

# The LADY, The CAPE and the COCKTAIL

What You May See On a Little Wonder Journey Among the Women of Refinement and Fashion Who Gather in the Afternoon at the City's Gilded Eating Places—Not to Eat But to DRINK



THERE has been a lot of talk lately about the increase of drinking among respectable women. Sermons have been preached on the cafe habit and there is a general outcry on the subject.

There are women of a certain class who always have drunk and probably always will drink. They are not under discussion. It is the home women, the family women, who are being talked about. Do they go about in twos and threes and groups in the afternoon and drink cocktails instead of tea?

I resolved to see for myself, and with that end in view I visited, with a friend, all of the first class cafes and hotels in the downtown section, about half a dozen, where drinks are served to women.

I had been told of one place in particular, in Powell street near Market, one of the most stylish cafes in town, where the women congregate. But we were going to do the thing thoroughly while we were out there, so we started a few blocks further up the same street, where we went in, one at a time, through a whirling door, down the hall and into one of the most beautifully appointed rooms in the country. It was just then very quiet indeed; however, at the far end of the room was an immense open fireplace with a big wood fire blazing and crackling in its depths, so we sauntered over to a window near it, settled ourselves cozily on one of the luxurious high backed couches of blue velvet with which the place is fitted up and touched the bell. Little, low, round tables—they are really so small as hardly to be worthy the name of table—are scattered about at intervals, in proximity to couches and chairs, and on each one of them is a little push bell. By pressing the button you may have drinks served to you on this same little table, and it is much more cozy and confidential than the table of a cafe, especially for tete-a-tete.

When the waiter came we ordered tea. We were politely informed that tea was not served there. To be sure, we were not in the tearoom, but I had thought, of course, if they serve drinks they'll serve tea, too. It seemed not, however, so we ordered Scotch highballs.

The whisky was brought to us in little individual bottles, much like small vinegar cruets, each just big enough to contain one drink. The waiter poured the whisky into a long glass and then added siphon water until the glass was filled.

Presently, as we sat there beside our drinks, two girls came strolling over to the fireplace, sat down in big easy chairs and one of them touched a bell. They were both young, the elder about 22 and the younger not more than 19, I should say. At a glance one could see that they were unusually well bred girls, and the older one was a beauty.

I wondered if they would drink cocktails. It didn't seem possible. "If they had men with them," I thought, "perhaps they would drink, but two girls by themselves? Hardly." But they did.

When the waiter brought their order one was red. It was in a tumbler with a big chunk of ice. The glass was about two-thirds full—a Dubonnet cocktail, I think it is called. The other was golden in color and was in a long stemmed, shallow glass with an olive in the bottom of it—a Martini.

They sat there in front of that fire chatting away as gayly and unconcernedly as though they had been cud-

died up on a divan at home eating chocolates.

Next to arrive was a party of three women. Two were matronly. The third had not come to that period, but she was on the way. They were all beautifully dressed. Two were in tailor gowns and the other was evidently on her way to or from a function of some sort, because she was in dinner clothes. When she opened her evening wrap and threw it back she disclosed a light lace gown beneath. They removed their gloves and I saw that the hands of all three were sparkling with diamonds.

Their order proved to be two Martinis and a gin fizz, the fizz for my lady in the lace gown.

This group seemed thirsty, for they very soon disposed of their drinks and ordered more of the same. After the second "round" they became quite jolly and seemed to be having a good time, almost a convivial time.

No other ladies came in at once, so we didn't stay. It was early, of course, but I was anxious to find the crowd, if there was one, so we drifted on down the street.

The next place we visited was the one I had been told about. It was not so quiet here.

One of the stewards showed us up the main aisle to a table a little past the center of the room and we sat down.

The place is not large, but it is made to seem so by an ingenious arrangement of mirrors extending the full length of the room on each side against the wall. Its interior is particularly attractive to me because of the absence of pillars. I hate pillars. They obstruct the view. And when one goes to a cafe I think one goes to see and be seen.

The architecture of the place is much like a Spanish court or patio, the upper part or mezzanine gallery containing the boxes that look down into the main room. It was pleasant in there, warm and bright and cozy, with a genial glow over everything, after the cold outside.

I noticed as we went down the aisle that the men of the orchestra were in their places and remarked to my friend: "Why, the orchestra must be playing—in the afternoon?"

"Of course," she replied. "That's what brings the women."

