

a blow. The press of the city was unanimous in expressing approval of the workings of the new law.

The most important legislative achievement of the year has been the enactment of a complete ballot law in Massachusetts. This measure, while modeled primarily upon the bill which the New York legislature passed, but which Governor Hill vetoed, differs from it in many respects. It contains an especially valuable provision for preventing the forgery of official ballots, and is, taken all in all, probably the most intelligent and comprehensive application of the English and Australian systems to American needs which has been made. It places the entire printing and distributing of the ballots in the hands of the State, to be paid for at the public expense. It provides, also, for independent nominations by a specified number of voters, and requires the printing of the residence, street and number, of each candidate after his name upon the ballot. The Massachusetts law ought to be carefully studied by the framers of the new bill which is to be presented to the New York legislature this winter. It is likely to become the model for bills which are to be presented in other States, as indeed it ought to be; for, aside from its great merits, it would be most desirable to have our different State laws upon this subject as nearly homogeneous as possible.

We speak with entire confidence of the possibility of the different States having such laws in the near future. This is one of the reforms which must come, for without it our system of popular government cannot be maintained. Every election, especially in our large cities, shows that until this reform is secured all other reforms are impossible of accomplishment. The control of the election machinery, of the printing and distributing of the ballots, must be taken from the politicians and put into the hands of the State. That is, we must take the power to control our elections away from the men who have no responsibility and no interest in government save extravagance and corruption, and put it into the hands of officials who are sworn to do their duty. Of what use is it to try to get honest men nominated for office when we leave in the hands of the political workers the power to defeat them at the polls by distributing fraudulent or defective ballots, or by making "deals" and "dickers" which cheat the people of their will? We have talked for years about reforming the primaries and the nominating conventions, but not one particle of progress has been made. Under the Massachusetts law any 400 voters, in case of a candidate for State office, and any 100 voters, in case of a candidate for a lesser office, by uniting in a petition in behalf of a candidate of their choice can have his name printed upon the official ballots and have those ballots distributed at the polls at the public expense. What more certain way of reforming the primaries could be devised than this? If there were such a law in New York City there would be an end to the astonishing spectacle which is there so often presented of a "boss" setting up a candidate of his own for office in spite of all protests, and frequently electing him in spite of all opposition. Under such a law both "bosses" and primaries would in a very short time lose their present dominance in our politics.

In fact, there is scarcely a form of iniquity known to our election methods which a good ballot law would not eradicate. We should be rid at one stroke of the assessments upon candidates, of the bribing and bull-

dozing of voters, of the nomination of notoriously unfit candidates, of "deals" and "dickers" and "trades" at the polls. All these would disappear, for the simple reason that the machinery of elections would be taken out of the hands of irresponsible and often dishonest men. Such an obvious and imperative reform as this cannot be long delayed.

Should there be an "Aristocracy of Criminals"?

THE prisons of the State of New York at present furnish a very impressive object-lesson in political "economy," or perhaps it may better be said, in political extravagance. In order that it may be fairly understood it must be approached from the standpoint of a few very plain and generally acknowledged propositions. They are:

1. That the prisons belong to the whole people.
2. That the prison system is maintained for the protection of society against the criminal.
3. That society is never fully protected against the criminal so long as he remains a criminal.
4. That the criminal remains a criminal until he dies or is reformed.
5. That no criminal is likely to cease to be a criminal until he has the ability and the inclination to earn his own living.
6. That the fact of a man being a criminal does not release him from the obligation of earning his own living; it gives him no right to support at the expense of the honest tax-payer.
7. That no criminal can earn his own living without working for it.
8. That no criminal can acquire the habit of industry and the ability to earn his own living without working to do it.
9. That since the prisons belong to the whole people, and not to any trade or class, all the interests and responsibilities in the prisons should be planned with reference to the whole people, and not for the benefit of any particular trade or class.
10. That the whole people demand in the penal system the maximum of protection at the minimum of cost to the tax-payer.
11. (a) That the maximum of protection can only be attained when the prisoner is taught to be self-sustaining. (b) That the criminal cannot be taught to be self-sustaining unless he be made to work.
12. (a) That the minimum of cost can only be attained by making the prisoner as nearly self-supporting as is possible. (b) That the prisoner cannot be self-supporting unless he work for his living.
13. That idleness in our prisons increases the expense of the prisons to the maximum and reduces protection to society to the minimum, thus inflicting a wrong on every honest tax-payer.
14. That all taxes come ultimately from the earnings of the laborer.
15. That the honest laborer, in demanding the idleness of the criminals in prison, simply insists upon the minimum of protection at the maximum of cost, and further insists upon paying a large part of the cost himself.

