But it's a bit odd that anyone would claim credit for a cocktail whose ingredients had been mixed well and often since at least 1740, when Admiral Edward Vernon issued his order to distribute limes and sugar with grog rations. Limes had mingled with rum for centuries aboard ships, and it wasn't much of a secret that the puckery tartness of limes and the underlying sweetness of rum were born to marry. The pair were the Astaire and Rogers of the cocktail world, every bit as perfect as gin and vermouth.

At heart, the daiquiri is simply a variation of the ageless punch recipe: one of sour, two of sweet, three of strong, four of weak. The chief difference between a daiquiri and punch—and the real stroke of brilliance, to which the General Shafter origin myth gives a nod—was the use of ice as the “weak.”

The cocktail culture that blossomed in the tropics in the 1920s was abetted by the wide availability of ice. In the steamier counties, ice had long been a luxury—captured most vividly in the opening chapter of Gabriel García Márquez's *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, in which gypsies bring a block of glimmering ice to a small village in South America, a jewel in a sawdust-filled chest, and the protagonist, Colonel Aureliano Buendía proclaims it to be “the great invention of our time.” The inconvenience and expense of cutting ice in winter near northern ports and shipping it south ended around 1870, when the invention of artificial refrigeration meant that even the most sultry cities could produce their own frosty diamonds. By the early twentieth century, ice was an everyday commodity.

What makes the daiquiri an enduring classic is its perfect simplicity. It doesn't require an off-putting list of unfamiliar ingredients, and the techniques for making one can be easily learned. Yet it requires a nuanced pouring hand to get just the right proportions—not too sweet nor too sour, not too icy nor too warm. A proper daiquiri may be either shaken or stirred. Recipes typically call for shaking the lime juice, sugar, and rum until the shaker frosts

over, then straining and serving. In 1909, a naval medical officer named Lucius W. Johnson met the engineer Jennings Cox, who served him one of his famous daiquiris. “He mixed in each glass a jigger of rum, the juice of half a lime, and a teaspoon of sugar,” Johnson wrote. “He then filled the glass with finely shaved ice and stirred it well. In that hot, humid weather the ice melted rapidly and the glass quickly became frosted.”

Johnson brought his daiquiri recipe to the United States, where he introduced it to the Army and Navy Club on Farragut Square in downtown Washington, D.C. The drink caught on, and the club soon opened the Daiquiri Lounge. (Officers still order up daiquiris here.) This was the first step to making the daiquiri a proper cocktail in the eyes of Americans.

It took Ernest Hemingway to give the daiquiri a more literary glow.

Constantino Ribalaigua Vert was the chief bartender and owner of El Floridita, a popular establishment just a few minutes' walk from Hemingway's hotel. With its long bar, dim interior, and grocery stocked with basic cooking supplies, it had the congeniality of a bodega combined with the sophistication of a hotel bar. Constantino had first learned about daiquiris from Emilio Gonzalez, a bartender at the nearby Plaza Hotel. But Constantino wasn't content to leave the concoction alone, and he tinkered endlessly, mixing daiquiris with the chipped ice from the Flak Mark chipper he had imported from the United States. He created at least four different versions of the daiquiri, all excellent. One popular variant included five drops of Marasquin, a cherry-flavored liqueur. He dubbed it the “Daiquiri Floridita.”

Constantino's technique involved equal parts precision and flamboyance. He would fill stemmed cocktail glasses with ice to chill them, pour the ingredients (often for several drinks) into a cocktail shaker, and then shake vigorously, reportedly then sending the contents in a great arc from one half of the shaker to the other.

He'd empty out the ice from the now-chilled glasses, line these up in a row on the bar, and fill them with a fluid sweep of his arm. Awed visitors said that every glass was filled to the brim, and not a drop was left in the shaker. To watch Constantino was to watch a master craftsman at work.

As he presided over his bar one day, a scruffy, bearish man entered and asked to use the toilet. According to one account, when the man emerged from the bathroom and saw the daiquiris lined up on the bar, his curiosity was piqued. He asked for a sip. “That's good, but I prefer it without sugar and double rum,” the man said. Constantino mixed one up to those specifications, and the man declared it *very* good. He was, of course, Ernest Hemingway. This modified version of the daiquiri became known ever after as the “Papa Doble.” (A later variation also enjoyed by Hemingway included a splash of grapefruit juice and a dash of maraschino liqueur: the “Hemingway Special.”)

It was Hemingway's first but by no means last visit to El Floridita. About a third of his life was spent in Cuba, a measurable portion at El Floridita. One of the waiters later recalled that Hemingway would often slide into his usual seat in a shadowy corner of the bar, far to the left, where he would read or write, and remain so still as to attract no more attention than a painting. “If you didn't see him you didn't know he was there,” the waiter said. Hemingway made no effort to stand out; one of the things he liked best about Havana was that he could let his beard go long, wear ratty blue swimming trunks and a dirty guayabera shirt, and sit barefoot at El Floridita while downing Constantino's double daiquiris.

And down them he did. Hemingway drank long and deeply, sometimes breaking up a drinking session with a trip to the jai alai fronton, only to end up back at El Floridita, where he'd have four or five more drinks before calling it a night. He maintained his drinking habits even after his third wife, journalist Martha Gellhorn, persuaded him to leave his downtown hotel room and purchase a small farm, which they called Finca Vigía, a few miles southeast of Havana. Hemingway said the marathon sessions with the bottle

were essential to combat the fatigue that plagued him after writing. Biographer Carlos Baker notes that his binges were the only aspect of Hemingway's Cuban life that really annoyed Gellhorn. And as their fights over his drinking increased, Baker wrote, he spent more time “at the Floridita while the tall daiquiris came and went in seemingly inexhaustible supply.”

