

"SCHOOL REPUBLICS" POPULAR WITH GIRLS AND BOYS

In nearly every large city in the union there is one or more schools where in active operation is being carried out an idea backed by former President Roosevelt and scores of other prominent Americans. This idea is the much talked of "school republic."

Since 1891, when the Patriotic league, which was the organizer of the system, sprang into existence thousands and thousands of bright faced children in all parts of the world have been taught by practical demonstration the value of student self-government.

Each school where the system is in force has its own government. This consists of a mayor, a judge, a council, a clerk of council, a health officer and a court of aldermen. These officers are elected by the children of the several schools and make the laws which govern the student body. Never a court met in a temple of justice that exhibits more sincerity in its conduct than do these school courts in their deliberations.

So successful has been the idea that this year it is planned to go a step further and introduce the system into the many vacation schools that are conducted in most of our large cities.

Wilson L. Gill, president of the Patriotic league, which has offices in Independence hall at Philadelphia, is the inventor of the "School Republic," or, as it is sometimes called, "The School City," idea.

Mr. Gill is primarily an educator. He has been described as "the apostle of democracy in education." His plan is not merely to put democracy in education, but to put education into democracy.

Mr. Gill conceived the idea that the best way to teach self-government is by putting self-government into the schools. He saw the truth that learning the chronology of historical events, imbibing the most intense devotion to the flag and learning the forms of civil government would not necessarily make the best citizen for a self-governing state.

Indeed, Mr. Gill observed, as thousands of others have done, that the citizens who most habitually neglect their duties, those who take the least part in the processes of government and who are most indifferent to the failure of democracy in American cities, are the ones who have had the greatest opportunities to acquire education along the conventional lines.

So Mr. Gill, as a scholar and a patriot, devoted his trained intellect to a solution of the problems presented by the invincible indifference of so many Americans toward their cities and states.

How to cultivate in the minds of Americans the habit of thinking along the lines of self-government? That was the question. How to induce the average citizen to regard himself as an important part of the machinery of state and to assume the responsibilities as such? The problem was pedagogical, psychological. It was a matter of mental training, and Mr. Gill, as an educator, thought out the answer.

He recalled the difficulties in the old days of teaching chemistry. Pupils were required to sit day after day in class and listen to learned lectures on analysis, and when the course was done they were turned out with a certain amount of theoretical knowledge of the science of chemistry, but they were not chemists. Not until the students were put into the laboratory and required to do actual work did they become chemists.

In other words, it was the old problem of learning to swim without going into the water.

So Professor Gill determined that the way to teach self-government to the youth was to put them into the swim-



CHEERING A NEWLY ELECTED MAYOR IN NEW YORK

ming tank of democratic institutions and let them learn the stroke by actual swimming. And not only let them learn the method, but let them exercise it until it becomes a habit with them, ingrained to second nature.

So he devised the school city. Under this plan each school to which it is applied is organized into a little self-governing community. It elects its own officers, makes its own laws, subject to the higher power of the teacher, as the municipality is subject to the constitution, appoints its own administrators and executives and, as far as possible, puts the responsibility for the peace and order of the community on the little citizens themselves.

It was in 1897 that the school city plan was first tried in actual practice. In a certain New York school the discipline had reached so low an ebb that

a policeman had to be stationed in the school yard all the time during sessions. Bernard Cronson, a teacher with a reputation as an unusual disciplinarian, and a member of the Patriotic league, was assigned to the school in the hope that he would be able to establish order. At the end of two weeks he was in despair and meeting Mr. Gill told him of the situation.

Here was Professor Gill's opportunity. He laid before Mr. Cronson his plan for school government by the pupils. Mr. Cronson determined to make the trial. Things couldn't be worse. They might be better. It was worth the effort.

The pupils were told that they were to govern themselves. They exhibited enthusiasm. What was more surprising they at once showed a sense of responsibility. In selecting their officers

they seemed to carefully weigh the characters of the candidates and to choose those who seemed best fitted to make wise rules, and to force obedience to them.

When it became a matter of deciding between the right thing and the wrong thing with their choice apparently free the children were almost unanimous in their desire to do the right thing, or at least in the expression of a preference for it.

Mr. Cronson found his problem of discipline solved. Other schools noted for incorrigibility took up the idea, and it spread to many parts of the metropolis.

