

HAPPY DAYS

BY RAYMOND CLAPPER

PROHIBITION gave Washington its first wallop in 1903. The wets who then flourished in Congress dropped their guard one day, and before they had recovered, the ancient bar in the basement of the Capitol had been abolished and the sale of liquor stopped in the House and Senate restaurants.

For some years the white ribbon lobby had been in a great state of horror over this vending of drink in the very halls of Congress. The bar was at one end of the House restaurant, directly below the hall of the House—a long, mahogany bench running the width of the room and set in front of large mirrors against which rested neat stacks of polished glasses, decanters, stock bottles of Overholt, Old Taylor, Johnny Walker in either label, and little basketed flasks of Chianti, which last made very neat gifts for the ladies. Three hard-working bartenders ministered to the congressional trade. Nine-tenths of all Congressmen, in those far-off sinful days, were steady guzzlers. Toward noon they would wander in from their morning committee meetings, so that when the House convened at noon and the chaplain launched into his morning prayer, the quorum was usually assembled downstairs, with its feet on the brass rail.

The Senators, more dignified, did not permit an open bar in their wing of the Capitol. The trade in wines and liquors there was restricted to service with meals. There was, however, no rule against a Senatorial luncheon of one cheese sandwich and five high-balls. To the Senate dining-room the elder statesmen brought their constituents when polite jobs of

oiling were to be done. Liquor was sold with meals in the House restaurant also.

This iniquitous traffic was rooted out quite unexpectedly, and largely because of a fumble by the wets, in the Spring of 1903. A general immigration bill was before the house. A pious Congressman from bleeding Kansas, mainly for the purpose of bringing cheers from home, proposed an amendment to prohibit the sale of intoxicants at all immigration stations. This novel proposal was resented by the chairman in charge of the bill, Shattuc of Ohio. He retaliated with an amendment authorizing the selling of beer. Landis of Indiana, the Upshaw of his day, protested that it was ridiculous and immoral to propose handing a glass of beer to each arriving immigrant.

"Then why don't you distinguish yourself by offering a resolution to stop drinking in this Capitol?" shouted the exasperated Shattuc. Landis snapped up the taunt and offered the amendment.

"If the same members of Congress who seem so eager to close the bar in the basement of the Capitol would abstain from patronizing it," declared the sarcastic Cochran of Missouri, "it would close for want of business."

But this bitter remark had no effect and the Landis amendment was adopted by 108 votes to 19, more than half of the House not voting. The absentees were downstairs in the bar.

The wets on Capitol Hill were chagrined but not alarmed. The powerful Senator Boies Penrose was then chairman of the Senate Immigration Committee, and it was expected that he would kill the amend-

ment when it reached him, for he was the wettest wet ever heard of. But for some occult reason he let it go through. Why, nobody knows to this day. Possibly he was sensitive about the reputation that had fastened itself upon him.

"Look at Knox," he complained one day later on, referring to his fellow Senator from Pennsylvania. "He drinks three times as much as I do and goes into the Senate and never shows it. But if I take one drink my face gets red and everybody says, 'Penrose is drunk again.'"

Or possibly he had just been irritated by some petty incident like the one which occurred when a constituent came to him for a trivial favor. Penrose was unable to locate any Pennsylvania Congressman to do the necessary errand.

"Everybody seems to be off drunk," he explained to his visitor. "But I'm temporarily sober, so I'll do it myself."

Whatever was in his mind, he let the amendment come out of his committee. Other Senators, seeing that the wettest of wets accepted it, were not disposed to object. A few days later the Federal attorney for the District of Columbia served notice that the liquor stocks in the House and Senate must be disposed of by July 1 or a prosecution would follow. Thus perished the House bar.

This primeval Prohibition act was observed just about as its big brother is being observed today—in spots. The old employés on Capitol Hill say that after the bar was closed the members and their friends were served with drinks in teacups. Brock's saloon was on a nearby corner in those days, where the House Office Building now stands. A dry Congressman would send over for a quart and make away with it in the cloakroom.

"It was a lot worse than before," one old House employé told me. "When there was a bar they used to go downstairs and take a couple of drinks and behave themselves. But after the bar was closed they got to bringing liquor into the cloakrooms by the jug, and they wouldn't quit until

they had killed the jug. Congressmen went around like boiled owls."