During his fourth marriage, to Mary Welsh, Hemingway still sought out El Floridita while awaiting her return from her frequent travels, keeping at bay what he called the “black lonelies” by staying out until two in the morning. A consummate competitor, Hemingway managed to set a house record, consuming sixteen daiquiris in one sitting. Yet he had a heroic capacity for drink. He rarely became a nasty or sloppy drunk, but rather tended to grow sullen and remote. He chief problem, he said, was the “mastodon hangovers” that made it all but impossible to work the next day.

The daiquiri became nearly as large a part of the Hemingway legend as bullfights in Spain and the woods of northern Michigan. He worked the daiquiri into his fiction, most notably in his posthumously published *Islands in the Stream.* “The Floridita was now open,” Hemingway wrote, and his protagonist Thomas Hudson entered and ordered “a double frozen daiquiri with no sugar from Pedrico, who smiled his smile which was almost like the rictus on a dead man who had died from a suddenly broken back, and yet was a true and legitimate smile.” Hemingway later turned uncharacteristically rhapsodic about his favored drink: “This frozen daiquiri, so well beaten as it is, looks like the sea where the wave falls away from the bow of a ship when she is doing thirty knots.”(Hemingway can't claim credit for introducing the daiquiri to the literate American public. That honor goes to F. Scott Fitzgerald, who produced the first known published reference to it in 1920, when the daiquiri made a fleeting cameo in *This Side of Paradise.*)

The daiquiri was by no means Hemingway's only drink—he was not especially picky when it came to alcohol. He often knocked back three Scotches when he finished writing. He liked absinthe and red wine and white wine and champagne and vodka and whiskey. On

the *Pilar*, his thirty-eight-foot fishing boat, Hemingway had a customized bar built high on the flying bridge to keep drink at hand when piloting the boat; he called tequila his “steering liquor.” Hemingway steadfastly refused to admit that he had a drinking problem. (“Have spent my life straightening out rummies and all my life drinking,” Hemingway wrote to A. E. Hotchner in 1949, “but since writing is my true love I never get the two things mixed up.”) But his drinking began to poach on his skills, and his output lessened and grew less compelling after the publication of *The Old Man and the Sea* in 1952. Even FBI director J. Edgar Hoover noted, apropos of Hemingway's fruitless hunts for German submarines off the Cuban coast during World War II, that “Hemingway's judgment is not of the best, and if his sobriety is the same as it was some years ago, that is certainly questionable.”

Hemingway managed to curb his thirst after being hectored by his friends, but like Captain Morgan four centuries earlier, his present love of drink began to overshadow the exploits of his youth. He was often in pain as a result of injuries suffered during his last African safari, and drink proved a balm for the body as well as the mind. Workers at Finca Vigía remember the afternoon he learned he had won the 1954 Nobel Prize for literature. He brought out tray after tray of drinks and served them up to the nearly dozen employees who maintained the house and grounds. “By the time we were done drinking, I could barely find the door,” one recalled. By the late 1950s, the writer George Plimpton said he could see Hemingway's distended liver through his shirt, standing out “from his body like a long fat leech.” The writer's mental state deteriorated, and he submitted to electroshock treatments in 1960 and 1961. Then one day in Ketchum, Idaho, two days after being released from treatment, he took out a shotgun he used for hunting partridge, loaded it, put it to his head and pulled the trigger. It was July 2, 1961, and Ernest Hemingway was sixty-one years old.

THE BELLS OF Repeal rang out on December 5, 1933, the day that Utah became the thirty-sixth state to ratify the Twenty-first Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. With noteworthy brevity, the amendment stated,“The eighteenth article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.” The Eighteenth Amendment, which banned liquor sales, remains the only constitutional amendment ever to be rolled back. The reasons for the reversal were many. The Drys had largely expended themselves in the long and hard-fought battle to ban liquor, and thereafter lost much of their drive, focus, and ardor. It turned out that they were better crusaders than administrators. What's more, in the early 1930s, the nation was slouching through the Great Depression, and any effort to revive manufacturing was welcome. Firing up the shuttered distilleries would light a spark in the more depressed regions of the country, and beleaguered farmers would find new corn markets for bourbon and grain markets for beer, thereby shoring up flagging commodity prices. (“Beer for Prosperity” neckties were fashionable among advocates for repeal.)

And, in the end, Prohibition didn't achieve its goal of eliminating liquor consumption—not by a long shot. Drinking did decline: By most accounts, Americans drank about a third less at the end of Prohibition than the beginning, not so much because they couldn't obtain booze but because drinking cost more. Yet the tax bill for reducing America's alcohol consumption by one beer out of three was staggering. Not only was enforcement expensive—by some estimates, the government spent more than $10 billion (in current dollars)—but the government also lost huge amounts of tax revenues to bootleggers and the black market.

More significantly, Prohibition undermined respect for the law. Crime became endemic in the cities as turf battles erupted in the shadowy demimonde of bootleggers and organized crime bosses. (Some 550 died in liquor-related clashes in Prohibition Chicago alone.) More insidiously, common citizens who otherwise considered themselves law-abiding thought nothing of filling a hip flask with illegal hooch or spending an evening at a speakeasy.

When the nation's most esteemed citizens openly flouted the nation's guiding charter, other cracks in the foundation were inevitable. Even John D. Rockefeller Jr., a firm Prohibition advocate who put his money into lobbying for the liquor ban, reconsidered his stand. “Many of our best citizens, piqued by what they regarded as an infringement of the private rights, have openly and unabashedly disregarded the Eighteenth Amendment,” he wrote. “As an inevitable result respect for all law has been greatly lessened.”

Faced with growing crime, a floundering economy, a mixed track record, and the impossibility of eradicating liquor consumption, the tide began to turn. The amendment to repeal the ban was introduced, passed, and ratified, and less than a year into his first term, Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Presidential Proclamation 2065. Roosevelt reportedly then mixed the nation's first legal martini in nearly fourteen years.

