



HON. WILLIAM H. TAFT.

REPUBLICAN CONVENTION

Story of the Great Gathering Told by a Master Pen.

Incidents and Sidelights—Picture of the Nomination of Secretary Taft—The Old Politician Talks of Politics of Yesterday and To-Day.

By WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

Chicago.—A national convention is all over but the shouting, when the presidential nomination is made. It is for that that the delegates assemble. High-browed men wrangle over party platform planks, and fight it out among themselves as to who shall be forced to accept the vice-presidential place, but in all of these things the general public has but little inter-

est. It was under orders, and nothing could move it. So it moved majestically along. It adopted the platform, formally voting down, by overwhelming majorities, planks advocating publicly in campaign contributions recommended by the president in his messages, valuation of railroads, recommended by the president in his messages, and the election of senators by the people.

A Roosevelt Convention.

For that convention was for Roosevelt policies only when it had them in the regular order and the authenticated form. The Roosevelt policies, as such, did not interest the convention, for it was under orders and took only the real milk of the word as it came through the committee, and it believed, and probably with some justification, in the fact that Roosevelt did not care to have his policies come into the convention by way of Wisconsin.

So it voted for the program and went on to the next order. And the next order was the nomination of a president. And that is a serious business.

It is curious to know just how forms and conventions and precedents are worshiped without sense or reason by apparently clear-headed men. But there sat 1,000 delegates and 10,000 spectators and listened to five mortal hours of utterly useless, entirely meaningless and absolutely vacuous speeches. These speeches were made putting men in nomination for the presidency who had no more chance to be nominated than they had of picking out a harp check and joining the



Frank H. Hitchcock Brought in the Delegates with Ease.

The visitors in the galleries are there only to see the hero crowned, and once the ceremony is over, and the shouting has worn itself out, their interest in the convention rapidly dies away—the show is over.

Thursday was a hot day, and the perspiration that the thousands shed would have floated all four of the president's battleships, and the real trouble of the convention—in a day of trouble—began after the invocation had been spoken, after Senator Hopkins had given a visible demonstration of the platform, which no one heard and no one seemed to care to hear, and after Congressman Cooper, on behalf of the minority of the committee on resolutions, began scolding the convention.

His speech, of course, did not convince. It was a protest, rather than an argument, and anyway the convention would not have changed that platform, which it believed to be inspired from Washington, if the minority had offered the Ten Commandments. But Cooper scolded, and when the authorized representative from the railroad engineers and firemen and firemen appeared and warned the convention that the railroad employees of the country were dissatisfied with the anti-union planks, that made no difference, either.

Gabriel's trumpet would have been heard on the table for the regular order of the convention. Its face was set

He assured the convention that under Fairbanks there would be no "government by impulse" and the crowd knew what he was driving at, and his usefulness as an orator was ended.

New York has a sense of humor, and when the delegation was called for New York the delegates roared laughing and let Gen. Woodford make the shortest and most appropriate speech of the day, nominating Hughes. And when he said that only 150 men beyond a doubt could carry New York—one being in the White House and the other in the governor's office at Albany—he made the crowd restive and quit just before his credit gave out.

The Clarion Note.

The only real clarion note of the convention was sounded by Knight of California, seconding Taft's nomination. For Knight has a voice, and Mr. Burton of Ohio, who put Taft's name before the convention gracefully, was not heard as well as such a speaker should have been heard. Knox also was tastefully nominated—with proper eclat and without too much wind-jamming.

And if the young football player, Cochem of Wisconsin, who gave the convention La Follette's name, had cut his speech in two, it would have made the hit of the afternoon. But he slid past the crowd's limit, and the smile which captivated every one wore off and he grew angry, and the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

It was Mr. McGee—remember the name—who, seconding the nominator of La Follette, started the whoop heard round the world. There seems to be no question that of all the candidates besides Taft, La Follette got the best demonstration.