Today, as everyone knows, Prohibition is in force all over the Republic; nevertheless, it is no secret that liquor is still obtainable in the Capitol. Not long ago a waiter in the Senate restaurant dropped a pint flask on the hard floor in full view and hearing of many eminent diners. It was announced next day that the contraband belonged to him, and every suggestion that it was destined for a Senator was indignantly denied. So the waiter was discharged with loud hosannas—and quietly hired again a few days later.

During the last session of Congress one peevish Senator complained that bootleggers were so numerous, and so persistent in canvassing the Senate Office Building, that they had become a downright nuisance. Policemen on duty at the entrance to the building have been known to fall into the *faux pas* of arresting bootleggers, mistaking them for peddlers, who are not permitted in the place. On one such occasion, the trapped purveyor, eager to protect his distinguished clients, fled into the nearest Representative's office and hid his brief-case before he would submit to arrest.

Congress contains numerous amphibians who have, in the historic words of the Hon. George Brennan, "dry throats and wet bellies." One was exposed not long ago, when it was testified in another member's divorce suit that he had presided over a party of dry Congressmen with a pitcher of liquor. He decided not to run for reelection. But such catastrophes are rare. It is hardly necessary for even the most impassioned dry Congressman to pull down the blinds in Washington when he wants to wet his whistle. The Prohibition agents there all have very poor eyes. And so long as a Congressman votes right, he need have no fear of trouble from the Anti-Saloon League, which takes the high moral position that what a member of Congress does outside of business hours is nobody's—at least not its—business.

Sometimes an eminent souse sails right out into the open bearing a full cargo, as happened one afternoon when a well-known Southern Senator, a faithful supporter of Prohibition ambled into the Senate chamber listing heavily to port, and fell asleep in the over-sized chair of Senator Penrose, who was then still alive, and who seems to turn up in every Washington liquor anecdote. Visitors in the galleries recognize Senators by means of numbered seat charts distributed by the ushers. The devoted public servant from Pennsylvania feared that he might become a victim of mistaken identity, so he announced formally to the Senate that his seat at that moment was being occupied by another Senator.

II

But after the Capitol bar was closed the tendency of Senators and Congressmen was more and more to contain themselves until the end of the day and then go downtown to drink their way along Pennsylvania avenue from the Capitol to the White House, the historic route of inaugural parades. It was an Appian Way of Bacchus, with forty-seven bars to its mile. Probably nowhere in America were there such superb drinking facilities in equally compact form. Nor such distinguished gullets to be quenched. Nowadays a Congressman meeting another in the cloakroom boasts that he played thirty-six holes of golf yesterday; in the old days he boasted of making thirty-six bars on his way up Pennsylvania avenue. To get as far up as Hancock's, at No. 1234, without having to call a hack was equivalent to breaking a hundred at Chevy Chase today.

Hancock's was a place of manifold and incomparable delights. Mint juleps there had thick frost on the outside of the glass—surely something to sit down to in Washington's Summer heat! But the big drink was Hancock's fruit punch—a punch likened at the time to that of John L. Sullivan, for its man always went down

for the count. Any time you went into Hancock's you'd find a couple of Senators with their noses deep in mint at a bare table in the back room. The old place is lost now in a row of second-hand shops, but at night, I suppose, many an illustrious ghost comes back to sniff the musty walls. In the old days the pungent breath of lager mingled with the sweet scent of corn pone and chicken *à la* Maryland frying in the kitchen. Hancock's Old Curiosity Shop got its name from its ancient collection of rusty pistols, faded theatre programmes, helmets of Washington's early volunteer firemen and other such things. There was a piece of blanket said to have wrapped the body of John Wilkes Booth, and beside it was what was said to have been Jeff Davis's toddy glass. The firemen's hats were in great demand on nights when the dry and distinguished boys from Capitol Hill were in a playful mood.

