

My First State Convention

By ELIJAH A. GLADDEN

A half-century ago (1884) six men who had been selected at a Scott County mass convention as delegates to the Democratic state convention started for Indianapolis from Scottsburg. They were Jefferson Gladden, Chas. W. Cruson, David M. Hugbanks, Harry Jewett, Mark Storen and Elijah A. Gladden. Of these all have passed away except Elijah A. Gladden, the writer of this reminiscence.

On the train, we fell in with Jonas Howard, the nominee for Congress from the old third congressional district, S. M. Stockslager, Col. Tom Hanlon, John Benz and many other active Democrats. At Columbus we fell in with Green Smith, Lincoln Dixon, George Cooper and others. On arrival at Indianapolis, we were impressed at the size of the railway station, or rather its lack of size, it being no larger than the Scottsburg depot. We went north on Illinois Street to Market Street and then east to the Circle which was a small park at that time, the monument being erected several years later. We went to the English Hotel where all six of us were assigned to a commodious room. After dinner we went out to see the city. The court house was the only large building to be found. The state house was built to the third story. The Fletcher building and the magnificent union station were both fairy dreams. We went about town on street cars drawn by mules, the mule cars not being supplanted by electric cars until 1893. We spent a pleasant night at the hotel.

The next morning it was decided that Elijah A. Gladden should be the Chairman of the delegation and that the delegation should follow the unit rule. The convention met at nine A.M. in the English Opera house, it being the largest place in the city for such meetings. The convention was called to order and Doctor Abbott offered the invocation. In his prayer the doctor asked the Lord to bless the "Grand Old Democratic Party". No sooner had he asked this of the Lord than a large number of the delegates cheered him to the echo. Senator Frank B. Burk, who was seated in the midst of those cheering, arose and in a cynical voice asked the assembled delegates if they had never been any place that they did not know the dif-

ference between a prayer and a Democratic speech. The doctor smiled and went on with his prayer.

The old *Indiana Journal* poked fun at the doctor inquiring, "Surely doctor, you do not expect the Lord to grant such a large request"? But the prayer was fully answered for the Democrats elected Cleveland president, a Presbyterian, as was the doctor. Thomas A. Hendricks was elected Vice-President. He was a deacon in the doctor's church. Hendricks influenced Cleveland to appoint Aquilla Jones postmaster at Indianapolis. Jones was also a deacon in the doctor's church. It was a remarkable and unusual prayer and to the doctor it must have seemed to get results.

After the doctor's prayer, the convention was organized in due form. Senator Daniel W. Vorhees was elected chairman; Lincoln Dixon was made roll-call clerk; and William H. English read the platform which was unanimously adopted. There were several candidates for Governor but Isaac P. Gray was nominated on the first ballot. As he was a great debater, the Democrats expected good results from his speeches. General Mahlon D. Manson would doubtless have been nominated for Governor if it had not been for the fact that the Republican party four years before this had challenged the Democrats to debate. Franklin Landers, the Democratic candidate had accepted the challenge for thirteen joint debates with Albert G. Porter and had been completely outclassed.

The Democrats, following the nomination of Isaac P. Gray, now challenged the Republicans to thirteen joint debates, which challenge was accepted and the candidates started to carry out the agreement. After three discussions, William H. Calkins, the Republican candidate, was so nearly used up by Gray that he declined to meet him in any further encounters.

In the selection of a candidate for lieutenant-governor, after seven candidates had been presented, Col. Tom Hanlon placed in nomination the name of General Manson and all the other candidates withdrew. General Manson also tried to withdraw but before he could arise from his seat three enthusiastic Democrats seized him and held him in his chair but in doing so they tore his linen duster completely off of him. The general was then unanimously nominated for Lieutenant-Governor. The convention by a unanimous vote instructed the delegates to the National Democratic Convention

to vote for Thomas A. Hendricks as a candidate for president of the United States. The writer recalls his amusement when he noted that of the more than one hundred men who were on the stage all wore whiskers except one—John W. Holcomb. Among many to be noted for their luxuriant whiskers were Senator D. W. Vorhees, William H. English, David Turpie, Green Smith and John W. Kern.

The convention adjourned at two o'clock and the six of us from Scott County went to the union depot to go home on the five o'clock train. The conductor, however, informed us that the train did not stop at Scottsburg. C. W. Cruson asked if he would let us off at Marshfield, the watering tank north of Scottsburg. The conductor replied, "That depends on what engine we have." He called the engineer to him and said, "Buck, will you have to take water at Scottsburg this evening?" The engineer replied, "I see they are all Democrats and like my engine always faithful so we will just have to stop for water at Marshfield this evening." The conductor then said, "All right, boys," and we all got on. When the train stopped at Marshfield, we all got off. After a thirty minute hike we reached home in time for supper.