

## Prohibition and Progress

[By William Jennings Bryan, in New York Independent.]

Prohibition has made more than a Sabbath's day's journey since the November election. The adoption of a constitutional amendment in Michigan, Nebraska, South Dakota and Montana, together with the advance recorded in several other states where the liquor laws were made more stringent—these all combine to give to the movement a decided impetus. Among the causes responsible for the growth of the temperance sentiment, three stand out as of special importance.

First, the decision of the supreme court sustaining the Webb-Kenyon law vindicated the contention of those who supported it and completely overthrew the arguments relied upon by the opposition. It will be remembered that the leading opponents of the law relied upon its unconstitutionality, the dignified and respectable argument usually resorted to when a legislator is ashamed to give the real reason for his opposition. Nearly all the senators and members who spoke against the bill when it was up for passage thundered their protest against the passage of an "unconstitutional law." It was vetoed on that ground by one of the most eminent jurists who has ever occupied the White House, and he was supported in his position by the written opinion of a learned attorney general. But when the law came before the nation's highest tribunal, behold! the court by a vote of seven to two sustained the constitutionality of the law and virtually declared that the saloon has no constitutional rights. It was black Monday for the liquor traffic.

The mortification which this decision has brought to the "constitutional lawyers" (who live in wet cities) suggests a rule which it is safe for legislators to follow, namely: NEVER VOTE AGAINST A MEASURE ON THE GROUND THAT IT IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL. The courts, and the courts alone, have authority to decide constitutional questions. If the constitutionality argument is allowed to defeat a pending measure, its validity can never be definitely determined because it can never reach the only forum in which its constitutionality can be decided. A legislator can not err, therefore, in voting for an unconstitutional measure, because the court will prevent its going into force. A legislator can, however, not only err, but bring humiliation upon himself by voting against a constitutional measure.

Encouraged by the sustaining of the Webb-Kenyon law, a number of states have passed what is known as the "bone-dry" law, entirely excluding the importation of liquor from without the state. These laws are unmistakable evidence that the tide against the saloon is still rising, because in most cases they were passed in states that have already closed the saloon.

In this connection reference may properly be made to the amendment, added to the postoffice appropriation bill just before congress adjourned, by which the government co-operates with the states in enforcing prohibition against importation. That amendment denies to interstate commerce the right to carry prohibited liquor into states which have themselves taken such action.

The new statute also comes to the aid of the states which prohibit the advertising of intoxicating liquor, it being made unlawful to use the mails for carrying into a state any advertisement prohibited by the state.

The second cause which has operated in favor of prohibition is to be found in the constitutional amendments which have been submitted during the last three months. Wyoming led in this, although her legislature had not received specific instruction in the subject. In Utah both parties declared in favor of submission, and the legislature not only put the amendment before the public, but closed the saloons by a very drastic statute, following the example of Idaho and Iowa, where statutory prohibition preceded constitutional prohibition. Minnesota has joined the states aspiring to prohibition by submitting a constitutional amendment and is

now considering statutory prohibition. In Ohio the amendment has again been submitted by petition and will be voted on this fall.

The most signal, not to say unexpected, victory has been won in Indiana—one of the states in which the liquor interests had succeeded in temporarily turning back the temperance tide. Some eight years ago Indiana went from county option back to township option, but the seeming retreat on the part of the state only increased the wrath of the citizens. This year the rebound has not only resulted in the calling of a constitutional convention, which is expected to include the prohibition amendment in the constitution, but it has resulted in a very strong prohibition statute and in enfranchising women in so far as it can be done by statute.

In one state only, Texas, have the liquor forces been able to make a successful resistance and there only because it requires two-thirds of both houses to submit a constitutional amendment. The democrats at the state primary declared in favor of submission and a considerable majority in both houses favor prohibition. At this writing it is still hoped that the people may be given an opportunity to pass upon the amendment. The strenuous fight which is being made against submission would seem to indicate that the advocates of the saloon realize the hopelessness of their case if the people once secure an opportunity to vote on the question.

The third cause for encouragement is the passage by congress of the bill making the District of Columbia dry. More than two-thirds of the senate membership went on record as favoring prohibition in the District of Columbia and the vote in the house was almost exactly two to one. It received the President's signature. This is a triumph, a great triumph, the importance of which can hardly be overestimated.