With drinks once again on the table, customers rushed to the bars, and bartenders hustled to stock the shelves. Although Prohibition had rendered the saloon extinct, its role was quickly filled by nightclubs and other entertainment venues, which proved to be a breed apart from the beery watering holes of the past.

The new places were, however, a distant cry from the grand hotel bars of the cocktail's golden era: The knowledge of how and what to drink had been lost to a generation. For drinkers, Prohibition was akin to the burning of the library at Alexandria.

Serious imbibers who recalled the stylish cocktails served up prior to Prohibition were disheartened by unschooled hordes that filled the new bars to overflowing. These were young people who saw drink as a mere intoxicant rather than a centerpiece to a social ritual. “Those who had mastered the art [of drinking] somewhat before Prohibition, have been slow to reappear, whereas the new crop would put to shame the uncouth ecstasies of South Sea Islander or the Indians of New Mexico,” wrote H. G. Moody in *American Mercury* in 1936. “Let the modern American who wishes to drink be made to know that he is starting from scratch, that he has to acquire a form of culture to do the trick even half well.” A drinker old

enough to remember better days told a reporter that she hoped only that her grandchildren would one day “know the difference between drinking like gentlemen and lapping it up like puppies.”

No spirit benefited from the long national drought as much as rum. With ample supplies in the islands and a newly developed taste for the stuff among everyday Americans, this three-hundred-year-old spirit emerged from its century-long slumber into a bright new day. Approximately 2.5 million gallons of rum were readied at the shipping docks of the West Indies on the eve of Repeal. The island of Trinidad sent off America's first legal consignment—one hundred cases—and gave away thousands of free drinks to American visitors in the hope that they would carry their newfound tastes back home.

“While a great deal of inferior “fire water' rum is likely to be sold in the United States for several years,” reported *Literary Digest* in early 1934, “the better quality rum made from genuine sugar cane should be obtainable in increasing measure … and the industry is confident of restoring the taste for a liquor that was once inextricably woven with the romantic history of early America.”

Rum was back in fashion. “Perhaps the fanatical dry will object to the latest discovery the drinking public of America is making—the discovery of rum,” reported *New Outlook* magazine in 1934. “The American public has been a little delayed in discovering this beverage, but according to reports from the West Indies and other Caribbean isles, a rum boom is under way, after many years of sad decline…. Perhaps because it was impossible to imitate, the years of Prohibition had made us forget just how efficient and tasty a beverage it is. But now the public taste is turning back to the memory of its ancestors, and rum is arriving, or about to arrive, on our shores in staggering quantity.”

The rum that made its way to these shores, of course, landed in a very different America than the rustic colonies it had left behind. Advances in the chemistry, sanitation, engineering, fermentation, and distillation had brought major changes to the liquor industry.

Production was no longer undertaken by a motley assortment of small-scale producers—like the approximately two thousand whiskey distilleries that flourished in the hills and hollows of Kentucky just prior to Prohibition. It was increasingly dominated by fewer, larger firms with enough capital to take advantage of new technological efficiencies. Among the largest and best known of the companies was National Distillers, dubbed “the United States Steel of liquor,” which had seven plants running night and day to meet booming post-Repeal demand. To compete effectively, rum manufacturing began the process of consolidation. Larger, better-funded companies like Cuba's Bacardi, Jamaica's Wray & Nephew, and Barbados's Mount Gay would come to dominate international rum markets.

An even more sweeping change came in marketing and branding. Early rum producers could ship a passable product in plain barrels to an undemanding market. That world had passed. To attract attention on crowded shelves and anticipate (or manufacture) consumer needs, rum manufacturers had to learn the craft of advertising and marketing.

Many rum distillers quickly realized that what the consumer wanted was “Cuban rum”—an almost generic term referring to any light, crisp rum. Like Bacardi, which started it all, Cuban rum went down easily and mixed well with everything. Cuban competitors had long ago sought to copy Bacardi's production methods, filtering and blending to produce a less cloying product. The Matusalem family produced a similar rum as early as 1872, and Havana Club rolled out its improved rum in 1878.

During and after Prohibition, other West Indian distillers also retooled to meet the clamor. Puerto Rico made the transition best, its rum becaming synonymous with Cuba's in the public mind. The government pushed hard to improve quality, banning island distillers from blending their rum with neutral spirits, then decreeing that all Puerto Rican rum be aged at least one year. Puerto Rican rums were further aided by its status as a United States territory, meaning that most exports, including rum, were exempt

from import duties. In 1936, Cuba's Bacardi family, rightly concerned about its financial disadvantage, became licensed to distill in Puerto Rico, and then invested more than a half-million dollars to buy an empty building near the seawall in San Juan's old city. This was a seed from which the world's largest rum distillery would one day grow.

For the smaller island distillers, Bacardi wasn't the most worrisome competitor. It was an unexpected heavyweight: the U.S.government. In 1934, the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt moved to improve the living conditions in another U.S. territory, the Virgin Islands, which the United States had acquired from Denmark twenty years earlier. President Herbert Hoover visited in 1931 and described it as an “effective poorhouse,” an island devastated by the back-toback economic hurricanes of Prohibition and the Depression. To make the islands self-sufficient, the U.S. government invested a million dollars to set up the Virgin Islands Company, which was chaired by the U.S. interior secretary. The money was used to buy sugarcane lands, sugar factories, and shuttered rum distilleries. The old stills were fired up. The goal of the government—in a striking departure from its recent role as liquor cop—was to produce “as fine a rum as distilling science knows how to produce.” Not all greeted this project with enthusiasm. U.S. distillers didn't relish the idea of competing directly with the U.S. government in home markets. And feral Drys took affront that government was getting into the rum trade. Roosevelt ignored the bawling and put this on his list of pet projects. He suggested that the new rum be called “Colonial” and even sketched out a possible label. In the end, Roosevelt didn't get his way. The rum was sold as “Government House,”and its label featured a palm tree, a haror, and a sailing ship.