The place was about two-thirds full of women. There was, I think, when we first sat down, one man in the room and he was over against the wall, far down toward the door.

The women were nice women, too; not merely because they were well dressed, but in every sense of the word. You could pick out, here and there, one who was a bit loud as to clothes and vivid as to hair; but not more than three did we see in that whole gathering. The majority were quietly dressed, absolutely correct women in every respect. There is an unmistakable something in the look, the manner, the expression of a woman that classifies her to the observer, in spite of herself, and these were of the class that are above reproach.

At the table next to us, down the aisle, sat an old lady with apparently a couple of her daughters. And she was the dearest old lady, with a sweet, kindly face and a little, old fashioned black bonnet on her beautiful gray hair—the kind of a bonnet that your mother and mine used to wear. I never see one of them without wanting to go up and kiss the wearer. And she was having the most beautiful kind of a time, this dear old lady. When the orchestra commenced playing, and that was very soon, her head was nodding in time to the music. The drink on the table in front of her was another of those insidious golden colored things with an olive in it—a Martini.

The daughters were fresh complexioned, good looking women, not very elaborately gotten up. They were just nice, clean, wholesome people and they showed it in every breath they drew.

One of the daughters was drinking a highball, and the other—"What is in that girl's glass?" I inquired of my friend. It had a peculiar, milky look.

"That? Why, that's a souse," said she.

So, it was absinthe! When they got up to go, their glasses were empty, even the olive was gone. Just back of us and across the aisle sat a group of three women in mourning. They were of the same class as the old lady and her daughters, or perhaps a trifle more worldly. All three were fine looking. They were drinking highballs.

I had thought I might, perhaps, get a few interviews in my tour of the cafes, but such a thing was not to be thought of. These were not the kind of women one could approach without an introduction.

On a little table far down the room



toward the door was a steaming chafing dish, and from it a boy in white linen, with a white cocked hat on his head, lifted something upon a large platter. Then he moved all over the room, here, there and everywhere. Whatever he had on that platter was popular; that was evident.

"What is that boy serving to those ladies in black?" I asked of our waiter. "Those are enchiladas," he answered. "They are served free with drinks."

When we first sat down my friend had said: "Let's have tea—let's have tea at tea time, even if we commence drinking cocktails the next minute."

So we were having our tea and some little sandwiches, and I give you my word we were about the only women in that room who were drinking tea.

The women of San Francisco have the courage of their convictions. They do their drinking in the open in plain view of any one who chooses to look. In contradistinction to this I thought of a certain new and elaborately gilded New York hotel, and at the present time the fad of the "490" for afternoon tea and of the things they drink out of those dainty china tea cups instead of tea. It is really the same thing, only they go about it a little differently in the more conventional east.

I had noticed the boy in white going

bonnet things being carried about by the waiters. Of the highballs I think one sees the most of the lighter colored Scotch. I must not forget the gin fizz, for it, too, has its devotees, and they are not few in number.

Just across the aisle from us was an interesting group drinking beer, two women and two beautiful children of about 6 and 8 years.

"What do you think of that?" said my friend, glancing over at them. I looked. The woman facing us was of the vivid type, one of the few I have mentioned. She was very pretty, too. Blond of hair and beautifully gotten up, but seemingly different from the majority of women about us. She was of the class one expects to see in a cafe.

"Do you think either of them belong to her?" said I, referring to the children.

"No," she answered. "Just then the other woman turned partly around so that I could see her face."

"Of course, both belong to that one," said I.

She was different altogether. Quiet looking. Not made up in any way. Curious that she should be with the other one, and have her beautiful little children along, too. Papa had better look out for his little mamma, and the company she keeps, or there'll be trouble in another family.

The orchestra had put their instruments away and taken their departure, and a barytone singer from one of the uptown theaters had taken their place.

Everything was at its brightest, with the place nearly full and the enchilada boy still busy, but there were other places I wanted to visit, so we took ourselves away. I should state that another man had come in. That made two in that whole roomful.

We crossed Powell street and went downstairs into a big place brilliant with white light, quite different from the soft, pink shaded twilight of the room we had just left, and not nearly so seductive. It was full—or seemed so at first glance—of pillars, big pillars. Of course, that is an exaggeration, but there are a great many pillars in the place. At the back of the room was a stage and a regular vaudeville program was in progress.

A woman was singing as we went down the stairs, singing an aria from an old Italian opera, and she was accompanied by one of the best orchestras in town.

