

Mr. Bryan's San Francisco Letters

(Following are special reports of the Democratic National convention at San Francisco, which were furnished to newspapers throughout the country by Mr. Bryan).

SENTIMENT DEVELOPING ON LEADING PLATFORM PLANKS

San Francisco, June 26.—The fog has not risen, the delegates are coming in, headquarters are being established and the delegates are exchanging calls.

Enough can be learned to make it quite evident that the wets have been whistling to keep up their courage. The foam on the Edwards boom is gone and the men who were confidently predicting a wet plank are now talking about a compromise which will omit all reference to the subject. They know that they cannot secure anything like a majority of the Committee on Resolutions—it is doubtful if they could secure one-third. They know, too that on roll call they could not secure a third of the convention. The Democrats from the dry states would not dare to go on record in favor of any plank looking to a reopening of the liquor question. And an adverse vote in the convention would be a great burden to carry in congressional districts where they hope to make a fight for a wet congress. Another difficulty that confronts them is that they cannot agree on the alcoholic content. A declaration in favor of light wine and beer without fixing any alcoholic content would, of course, lay them open to the charge of attempting to violate the amendment by statute and the Supreme Court has sufficiently indicated its determination to protect the Eighteenth amendment. If they attempt to fix a per cent they are at once confronted by the different degrees of thirst registered among the wets. Some want a larger percentage of alcohol than others, and they want a higher percentage in the afternoon than in the morning. They talk about wine and beer but what they want is alcohol. You can change everything else in the wine and beer except the alcohol and they will not know the difference, but they kick if you take the kick out.

The dries will offer no compromise. With three-fourths of the Democratic senators and two-thirds of the Democratic members of the House voting for submission and every Democratic state ratifying and with the Supreme Court overthrowing every contention of the wets, why should the Democratic party be afraid to point with pride to the party's part in the adoption of the amendment or hesitate to pledge the party to an enforcement of the Volstead act without any weakening of its provisions?

The situation here compels positive and unequivocal action. We have a group of delegates who are so busy nursing their throats that they can't give the attention that they ought to to the party's welfare. Instead of planning humanitarian work and aiding the party to voice the conscience of the nation on great problems they put the restoration of alcoholic beverages above all other questions. If the wets could win a victory in the convention this year they would defeat the party. Prohibition was won before many women were given the ballot. If anyone thinks that the verdict will be reversed with the women voting he knows very little of woman's attitude on this question.

One of the strange fallacies advanced by the wets is that a wine and beer plank would be popular. The fact is that the efforts to win on a wine and beer platform have been less successful than the fights for the old fashioned saloon. A year ago last April Michigan turned down a wine and beer proposition by over 200,000, while prohibition of all intoxicants had won by only about 65,000. In the recent Alabama primary ex-Governor O'Neill, who ran on a wine and beer platform polled only one-fourth of the vote, and remember that Alabama was the only dry state in the south where the wets had strength enough to make a fight against ratification. They lost their fight but they were not so badly beaten in that fight as Governor O'Neill was. The pocket flask of whisky has had many friends but what tailor ever made a pecket for a beer bottle or a wine bottle?

The advocates of treaty ratification without

the dotting of an i or the crossing of a t, are beginning to realize that the delegates are informed as to public sentiment. The primary vote has not been extensive enough to give any candidate much encouragement, but the small vote polled is not without its warning. The Democratic vote is not coming out this year and its failure to appear at the polls cannot be construed as an endorsement of the League of Nations without reservations. The Republican convention has alienated a large group of voters who vigorously protest against the failure of the Republican party to endorse the vote cast by more than two-thirds of the Republican senators in favor of ratification with reservations. These voters can be drawn to the Democratic party by a platform declaration that will give hope of immediate action, but they will be driven to the support of the Republican position, unsatisfactory as it is, if the Democrats show as much partisanship as the Republican leaders did. Everybody knows that neither party can secure two-thirds of the Senate at this election and the making of the treaty a party issue invites, therefore, a sham battle with no decision possible. A large majority of the American people want peace and world disarmament. The Republican party denies this to them and this denial offers the Democratic party an opportunity seldom presented in politics.

There seems little doubt of the party's disposition to write a labor plank satisfactory to the wage earners and a plank favorable to agriculture. The two questions over which there may be differences of opinion are, first, will the party offer itself as a defender of the home against the saloon? I feel sure it will. Second, will it give expression to the peace sentiment of the country? I hope so.

