

Friday.]

BRONSTON—McDERMOTT—MACKOY.

[December 12.]

Louisville started to read the amendment offered by him, as follows: "No license granted by State or municipal authority shall permit the opening of a retail liquor establishment on the Sabbath or on election days, and said opening is hereby declared unlawful; and it shall be unlawful. And it shall be unlawful for any person to give, sell or loan to any person on election days—" I had it in my amendment, I think, "any qualified voter——"

Mr. BRONSTON. Leave it as it is.

Mr. McDERMOTT. I move to strike out the words "on the Sabbath." You are trying to do too much.

The reading of the substitute after it was interrupted was not again resumed.

The amendment offered by the Delegate from Laurel was again read.

Mr. MACKOY. I desire to say in regard to this amendment that it is legislative in character——

Mr. BRONSTON. I make the point of order that we are operating under the previous question.

The CHAIRMAN. The point is well taken.

Mr. RAMSEY. I would like to answer the suggestion made by the Delegate from Covington——

Mr. STRAUS. I make the point of order that we are operating under the previous question.

A vote being taken on the amendment offered by the Delegate from Laurel, the same was rejected.

The amendment offered by the Delegate from the Fourth Louisville District was again read.

Mr. SPALDING. I ask a division of that so that we can vote upon it separately.

Mr. WILLIAMS. I offer my amendment to that.

Mr. BRONSTON. I make the point of order that the previous question is still in force.

The CHAIRMAN. The point is sus-

tained. The Chair thinks the substitute offered is susceptible of division, and the Clerk will report the first part of it.

The Clerk reported the first part, as follows:

No license granted by State or municipal authority shall permit the opening of a retail liquor establishment on election day, and such opening is hereby declared unlawful.

A vote being taken, that portion of the substitute was adopted.

The Clerk then reported the balance of the amendment as given above, and the same, upon a vote, was adopted.

An amendment offered by the Delegate from Oldham was read, as follows:

Amend by adding an additional section, as follows: "The General Assembly shall provide by law for prohibiting and punishing bribery, and receiving a bribe in primary elections, nominating conventions, or other meetings that may be held for nominating candidates for office; may exempt one testifying against the other."

A vote being taken, the amendment was rejected.

Mr. MACKOY. I now renew the motion I made a little while ago, that the Committee representing the Equal Rights Association of the State of Kentucky, if they desire, be permitted to address the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. RODES. We are not through with this report.

Mr. MACKOY. I move that the other matter be postponed.

The motion to postpone and allow the Representatives of the Equal Rights Association of the State of Kentucky to be heard was, upon a vote, carried, and the Committee of ladies were escorted into the Hall.

Miss LAURA CLAY. Gentlemen, I thank you very much for the opportunity of speaking a few words on the amendment read in your hearing. What we wish of you, is not now to consider woman suffrage at all. What we ask of you is, that you shall give the General Assembly the power

Friday.]

MISS LAURA CLAY.

[December 12.]

in its discretion, to extend suffrage to women on the same terms as it is now extended to men.

It has been my privilege and pleasure, in the last few days, to hear gentlemen recalling and emphasizing the great principles that lie at the basis of our government. I have heard the instruction with joy, with an uplifting of the spirit, as the gentlemen spoke of the sacred rights of humanity, in this Hall. It has been declared in the noble Bill of Rights framed by them, that they believe in equal rights to all, exclusive privileges for none. I have heard suffrage described as the crowning glory of the free-man. I have heard all of these things, and seen with a joy which only a native-born Kentucky woman can feel, that, amidst all the difficulties now surrounding us, there was an unfeigned and earnest spirit to preserve to our State the blessings which we have had of free government, and to secure good and free government to all. There has been but one tone in regard to ballot reform. It has been shown that there was danger, and I have heard these gentlemen speak for the purity of the ballot, and, while they speak fearlessly, they speak words of warning, that we must guard the sacredness of the ballot. Eternal vigilance was the burden of the cry. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty; and these gentlemen wish to exercise that vigilance. Mingling with these words of pure patriotism and love of liberty, there is a note of warning, as I say, and it has brought to my memory powerfully the time I spent in the Capital city of our Mother State, Virginia. While I was there I saw the old church in which Patrick Henry spoke those immortal words, "Give me liberty or give me death." I went into the Capitol, and there I saw a *fac-simile* of Magna Charta, the very beginning of Constitutional Government. I saw there the autograph of the father of his country, whose solemn warnings were quoted yesterday in relation to the purity of