The first fifty thousand cases of Government House rum arrived in New York in April 1937. To the relief of other West Indian distillers, it did not cause much of a stir among the new class of rum aficionado. “I have never yet tasted a good Virgin Island rum,” David Embury would later write in his 1948 bible of bartending,

“but Old St. Croix and Cruzan are probably the best I have tried and Government House the worst.”

BACARDI REMAINED THE rum to beat: It was so dominant that drinkers in the United States often used “Bacardi” interchangeably with “rum,” and would often order Bacardi and soda, or Bacardi and tonic. This was good news for a company in a market that increasingly depended on branding. But it was bad news in another way: “Bacardi” threatened to become a generic term—like Kleenex or FedEx— and bartenders increasingly felt free to substitute any rum on hand, even if a customer specifically ordered “Bacardi.”

Things were further muddied by the popularity of a cocktail called, simply, the bacardi—in essence a daiquiri made with a splash of grenadine syrup instead of sugar. American bars sold plenty of bacardi cocktails without a trace of actual Bacardi. This put the Bacardi family in an unpleasant mood. In 1936, Bacardi took the unusual step of suing two transgressors—the Barbizon Plaza Hotel and Wivel's Restaurant, both in New York City—in an effort to get them to stop selling another company's product under their name. The stakes were high, and the company flew in bartenders from around the globe to testify that, yes, any bartender worth knowing would put authentic Bacardi rum in a bacardi cocktail. The appellate division of the New York Supreme Court eventually agreed, ruling that a bacardi cocktail *must* contain Bacardi rum. And so it was. In 1946, the *Stork Club Bar Book*, among others, began specifying “Bacardi rum” in its recipe for the bacardi cocktail. (The company victory didn't come without some backsliding.“Though bearing the proprietary Bacardi name,”reported *Holiday* magazine cheerfully in 1962, “it is not improper, or even adulterous, when made with any of the excellent dry Puerto Rican or Cuban brands.”) Hoping to eliminate the confusion altogether, Bacardi eventually launched a campaign to rename the cocktail the “grenadine daiquiri.” That didn't catch on, but the crisis had passed. The

bacardi cocktail followed the path of so many fine drinks and eventually slipped from favor, to live on mostly in musty bar books.

The daiquiri, happily, stuck around, although often in a form that Constantino and Hemingway would scarcely recognize. Havana's El Floridita bar has changed considerably since Hemingway's day, and customers now enter under a graceful neon sign that declares the bar to be El Cuna Del Daiquiri, or “the cradle of the daiquiri.”Tour buses crammed with Italian and Spanish tourists fresh off cruise ships idle outside the door. Inside, El Floridita has been nicely cleaned up, with bartenders in crimson vests and towering mirrors that give the place a sense of spacious elegance. (In the 1960s, large murals of Fidel and his colleagues in their field uniforms were installed behind the bar; they came out and the mirrors went in when Cuba decided to embrace tourism again after the Soviet Union collapsed.)

El Floridita has long capitalized on its connection with its most famous habitué. A bust of Hemingway was commissioned and installed above the bar while the great man still came in to order daiquiris. Giddy tourists often insisted he sit beneath the statue so they might take his picture. Hemingway, not surprisingly, found this odious. “How can you look at a bust of yourself in a bar?” he groused in 1957.

A long, graceful bar curves around the wall, ending in the cul-desac where Hemingway was said to perch. His bar stool was chained off and “reserved” for him for years after his death; in 2003, the bar replaced the bust of Hemingway and his stool with a life-sized bronze statue of the author leaning against the bar. A memorial daiquiri usually sits in front of him, along with a bronze book with a pair of bronze reading glasses. Photos cover the wall, most notably a shot of Hemingway sharing a light moment with a wispily bearded Castro. A steady stream of tourists line up to have their photos taken with Hemingway's simulacrum.

At today's El Floridita, Hemingway's beloved daiquiris are served frozen and dispensed from a blender. The drinks are served in a gracefully tapered cocktail glass and cost $6—or twice as much as

daiquiris in bars in the surrounding neighborhood. Blender daiquiris are no doubt the only way to accommodate the crowds that come and go by the busload; the old-style shaken daiquiri required an undeniable amount of labor. There was the squeezing of the fresh lime, the measuring of the sugar, and the shaking of the drink. (Cocktail authority David Embury even insisted on moistening the rim with lime and dipping it into powdered sugar.) Shortcuts naturally appeared to accommodate bartenders pressed for time and talent. In 1937, the Seven-Eleven mix was created—a first step toward the mass-marketing of the bartending craft. Bartenders, like workers everywhere, had become assembly workers rather than individual artisans.

The same year that Seven-Eleven mix was introduced, the Waring Blender, named after and promoted by a popular big-band leader (Fred Waring of Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians), premiered at the National Restaurant Show in Chicago. It proved wildly popular as a time-saver. But it also led to the misguided belief that a proper daiquiri should have the consistency of a sherbet, something to be eaten with a spoon. Daiquiris were "improved." Some New York bartenders not only whipped their daiquiris into a fine slurry with their mechanical aids, they also added egg whites such that "these frosted Daiquiris could stand up in an ice cream cone to the last nub," wrote Hugh Foster in 1962. Foster noted the chief defect of the sherbet daiquiri was that the extreme cold "anesthetizes the whole apparatus of taste, and markedly that of smell." This effectively removes the alcohol taste from an alcoholic drink, and leads drinkers down an old and familiar path to intemperance.