WET AND DRY ISSUE PARAMOUNT IN DISCUSSION

San Francisco, June 27.—When the convention opens tomorrow it will be confronted by issues which will for a couple of days overshadow booms for candidates. The issue talked about most is the one involving the prohibition amendment and its enforcement by Federal statute. The changes of attitude by the representatives of the Knights of Thirst have been kaleidoscopic in number and variety, if not in speed. At first we had the cocksure opponents of prohibition led by Governor Edwards and heartily seconded by Governor Smith. Governor Edwards wanted to make his home state "wet as the Atlantic Ocean" and when Dame Fortune landed him in the Executive chair he attempted to moisten all adjacent territory. He was so emboldened by his lucky strike that he blossomed out into a candidate for President and the brewers began to beat their tom toms throughout all the swampy sections of the country.

Then Governor Smith of New York in a burst of enthusiasm denounced prohibition as worse than Prussianism and a Democratic state convention held in New York declared unalterable, if not unutterable, opposition to the national amendment and pledged the party to nullify by state statute any Federal law enforcing it during the (as they hoped) short period that might elapse between the date of the convention and the nation's return to the saloons. The men who felt that the right to poison others with alcohol was the only inalienable right guaranteed by the constitution and the right to drink intoxicants the only kind of liberty represented by Columbia, proceeded to tell the Democratic party where to head in on the liquor question. The wet propaganda received copious encouragement from a number of wet organizations in different parts of the country. Even the Supreme Court decision did not discourage them. They descended on the convention like an army with banners, foaming like a glass of beer and raging like strong drink. While there is some rivalry among those who aspire to lead this motley host, the Honorable James Nugent of New Jersey will probably be given the distinction of being flag bearer, his fitness for the place having been attested by his closeness to the New Jersey brewers and by the fact that he was one of the four Democratic members of the Resolutions Committee in the St. Louis convention of 1916 who brought in a minority report against admitting women, the

implacable foes of the dram shop, to full citizenship and suffrage. Two of his three compatriots on that occasion were an Indiana brewer and a governor of Texas who has since been impeached. But the "Lights are out in the Capitol" so to speak; the advocates of wine and beer have come up against a stone wall. They counted noses, regardless of color, and they find that they cannot hope to poll a majority, probably not a third in favor of any wet plank, no matter how ambiguous its terms might be. Nothing having the odor of the vat can hope to receive the approval of this convention.

They are now digging a second line of trenches from which they hope to defend themselves against the attack of the dries who are already crossing "No Man's Land." There are some in the convention—there always are some in a political convention—who dodge whenever any issue arises. They would amend the ten Commandments if by so doing they could suppress a roll call, for be it remembered that it is impossible to bring a thousand men together without including a few who "love darkness rather than light," for the old reason so clearly set forth in Holy Writ. Light is as wholesome in politics as it is sanitary. For this reason all legislative bodies provide for a roll call and no one who has ever been a member of a legislative body needs to be told that the vote on roll call often differs materially from the viva voce vote. I have known a vote to adjourn to be carried overwhelmingly by the voice and defeated overwhelmingly on roll call. The dries rely upon the moral strength of their cause and the spiritual urge of those who sent these delegates to the convention. The country is dry even when the men alone vote. It is parched and brown when women vote and it seems quite certain that about 26,000,000 of women will sit in judgment upon the candidates presented by the various parties this year. As nearly all of these women can read—note the large percentage of girls in high schools—the writing of platforms becomes an important matter. A convention is made up for the most part of people who have political ambition more or less clearly developed and the fear of the voter is the beginning of wisdom in popular government.

It may be stated without fear of successful contradiction that the delegates to this convention will have an opportunity to vote for or against a dry plank. This will give every state a chance to go on record. And, as every delegate has a right to demand a poll of his delegation, there is no reason why any delegate should lack an opportunity to make his vote known to his constituents or allow a colleague to crawl in under the brewery tent without identification. In other words, those who want an open platform openly arrived at will be accommodated and those who want to hide will act with full knowledge that their sin will find them out.

Telegrams are pouring in from temperance organizations and church bodies; these are in sufficient number to offset the influence of those whose business it has been for at least twenty centuries to offer the earth to those who will fall down and worship the evil one. It is, of course, impossible to forecast the exact language of the dry plank as it will emerge from the Committee on Resolutions, but I shall submit to the committee for the consideration of its members the following:

"We heartily congratulate the Democratic party on its splendid leadership in the submission and ratification of the Prohibition amendment to the federal constitution and we pledge the party to the effective enforcement of the Volstead law, honestly and in good faith, without any increase in the alcoholic content of permitted beverages and without any weakening of any other of its provisions."

OUTLINES PLAN TO OBTAIN RATIFICATION AND END WAR

San Francisco, June 28.—The division among the delegates on the treaty plank is not fundamental; it is merely a difference of opinion as to the best means of reaching an end which all desire. No Democrat in the convention would rise in his place and admit opposition to world peace, universal and everlasting. But how can world peace be secured? The President brought back from Paris a League of Nations plan with a covenant that embodied the best that he could secure—and when we consider the newness of the plan, the number of nations agreeing to it and the diversified interests at the conference