

The Fool-Killer

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WE AIN'T A-GOIN' TO HAVE NO WAR.

We're a-goin' ahead, so the papers say,
An' buildin' a boat in the U. S. A.

That never has had its match;
It's a-goin' to be longer than ever before,

An' wider an' deeper an' faster an' more

Exceedingly hard to catch.

It's a-goin' to have bigger an' heavier guns

Than any yet known to the terrible Huns,

With the thunderin' voice of Thor.
It's a-goin' to have armor a foot or two thick,

An' an army of fighters that nothing can lick,

But we ain't a-goin' to have no war.

We're a-goin' to have armies as good as the best,

An' a little bit better, when put to the test,

An' a little bit bigger as well;

We'll resort to conscription or any old plan

When we need a machine in the shape of a man

To be trained in the science of hell

We're a-goin' to make "Freedom" our slogan, an' then

We're a-goin' to make "patriots" of all the young mer;

A "pacifist" is what we abhor;

We're a-goin' to teach fightin' in all of the schools

To the young generation of workin'-class fools,

But we ain't a-goin' to have no war.

We're a-goin' to have laws that will bridle free speech;

We're a-goin' to put liberty plum out of reach

Of the average women an' men;

If anyone opens his mouth to protest,
He'll find himself suddenly under arrest

An' carelessly locked in the pen.

Now of course it's a crime for a feller like me

To question the acts of the powers that be;

But what is my think-tank for?

An' what is the use an' what is the sense

Of war preparations so immense,

If we ain't a-goin' to have no war?

—James Larkin Pearson.

Maybe it was the cigarette smokers who elected Harding. Probably they thought one of their kind in the White House would sorter make the habit respectable.

I am sometimes accused of being a knocker. Well, I admit it. I do knock the things that I think need knocking, and so does the other fellow. The people who knock me for being a knocker are just as much knockers as I am.

UNCLE SAM'S HIRED MEN.

Once upon a time I had an uncie named Sam.

And Uncle Sam needed a hired man to look after his affairs.

There were two men in the neighborhood who made a practice of hiring out for wages. One of these men was named Bill Republican and the other was named Tom Democrat.

Tom Democrat was older than Bill Republican, but they both seemed to be strong, able-bodied men, and it was sometimes a hard matter for Uncle Sam to decide which one he wanted to hire. My recollection is that he hired Tom Democrat first—possibly before he had ever heard of Bill Republican. Tom did very well for a while, but later he got to drinking and staying out at night, and soon began to neglect his duties.

Of course Uncle Sam didn't like for his hired man to do that way, and so when Bill Republican came along Uncle Sam turned Tom off and hired Bill. That made Tom Democrat as mad as a wet hen, and he went off and sulked a while.

Now Bill Republican was a fine looking young feller. He was tall and straight and well built, and could reel off a purty good line of gab when he applied for a job. He made all sorts of fair promises, and he lived up to them very well for the first year or two, and then he began to go just like Tom Democrat had gone. He got so he couldn't be depended on to do anything right. It was a common thing for my uncie to go out in the field and find Bill asleep in the fence corner, and maybe half-a-dozen cows in the corn. At feeding time he was always careful to feed the big fat hogs, but the weak little ones and poor ones never got anything. Bill said the little old runts ought not starve, anyhow, and get out of the way of the big hogs.

Well, Uncle Sam got purty tired of Bill before his time was out, and by that time Tom Democrat had got over his pouting spell and come back to see if he could get the job again. Tom was all dressed up in a new suit of clothes and looked fairly respectable. He told my uncie that he had reformed and was living a different life now. He said he wouldn't get drunk any more, and he would give special attention to feeding the little runty pigs so as to give them a fair chance with the big hogs, and he wouldn't leave the doors unlocked at night as he used to do. Then he went on and told a whole mess of bad tales on Bill Republican. He had been hiding in a brush-pile and watching Bill, and it was just awful how bad Bill

was doing. Honest to goodness, Bill was getting so low down that he wasn't fit to sleep in a white man's barn any more. Now Bill really was doing mighty bad, and Uncle Sam believed every word Tom said about it.

So when Bill came in from his work that night Uncle Sam cussed him out and told him to highball and not show his carcass around that ranch any more. Then he turned around and hired Tom Democrat again.

Well, honey, I know you'll be sorry to hear it, but the fact is that Tom didn't do a doggon bit better than he did the first time. Wusser, if any odds. He got drunk the very first night, and next morning they couldn't find him anywhere. When they finally did find him he was standing in front of the mail box waving both arms and preaching to it. Uncle Sam heard him say to the mail box: "Repent, I say! Gol-durn ye, repent! If you don't change your ways you'll go to hell certain."

After that he got drunk about once a week, and it took him two weeks each time to get sober. He very often poured the milk in the slop bucket and ran the dishwasher through the cream separator. And cuss? My stars alive! You have heard of men who could cuss a tune. Well, Tom could cuss about four tunes at once. Then on top of all the rest, he got to stealing everything he could get his hands on. It wasn't safe to leave the house and barn out of doors, for Tom was liable to steal the whole works.

Finally Tom Democrat's time was out, and Uncle Sam was mighty glad of it. And what do you think? There stood Bill Republican wearing a smile that wrapped clean around his head three times and enough of it left to tie under his chin.

"Well, what do you want now?" asked Uncle Sam sorter cross-like, for he wasn't in much of a good humor.

"I've come to get my job back," says Bill Republican, drawing himself up and pounding his chest with both hands. "I heard you was tired of Tom Democrat, and of course you will want to hire me again. I don't suppose you remember anything about how sorry I used to be, and besides that, I have reformed. I got religion six times last year, sent my character to the laundry twice, and was operated on for dishonesty several times. So you can rest assured that I am perfectly all right now. If you'll put me in charge of your affairs I'll clean up the mess that old Tom Democrat has made, and I'll soon have everything running like a huckleberry watch." So Bill Republican got the

job. No sooner was the job safe than the promises were forgotten, and Bill Republican fell back into his old habits, even doing a good deal worse than he ever had done before. He made all of his previous records look like the tracks of baby angels in the sands of time.

And so—

Out went Bill again.

In went Tom again.

And then—

Out went Tom again.

In went Bill again.

And every time he changed men, my poor old fool uncie actually believed that he had bettered himself. He seemed to forget all about how rotten they had both been on previous occasions, or else he had great faith in their lying promises to do better. I never could quite decide which it was—faith or foolishness. My last guess is that it was both.

The question that has always puzzled me is this:

Why did Uncle Sam have to limit his choice to those two measly sons-of-guns, when there were plenty of good honest, reliable men who would have been glad of the job? Why didn't he politely kick both of the lying scoundrels into the middle of last century and hire somebody else?

But look!

Dog my cats!

Uncle Sam has just hired Bill Republican again!

I just want you to hush, as Tom Watts says.

"COMPLETE PUNISHMENT."

The preachers are all afraid of me. I hardly ever get a chance to talk with one. But I did manage not long ago to get one to stand a few minutes.

The first question I put to him was this:

"Do you believe that the wicked in hell will get the full and complete measure of punishment that is due them for their sins in this world?"

He bit like a trout:

"Yes sir, I certainly do."

The next question was:

"Can a job be complete without being finished?"

"No, I guess not," he replied, beginning to look uneasy.

"Well, then," says I, "Ain't you got sense enough to know that when a job is finished it STOPS?"

The poor fellow looked like he could have crawled into gimlet hole.

Wilson said the election was going to be a "solemn referendum," but the voters misunderstood that big word. They thought it was "forever end 'em."