

July 1, 1919

Uncle Camuel Will Get You If You Don't Watch Out

[Abstract of address of William Jennings Bryan July 1, 1919, at the Methodist Centenary Celebration, Columbus, Ohio.]

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: I appreciate the honor done me by the Centenary committee in inviting me to participate in the exercises of today. Where could the first dry day in this saloonless nation be more fittingly celebrated than in the capital of the largest state that has gone dry by popular vote. And under what auspices could the day be celebrated with greater propriety than under the auspices of this great church, which has taken so conspicuous a part in the overthrow of the saloon?

If I were a minister I would take my text from the Bible—I will do so anyhow. "They are dead that sought the young child's life." These are the words employed when Joseph and Mary were informed that it was safe to return to Palestine. Has not King Alcohol slain more children than King Herod? His reign is over. His shadow will no longer darken the doors of the homes of our land. He will no longer blight the hopes of children and blast the lives of men and women.

And what a complete victory! We have nine states more than we needed and the amendment was ratified in a little more than one-seventh of the time allowed for its ratification. No party can claim entire credit for the victory; the two great parties united in the fight against alcohol and share the glory together. It was a triumph of the nation's conscience.

The revolution will not turn back; the factors that have combined to bring success are growing factors. Each day adds to their strength. Let me mention some of them. First, moral standards have been raised, and they will not be lowered. Second, scientific investigations have shown that even the moderate use of alcohol is injurious and these demonstrations cannot be overthrown. Whether one is fighting as a soldier or is a producer in time of peace, he needs a clear brain and a steady nerve. York, the world's greatest soldier, measured by individual efficiency, was a teetotaler—no rum ration could have qualified him for the unexampled work that he did. Third, business men have helped by giving preference to men who do not drink. Fourth, patriotism carried our cause over the top; the war threw a ghastly light upon the menace of alcohol. Our army, trained under conditions never known before, surprised the world as a fighting machine. The lesson will not be unlearned—it will be taught to other nations.

Enforcement comes next. But it will be easier now. The liquor interests have used wet territory as a basis for their operations against dry territory. There is no longer a wet spot under the flag.

Heretofore we have had to combat great financial organizations; now we deal with individual criminals, and each one of these will be running so fast to get away from an officer of the law that he cannot co-operate with any other boot-legger running in the same direction at the same speed.

In the past the breweries and distilleries have been able to make each day the money they used in fighting prohibition; now the buildings must be put to other uses—one brewery in Michigan has been purchased by a Methodist church and converted into a social settlement plant—the greatest conversion since the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

What a night of sorrow we have passed through, but the morning is here, and joy cometh with it.

John Barleycorn is dead. It looked at times as if the final obsequies might be delayed until January 16th, but the president's recent announcement would seem to put an end to the drink traffic. He says that he has no power to prevent war prohibition from going into effect. As war prohibition continues until demobilization is completed, and as we have yet in the service more than a million emergency soldiers, nearly one-half of them in Europe, the chances are many to one that demobilization will not be completed before constitutional prohibition begins. The longer the nation is dry the greater the grave in which a long suffering, but at last aroused, people have buried man's greatest enemy.

There will, of course, be remonstrance and resistance in some sections. A St. Louis con-

gressman is trying to secure the exemption of beer and wine, but he will fail, and ought to fail. The brewer and the distiller have been partners in crime—co-conspirators against all that is high and holy. Now that they are about to reach the end of their criminal careers, it would be cruel to separate them; they must be allowed to die together and be buried in the same grave.

The last hope of the liquor interests is to entrust the courts to decide how much alcohol is necessary to intoxicate, but this effort also will fail, and ought to fail. The prohibition law to be enacted by congress will fix the alcoholic content. If the people have a right to protect themselves from the saloon, they have a right to define a saloon and to say what it shall be permitted to sell. Congress and not the courts will decide upon the alcoholic content to be permitted.

And what is there yet to be done? The work of education must continue so that each succeeding generation will be more hostile than the one before, to any use of intoxicating beverages.

And then will follow the largest work of all, namely, the carrying to other nations of the dual remedy that we are using here, total abstinence that makes the individual immune to alcoholism, and prohibition that destroys the breeding place of the influences that carry the germ of the disease. We cannot be deaf to the Macedonian calls for help. We are the heirs of the past and have received from every other nation. Having received more than any other nation ever received, we must give and serve as no other nation has.

Our Saviour went about doing good; he healed the sick; he opened the eyes of the blind; he cast out devils. We are commanded to follow in his footsteps and imitate his example. The world is sick—we have found a remedy. The world is blind—we can open their eyes to the evils of alcohol and to the benefits of total abstinence and prohibition. In the spirit of the Master, we can help to cast out the evil spirit that has afflicted man throughout the ages. Having emancipated ourselves we are in position to help redeem the world and we will do so. I did not expect nine years ago that I would

ever live to see the nation dry. But our cause has made such rapid progress and I have such faith in the weight of our nation's example that, though 59, I expect to live to see the day when there will not be an open saloon in any civilized nation on the globe.

