

is repeated in greater or less degree in nearly every State, was due entirely to the electoral-college system, and is one of its most curious products. Why a voter should allow himself to be cheated of his purpose to vote for the presidential candidate of his choice simply because he has a personal dislike for an elector who has merely a perfunctory duty to perform in the machinery of election, is a mystery. Yet in every election the names of electors on both tickets are "scratched" by hundreds and sometimes thousands of voters. In 1880 California divided her electoral vote as she did in 1892, giving one vote to Garfield and the others to Hancock. Personal feeling toward individual electors was the cause in both cases. In New York State, in 1892, Richard Croker, the boss of Tammany Hall, received a smaller number of votes as elector than any other man on the Cleveland electoral ticket. This was obviously due to dislike of Tammany Hall, without regard to the merits of presidential candidates. The North Dakota division was due to an error in the final count that was not rectified till after the result had been officially proclaimed by the governor, and could not be altered.

All these and kindred mistakes are due to the use of a system which is made to fulfil another purpose than that for which it was originally designed. When the electoral college was devised, it was for the purpose of having its members exercise individual choice in the election of President and Vice-President. They have long since ceased to do this. Political usage has so changed their function that if one of them were now, as he could do without fear of legal interference or punishment, to vote for some other candidate than the one for whom his party had delegated him to vote, he would be regarded as a betrayer of trust by the whole people. Their names on the ballots are, therefore, a clumsy, useless, and often misleading relic of a practically abandoned system. If they were to be replaced by the names of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, for whom the people could vote directly, there would be none of the mistakes committed which occurred in the last election.

Several measures were presented to the last Congress looking to the abolition of the electoral college, but the one which found most favor was the simplest and least revolutionary. It provided simply that there should be no more electors, and that the States should vote directly for President and Vice-President, each State having the same number of electoral votes as at present, and the total electoral vote of each State going to the candidates for President and Vice-President having the largest popular vote. In this way it would be possible for a voter to exercise choice in voting for Vice-President, a privilege which is forbidden him under the present system. It might happen that a State would give its electoral vote to the presidential candidate of one party and the vice-presidential candidate of another. This possibility would have a most beneficial effect upon the selection of candidates for Vice-President, and in this respect would be a distinct public gain.

By leaving to the States the right to vote as separate entities, all that is worth preserving in the present electoral system would be retained. For this reason the plan of popular voting by States is certain to find more favor than that of popular voting by the whole country, the candidates having a plurality over all

others in the grand total of all the States to be declared elected. The State plan, besides preserving State entity, which is a very popular idea, also insures an early knowledge of the result in an election, which is an important consideration. If the election were to be decided by popular vote of the whole country, there might be a considerable period, in case the contest were a close one, before the result would be known. This would be a serious source of confusion and uncertainty. In other respects, a vote by the whole people is unquestionably the fairest and most democratic possible. It would help to complete the work, already so well begun by the secret-ballot laws, of abolishing money and corruption from our elections. No man could foresee how such an election was going, or could find any spot in which it would be worth while to attempt to influence the result by the use of a corruption fund.

A General Free Library Movement.

FROM almost its first number this magazine has been in the habit of pointing out from time to time the great value of free public libraries as a means for spreading popular education. In an article in this department in *THE CENTURY* for June, 1882, we said:

A library is of more use in an educational way than a high school. The taste for good reading is the true door to culture, and if the taste for good reading be once established in a young person, there is an absolute certainty of the attainment of a degree of culture which persevering years in school cannot give. It is not enough to have free schools. A widespread movement for libraries, which shall be either wholly free or exceedingly cheap, would be a most wholesome one. The abolition of the low-priced, pirated productions, which we hope to see brought about by copyright, would leave the field free for libraries, and libraries would render American as well as English literature of easy access to the humblest.

This hope about copyright is at last realized, and we are glad to see in many directions indications that its fulfilment has come at a very opportune moment so far as the growth of the free library movement is concerned.

It is most encouraging to learn that within the past few years there has been a steadily growing interest in this subject manifested in nearly all parts of the country. The chief reason of this has undoubtedly been the action of Massachusetts in creating a Free Public Library Commission, whose zealous, intelligent, and successful exertions have commanded the envy, and excited the ambition, of other States. The Massachusetts commission was authorized by a law which was passed in 1890. It is composed of five persons, appointed by the governor, who hold office for five years, but whose terms expire in different years, one new commissioner being appointed each year. They are authorized to expend, on the application of a board of library trustees of any town having no free library owned and controlled by the town, a sum not exceeding one hundred dollars for books to be used in establishing a free public library. The trustees who make the application must have been duly and regularly elected at a town-meeting. The law provides that towns establishing libraries under the act shall appropriate a certain sum each year, according to the assessed valuation of their property, for the use and maintenance of the library. The governor appointed as the first commission, Mr. C. B. Tillinghast of Bos-

ton, Mr. Samuel S. Green of Worcester, Mr. Henry S. Nourse of Lancaster, Miss E. P. Sohler of Beverly, and Miss Anna E. Ticknor of Boston.