Busy bars now feature apparatuses the size of small washing machines that dispense frozen daiquiris at the tug of a lever. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans Original Daiquiri chain had forty-one company-owned bars plus twelve franchises in and around Louisiana (twenty-seven alone in the city of New Orleans). Most had reopened by the end of 2005. The chain also sells trademarked Blend-A-Paks packs to other restaurants. "Each pak makes one

blender of frozen drinks," says the advertising, "so you get three times the fun."

Or not. Those who succumb to the easy, slushy charms of the premixed, frozen daiquiri miss out on the subtle, complex quality of a gently made original, shaken briefly but vigorously with crushed ice— just enough to chill it thoroughly and dilute it slightly. Small, sharp crystals of ice persist for those first two or three sips. The daiquiri should always be served in a stemmed cocktail glass, like a martini, so that the heat of one's fingertips doesn't warm the drink. A well-made daiquiri does not produce an ice-cream headache.

If one needs an example of how to drink a proper daiquiri, one need only go back to the 1960s. On the night he was elected president in 1960, John F. Kennedy sat sipping daiquiris in the dining room of his house in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts. When dinner was over, Kennedy rose and walked to a nearby room to watch a small television with bad reception. Here, he checked in on the election returns, and here—infused with the glow of a daiquiri—he learned he would be the next inhabitant of the White House.

This, to my mind, was the perfect daiquiri moment: a blend of power and understatement, edged with upper-crustiness like sugar on a rim. From these heights, rum had only one direction to go.

Rum and Coca-Cola would escort it into the netherworld.

[RUM AND COKE]

Place *one-and-a-half ounces* RUM into tall glass with ice cubes. *Fill* with COCA-COLA. *Garnish* with slice of LIME. Repeat until well intoxicated.

chapter 8

[Rum and Coca-Cola]

> *Our American public has an eccentric habit of jumping from one extreme to another. One year the whole population goes daft over the teasing perplexities of midget golf and becomes wildly excited while trying to wham the ball through hollow logs and gas-pipes and around sharp curves and over all kinds of misplaced bumps. Next year the Tom Thumb pleasure grounds are as dead as night clubs.*
>
> —George Ade, *THE OLD TIME SALOON: THE NOT WET–NOT DRY JUST HISTORY* (1931)

WAR IS HELL on liquor. Just when the citizenry finds itself in need of a stiff drink, drink becomes scarce. On November 1, 1942—less than a year after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor—the U.S. government banned domestic production of gin and whiskey at the nation's 128 distilleries. (The domestic production of brandy and rum, both inconsequential, was permitted to continue.) Distilleries were ordered to produce high-grade, 190 proof industrial alcohol, a vital ingredient in producing butadiene, used to manufacture aviation fuel essential to the war effort.

The government sought to assure Americans that diverting distillery production to the war effort would not unduly inconvenience them. Domestically, 500 million gallons of whiskey remained at bonded warehouses as a sort of strategic whiskey reserve. At the prewar rates of consumption, the government said, whiskey reserves were expected to last for four years, by which time the war would be concluded. Imported Scotch was also available

from time to time, although it was becoming more rare and expensive. Scotch was shipped only when chance permitted from Great Britain, in the holds of otherwise empty homebound Liberty ships that had ferried wartime supplies to England. Prowling German submarines in North Atlantic shipping lanes made the export of Scotch unpredictable at best, and it fell from 7 percent of the American market prior to the war to about 5 percent during the war.

With imports down and domestic production sharply curbed, liquor soon found itself subject to rationing, like nylons and rubber tires. The seventeen states with state-regulated liquor sales all rationed sales—in Washington State, customers were entitled to just one pint of liquor per week; in Iowa, topers were allowed a quart. In noncontrol states, prices rose as supplies shrank, and shortages made it hard for liquor vendors to survive. About a thousand package stores, taverns, and bars closed in Ohio alone; an equal number were shuttered in San Francisco.

Faced with the shortfalls of bourbon and Scotch, American tastes proved fungible. Whiskey bottlers stretched out their inventory of aged liquor by ramping up production of blended whiskeys, using imported neutral spirits distilled from molasses and potatoes. This was not without problems. Alcohol hastily distilled from molasses sometimes retained the heavy aroma of rum, prompting consumers to grouse about the off-smell. Seagram—the big Canadian distiller—sensed an opportunity, their ads bellowing about “ersatz” whiskeys flooding the market while boasting that their own blends were made of pure grain spirits. Prior to 1941, blended whiskey accounted for less than 40 percent of the U.S. whiskey market; in 1946, the peak year for blends, they accounted for 87 percent.

United States consumers faced with declining stocks and a diminished quality of whiskey retooled their palates. Retailers reintroduced their customers to a spirit from Mexico that had been smuggled in during Prohibition, made from fermented agave cactus. Tequila made a reasonable replacement for now-scarce gin but was generally regarded as a nasty bit of business, something to be

consumed only in grave emergencies. ("In general," wrote David Embury in 1948, "the only liquor I have ever tasted that I regard worse than tequila is slivovitz.") Tequila had a rank, rotten-egg odor, displacing old-time rum as the most evil-smelling of liquors. According to Embury, the overpowering tequila aroma could be partially offset by first downing a dilute acid, which helped to counteract its foul taste and smell. Such an acid could be concocted simply by mixing salt and the juice from a citrus fruit. A routine called the "Mexican Itch"arose, which involved first licking salt from the back of one's hand, then sucking on a lemon before downing the tequila, usually with one's face twisted into a look of extreme distress. Tequila has improved immeasurably, yet the routine persists in college bars and elsewhere. Why the routine has shifted to the present order of salt, tequila, *then* lemon or lime is unknown.