If there is any force in the doctrine that the people shall rule, then it logically follows that the saloon is from now on an outlaw, a fugitive from justice. A majority of the people live in dry territory and the majority of the people's representatives in the senate and house faithfully reflect the views of their constituents in opposing the saloon. The accursed thing exists only because the constitution, by its ultra-conservative provisions, restrains the majority from immediate and decided action.

The progressive sentiment of the country is not only handicapped by having to secure the control of the senate, house and executive before it can carry out its program, but, to secure a change in the constitution, it must control two-thirds of both houses and three-fourths of the states. The advocates of prohibition have at last practically overcome the first obstacle and it is quite certain that a national amendment prohibiting the manufacture and sale of intoxicating beverages will be submitted by the congress elected last fall. As national prohibition is stronger than state prohibition—enforcement being easier in the larger unit—there is great probability that the amendment will be ratified by the necessary three-fourths vote of the states.

All in all, it has been a great year for the workers in behalf of temperance; Bacchus and Barley Corn are on the run, and neither is steady on his legs. Alcohol is still above ground, but it is, so to speak, a disembodied spirit. With the white flag of prohibition waving over the nation's capitol, just below the Stars and Stripes, the new emancipation is at hand.

As further proof that the world does move the legislature of Wisconsin has voted to submit the prohibition question to the voters of the state at the April election in 1918, to go into effect in 1920 if it carries. Milwaukee is given a splendid opportunity to prove herself famous in another and different way.

The city men are merely doing a little more rooting on the side for the farmer than usual. When we see them leaving their jobs and closing their stores to go out and help garner the crops, we will be able to determine whether they mean it or are firm believers in the old theory of letting George do it.

Mr. Bryan says he is for everything the American government is for. That's the way for an American to talk.—Dallas (Tex) News.

## Why United States Entered War

A Washington dispatch, dated May 23, says: No nation that respected itself or the rights of humanity could longer have borne the overwhelming wrongs that Germany inflicted upon the United States, President Wilson declared in a letter re-stating the reasons for the nation's entrance into the war, written to Representative Heflin of Alabama and made public at the White House.

Mr. Heflin had written to the President saying some of the recent utterances of the war had caused confusion over the issue with Germany. In restating his position the President again made it clear that the United States had no quarrel with the German people, but with an autocracy "which acts upon purposes to which the German people have never consented."

The letter follows:

"It is incomprehensible to me how any frank or honest person could doubt or question my position with regard to the war and its objects. I have again and again stated the very serious and long-continued wrongs which the imperial German government has perpetrated against the rights, the commerce and the citizens of the United States. The list is long and overwhelming. No nation that respects itself or the rights of humanity could have borne those wrongs any longer.

"Our objects in going into the war have been stated with equal clearness. The whole of the conception, which I take to be the conception of our fellow countrymen with regard to the outcome of the war and the terms of its settlement, I set forth with the utmost explicitness in an address to the senate of the United States on the 22d day of January last. Again, in my message to congress on the 2d of April last, those objects were stated in unmistakable terms. I can conceive no purpose in seeking to becloud this matter except the purpose of weakening the hands of the government and making the part which the United States is to play in this great struggle for human liberty an inefficient and hesitating part.

"We are in war for our own reasons and with our own objects clearly stated, and shall forget neither the reasons nor the objects.

"There is no hate in our hearts for the German people, but there is a resolve which can not be shaken even by misrepresentation to overcome the pretensions of the autocratic government which acts upon purposes to which the German people have never consented."

### PRESBYTERIANS DECLARE FOR SUFFRAGE

By a large majority the Presbyterian church in the United States of America (North) adopted a resolution declaring for woman's suffrage.

The resolution was introduced by Dr. John B. Rendall of Chester, Pa., president of Lincoln University, and was passed by the general assembly after some debate.

The text of the suffrage resolution is as follows:

"Whereas, In our history the influence of women has been invaluable in all such moral reforms as temperance and honest government; and,

"Whereas, The Presbyterian Church believes in utilizing every force in the new and larger work lying before this country; and,

"Whereas, We recognize that Christian wives and mothers should be given an opportunity to assist in the great work of introducing into civic life more of the true spirit of practical Christianity; therefore be it

"Resolved, That we, the commissioners to the general assembly of the Presbyterian church of the U. S. A., assert our belief in the justice, wisdom and righteousness of the enfranchisement of the women of our country."

Congress having made up its mind that it is evidence of an unpatriotic act to corner the food supply of the nation and run the prices up on consumers and has prescribed heavy penalties for those who thus openly work against the best interests of the country, we now have a more vivid idea of what constitutes real preparation for war.