But after that complications occurred. Some one walked across the gallery back of the speaker's platform with a flag containing Roosevelt's pic-



Senator Lodge Wielded the Gavel with Satisfaction to All.

ture, and the applause for La Follette merged into the futile, stupid attempt to stampede the crowd to Roosevelt, and for a quarter of an hour the yelling continued.

It was quieted as the roll call on president began and continued down to Iowa. There a silence fell, and continued until Taft was nominated.

Now written down here in a thousand words, this seems like the story of a stirring episode. Yet it covers events that lasted from 10 o'clock until 5:30. There was some formal cheering of something like two and six-eighths seconds for each of the allies, and this is the best part of it all—those who had sought the nomination the hardest, Cannon and Knox and Fairbanks, got no more than Foraker, who took what he could pick up. There were no differences between the \$75 picture fireworks and the ten-cent roman candle—they all fizzled and went out in gloom.

Abner Handy Talks.

But to go back to some of the earlier days of the convention, some of the days before the fireworks were all exploded, the days when only the fuses were sizzling. It was on Sunday, I think, that I met my friend Handy—Abner Handy from the Ninth Kansas district. Mr. Handy, who has been out of politics in Kansas since 1902, was unable to get to the convention before Sunday on account of floods in the Kaw bottoms, and until his arrival the pre-convention milling had been rather tame. But the arrival of Mr. Handy in his Prince Albert coat and black slouch hat, with his massive head of hair protruding fiercely, and his little slits of eyes keenly measuring up the situation—Mr. Handy is an expert on "the situation"—added new life to the crowd in the Annex, and one day said that the convention began with his arrival.

"It has been 12 years since I attended a Republican convention," said Mr. Handy, as he lolled in a red plush divan in alimony sily and spat through his teeth at the onyx mop-board, "and I meet a great many new faces. I first saw Fairbanks in the St. Louis convention and I have just been talking to one of his managers—one of the new men in Indiana politics—born since I left the state—a Mr. Ade—George the call him. Clever young man, apparently. He tells me there is a strong undercurrent for Fairbanks, and wanted me to help him bale it up so that there would be some surface indications.

"But the situation," said Mr. Handy, as he pulled at his mustache and put his hat over his eyes, "does not seem to be working out that way, though. Fairbanks is a man than whom no other in all this great galaxy of sister states is more fitted geographically and logically to lead our great party. 'I speak,' went on Mr. Handy, after reflecting and chewing viciously at his cigar, 'I speak in no uncertain tones in this matter; he is a leader without fear and without reproach, and with him as our standard bearer in this great contest the eagles of victory would perch upon our triumphant girdles.'"

Is Now for Taft.

I can say for Mr. Handy to-day that he is an ardent supporter of the secretary of war for president, and proposes to take the stump for him in his district. After the nomination Mr. Handy said to me:

"You know that I was for Roosevelt, of course. I was for him when he was just a kid in the police commission in New York. What's more, if we could have put him on the ticket this year he would make Garrison county solid for the whole ticket. But then, you know, he's impulsive and erratic, and we've got to get down to business."

No Politics, All Reform.

It was on Monday that I met my friend from the Ninth district, again. He was in the Pompeian room of the Annex when I found him.

"The only true thing," he said, as he waved proudly for the boy and ordered a split of water—"the only true thing about this convention is that nothing is true."

As he sipped the fuzzy water and recalled his promise to Mrs. Handy before he left home, Abner added reflectively: "The trouble with this convention is there is no politics in it. There are no politicians here. I've looked at this man Hitchcock—nothing but a card index, that's all there is to him. And I've looked over Voysa—he won't do; he's perfectly frank. Haven't heard him called a liar since I've been here. No man gets far in politics until his enemies call him a liar."