THE WEST INDIAN rum industry worked overtime to fill empty U.S. liquor cabinets. Distilleries produced more rum and neutral spirits for blending, and Cuba even started distilling gin—although Cuban gin was regarded as generally unpotable.

The renewed demand for West Indian alcohol came at a welcome time for the islands, as the war had proved devastating to distillers. Barbados had seen its exports to Europe and Great Britain plummet, and Jamaica, which had found a niche supplying Germany with heavy rum to be blended with alcohol from sugar beet, watched helplessly as this profitable market imploded.

The thirsty United States made up for the evaporation of the German market and then some. Rum came flooding north in quantities unimagined prior to the war. The production of beverage alcohol increased fivefold in Puerto Rico, Barbados, and Trinidad. In 1944, Puerto Rico exported 3 million cases of rum to the United States. Cuba sent 5 million. And even the struggling Virgin Islands accounted for 1 million cases. (The U.S. War Production Board had mandated that distilleries in the U.S. territories, like those on the

mainland, produce only industrial alcohol during the war. But the outcry from Puerto Rico—which stood to lose $12 million in taxes alone—forced the feds to relax the decree, so that distillers were permitted to produce 90 percent of their previous year's rum output.)

The war aided rum distillers in other unexpected ways. The London blitz sent more than a quarter million gallons of rum up in flames at the Deptford storage yards, and the Admiralty scrambled to contract for emergency supplies from Cuba and Martinique—which scrambled to meet the demand.

Smaller rum companies, which had closed their doors as the larger companies dominated in the post-Prohibition years, swept out the cobwebs and resumed production. Puerto Rico alone saw seventeen distillers in operation during the war. The newly invigorated rum economy was hampered only by the lack of a merchant fleet to freight the spirit north, since cargo ships had been dragooned into supplying Europe. So the buyers and sellers of West Indian liquor scratched together an improvised fleet, sending retired schooners and fishing vessels of questionable seaworthiness to haul rum from the islands. *Business Week* reported in 1943 that the rum shipping fleet serving Cuba "made rum-running look like a House of Morgan transaction."

Alas, the wartime rum trade bore another similarity to the rumrunning era: Much of the product was strikingly bad—unaged and produced hurriedly by out-of-practice distillers. Few drank this rum by choice, so distributors forced wholesalers to buy three cases of it for every one of hard-to-find whiskey. (The practice was both illegal and impossible to stop.) Liquor store owners, who bought from wholesalers, were also required to stock more rum if they wanted whiskey for their shelves. They would sell for $2 rum that cost them $4, but they made up the loss on Scotch or Canadian whiskey, which could bring a profit of $6 or $7 per bottle. Buying cheap, unpalatable rum was simply the cost of doing business. As a result, rum was again dragged into the gutter, consumed by those who couldn't afford better. John Adams would have recognized it.

Consumers who bought the wartime rum struggled to mask the taste. Fortunately, a popular and inexpensive soft drink with elements both bitter and sweet was widely available and eager to rise to the occasion.

THE ANGOSTURA BITTERS plant is in Laventille, Trinidad, on the southwest side of a low ridge that separates it from the sprawling city of Port of Spain. Laventille is an industrial suburb of snarled traffic, dun-colored warehouses, bland factories of concrete block, and hardscrabble hillside homes with galvanized steel roofing. The Angostura compound is large and modern and consists of a great many low buildings; the company's 250 employees attend to inscrutable industrial activities, much of which involves tankers of molasses. Stainless steel columns soar skyward under corrugated tin roofs, and the din of steam being vented is constant. The factory would not be out of place within sight of the New Jersey Turnpike.

This is both unsurprising, because Trinidad is one of the more industrial of the West Indian islands, and surprising, since the flagship product, virtually unchanged for nearly two centuries, is sold mostly in four-ounce bottles and only rarely served more than three drops at a time. It is hard to imagine a business built on a less substantial foundation.

Bitters are made by infusing sharp-tasting herbs, seeds, bark, fruit peels, or roots—like orange peel, hops, calumba, or cascarilla—in alcohol and extracting their essence. Like many ingredients of recreational drinking, bitters were first produced as an elixir and only later embraced for their flavor. The Swiss have been among the most passionate consumers of bitters. Absinthe Suisse, a cordial made with an infusion of wormwood, enjoyed a mania in the late nineteenth century and then was banned for such inconvenient (and largely fictional) side effects as hallucinations, convulsions, tremors, and paralysis.

Angostura bitters are brewed in a room not much bigger than a suburban shoe store. This is the second ring of the bitters inner

sanctum, filled with stainless steel tanks and gauges and a tangle of shiny pipes. In the corner is a chute that leads from a room upstairs—the first ring of the inner sanctum,“the Sanctuary.”Only five company directors are authorized to enter the Sanctuary, as this is where the secret ingredients of Angostura bitters are actually mixed.

The company orders as many as twenty herbs, roots, seeds, and whatever else from around the world, although how many of these are actually employed is a mystery. Maybe only a half dozen. Maybe more. “Who needs to know?” asked Everard “Chippy” Roberts, fixing me with a long, neutral stare.

Once the directors mix the herbs according to a proprietary formula, the potpourri is sent down the chute, then infused—or “shampooed,” in company parlance—in vats of alcohol. Following this, it is filtered, bottled, and exported worldwide, with markets in more than a hundred countries. Every drop sold globally is produced in this one room.

I sniffed the air in the shampooing room. I detected mace, perhaps, and maybe nutmeg or dried orange peel. I asked Roberts about gentian root, and he shrugged, admitting to nothing. I pointed out to him that this is the one and only ingredient listed on the label. Roberts looked at me as if I had greatly underestimated him. He shrugged again.

Whatever it is, the formula has evidently been unchanged since 1824. It was the handiwork of a German named Dr. Johann Gottlieb Benjamin Siegert, an adventurer who became the surgeon general of Simón Bolívar's rebel army at Bolívar's base of operations, a town called Angostura up the Orinoco River in what's now Venezuela. (The town is now Ciudad Bolívar.)

