

sudden desperate illness of his father, he had arrived in the city the day before, a man with the look of a winner.

One cannot hang in the clouds for ever. Yet to plunge down the precipitous grade of Powell Street, through the happy crowds of visitors doing the town, was frightening. It was not the physical descent alone (though anyone can tell you that to drive up and down Nob Hill is better than a ride in a roller-coaster). Market Street, the great diagonal that cuts the downtown area in half, lay below us. It was forlorn, the lives of the people drifting along its wide pavements as far removed from the gala atmosphere we had just left, as New Zealand is from California.

None of this harsh contrast was apparent next day at the Cow Palace. Here was America, rip-roaring, banner-waving, and as raucous as a fun fair. To get in at all had not been easy, but now five personal appearances and seventy miles after my original application, I was inside.

Teetering dizzily on the outskirts of that huge gathering of the tribes, I found my seat and fought for my equilibrium. At first, it was an ordeal by sound. A 50-man band, supported by an electric organ, kept up a constant boom at a frantic tempo. There are certain tunes I never want to hear again, and *California, Here I Come*, is one of them.

Half-blinded by the perpetual flicker of flashbulbs from the professional photographers on the floor of the assembly and the amateurs in the stands I began to pick out the acting areas on this great stage. On the floor, solidly packed with delegates and their alternates; in the huge half-empty area reserved for the daily press; up and down the aisles; there was a ceaseless, restless coming and going. How, I said to myself grimly, can serious business be done in this mad-house!

Now it is all over. By the time the gavel sounded for the last time the whole gargantuan scene had taken on pattern and form. By the second session I found myself pointing out the V.I.P.'s to my neighbour and I had snooped unblushingly through borrowed binoculars at Wendell Corey, who was responsible for the star-studded entertainment. This element of the Convention, designed to brighten the inevitable pauses for the sponsors' message to the television audience, allowed me to see more celebrities than I had mustered in my entire six years in America. At a discreet distance, certainly, across a vast restless audience, I have seen Irving Berlin leading the convention in a campaign song he must wish he had not written; heard Irene Dunne repeat the President's prayer at his inauguration (with the electric organ coming up under her voice); observed for myself that Ethel Merman requires no amplification system and that John Charles Thomas is not as young as he used to be.

There were two elements in the drama of these four days that had me on the edge of my seat. For a visitor from a tightly-knit country where regional differences count for little, there is something about a roll-call of the States, territories and territorial possessions that over-stimulates the imagination and leaves one punch-drunk with the size and diversity of this vast nation. This is the heart-beat of the convention, the time-honoured method of balloting. For



★ ABOVE: The Presidential car about to leave the airport for the Convention hall. RIGHT: Getting a ticket was bad enough; finding your way in after that was another problem ★

the roll-call to be most impressive there must be a difference of opinion, as there was at Chicago. But even without the added edge of suspense that made such good television viewing last week, without the sturdy opinion within delegations that divides the vote between three, four or even more candidates, the sound of the roll-call is magnificent, and will linger in my ears long after the rest of the tumult is forgotten. Alphabetically, one by one, the secretary drones on in an even voice, and up from the floor come the voices of the chairman, now in a clipped Bostonian accent, now in the drawl of the deep South.

The other eye-opening element (not in itself new since Chicago) was the extraordinary phenomenon of the so-called spontaneous demonstration. Everyone knows these are organised, and no one cares, so long as they are ear-splitting and eye-filling. However many demonstrations the lusty-lunged Young Republicans staged, they were all mere dress rehearsals for the moments when first the President, and then his running-mate, were renominated. Up from the stands rose a great flutter of banners and simultaneously the floor of the house was alive with banners, streamers and balloons. To the deafening roar of applause, the wild screams and shouting, someone added a police siren, while the band and the organist whipped into their act through the amplifiers. As if all this were not enough a gentle flock of homing pigeons was let loose to rise frantically above the pandemonium. Ten minutes the chairman allowed for the President's melee, five for the Vice-President. Both outbursts seemed like an eternity. Waving corn this may be, but it is corn

calculated in bring in a good crop of votes next November.

Not all the demonstrations were contrived. For the elder statesmen of the party, for Governor Dewey and for Mr. Hoover, synthetic sound and fury gave way to honest, affectionate, standing ovations. And these were only a prelude to what was to come when the Vice-President arrived, and this again a lukewarm effort by comparison with the uninhibited roars of applause for the President and his wife.

It is impossible to gauge a man's popularity by the sound 20,000 of his own supporters make at such a climactic moment, particularly when two enormous baskets of balloons flutter down to pop merrily among the constant pyrotechnics of flashbulbs. But when he arrived at the airport I heard the organised clamour utterly drowned in the open-throated delight of the crowd. For thirteen miles, until he reached the heart of the city, and 25,000 people welcomed him to Union Square, this kind of cheering was what he heard.

Now the candidates are chosen and both parties have had the eyes and ears of the voters riveted on what



they have had to say for themselves about themselves. The delegates left the Cow Palace in an aura of blissful contentment—the family party had been a success. A stocky farmer from North Dakota took the car on our left, a young executive with a decorative wife slid into the white Jaguar on our right, and we drove home through a traffic jam to retire from this marathon and get back to balancing the budget.