"Say," added the colonel, as he leaned across the moose on the table top, "say—now honest—why did your paper cut the 'Hon.' off in front of my name? I like it. Tell them to put it on. I was around when the New York delegation held a meeting to-day, and say! They don't know any more politics than a rabbit. They decided to do nothing. Imagine a convention where the New York delegation is such a four spot that they have to debate three days to decide whether they will take the vice-president! And what's more, imagine a convention where the most serious item of interest is the nominee for vice-president! And now the New York delegation is going to have its palm road to find out whether it will take Hughes for vice-president or rally around Jim Sherman, the people's choice, or commit hara-kiri with Tim Woodruff."

Mr. Handy reflected for a time and sighed. "It's h—!!—it's certainly h—!!—but what else could you expect of a convention where people all paid their railroad fare. You reformers will get this country sewed up in a sack so that there won't be any politics any more. They'll nominate the delegates by direct primaries, instruct them on the chief planks of the platform—and where will the palladium of our liberties be then?"

There is something in Abner Handy's view of it. The alternate from the Ninth Kansas district has been drifting around to-day looking for the old familiar faces, and he finds they are not here. There aren't a dozen bronze buttons in all the throng.

"What has become of our common heritage?" exclaimed Mr. Handy, warring his glass wildly. "Where is our manifest destiny? Who's gone and stolen the pride pointer and the alarm-vuever? Is it in the platform? No, you reformers are making terms with Gompers; and Taft's 'liberal views,' as they call them, are going to prevail over the fine conservative views of our peerless leader, our grand old man, freedom's champion, the defender of the faith of the fathers, the man who—the man who—the man who—reiterated Mr. Handy—"the man who—I refer to Hon. J. G. Cannon of Danville, Ill."

"Where's your keynote speech in this convention? I'll tell you; it's fastened in Burrows' time lock. Who is going to sound a clarion note here to-day? There will be no clarion note. The name of the gallant Blaine will not be heard in the hall. The party that saved the country, that broke the shackles on 4,000,000 slaves, the party that preserved the Union, is represented here by the allies, and they are tossed around like a lot of last year's alfalfa. They came here asking for the presidency; they were willing to compromise on the vice-presidency and sprung the name of Jim Sherman."

"It reminds me of the time Col. Anderson J. Balderson of our town started out to be minister to England under Cleveland's first administration. He found that job gone, and compromised by applying for assistant secretary of state. Falling in that, he asked for United States marshal. Falling in that, he asked for the postoffice at home, and then, falling in that, straightened himself up and said: 'Thank heaven, we have a Democratic governor in Kansas, and he will not turn me down.'"

"He came home three months later with a pair of Gov. Glick's old trousers, and to that end has your reform brought those who for 40 years have been fighting the party's battles."

Mr. Handy rose proudly and said: "Reform—reform—what crimes are committed in thy name!"



JAMES S. SHERMAN.

breakfast of bacon and eggs? Not at all! Was it a delegation of food sufferers or a chain gang? No, but it looked like the melancholia ward of an asylum out for a morning's airing—and it was the Knox Marching Club!"

"They are here. The band is here. They have to do something—so they



The Smile of Secretary Taft's Brothers.

fit through the hotels like lost spirits and recall the dear dead days when there was politics in this man's town, and a railroad attorney with a book of transportation was a bigger man than old Grant. And that's what your reform has done. Put a lot of Willies in serge suits—nine ninety-eight, marked down from fourteen fifty—into control of the destinies of our great republic.

"What has become of our common heritage?" exclaimed Mr. Handy, warring his glass wildly. "Where is our manifest destiny? Who's gone and stolen the pride pointer and the alarm-vuever? Is it in the platform? No, you reformers are making terms with Gompers; and Taft's 'liberal views,' as they call them, are going to prevail over the fine conservative views of our peerless leader, our grand old man, freedom's champion, the defender of the faith of the fathers, the man who—the man who—the man who—reiterated Mr. Handy—"the man who—I refer to Hon. J. G. Cannon of Danville, Ill."