the ballot-box. I saw mementoes of many of the revolutionary fathers, but the thing that thrilled most through my heart in my visit to that city were words of which those spoken in this hall seemed the echo, that freedom is a sacred gift to be preserved by greatest care. Those words were written by the Burgesses of Virginia in the first Bill of Rights, in the old colonial days, and they ran something like this: "That we cannot long preserve free government or the blessings of liberty to ourselves without a firm adherence to justice and a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles." Gentlemen, I do not propose to argue woman's suffrage. You have your own opinion; but I speak of justice, and justice only. Think of the words of our forefathers, "a firm adherence to justice, and a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles." What we ask, will it not be a firm adherence to justice? Shall we fear what shall follow in the footsteps of a firm adherence to justice?

Will it not give the people another opportunity for recurrence to fundamental principles? We ask that the General Assembly shall be granted the power to extend suffrage to women; that Assembly whose members are representatives of this people as you are yourselves. We know that this question is a growing one. We know you are afraid of evil powers; the powers of those who will endeavor to break down your work for the sake of evil; but I know there is not a gentleman on this floor who is afraid any evil will ever call in women's suffrage to subserve its end. The women know, and the sons of women know, that none will ever dare to call in woman's suffrage to help any evil thing. I appeal to the intelligence of every gentleman on this floor. Who can deny, who believes in the fundamental principles of our Government, that woman's suffrage is just? Nothing can stand in the way of granting this measure except the various ideas of expediency. Ah! those people

Friday.]

MISS LAURA CLAY.

[December 12.]

who believe that the right is not expedient; there may be some who believe that the time is not yet come for it. We do not ask it now; what we ask is, that when the time shall come, we shall be able to take it promptly. There was a respectable minority yesterday who thought it might be well to leave it in the power of the General Assembly to revise the work of this Constitution, or one important part of it, that relating to the manner of taking the votes of the people. Shall you be afraid to trust the General Assembly with the control of this, when the time comes when popular sentiment shall ripen? That secret ballot is a mode; this is a principle. Are you afraid to trust the principle in the hands of the General Assembly any more than the method? This is all we ask. It is a principle which will be laid before the General Assembly, a principle which can never be sustained by them until it is the voice of the people, for no evil manipulator will ever bring up woman's suffrage for fraud. That is the thing I present to you, and ask your consideration of it. I am as true a patriot as any man in this country, and it is with rejoicing hope and courage that I see the unfeigned desire of this Constitutional Convention to maintain the rights of free government. But it occurred to me, could these men be speaking these lofty thoughts and not remember, with any thrill of sympathetic pain, that there were others besides men as patriotic and intelligent, as law-abiding, as peace-loving—others who give as many hostages for the honor and safety of the State as they? Can they utter these noble sentiments, and yet exclude from any share in them the women of their homes? Can it be that gentlemen utter thoughts which uplift the soul, express all this noble feeling, these patriotic and high motives, and then shut out from them forever the women in this Commonwealth by the organic law? Will the men forget that women also have rights, and that we have more right than

