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## IMPRESSIONS OF A NEOPHYTE

*By Robert D. Charlton of the Denver Bar*

THE title of this article is, doubtless, misleading. Frankly, it was intended to be so, although the writer is both a beginner at conventions and in literary pursuits. One might plausibly argue that a neophyte could not gather impressions. However that may be, it is the only indicia occurring to me which will illustrate the observations that I retained as a result of my first participation in the Annual Convention of the American Bar Association.

I confess that I attended the convention of the American Bar at Atlantic City, N. J., the 17th to the 20th of September last. As my wife was along I am not able to report upon the Sub Rosa and extra programme activities of the assembled delegates, so my remarks are confined solely to the open and scheduled meetings.

Upon arrival at Atlantic City late in the afternoon of Wednesday, the 16th, I repaired to the City Auditorium for the purpose of advising the powers that be, that another enthusiast from the West had arrived. This didn't seem to excite those in charge in the least, and beyond permitting me to sign my name on a card (which appeared harmless and non-committal), and loading me down with stacks of literature, which in bulk gave promise of outlasting our Montgomery Ward Catalogue, no ripple was I permitted to cause in the even tenor of their ways. The explanation might be in the fact, that sessions of various committees and sections had already been going on for about a week and were then going on, so that these people had so become used to a noisy and disputatious throng that one more or less made no more difference than the addition or subtraction of a bucket of water to the Atlantic Ocean. By the way, the Atlantic Ocean was there, and in force. I have since been informed that other elements were present, but, as stated, they belonged to the extra-curricula activities of which there is no first hand knowledge on my part due to the limitation already described.

The Atlantic City Auditorium deserves more than a passing mention. It is a tremendous structure. It loomed up as

being big enough to contain all of the disputants connected with the new Denver City Hall, as well as all those who have solutions of the present economic situation. The building contains a main auditorium, which is capable of accommodating 40,000 persons, various offices and rooms, besides the Ball Room, which in itself is very extensive. The main sessions of the convention were held in the Ball Room. I never inquired if there was anything significant in that fact.

The morning of September 17th, about 11 thereof, marked the official opening of the Convention. Many Big Wigs were ranked behind President Boston on the stage, all garbed as if for an afternoon wedding. After the President of the New Jersey State Bar Association made his address, which was entitled an "Address of Welcome", the balance of the morning was consumed by the President in giving a summary of 142 years of the history of Constitutional Government, and in trying to convince the meeting that the said Constitution was still in effect. After his close the various State Delegations held their meetings to nominate and elect various officers and candidates. Upon going to the place assigned to Colorado I was delighted to find a considerable delegation from this State. I had already seen Miss Lathrop before the meeting convened in the morning, and I was much impressed with the fact that she knew all the leaders, and that she has done a tremendous lot in putting the Bar of Colorado on the Map as far as the American Bar was concerned. What went on in the afternoon meeting I do not know, as the invitation of the Atlantic Ocean was too overpowering to be ignored.

However, about five we went to the tea which was being staged at the Marlborough-Blenheim for the benefit of delegates and guests. I didn't know there were so many delegates and guests until the tea, because the attendance at the morning meeting didn't indicate such a great number. I suppose the call of refreshment and the absence of prepared speeches might have accounted for the increase. I don't believe there were any interlopers, because there would be a brave layman indeed, who would voluntarily thrust himself in the midst of lawyers feeding.

The President gave a reception (it wasn't thrown, it was given) at the Haddon Hall at ten Thursday night. Quite a

mob jammed the place, and after going by and shaking hands with the President one was at liberty to follow his own bents with respect to amusement.

The next day, Friday, the sessions, both morning and afternoon, were devoted to the reception of various reports. Inasmuch as there was no necessity of action upon the part of the Association in most instances the usual formula was, "that the Committee's report was printed at page so and so of the tentative program", and if you didn't like it you could read it. However, there were three interesting events that transpired during the course of the day.