Shoomaker's was another favorite resort of statesmen. Shoo's, as it was usually called, was in the heart of Rum Row, just around the corner from Newspaper Row. Strangers were almost invariably disappointed when they first entered. Shoo's was known among well-informed bibuli the length of the land as Washington's most remarkable saloon, the birthplace of the celebrated concoction dedicated to Col. Joe Rickey, the favorite bar of Cabinet members, Supreme Court Justices, generals, and politicians. But it was nothing to look at. Its appeal grew only with acquaintance. There was no more disreputable looking bar in town. Dilapidated is a better word. Cob-webs hung across the dark corners. Boxes, barrels and packing cases littered the none too spacious drinking room. The place was never dusted. Cats crawled over the rubbish. A stale smell of souring malt greeted customers at the door. The dingy walls were hung with faded cartoons and yellowed newspaper clippings, most of which clung on by one corner and seemed in imminent danger of dropping off.

Shoo's scorned the free lunch that was set up in most other Washington saloons. Every afternoon, just before the four o'clock rush, a small plate of rat-trap cheese and a bowl of crackers and ginger-snaps were put out. You could take it or leave it. Shoo's depended entirely on the quality of its drinks. Its gin rickey was nationally famous, of course. Its barrel liquor supported an excellent bead and was as good as could be bought. The place always had a quiet, dignified air about it; it was more like a decaying club than a dram-shop. The bartenders did not wear the white jackets of their trade. Instead, they worked in well-pressed business suits and carried themselves with dignity. Gloomy Gus Noack, the chief of the staff, was suspected of being a Sunday-school superintendent on Sundays. One of his colleagues, Billy Withers, worked there throughout the sixty years the old joint was open.

Odd characters were more numerous in Shoo's than in any of the other bars of the town. One was an ex-faro dealer, a patriarchal old fellow with a long white beard. He always wore a plug hat and a Prince Albert coat. Another was a faded poet who, given a drink and a patient ear, would argue interminably that he, and not Ella Wheeler Wilcox, wrote "Laugh and the World Laughs with You." There were legends of famous men who in bygone days had enjoyed their daily libations in Shoo's quiet retreat—Grant, Sherman, Little Phil Sheridan (who was fond of brandy smashes) Rosecrans, Custer, Miles and Pope, and Senators and Congressmen without end.

The District of Columbia went dry on October 30, 1917. Shoo's held on as a near-beer stand for a few months. But its customers disappeared, and so, in March 1918, the doors were closed. There was no ceremony. A few eminent clients were allowed to carry away mementoes. The next day carpenters came in and began remodeling the place into a cheap restaurant to feed war-workers.

Pre-Prohibition Washington knew many other noble bars: Sawdust Hall, where Jack Kane kept a set of boxing gloves for customers to use; Count Perreard's, where Bastille Day was celebrated each year with great damage to the premises but none to the generous heart of the kindly little Frenchman; Klotz's behind the State, War and Navy Building, an Army and Navy filling-station where you were greeted by Bartender Harry's growl, "Don't speak to me; I've got everything but a hare-lip"; Made's, with its back-yard pond of live bull-frogs, whose croakings were extremely annoying to Senators in their cups; Gerstenberg's, famous for its beer and sour-kraut; and many that were more noted for their food than for their liquor, such as Losekam's, Bucholtz's, and Harvey's, the home of sea-food.

Across the street from the Treasury, where the National Press Club and Keith's Theatre now stand, was the Riggs House, whose genial bar was a popular first aid station for government clerks. This bar was the home of the Foolish cocktail, a Martini with a floating slice of onion. Miss Frances Willard, founder of the W.C.T.U., often stopped at the Riggs House, but was seldom, if ever, seen in the bar. But Ollie James and Gumshoe Bill Stone were there often. The bar was a fine old black walnut affair, kept cleaner than some of the other troughs of the time, with fresh towels always ready for the more refined boozers.

Then there was the Ebbitt House bar, where the racing crowd and Army and Navy officers congregated before a sumptuous free lunch every afternoon. The hot Virginia ham, served with salads and other delicatessen, often sustained indigent Washington newspaper men until payday. The Raleigh Hotel bar was a highly ethical place, where a bartender almost lost his job when he was discovered filling an Apollinaris bottle with seltzer water. It was scandalized one day when a woman shot a Senator in the adjoining lobby, an episode which the sedate Washington *Star*

heralded with the headline: "At the Raleigh."