Siegert was directed to produce salves and potions to treat the troops, especially for various tropical ailments that proved more fatal to the rebel army than wounds suffered in combat. Siegert concocted remedies and tisanes by gathering herbs, bark, and roots. (Exactly which? Who needs to know?) He infused these in bottles of rum. He spent much of his time tinkering and perfecting one of his

infusions, which he called *amargo aromatico*, or aromatic bitters. When the fight for independence concluded, Siegert remained in Angostura, and seamen who arrived at the river port started seeking him out and asking for his bitters, which not only relieved gastric discomfort but made most drinks taste better.

Today, the four-ounce dark brown bottle of Angostura bitters has an oddly oversized paper label that extends up to where the bottle's side curves into the bottle's neck. The label has been aptly described as having the appearance of a child unhappily wearing his big brother's jacket. The company ascribes this packaging quirk to miscommunication between the printer and the bottler, but the issue went unresolved long enough for the ill-fitting label to become integral to the product's identity. In 1995, the British Advertising Council voted Angostura bitters as the “world's worst displayed product.” In the same announcement, the council urged Angostura never to change it.

ANGOSTURA'S WEREN'T the first or even best known bitters of the nineteenth century. During the Haitian revolution of the 1790s, when slaves overthrew their French masters and established the first black republic in history, the family of a French Haitian named Antoine Peychaud fled the island for New Orleans. In his new home, he became a pharmacist and produced bitters concocted of various Caribbean spices, thought to be the first commercially sold in North America. Most of his customers presumably bought bitters as a tonic to relieve a queasy stomach, but Peychaud had the imagination to add several drops as a flavoring to a cognac, which he served to customers in an eggcup. The French called the cup a *coquetier*, but it was mangled by English speakers and became “cocktail.”

Et voilà: the first cocktail. At least that's one theory behind the name—etymologists only agree only that any reliable documentation about the name's origin is lost. Other explanations include the odd notion that a strong drink was said to “cock your tail,” which was a way of telling a show dog to keep its tail up. Some suggested that the remains of various kegs—supposedly called cock-tailings—were mixed together and sold in early taverns. Other

accounts include roosters in various forms—that the first mixed drink was stirred with a rooster feather, and that topers once toasted the winner of cockfights. These explanations strain credulity; only the *coquetier* one passes the straight-face test. Unfortunately, recent research by Phillip Greene, one of Peychaud's descendents, found that Peychaud actually left Haiti in 1803, when he was less than a year old. The first known appearance in print of the word *cocktail* referring to an alcoholic drink dates to May 1806, when it appeared in a Hudson, New York, newspaper. "He must have been a precocious little pharmacist at the age of three," Greene notes drily. So the debate over the name's origin goes on.

Cocktail is today a generic term, but in the late nineteenth century it meant just one of many types of intoxicating drinks, among them fizzes, rickeys, slings, juleps, and cobblers. A cocktail *always* included bitters. In its earliest documented use in 1806, a cocktail was defined as "a stimulating liquor, composed of spirits of any kind, sugar, water and bitters." Even as late as the 1880s, more than half the recipes for cocktails in one guide called for bitters.

Bitters were far more common and esteemed then, and discerning drinkers were more sophisticated when it came to using them. Medicinal bitters were particularly popular in nineteenth-century America, especially where local option laws banned liquor sales. Hotstetter's Stomach Bitters contained 44 percent alcohol and was advertised as "harmless as water from a mountain spring."Others included Luther's Temperance Bitters, Drake's Plantation Bitters, Flint's Quaker Bitters, and Faith Whitcom's Nerve Bitters, all of which had an alcohol content somewhere between wine and 90 proof liquor, and none of which probably tasted much worse than bootlegged liquor then available. *Cooling Cups and Dainty Drinks*, published in 1869, provides recipes for the home mixologist to make seven types of bitters. Even in 1939, six years after Prohibition ended, a popular bar guide detailed the "eight main bitters" used in drink preparations. In 1944, when Ernest Hemingway departed Cuba to report on the war in Europe, his luggage consisted of a toothbrush, a comb, and "innumerable two-ounce bottles of

Angostura bitters," according to one of his friends, because the novelist had been informed that bitters were in desperately short supply owing to the depredations of German submarines.

Today, one can turn up Peychaud's Bitters (still made by a New Orleans company) in specialty gourmet and liquor shops. It has a bitingly sharp and medicinal orangish-cherry flavor. Regan's Orange Bitters No. 6 began production in 2004, a faithful re-creation of a once-popular style of bitters. But the wide selection of bitters once available to drinkers is much diminished. Today, "bitters" almost always refers to Angostura's.

The nineteenth-century appetite for bitters grew as the twentieth century neared, and exotic flavorings eventually came to be mixed increasingly with sugar and water and consumed without alcohol as a refreshment. Bitters and today's soft drinks are two branches of the same family tree, although bitters ceased to evolve some time ago and have an archaic appearance, like Ovaltine or Marmite, when spotted on modern, fluorescent-lit supermarket shelves. Early soft drinks were sugary syrups made of infused fruits, nuts, and roots, then diluted with water containing what was then called "fixed air," later "charged water," and today carbonated or soda water. Impressively elaborate soda fountains with marble counters and carved back bars cropped up in big cities to serve beguiling new products to an eager public in the 1870s and 1880s, a process as filled with ritual as the opium dens of the Orient.

An 1876 temperance article about an excursion to a saloon noted, "The only unalcoholic drink found in the shop is that known as soda water or sometimes sold in bottles as mineral water, which owes its slightly exhilarating effects to the carbonic acid gas compressed into the liquid and which throws the water into effervescence when the pressure is removed. The pleasant taste is due to the sirups used, and the gentile excitement to the impression of the carbonic acid on the stomach. This is a wholesome and unalcoholic drink."