simply to be governed for our good? That the highest right of a free woman, as well as of a free man, is self-government? That the people you are called on to govern, are not only men, but women? Women do not ever dream that they have more wisdom than man; but this we do say, that women have a different wisdom from men. Wisdom is not only manly but womanly; men are patriotic, women are patriotic. The laws touch women as they do men. I was about to say as much, but I am almost tempted to say more than men, for men have better means of self-defense than women. Women must look only to the law for defense. The appeal I make to you is not to give suffrage to us now, because we know the people might not sustain you and it might endanger your work; but this is what we do say, will you leave this House and allow no hope for women? Will you go from this hall and forget every appeal of the women who are here with hearts and feelings like yours, and all the sentiments of liberty and independence which is a manly quality, but none the less womanly. I ask you to give us hope. Show that your hearts are not entirely closed to the appeals of women who are just as earnest in their desire for liberty as our forefathers when they trod the snow with bleeding feet. These things are as dear to us as they are dear to you, and the love of liberty can not forever be maintained in the hearts of men unless they are taught at the knees of their mothers the great rights of mankind; and shall those sons grow up and say to the mothers, "these rights are for me and not for you?" We ask nothing now to be given us, but we do ask that the women of this Commonwealth, as they think of this noble assembly, which, in all other respects, and I hope will in this, has so far answered their highest expectations, I do entreat that the women shall not close their labors without saying they are unwilling to forever tie up the hands of women, but that they shall share in the noblest privileges of the

Friday,]

PHELPS—BRONSTON—BRENTS.

[December 12.

freeman, that of self-government, and that this Constitutional Convention will foresee and provide for the reform to come. We beg of this Convention that it will take such action as will not lay one straw in the way when the time comes for the people to confer the privilege of self-government upon women.

Mr. J. L. PHELPS. In my haste in making a speech which I did not expect to make, I incidentally referred to the murders during the administration of Governor Blackburn. I want now to explain that that death rate had no reference whatever to his administration; but I happened to have the statistics for those years, and they were the only ones I could remember at the time. I want to say there is no one here who can speak in higher terms of Gov. Blackburn than I will.

The amendment offered by the Delegate from Clinton was read, and is as follows:

The General Assembly shall provide by law for the appointment of a board in each county and city voting separately from the county, composed of not less than two persons residing in the county or city, whose duty it shall be to select and appoint the officers of election in each voting precinct in the county or city. Said officers shall be sober and discreet persons who can read and write, and legal voters in the precinct for which they are appointed. The members of the board and the officers of election shall be equally and fairly divided between the adherents of the political or contending parties at the election to be held.

Mr. BRONSTON. I want to interrupt the proceedings just one minute to make a motion, which I think it is my duty to do, and that is, that the speech which has just been delivered and taken by the Reporter be regularly published in the proceedings of the Convention.

A vote being taken, it was so ordered.

Mr. BRENTS. I want to explain my amendment, and I would be exceedingly glad to have the attention of the Delegates, and especially the members of the Committee

on Elections, because I consider this a very important matter. We have been for several days considering the best means to prevent corruption and to secure purity and honesty in the elections. It is not sufficient to provide for free elections and for giving every voter an opportunity to go to the polls and freely and independently cast his ballot according to his convictions. It is also important, and highly important, that the vote, after being cast, shall be honestly counted. What will be the good, if we provide for honest and a fair and quiet election, if we neglect to provide for the honest count of the votes after they are deposited in the ballot-box? My amendment aims at securing officers who will count honestly, as well as to secure fair elections. I will read it: "The General Assembly shall provide by law for the appointment of a board in each county and city, voting separate from the county, composed of not less than two persons residing in the county or city, whose duty it shall be to select and appoint officers of election in each voting precinct in the county or city." Under the present system one man appoints the two judges and the clerk. There is a law that these officers shall be divided between the political parties; but the judge may comply with the law and yet give one party, the party to which he adheres, an undue advantage. He may appoint strong minded intelligent men of his own party on the one side, and weak and ignorant men on the other. I have given this matter some thought, and I do not believe it is safe, I do not believe it will secure the people's rights to leave it in the hands of one man to appoint the officers of election. Therefore, I have offered this amendment, which provides that there shall be a board of not less than two persons. "Said officers," that is, the officers of the precinct "shall be sober and discreet persons." I will ask the members of the Committee on Election if they have any objection to that? Do you object to the officers of the election being sober?