When this nation was governing Cuba General Wood introduced the school city idea into that island, and it was put into operation in 3,600 schoolrooms on the island. Theodore Roosevelt, as president, wrote a letter commending it as he had seen it in Cuba and New York.

One day while in his office in New York Professor Gill was visited by the commissioner of education of the Argentine republic, who had heard of the school city and had come to learn of its results.

While he was talking to Gill a commissioner from Japan entered. Before these two left a commissioner from Sweden had joined the group. An hour before not one knew of the other's existence.

Now nearly every big city in the United States has some school in which Gill principles has been put into operation. It has spread to the nations of Europe, to China, Japan and the islands of the sea.

"It has proved, where rightly established and properly directed, a wonderful aid to discipline.

"The object of the 'school city' is to train the citizen from early childhood in the habits of democracy so that when he leaves school he will continue to exercise those functions wisely and diligently in the larger field of city, state and national citizenship."



COUNTING VOTES AT AN ELECTION IN A HAVANA SCHOOL

THE SNAKE-CHARMED BIRD

By CHARLES CHRISTODORO

How strangely that linnet acts? See it fly backward and forward as if weaving an invisible thread into an unseen pattern!

To and fro swinging and circling until you imagine it to be making in its flight a figure eight.

Its flight is a slow laborious one, in fact, the effort the bird is making would warrant one in supposing that it was breasting a heavy breeze, yet not a leaf stirs, the warm air being absolutely, for the time being, still and undisturbed.

The bird weaves on back and forth, in and out, describing its two meeting circles and keeping so closely to its prescribed flight as to make one think that it was held to the earth by a film of invisible elastic, which permitted the bird to fly just so far and then compelled it to return.

There's a fluttering and a condition of agitation shown by the bird always

when it passes the center of the figure eight pattern it is weaving. At this point, in its fright, the bird seems to redouble its exertions to get away from—something.

We softly move along to investigate, the bird paying no attention to us, but continuing its weaving.

On a cleared spot in the grass there was a large gopher snake which, either because of our careful approach or interest upon the weaving bird, saw us not.

How his eyes glistened and glistened! But his head and neck, how they undulated from side to side with the rhythmic cadence of the ocean's swell! From right to left and left to right, slowly, quietly, went that ropelike neck and head, the bird following the swing and coming just a little closer every time. The master weaver was at work and it was he who designed the pattern for that little bird—a pattern that, unless we interfered, was apt to

abruptly end at the center of the figure 8, where the weaving must cease.

The weaving bird is certainly getting tired and the elastic is pulling upon it harder and harder. The eyes of the snake glow with expectation and the weaving neck begins to curve and the moving head draws slightly back, weaving, weaving all the time, slowly to right, slowly to left, and the weaving bird is sorely distressed. The elastic has almost drawn it within reach and its work at the loom is almost over, when we stamp our foot smartly upon the ground, the elastic snaps, the snake quickly darts into a nearby opening, and the little bird, with a flutter singularly free now, alights upon a nearby twig and pants, as one has seen birds do on a day when the sun held sway above all and the leaves and flowers panted for moisture.

The master weaver was gone and the laboring tailor had deserted his pattern and was enjoying a well earned rest.

And one day we looked down into the ocean's depths through the glass bottom of our boat, and for 50 feet down, more or less, we saw through blue waters, and then it became misty and the eye could not further penetrate the

depths. And as our boat glided along out from the depths came the tops of a forest growth of kelp, almost touching the bottom of our boat. See it gently weave from right to left with the sway of the ocean!

Our eye follows down the stem of one of these ocean trees, but the dimness and mist that come at 50 feet or less completely barred our further investigation. Yet the brown leaved tree swayed to and fro, right and left, with the same swing and rhythmic cadence of our friend the gopher snake. The air pods, so generously spread amid the leaves of this watery tree, kept it erect and floating, swaying, undulating with every breath the ocean takes.

And the treetops below bend and sway and weave a spell for us. We gaze and, becoming entranced with the weaver in the ocean's depths, a longing comes over us to slip down into the clear blue depths and walk among those waving trees that have root somewhere upon the ocean's bottom a hundred feet down, perhaps.

There are many things else upon the ocean's bottom which we can see by moving elsewhere, but we linger spell-bound watching the weaving kelp, to and fro, back and forth, and are loth to leave the spot. And then we remembered the little feathered weaver and the master hand that weaved the spell.