The more complex and exotic the ingredients in soda syrups, the more firmly they seized the public's imagination. In 1876, a

Philadelphia Quaker named Charles Hires trademarked his now-famous root beer, which he boasted was made from no fewer than sixteen wild roots and berries. In 1885, Dr. Augustin Thompson of Lowell, Massachusetts, introduced the world to Moxie Nerve Food, a fizzy drink with an acrid medicinal taste that was curiously soil-like. Thompson sold oceans of it thanks to a story so wildly implausible that people thought it must have been true. He claimed that an adventurous associate named Lieutenant Moxie had in his jungle wanderings stumbled upon an elusive South American tribe that gained superhuman strength by brewing a beverage from a mysterious root. While coyly insisting that his nerve food was not a medicine, Thompson suggested that four glasses daily would have proven highly beneficial; it would relieve brain and nervous exhaustion, “loss of manhood,” paralysis, and mental imbecility, among other afflictions. Like Angostura bitters, Moxie is flavored in part with gentian root; it's still produced today and remains popular in certain precincts of New England. A glass of iced Moxie, it should be noted, mixes splendidly with a jigger of Jamaican or Demerara rum.

Moxie was the nation's top-selling beverage until the 1920s, when it was overtaken by a soft drink of even more exotic ingredients. Its inventor was a pharmaceutical chemist from Atlanta named John Pemberton. He concocted it with infusions of the coca plant from the Peruvian Andes and the high-caffeine kola nut from Africa, then tempered it with seven secret flavoring agents. Pemberton named the drink after its principal ingredients: Coca-Cola.

Coca-Cola's taste was distinctive, at once bitter and sweet, and it quickly moved ahead of the mob of nerve tonics and soda fountain drinks. The fledgling company distributed thousands of coupons redeemable for free samples and later established a far-flung network of franchisees that bottled and sold its product. But what brought Cocacola to the fore and kept it there was its legendary flair in trademarking and marketing. Early on, the company directors understood the power of a memorable brand, a remarkable achievement when many consumer staples were still purchased as

bulk goods. The graceful script logo and the slogan “Delicious and Refreshing” were established by 1887, and by 1913 the company started splashing its distinctive script on the sides of buildings. The same year, the company distributed 100 million items, ranging from matchbooks to baseball cards to metal and cardboard signs, emblazoned with the soon-to-be inescapable Coca-Cola script logo. In 1916, the company started selling its product in a sensuous pale green bottle that was as memorable to the touch as the flavor was to the taste.

From its base in Atlanta, Coca-Cola first captured southern markets, then deployed its troops to conquer a nation. Coca-Cola moved from the corner fountain to the bottling plant in 1894, first in Mississippi, and then nationwide in 1899 after setting up a licensing agreement with a pair of Nashville entrepreneurs. About the same time, Coca-Cola also took its first tentative steps abroad. Canada and Germany were among the earliest global markets for the company, as was one other country that had recently gained its independence: Cuba. And when Coca-Cola crossed the Straits of Florida, a dalliance with the local spirit was never in doubt.

“War is probably the single most powerful instrument of dietary change in human experience,” writes historian Sidney Mintz. Shortages force folks on the home front to change their expectations of what's for dinner. Expeditionary forces in distant lands not only sample new and exotic foods, but also contaminate local fare with ingredients they've brought along.

The same may be said for habits of drink. Soldiers abroad find new and appealing means of intoxication and seek to re-create them when they return; at home, consumers adapt to shortages of old favorites by developing a preference for something more widely available. Such a shift might start begrudgingly and evolve into genuine enthusiasm. The English war against Holland introduced gin to the British Isles in the sixteenth century and launched a lethal mania that took two centuries to quell. The American Revolution

disrupted the rum trade and helped usher in whiskey as the American tipple. After massive numbers of American troops left for home from Europe following World War II, they brought with them a new taste for French brandy and wine, along with German schnapps. World War II also introduced a generation of American soldiers to a new kind of rum.

One story suggests that like the daiquiri, rum and Coca-Cola has its roots in the Spanish-American War. In the 1960s, a man named Fausto Rodriguez swore out an affidavit that in 1900, while a messenger with the U.S. Army Signal Corps, he and an officer friend (name redacted in the affidavit) went to a local bar, where the officer ordered a Bacardi and Coca-Cola. American soldiers ordered a round for themselves and, finding it to their liking, toasted the officer as the inventor of a new and delightful drink.

It is rare and exciting for a cocktail historian to find a legal affidavit attesting to the invention of a popular drink, but several details render this one suspect. First, it was published in a full-page ad in 1966 by *Life* magazine—and paid for by Bacardi, which was promoting itself as the source of many famous drinks. More troublingly, Rodriguez was well known in spirits circles as the New York–based director of publicity for Bacardi. As such, the document is only slightly more believable than a man dressed as Santa Claus telling you that he is, in fact, Santa Claus.

A slightly more plausible variation of the creation myth involves similar elements: American soldiers in Cuba, the Spanish-American War, a group of Cubans and Americans in a bar. But this one has the soldiers mixing rum and Coca-Cola and toasting their Cuban comrades in arms by calling out, *"Por Cuba libre!"*—"to a free Cuba!"

Whatever its origin (and it is the lot of the cocktail historian never to be fully satisfied), it's clear that the Cuba libre or rum and Coke crossed the Straits of Florida and headed north. It was initially most popular in the American South, like Coca-Cola itself. During Prohibition, Coca-Cola emerged as a handy mixer to mask the taste of the lower grades of rum and other alcohol; after Repeal, rum and Coke continued to gain adherents north and west. Only the most