

THE DESERT WEEKLY

PIONEER PUBLICATION OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION.

ESTABLISHED 1850. TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

NO. 20.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1892.

VOL. XLV.

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE.

"A Subscriber," who accompanies his communication with the necessary guarantee of good faith in the shape of his name, wants to know how the Electoral College proceeds, of what it is composed, how it counts the votes and something of its general procedure. A little book entitled "The Practical Politician," recently issued in this city, gives the desired information; we copy the portion of it regarding the Electoral College, as it seems to be about what our correspondent desires:

Every fourth year—this is one of them—the people in the different states go through the solemn and majestic performance of choosing electors, who in turn choose the President and Vice President. We often hear of So-and-so having carried such a state for the former office, and while this is practically correct it is theoretically wrong. The intention of the framers of the Constitution was clearly to take the choice out of the hands of the people and vest it in a body of men chosen by the people, those so chosen to be a deliberative and executive body, styled in their aggregate capacity the Electoral College. This was, as hereafter set out, a concession to the Hamiltonian system of government, the supposition being of course that only men of station, ability and influence would be made electors and that they would naturally select two of their own kind or the highest offices. This question soon resolved itself into a more representative shape through the organization and growth of practical politics; that is, the form was preserved, but it became an unwritten law that electors should vote for the men nominated by their respective parties, and they have done so with one or two exceptions ever since. Of course the conventions which place these electors in nomination make a selection of men well known first of all as staunch partisans, who will vote, if elected, for the candidates of that particular party, already nominated, and thus have the sovereign citizens measurably reduced the chances for a sovereign of another character. To betray the trust reposed in one as an elector would not subject the person so betraying to a criminal or any other prosecution, for there is no law against it; but he would likely receive treatment much more rigorous and long-continued, in that he would be looked upon and treated as a second

Benedict Arnold, and not only political but most probably social ostracism would be his portion for life. Is not this a striking exemplification of the rule of the common people in spite of the actual restraints designed for them by the founders?

Each state is entitled to as many electors as it has senators and representatives combined, in Congress. Each has the same number of senators—two—while the number of representatives varies in accordance with the population, but a state is entitled to one in any event. The electors are nominated by the different party conventions in the same manner that other officers are nominated, but the manner of their election rests exclusively with the legislature. In some states the nominations are made by congressional districts, each one naming its own, and the two at large, representing the senators, are put up by a state convention; in others, the latter gathering names the entire list but in every case (except in Michigan under a recent enactment) they are all voted for in bulk by the people of the state, so that a voter in the First congressional district, for instance, votes for the elector representing the Twentieth district as well and for all others. In this way the candidate of the party which carries the state is apt to and nearly always does get the full vote of the state, though this is not an invariable sequence by any means, since in nearly all elections where more than one man is to be chosen, some receive more votes than others and some are elected while others are defeated on the same ticket. In the election of 1880, the vote of California was divided between Hancock and Garfield, the former receiving five, the latter one. This is the most recent case.

The electors having been duly chosen on Tuesday after the first Monday in November, receive each a certificate of election from the governor. Their official meeting takes place on the second Monday in January next following, at such place as the legislature may appoint, usually the capital of the state. After the customary formula, each elector deposits a ballot containing the name of his choice—or rather his party's choice—for President, and immediately thereafter votes in like manner for Vice President. A certificate in triplicate of each vote is then made out, and one

of these under seal is entrusted to a special messenger, chosen by the electors, to be delivered out of hand to the president of the United States Senate in person; another set is forwarded to that official by mail, and the third is filed with the judge of the district court for the district in which the election is held.

The Senate and House of Representatives meet in joint session in the hall of the latter body on the second Wednesday in February next succeeding, when the certificates are opened by the president, and four tellers previously appointed count the votes and read aloud the result; their lists are then handed to the president of the Senate, who makes a formal announcement of the result, if there be a result, and the thing is done—the new President and Vice President are officially introduced to the people. The installation occurs on the 4th of March following, and is usually accompanied by imposing demonstrations.

In case there should be no election, by reason of there being more than two candidates and no one having received a majority of all the electoral votes, the houses immediately separate and the Representatives proceed to elect a President. Each state casts but one vote, and of course the majority of the delegation determine what that shall be. Two-thirds of the states constitute a quorum, but it requires a majority of all the states to elect. In case the House should not be able to choose a President, the Vice President (chosen by the Senate if there shall have been no such election by the electors) becomes President at the time the latter would have been inaugurated.

Our correspondent also desires information regarding the word "plurality" used so often in election returns. The same authority answers this question: There is no plurality when there are but two candidates, as one or the other has then a majority, that is, a preponderance of all the votes cast, unless it should be a tie. When three or more candidates for an office are voted for, the one that has more votes than any other has a plurality, the size of his plurality being determined by the difference between his vote and that of the candidate having the next highest one to him. For instance: A, B and C are candidates for the legislature; A has 500, B 550 and C 600 votes; it will thus be observed that C has not a majority, because he