

THE NEW METHOD OF VOTING.

BY

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The growing interest in ballot reform has induced us to invite Senator-elect Saxton, the originator of the Saxton Bill, to explain the form and purposes of that measure, and to point out wherein it differs from the laws that went into operation at the recent elections in Massachusetts and Connecticut. The Governors of those States have also been kind enough to indicate, for the benefit of the readers of *THE REVIEW*, the extent to which the recent elections have cast light upon the working of the new laws. The necessity of reform of some nature is forcibly suggested by General Mahone's contribution, which illustrates the doubts so often entertained by adherents of all parties as to the officially-declared results of elections conducted under the old methods.

EDITOR N. A. R.

SENATOR-ELECT SAXTON:

I AM requested by the present editor of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* to state wherein the New York ballot measure vetoed last spring differs from the secret-ballot acts recently passed in Connecticut and Massachusetts. It is with pleasure that I accede to this request, because I recall the great interest that Mr. Thorndike Rice, the late distinguished editor of *THE REVIEW*, manifested in the subject. Indeed, my first inspiration in this line was drawn from his efforts in this direction and the draft of a bill made by him and published in the New York papers two or three years ago.

The brief space at my disposal will only permit me to answer the question in the most general way. The prominent features

of the New York bill were (1) that all ballots should be printed at public expense and delivered to voters by duly qualified officers ; (2) that they should contain the names of all candidates nominated for a particular office ; (3) that the voter should be entirely shielded from observation while preparing his ballot.

The Connecticut statute permits parties to print their own ballots upon official blanks furnished by the Secretary of State. The ballots are to be uniform in appearance. Any person may receive as many of these official blanks as he wishes upon payment of their actual cost. The Secretary of State must also deliver to the various town clerks, for the use of electors, envelopes of a certain size stamped with the seal of the State. At the entrance to each polling-place are an "envelope booth" and "a ballot booth, at which the voter may obtain ballots of any political party that he may desire"; each in charge of two persons not of the same political party, "who shall be appointed by the registrars." Adjoining the room where the ballot-box is placed are booths where the voter may enclose his ballot in the envelope "secure from outside observation." From the examination I have given this act itself, I infer that its practical operation is about as follows: The voter receives his party ballots in the presence of the two persons having charge of the ballot booth. At the envelope booth an official envelope is given to him, indorsed by the two persons designated for that purpose. He then goes into a private room, if he chooses, and encloses his ballot in the envelope, which he securely seals. Then passing into the polling-place, where only the election officers and challengers are permitted to remain, he hands the envelope to the box-tender, who deposits it in the ballot-box.

The Connecticut law is doubtless good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. A party ballot cannot be a secret ballot. One of the cardinal principles of ballot reform is that no ballot should be allowed to go outside the polling-place and that no ballot should be valid that comes from the outside. The provision that places partisans in charge of the ballot booth gives poll-workers the opportunity they seek of ascertaining what party ballot the voter selects.

The Massachusetts law is essentially the same as the New York bill, although differing from it in many details. They contain substantially the same provisions for making and certifying nomi-

nations. Each prohibits the use of any but an official ballot, and requires the voter to prepare his ticket in a private booth. They differ mainly in their provisions as to the form of the ballots and the method of getting them into the hands of the election officers.

The Massachusetts law prescribes that there shall be but one ballot, which shall contain the names of all candidates for any office whose nominations have been duly made. These names shall be arranged in alphabetical order under the designation of the proper office, except that the names of candidates for Presidential elector shall be arranged in groups. "There shall also be added to all the names of candidates their party or political designation." All ballots, except those for use in city elections, are to be prepared by the Secretary of the Commonwealth. He is required to send two sets of them in sealed packages, "at different times and by different methods," to each town clerk, a certain number of hours before the day of election. One set is for distribution to the different polling-places in the town. The second set is sent as a precautionary measure, and is only to be used in case of necessity.

The New York bill, instead of the "blanket" ballot, required separate ballots for the different classes of officers. In other words, the various ballots indorsed "State," "County," etc., provided for by existing laws, were to be retained. The names of all nominees for the same office were to be placed upon one ballot, but grouped together under party names, so that the elector might vote for an entire group by making the proper mark opposite the party name at the head of such group. The ballots were to be printed by the county clerks, instead of the Secretary of State, and delivered by them to the election officers on the morning of election day. There was no provision for printing more than one set of ballots, but in case the ballots should not be delivered, for any reason, *fac-simile* unofficial ballots might be used.

These are the main points of difference between the two measures. While they call for careful consideration, they do not touch any vital question. The principles underlying them are identical.

CHARLES T. SAXTON.

THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS:

BY THE election of the 5th of November in this Commonwealth a full and fair test of the so-called "Australian ballot" was effected. Enacted by the Legislature of 1888, the law which