When the commission entered upon its labors, 248 of the 351 cities and towns of Massachusetts had libraries in which the people had rights or free privileges, and in 175 of the 248 there were absolutely free public libraries under municipal control. All together these libraries contained about 2,500,000 volumes, or slightly more than the total population of the State. The gifts of individuals in money, not including gifts of books, for libraries and library buildings exceeded \$5,500,000. Yet there were still 103 towns in the State which had no free public libraries. These were nearly all small towns, many of which contained a declining population. Upon these the commission bent its energies, and the results of its first year's labor were very gratifying. An appeal was issued to them to avail themselves of the State's offer of aid, and 37 of them accepted at the spring town-meetings of 1891. Several towns made appropriations in excess of the amount required by the statute. A cheering effect of the law was the voluntary offer by individuals of books to aid in the formation of new libraries, and the commissioners were able to distribute over fourteen hundred volumes in addition to those purchased by the State. In many instances associations turned over their collections of books as gifts to the town; others made appropriations from their treasuries to aid in establishing a library; and persons of wealth, sometimes permanent residents of the town, sometimes summer residents or visitors, made handsome gifts of money. The total of individual gifts during the time which has elapsed since the commission was appointed is over a half million dollars, and in the same period individuals have provided the funds for the erection of eleven new library buildings. During the past year several towns have received gifts, ranging from \$25,000

to \$50,000, to be used in building free public library structures. In fact the State is well sprinkled with handsome memorial library buildings, there being something like seventy-five of these in as many towns.

The impulse imparted to this most patriotic and worthy work of popular education has not been confined to Massachusetts. It has spread all over New England, and is felt perceptibly in many Western States. New Hampshire has created a similar commission, and other States are preparing to do the same in the near future. There are memorial library buildings going up in increasing numbers yearly in all parts of New England, and free public libraries are everywhere coming more and more to be a recognized branch of the educational machinery of every city and town. An imperfect report of the gifts and bequests to libraries in the United States of which record could be obtained, which was made to the Conference of Librarians in San Francisco in October, 1891, placed the total at nearly \$24,000,000. The true total is undoubtedly far in excess of that, but this is a sufficiently large sum to give encouraging evidence that people of wealth realize the importance of the work which libraries are doing.

It is urged with great earnestness by the leaders in the free library movement that in order to perform perfectly their high and useful mission all public libraries should be absolutely free. The charging of a fee, however small, greatly diminishes the usefulness of any library. The testimony of statistics upon this point is conclusive. When the public library of Springfield, which had been charging a small annual fee, was made free in 1885, the number of card-holders increased during the year from 1100 to over 7000, and the circulation of books from 41,000 to 154,000. A similar change in the Otis Library of Norwich, Conn., made about a year ago, increased the number of books taken out during the following year from 500 to 3000.

OPEN LETTERS.

The Kindergarten Movement in Chicago.¹

WHILE an extended interest in higher education has been awakened through the opening of our new university, and the establishment of many centers of the university extension work, another educational factor is affecting no less vitally the heads, hands, and hearts of the little children of our city.

There are here three strong kindergarten associations working out Froebel's idea, each one pushing forward in distinctly different methods, yet all working for the foundation of character-building, by the trend given to the child's thought, word, and work during the first seven years of his life.

Each association maintains a training-school, and year by year the standard for admission becomes higher; the course of study is broadened, not only by new insight into Froebel's philosophy, but by a clearer recognition of the relation of the kindergarten to the school and to life in all its phases.

The Froebel Association—or Froebel Society, as it

was first called—was the outgrowth of a Mother's Study Class, organized in 1874 on a plan suggested by Miss Elizabeth Peabody in a circular letter to parents calling on them to investigate Froebel's philosophy and methods. This study culminated in the opening of the first kindergarten in the city, conducted by a regularly trained kindergarten.

In 1876, Mrs. E. W. Blatchford organized the first free kindergarten, in memory of a little child. Later, as the faith in these principles grew stronger, and the desire of others to enter into this work increased, a more definite organization seemed desirable, and several members of one society visited Mrs. Shaw's work in Boston, Mr. and Mrs. Kraus's in New York, and Miss Blow's in St. Louis, and gained much valuable information in regard to the practical workings of the system.

The Church of the Messiah (Unitarian) was the first religious body to recognize the place of the kindergarten in church work.

In October, 1880, a public meeting in the interest of free kindergartens was called in Farwell Hall. The meeting was well attended, and a committee was ap-

¹ See several articles on the kindergarten movement in THE CENTURY for January.