

Now as to the *fairness* of the constitutional method. It has happened that the President selected by the electors of the different States received the support of the minority in the popular vote, without going into a minute account of this historically. The possibility of its occurring may be illustrated clearly by taking two States as examples. For instance, the last Republican plurality in the popular vote for President in Pennsylvania was 81,019. The number of presidential votes thus secured was *thirty*, that being all Pennsylvania is entitled to have. In New York the same year the Democratic majority, popular vote, was 1047, which small majority secured to the Democratic party the *thirty-six* electors to which New York is entitled. Suppose now these had been the only States concerned in the election, the Democratic party would have named the President by a majority of six votes in the electoral college, but the Republican majority in the two States would have reached several thousands. Our method does not, therefore, always elect by a majority of the popular vote and is not therefore, choosing a President by the greatest body of the people.

This could be further established by taking a case of failure on the part of the electoral college to choose a President, as in 1800 and 1824. It then becomes the duty of the House of Representatives to select the President, and the Constitution gives to each State, however large, but one vote in the balloting. Still other difficulties have been encountered by our present method, such as the counting of the votes by the President of the Senate, but these would occupy too much space to explain in a satisfactory manner.

From these defects, facts thus briefly noticed, we see how far our present method is from being consistent with the true Democratic spirit of the times.

There are two political rights which should be guaranteed to all under a Republican form of Government: They are the right every man has to assist in establishing a government, if that has not already been done, and after that to share in it by voting for those who shall enact and execute the

laws. The closer we come in our practice to this idea the more fully will we secure a universal interest in the government, and with it individual responsibility for the common weal.

By our nominating conventions we are able to modify to some extent the operation of the Constitution, this is due to two facts, first, the people have a direct voice in selecting the delegates who compose the convention, and second, it has become practically understood that the electors chosen in November will cast their ballot for the candidate of the party to which they belong.

Yet with all this effort to secure a verdict of the popular will we fail, and it remains a fact that our mode of choosing a President is the weakest point in our plan of government.

There seems no excuse for its existence any longer. It is condemned by the press at home irrespective of party, and referred to by foreign critics as a good illustration of the defects of a "theoretical paper constitution." We should secure a constitutional amendment, and this at no distant day. The founders of our Republic framed the Constitution "during the dark and humiliating days of the Confederation." They were influenced by a fear of centralized power on the one hand and by a distrust of popular intelligence on the other. They therefore adopted a method of choosing a chief executive which would secure his election by a select body of men. In this they followed both English and European precedent and avoided the danger of riots and tumults which they knew had followed popular elections in the ancient republics of Greece and Rome.

Their plan was probably the safest for the times in which it was introduced, but we have advanced many degrees during the century of our national life just passed, and with our enlightened public sentiment and the experience of so many years it would certainly be safe now and in every way more consistent with our Republican principles to elect our President by a direct popular vote and perhaps to extend his term of service from four to six years.

Mr. H. V. Holmes of class '91, delivered a sound and elaborate speech to the Republicans at Elk Run. Holmes is an energetic and live worker in the interest of protection.