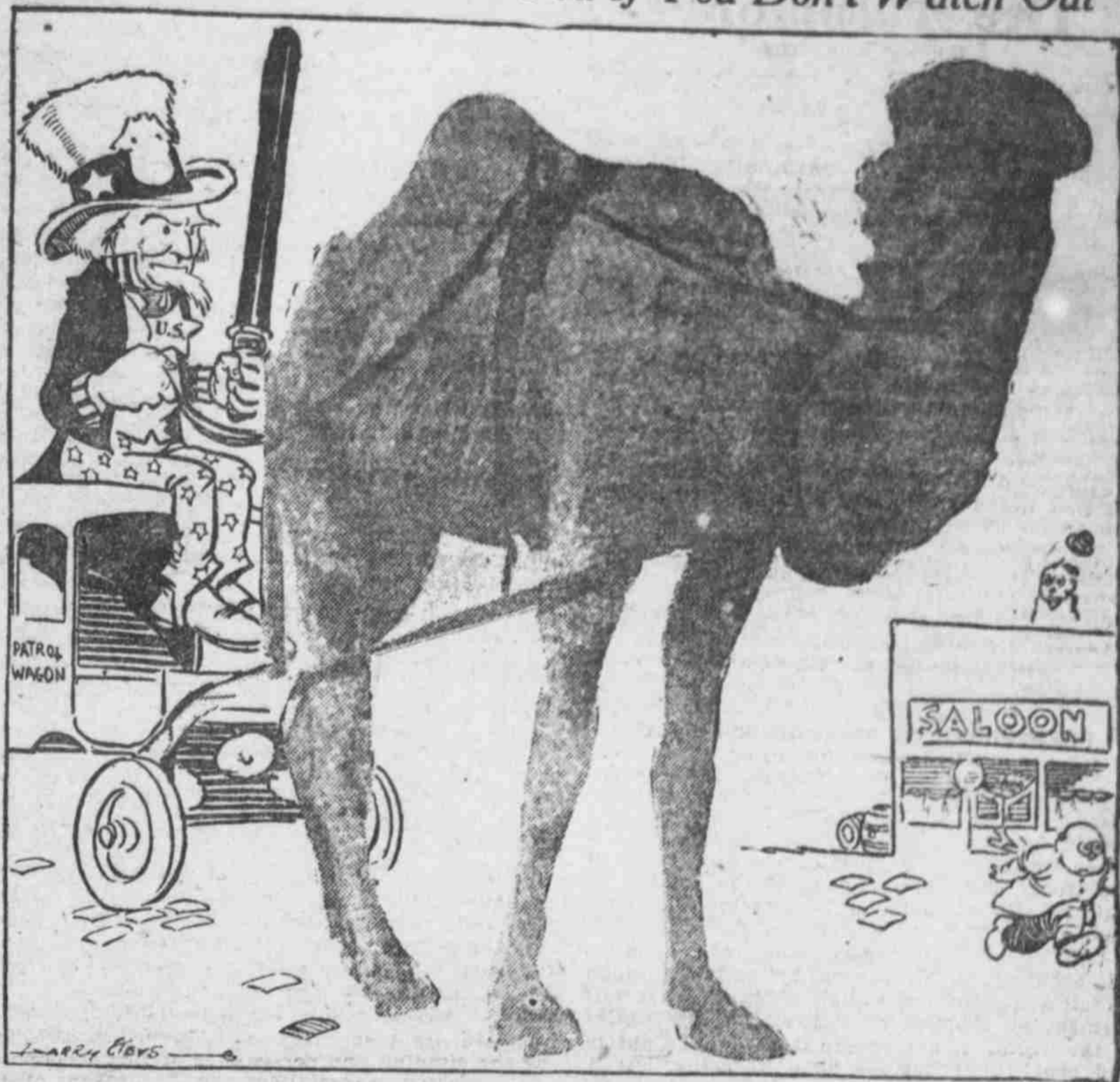
I cannot conclude without adding a word in support of the league of nations, and it is not out of place here, for the league of nations plans to slay another tyrant, the god of war—the only despot that rivals King Alcohol in cruelty. The President does not exaggerate the importance of the treaty when he says it begins a new era. It does even more than that. It is not too much to hope that it may "inaugurate on earth the reign of the prince of peace". The covenant of the League of Nations contains three provisions which, taken together, make war almost impossible. First, all international disputes are to be investigated before war; second, armaments are to be reduced, and third, secret treaties are to be abolished.

The senate is quite sure to ratify the treaty, including the League of Nations; if it does not ratify, a senate will be elected that will ratify. The American people will not turn back to the old ways of blood and slaughter.

And now that peace has been restored the Christian church faces a supreme duty, the duty of healing the wounds of war and uniting all the nations in an universal brotherhood. Permanent peace can rest upon no other foundation. The spirit of Christ at work among men, and that alone, can crown the League of Nations with success and make the war out of which we have just emerged the last war to redden this old earth with blood.

May we not remark that for a lot of chaps who have been firmly convinced for years that prohibition does not prohibit, the brewers and their political satellites exhibit some very unmistakable fears that the end of the world has come for them.

Every housekeeper who has the job of urging a reluctant husband to cut the lawn when it needs it can understand just how Germany feels about carrying out the commands of the peace treaty.



—Columbus, Ohio, Citizen.