These propositions, if grouped with the statement that all the prisoners in the New York prisons are idle, hardly need comment. In many of the other States

of the Union the same conditions exist that have brought about the passage of the Yates prison bill, the law that has thrown our prisons into this frightful state of demoralization. The demand was made by the so-called labor-reform leaders for a reduction in the competition of prison labor with free labor. The Yates bill was the result. While allowing hand labor in the prisons, it prohibits the sale of all prison products, and demands that the prisoners shall only work in supplying the needs of the State institutions. This would furnish labor to not more than one-twentieth of those incarcerated in our penal institutions. The act was "to take effect immediately"; and it has taken effect. To-day in our New York State prisons, and worst of all in the Elmira Reformatory, the shops are closed, the men are locked in their cells, they have ceased to earn their own living, the idleness that has already cursed their lives has fallen upon their lives again; they have nothing to do but to brood over their criminal exploits of the past and to plan criminal acts for the future. They will go out of prison in the same hopeless and helpless condition in which they entered it. They will go out as they came in — criminals. They will continue to prey upon society, and all the more successfully because of the criminal associations that they have formed in the idle hours of their imprisonment. In the mean while honest laborers may have the satisfaction of knowing that a man has only to be caught in committing a burglary or in robbing a bank to demand support from their earnings.

Every shoemaker, and hatter, and tailor, and day laborer in this State is to-day paying his share in the support of the fifteen thousand criminals in our penal institutions; and the laborer is paying the larger part. He may not directly pay the increased taxes, but inasmuch as his employer's and his landlord's taxes are raised, inasmuch will his wages be reduced, his house rent increased. And not only so, but when the criminal that the workman has been supporting comes out of prison, he will be a greater menace to the honest laborer's safety than when he went into prison. By his futile attempt to save the small fraction of a cent on his day's wages, the workman has increased the chances of having his earnings stolen, and multiplied the dangers that encompass his life and property.

It will of course be said by the friends of the Yates bill that when it is fully in operation it will not prevent systematic labor in the prisons. But one has only to glance at the law to see that it is entirely out of harmony with the spirit of the age. It forbids the use of machinery in prisons; and even the few prisoners who under the full operation of the law may be allowed to work go out, with only some old-time handicraft by which to earn a support, into a world that lives by machinery. It forbids the sale of prison products, but it does not prohibit the purchase of supplies from the outside world. As there are no earnings, all supplies must be purchased by the public funds, which, of course, finally come out of the pockets of those whose unscrupulous leaders made this law.

This law passed through a Republican legislature as a purely political measure. It was signed by a Democratic governor. It will be remembered hereafter as the most expensive prison law the State has ever known. It opens up immeasurable opportunities for corruption and theft. When the intelligent working-man stops to

think of the inevitable results of this law, he should call to account every man who has had a part in its origin, or its passage, or its signature; he should never permit these men to pose as the friends of labor and the laborer. No man is a friend to the laborer who leads him to do an injustice, or who puts an additional burden on his already overburdened shoulders.

A Confusion in American Party Names.

A CONFUSION exists in America in the use of party names which arises in part from the Constitution of the American Union—from the existence of States within the state. No merely local elections in England, for instance, are so important as our State elections. The local policy and local morality of the two leading parties as differentiated by the State communities are constantly varying north, south, east, and west. In one State, as in one city, one of the great party names may be used by a trading clique or a venal majority for unworthy purposes. In another State, as in another city, the other great party name may be in like manner degraded. Meantime the two great parties of the nation enunciate and act out their respective policies in the national conventions and in the legislative and executive branches of the General Government.

This condition of affairs has often a most unfortunate effect. Men of ability and of a fair amount of civic virtue are constantly being crippled in their public usefulness by being falsely and mischievously committed, against their clear convictions and better impulses, either to the local branch of a party through their approval of the same party's national principles, or to the national policy of a party through their approval of the so-called same party's local action. The finest contempt of the professional party-manipulator is reserved for the freeman who stands up for good local government, municipal or State, under whatever party name it may be offered, and stands up with equal determination for what he conceives to be good government in the nation, under whatever party name that government may be at the time best attained, even if he finds himself consorting on a State or a municipal issue with one party and on a national issue with another.

But the "free and independent" voter is a better citizen than the voter who is dazzled or intimidated by banners, badges, and words without meaning. There is no sincerity in the partisan abuse showered upon such a voter. The abuse is meant to produce the effect of trepidation upon the man who sees clearly and votes straight to the mark every time. But year by year the trepidation is less apparent, and the partisan scolding more of a sham. The greatest scolds are notoriously partisans who have themselves scratched and bolted whenever it was their interest or pleasure to do so. The time appears to be approaching when he will be regarded as a poor creature indeed who is governed in his voting for municipal, State, or national candidates by the good or the ill opinion of some other person, rather than by his own conscientious convictions. If the "whipper-in" should permanently succeed, and voting at all elections should be a matter of precedent, habit, or domination of mere party names, it would be time to despair of the republican experiment in the New World. The caucus and the boss would have supplanted free, representative government.