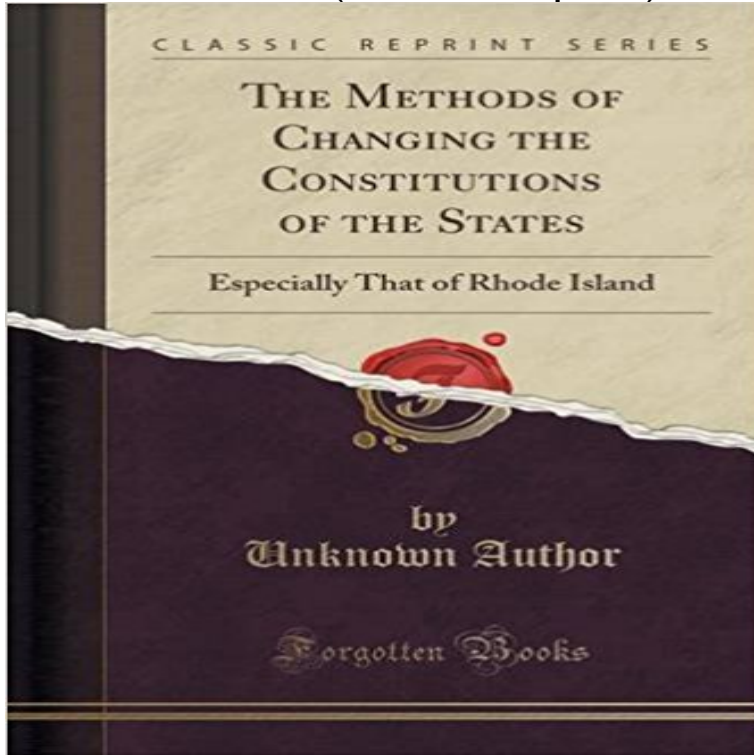


# The Methods of Changing the Constitutions of the States: Especially That of Rhode Island (Classic Reprint)



Excerpt from The Methods of Changing the Constitutions of the States: Especially That of Rhode Island

Most of the papers in this compilation have been prepared with a view to the practical action, at the times when they were issued, of the people and the legislators of the State of Rhode Island. They were not intended as literary or didactic treatises. They relate to a subject of no slight importance in the history and institutions of our American States, settled indeed in many, yet undetermined in some, - a subject upon which but little has been written. An English nobleman, than whom no one in foreign lands is more instructed, very recently told an American citizen that he was not able to find anything in print upon the subject of the mode of changing the American State constitutions. Jameson had indeed, in his work upon conventions, written some years since, given attention to the subject. But our works upon general constitutional law hardly refer to it. The action of our States has not yet passed into written history. The purpose of the compilation is to show that there are at least two methods of constitutional change in a State constitution; the first and original one consisting in the action of a convention of delegates elected by the people to frame a new or amended constitution, and the adoption of such new constitution by vote of a majority of the people of the State; all the proceedings being conducted pursuant to a law passed by the existing government. The second method arises from an express provision of an existing constitution (first introduced about 1820), which authorizes a legislature, with certain precautions, to propose amendments of the constitution to the people, to be determined by their majority vote.

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