One of the favorite saloon-keepers of those glorious and departed days was Dennis Mullany, who was educated for the priesthood but preferred to keep a modest gin-house at the southwest corner of Pennsylvania avenue and Fourteenth street, opposite the New Willard. Mullany's equipment was meager. He drew his beer direct from the keg and had no coils. There was a very plain bar in the front room and a pine table and a few chairs in the back room. Here the Brain Trust of Newspaper Row met every afternoon, to exchange news and gossip. Sam Blythe spent many happy hours there before he took the veil and mounted the water-wagon. Bob Wynne, later Postmaster-General; James Rankin Young, once a Congressman from Pennsylvania; Major Stofer, and other famous correspondents made it their headquarters. Mullany, a well-read man, often neglected his trade to sit, with his chair turned backward, his chin hung over the back of it, arguing the tariff, free silver, or anything, no subject barred. Sunday closing being then in effect, he left his back door open, and his favorite customers enjoyed open house in the back room. Everything was free on the Sabbath.

Free drinks were also frequent at Engel's—that is, during the baseball season. The

old man's son, Joe, now a scout for the Washington baseball club, was a star pitcher in those days. Every time he won a game his father would order drinks on the house. There was always a rush from the scoreboard into Engel's when Washington won. The old man would tuck back his white apron and go around exclaiming proudly, "My poy, Choe!"

III

It all passed into the shadows very quietly. On the fatal day all the serious drinkers of the town, official and private, were lined up at the bars three and four deep. It was a mournful time. Only one saloon reported any disturbance. Arrests for drunkenness were fewer than usual for a Saturday night. The Willard, Raleigh and Shoreham Hotels had closed their bars a few days before. The clubs auctioned off their supplies. When the final hour drew near, all partially empty bottles on the saloon bars were given away. Glasses were distributed to eminent clients as mementoes. The final toasts were drunk quietly.

In a house in Massachusetts avenue a little tight-lipped man sat before his fireplace reading the evening newspaper. He was the Hon. Morris Sheppard, Senator from the State of Texas, author of the fateful act that made Washington dry.

CYPRIAN HYMN

BY JOSEPH WARREN BEACH

SAPE in the courts of Love, we have forgotten—the sunny courts of Love set round with cedars—we have forgotten the pits of shame, the dismal swamps, dead trees with scaling bark and deadly vines, close-clinging, trailing slime. . . . Oh, wonder! Oh, praised be Venus that we should ever have come through, past sights that freeze the blood like fearful dreams, dreams that beset the helpless spirit to sleep abandoned. Praised be Love!

There by his mottled pool Narcissus lies, the prey of obscene birds—Narcissus, who so long time, deaf to the tender invitations of woodland girls, sealed up within the circle of his own passion, beseeching himself for love, for mercy, bloodless, haggard with incessant craving, was made the victim of his own image. His own image, green from the mantled pool, rose like a wraith of mist from the stagnant water, and like a serpent round his throat and loins, strangled Narcissus. . . . How could we ever pass a sight so fearful? Praised be Venus!

How did we escape pollution of harpies, filthy birds with throats insatiable, forever swooping and snatching filth? Or those caged apes that torture one another and mishandle, or crouch alone in the gloom, passive and melancholy on their haunches? How did we escape the trampling of centaurs, herds of centaurs male and female, stampeding, spattering mud from frantic hooves, and straining to sever human

breasts and shoulders from loins of beastly mare and stallion? Praised be Venus!

Here in the courts of Love set round with cedars, poplar and maple spring in mounded spires, and oaks tough-fibred, branches firm-set in trunks millennial, down shameless aisles of woodland cast the shadow of their green fulfillment. Gravelled ways through grassy borders lead down by terraced gardens, by unexhausted fountains tossing rainbowed spray. And marble urns at measured intervals offer to Love oblation of purple flowers and the incense of flowers.

Round about the temple—set on the greenest hill, pillar and pediment of yellow marble veined with purple and rose—the Graces scatter the dew of the lawns with rose-veined feet, and there by light of the rising moon young Hyacinths unharmed play with the nymphs at discus-throwing. Unharmed Actæon gazes on bathing Artemis. Leaving her tunic, and leaving her bow and arrows and her maidens, she runs inviting down the leafiest track. Happy Actæon! No fear of spotted hide and branching horns! You shall come on human feet with a man's hands to scatter incense on the sacred flame!

Oh, praised be Venus, we have come through the place of tombs, the lurid desert without moon, without a star! Our dragging feet we have freed from