"Where's your keynote speech in this convention? I'll tell you; it's fastened in Burrows' time lock. Who is going to sound a clarion note here to-day? There will be no clarion note. The name of the gallant Blaine will not be heard in the hall. The party that saved the country, that broke the shackles on 4,000,000 slaves, the party that preserved the Union, is represented here by the allies, and they are tossed around like a lot of last year's alfalfa. They came here asking for the presidency; they were willing to compromise on the vice-presidency and sprung the name of Jim Sherman."

"It reminds me of the time Col. Anderson J. Balderson of our town started out to be minister to England under Cleveland's first administration. He found that job gone, and compromised by applying for assistant secretary of state. Falling in that, he asked for United States marshal. Falling in that, he asked for the postoffice at home, and then, falling in that, straightened himself up and said: 'Thank heaven, we have a Democratic governor in Kansas, and he will not turn me down.'"

"He came home three months later with a pair of Gov. Glick's old trousers, and to that end has your reform brought those who for 40 years have been fighting the party's battles."

Mr. Handy rose proudly and said: "Reform—reform—what crimes are committed in thy name!"

or some formal occasion. Yesterday afternoon the sibilant flap of the great rowd in the Coliseum fell like a great rave on the shores of the place, in idle conversation as the proceedings of the convention drifted on. The committee on credentials made its report, and the great crowd lapped it up as the sea laps up the sand—impersonally, uninterested, utterly idle. There was no fight, and evidently the rowd knew there would be no fight. The regular order proceeded, and Senator Lodge was installed as permanent chairman, and the great crowd—the great buff sea, rocked idly to look at him. He began to speak with some fervor, and little ripples of applause played across the tide. His earnestness deepened, the billows lapped lightly.

And the waves lulled and were quiet. And then, not while he was at a climax, but as the man before them was reaching deeper and deeper into the soul of the place and the occasion, the sibilant flap of the crowd hushed, and in the great silence the man spoke, simply and strongly and without oratorical flourish or emphasis. "He has enforced the laws as he found them, and so he is the best abused and most popular man in America."

It was not much of a tribute. But a wave of sincere feeling swept over the quiet tide of humanity. It was not a strong wave—not much stronger than the first wave that came rolling in. But another wave followed it, and another higher and stronger came after it. The speaker, who did not realize what was about to come, put out his hand to beg silence, but a huge wave of applause came over him, and he ducked and backed off good-naturedly and let the wind of emotion pass as it would across the restless sea before him.

At Flood Tide.

In another minute, perhaps two, Senator Lodge rose again to face the rising tide, but it rolled in on him with a great roar, and men knew that the storm of applause had come which Theodore Roosevelt's work as an American citizen had conjured. So they let it rage, and for nearly an hour the waves of that storm broke and roared in that place.

Then the crowd, in that hour of joy, gathered individuals in and they ceased to be individuals and became the crowd. At times the delegates were swept off their feet. State after state rose, like black billows on the face of the waters, and cheered and waved pennants and sank to equilibrium only to ruffle up again and cheer with the crowd. No state was able to keep its mooring. And in the tumult and the shouting there were no reactionaries. New York was as boisterous as Wisconsin, and Kansas joined Pennsylvania.

"Roosevelt, Roosevelt, four years more," they roared, and the cry skimmed over the waves of applause like a gull, and like a gull it was evanescent. It signified nothing. And then slowly, when the deep answered deep, the calm came and the speaker went on with his speaking.

It was all so simply and so naturally done, all so evidently sincere, without clique or prearrangement, that there was in its undercurrent an element of sadness. For it seemed a good-by rather than a bait to Theodore Roosevelt, and those who have feared him feared him no more, and those who have trusted him were happy, but rather sad than joyful.

Once the big show—the presidential nomination—was over, the remainder of the work of the convention, the election of a running mate for Secretary Taft, was completed in short order on Friday morning when Hon. James S. Sherman of New York was named for second place on the ticket.

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE
(Copyright 1908, by Geo. Matthew Adams.)