

Pen Picture of the Convention

No one who sat through the eleven-hour-all-night-session of the democratic convention of 1904 is ever likely to forget.

It was without a precedent in incident in dramatic intensity and will be historic in results.

It is doubtful if such a succession of vivid scenes and powerful incidents have ever occurred in a political assembly in America.

Let us understand the scene. The Coliseum is an immense oblong building, capable of seating 10,000 people, and, with the floor space filled, perhaps 17,000. Just in front of the speaker's stand sat the regular delegates to the convention; a thousand strong. This body numbered about one-twelfth or at best one-tenth, of the great assemblage. This vast audience was not made up of the rabble nor void of a purely local origin. They were well dressed men and women of the highest order of wit and intelligence, as was evidenced by the many brilliant comments and questions hurled from time to time at the speakers and the officers of the convention. There were 200 Georgians there, 500 Texans, about 700 Nebraskans, while Illinois and Indiana and Kansas had several thousand each. Scarcely more than half the audience was from Missouri, and in its caliber, its interest, its zeal, its patient waiting and its genial wit, it was as representative an American audience as has been assembled anywhere.

From first to last it was a battle royal of delegates against audience. Solid, compact, level, and with minds fixed, the phalanx of a thousand delegates occupied the center of the Coliseum. In this rank the reorganizers were in full control. They stormed title and applauded seldom, and when

they moved they moved with unbroken ranks and unchanged expression of loyalty for that which they had come to do. But the vast audience, a mighty multitude, rising tier on tier to the last gallery and stretching far out into the wide wings, packed and jammed with representative men and women of the American democracy—this mighty crowd was heart and soul with the minority of the regulars on the floor.

Bryan and Hearst were its idols, and for every defeat administered to their leaders on the floor by the majority the 14,000 auditors consoled them with thunders of applause and tempests of cheers. There delegates were for Parker, but the audience was ready to follow Bryan or Hearst or Cockrell to any charge or assault. Parker's men had the votes, but the sea of popular sentiment surged and thundered about the idols of the old democracy.

Eleven hours of consecutive speaking—from 7:30 p. m. to 6:30 a. m.—lasting from twilight to sunrise—with scarcely a seat deserted or a moment without its passion of enthusiasm.

Parker's forces were handled with consummate skill and firmness. They never lost a point nor missed an opportunity.

The brilliancy and resourcefulness of the opposition was simply superb, but its indefinite legions always recoiled from the stone wall of perfect organization before it.

Cockrell of Missouri had in volume of scenic effect the ovation of the convention. Nothing in the history of conventions ever equaled the thrilling and suggestive beauty of that sea of ten thousand flags waving in the wildly enthusiastic hands of men and women of Missouri. It filled the amphitheater with the glory of the flag and the good name of the brave old senator.

Curiously enough, these spangled weapons of enthusiasm were captured by accident from the Parker equipment, and their premature use spoiled the closing scene of the Parker triumph. The flags, about 10,000 in number, had been procured by the Parker men, and had just been distributed with instructions to wave them when Parker was nominated.

Champ Clark, in nominating Cockrell, shot this electric sentence into the air:

"Talk about the courage of the republican president! Old Cockrell is braver than Roosevelt!"

And then pandemonium broke loose. The audience which seemed to be for anybody except Parker, joined the 7,000 Missouri enthusiasts in a frenzy of rapturous demonstration. Forgetting instructions, every Parker flag was unfurled, and such a sea of color and glory and enthusiasm as no American audience ever saw before surged and resurged and roiled and rolled again over the floor and through the galleries of the famous coliseum.

The gallant old Missourian must be credited with the finest and most spectacular popular demonstration ever made over an American citizen—even if he did steal Parker's thunder to get it.

The ovation to Parker, following upon Littleton's nomination, lasted thirty-one minutes. It had the large majority of delegates massed in front of the speaker. The scene was superb. The blended flags, the joined emblems, the marching ranks of delegates, the thunder of cheers, were all there. Georgia, ever at the fore, bore the banner—the most beautiful of all—far in front of the procession, and finally, with southern gallantry, carried it to the central box, where sat Mrs.

Charles Hall, of New York, and to whom Chairman Gray gracefully presented it, to be moved by her own hands at the moment of her father's nomination. Mrs. Hall was one to be loved with delight.

The ovation to William Randolph Hearst lasted thirty-six minutes—five minutes longer than the demonstration over Judge Parker, and equal in every attribute of intensity and enthusiasm to that event.

It was one of the wonders of the convention. While not nearly so many of the delegates participated, its strength and persistency, even upon the floor, was remarkable, and the same marching and waving of flags and emblems made it memorable. But anything the great editor may have lacked upon the floor was more than compensated by the magnificent demonstration upon the part of the vast audience about him. Saving Cockrell's local strength, he was easily and overwhelmingly the favorite of the 17,000 representative Americans for the presidency. And they sent back to his marching and shouting friends upon the floor a rolling volume of thundered enthusiasm which eclipsed the Parker roar as the ocean does the gulf. It was the magnificent tribute of American democracy to one who had been the proven friend and champion of the people, and it was a joy to his friends to see in this splendid and spontaneous demonstration the vindication of a great and useful democrat, and the assurance that the people know and love him for what he is and for what he has done.

Yea, and a little later on, with the field of the primaries against him, William Randolph Hearst polled the total of 201 honest votes for the nomination of the democratic party for president of the United States. There will be none to malign this gallant democrat as he unlimbers his eight great jour-

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