The first came about when the Committee on Crimes and Criminology asked for the adoption of a resolution to the effect that "the law ought to be that judges and prosecutors, in the trial of a criminal case, might comment on the failure of the defendant to take the stand in his own behalf." Immediately the war was on and once again it was demonstrated that forensic arts could play a part in the deliberations of a staid and august body.

A sharp alignment was drawn between proponents and opponents; many and varied were the arguments advanced for and against. The matter was put to vote and by a close margin the resolution won. A great day for America, exclaimed some! "Huh, the school teachers and commercial lawyers are more numerous than the criminal lawyers", observed a cynical on-looker. During the course of the argument a feminine deputy district attorney from New York City tripped upon the rostrum and after advancing a preamble "that she hadn't thought much about it", announced her violent opposition to the resolution, but her appeal failed to sway the hard boiled mass, and for once a woman's words were wasted.

The next came in a discussion supplementing the report on communications, when it developed that labor in Chicago was indignant at the efforts of the monopolists in denying labor a radio station of equal power with the Chicago Times in Chicago. However, as no action was to be taken on the report debate was abruptly brought to a close, upon the ground that protestant was out of order. Perhaps he was, but he looked pretty fit to me.

In connection with the radio report it was also of interest to me to learn that the ether was no great open space as far as radio was concerned. On the contrary there were about 90 traffic lanes over which stations broadcast. America, Canada and parts of Europe had gotten together and appropriated these lanes some time previously, making percentage allocations to each in order to solve broadcasting difficulties. But Mexico had intentionally, or inadvertently, been left out of the meeting which made the appropriation, and now she was raising hob by building tremendous stations and appropriating these lanes anyway. Will the doctrines of riparian rights and prior appropriation again come into conflict?

Lastly, when the Chairman of the Committee on Aviation Law supplemented his report there was immediately developed the interesting fact that the real estate lawyers were very antagonistic to the aviators, because no recommendation was made in the uniform code concerning diminution in value of property due to trespasses by airplanes sailing by and disturbing the peace of tenants of buildings.

The high light of the entire meeting to my mind, was Miss Lathrop's dinner, given at the Marlborough-Blenheim, at which she was kind enough to include the writer and his wife, among other Coloradoans. Many notables were there, President and Mrs. Boston, Mr. Saner, Mr. Armstrong, Senator Long, Dean Pound, Dean Wigmore (all five volumes compressed into one man in a boiled shirt), Hon. P. W. Meldrim, General McChesney and many others. It deserves more than a paragraph, but it has been more ably described by others.

Afterwards every one went to hear Sir Lynden Macassey, the British Barrister, in the Ball Room. Unfortunately Sir Lynden became very ill and could not attend, but his address was read by the Secretary, and it was an extremely interesting narrative of the traditions of the Inner Temple and the part it played in the bringing into the world of the Constitution. It was interesting to learn that so many of America's early lawyers and leaders were members of the Inner Temple. Like the English, though, it left the impression they were still trying to claim credit for everything.

Mr. Beck, of Philadelphia, made a witty and pleasing rejoinder.

Afterwards, the Gilbert and Sullivan opera, "Trial by Jury" was presented by a local company and was amazingly well done. Thereafter there was dancing in the Ball Room, music being furnished by Guy Lombardo's Royal Canadians, during the course of which he gave his nightly broadcast.

The next morning, after some more routine reports, the election of officers was had, Mr. Guy Thompson, of St. Louis, being elected President.

That night the annual banquet took place. Albert Ritchie, the Governor of Maryland, made a speech which hardly mentioned the Prohibition Law, although it purported to deal with "facing the facts and telling the truth".

One sharp impression was left, and that was, that the Convention did demonstrate that there is a great brotherhood of lawyers in this country, and that the Association has accomplished a great deal in integrating the lawyers of America into a worth-while and earnest whole, and it is the obligation of all of us to forward the work as much as possible.

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The principles of evidence in law are founded in the charities of religion, in the philosophy of nature, in the truths of history and in the experience of human life.—*Thomas Erskine*

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A receiver is a gun that is a good deal easier to fire off than it is to control after it is fired.—*O. W. Holmes, Jr.*