There was a good crowd, and they were still coming. We sat down near the entrance, and it was interesting to watch the women as they came down the stairs and were shown seats. A few wore an air of timidity, as though they were adventuring into something unknown and

WHEN THE WAITER BROUGHT THEIR ORDER ONE WAS RED.



forbidden. They, however, were the exception. Mostly they came in with that indifference of manner that is born of custom and habit—I suppose one might say, the cafe habit.

I noticed a slight difference as to class here. They were more mixed, there was a bigger percentage of loud looking women, but, for all that, the great majority were nice, respectable women.

More beer was being drunk here, and not so many cocktails, as across the street.

After the woman had finished singing, four girls in the uniform of soldiers came out and played cornets. A couple of pretty, quiet looking women

girls at an adjoining table were drinking, one a Dubonnet cocktail and the other—wonderful to relate—a seltzer lemonade! And it was the only lemonade I saw during my visit to the cafe.

This was all very interesting, but the afternoon was waning and I had secured no interview.

Suddenly I thought of Jeanette! Ah, there was my opportunity. Jeanette is the colored maid who officiates in the ladies' parlor of a very well known and popular cafe in Market street. She used to work for my friend in the long ago, before she became, as we tell her, a public character.

"Let's go and see Jeanette a minute," said I, and my friend agreed.

When we arrived we went directly to the ladies' parlor. Jeanette was glad to see us, but she was full to bursting of the New Year's eve celebration. It was not so very recent but poor Jeanette had seen only the unpleasant side of it and she remembered.

I tried to get her views on the afternoon cocktail crowd, but about all she said was, "It isn't what it used to be here. The crowd has shifted."

"What to, Jeanette?" inquired my friend.

She named the places we had just left.

"Of course, if the management won't furnish music and entertainers they can't expect to keep the crowd. I've told them, but they won't see it."

And then she drifted back to the New Year's celebration.

"I had one drunk at 6 o'clock," she said.

"Wasn't that pretty early?" asked my friend.

"Yes, for New Year's eve," answered Jeanette.

"Why, you don't mean to say the women get tipsy in the afternoon, do you, Jeanette?" I was aghast.

"Why not?" she returned. "They get tipsy whenever they feel like it."

And she proceeded to tell us, with much rolling of her eyes and raising of her hands, of a party that came from one of the nearby towns across the bay and got regularly "loaded" as she put it. Jeanette is nothing if not sophisticated.

"But about your 6 o'clock case on New Year's eve?" said I. "Tell us about that."

"Oh, that poor little girl!" said Jeanette. "She wasn't more than 19 or 20—such a pretty girl, too. I saw her coming and got her in here, on that couch. She couldn't raise her head," continued Jeanette. "All she could do was to say, 'Oh, Jeanette, I'm so sick!' You don't need to tell me that, child; I see. I can see it."

"How did it happen so early?" I inquired.

"Tom and Jerry's on an empty stomach," answered Jeanette.

Is it any wonder the poor girl was ill?

"And her young man just begged me to let her stay here until she was better," went on Jeanette. "Why, I've a machine ordered and a table reserved and everything," he says.

"I can't help what you've got ordered. The only place for this girl is home," I told him.

"Can't she stay here for a little while until she's better?" he pleaded.

"Any other night in the year she could stay until the place closed and welcome, but not tonight. By 9 o'clock this room will be heaped up with wraps and coats. It's the only place I have for them. And every once in a while that poor child would say, 'Oh, Jeanette, I'm so sick!'"

"Why, she's down and out!" I sez. "Can't you see for yourself that the only place for this girl is home and bed?"

"We had a terrible time to get anything to take her home in," went on Jeanette. "Every machine in town was engaged. I telephoned all over and finally got them a carriage and we managed to get her into it, and believe me, I was relieved to see the poor girl go. Why, I had this place stocked up with sealinks and things by 9 o'clock, and by 11 things began to be lively." Jeanette's hands went up and her eyes rolled. "After that I was some busy."

And from her account of what her arrangements for the night had been that ladies' parlor must have resembled an emergency hospital. Wise forethought had provided couches and easy chairs in plenty, and also the little accessories that one finds in one's stateroom aboard ship when one embarks on an ocean voyage.

"They fairly fell over one another in their hurry to get here," said Jeanette, and she covered her mouth with the palm of her hand. The gesture was more eloquent than words would