

Woman Suffrage Postponement in Ohio.

It is greatly to be regretted that the Woman Suffrage amendment to the Ohio Constitution was defeated at the polls. Happily however for this advance in democracy, its ill-timed presentation did not defeat the Initiative and Referendum along with it.



When the holding of a Constitutional Convention was under discussion about a year ago, and the importance of concentrating all effort upon the Initiative and Referendum was manifest, suffrage leaders took a pronounced position which, under the circumstances, made co-operation between suffragists and direct legislationists, generally impracticable or ineffectual.* Suffragists ignored the fact that the Initiative and Referendum is the gateway to their measure as well as to every other; and although many suffragists have worked faithfully and efficiently for this measure, the influence of their movement was centered upon suffrage regardless of the Initiative and Referendum. This could not have been without effect in cooling the ardor for woman suffrage of many men. Even if it did not cool their ardor, the throwing of both those fighting questions into the arena at the same time compelled a choice, so far as active service was concerned. Every word that a pronounced woman-suffragist said for the Initiative and Referendum would almost necessarily make votes against the latter among opponents of the former. That both questions should have been before the people at the same time was ill-advised; and if there was any doubt before in woman suffrage circles, there ought to be none now. The Initiative and Referendum should have had right of way *in the interest of woman suffrage itself*. Had that measure not been adopted, woman suffrage would now be postponed in Ohio for twenty years. As it is, the direct legislationists having carried their Amendment, it will be a fighting question again as soon as the signatures for it of 10 per cent of the voters are obtained—a process that will be in itself intensely educational.



The thrusting of the woman suffrage question into the recent Ohio campaign was ill-timed for an additional reason. The corrupt and corrupting liquor traffic, the corrupt and corrupting monopoly interests, and a certain coercive ecclesiastical element, were considerably alarmed over the Initia-

tive and Referendum alone. They were more than doubly alarmed when they faced both questions at once. And the juxtaposition made it easier for them to oppose both effectively. At the same time it was harder for woman suffragists and direct legislationists to co-operate effectively. The democratic side was weakened by the very circumstances that strengthened the enemy. And for this the putting of the woman suffrage amendment into the same campaign with that for the Initiative and Referendum was responsible.



But in saying that the woman suffrage question at that election was ill-timed, we do not mean to be understood as implying that it could have been prevented. It is part of the power of plutocracy in action that its differing factors can deliberately combine for temporary emergencies, and part of the weakness of democracy in action that its differing factors cannot deliberately combine. Democratic leaders are often driven into untactical positions by the democratic hosts behind them. This is doubtless what happened in Ohio among the suffragists. For better or worse it couldn't be helped. Let all be grateful, then, that in seizing upon an inopportune moment for a trial of strength, the woman suffragists lost their own amendment only, and not the Initiative and Referendum also. Thanks to the adoption of the Initiative and Referendum, woman suffrage in Ohio is postponed, not for twenty years as the danger was, but no further than it would have been if its advocates had delayed it voluntarily in favor of the Initiative and Referendum.



Ecclesiastical Influences.

Denying that she had ascribed the defeat of woman suffrage in Ohio to opposition of the Catholics, Anna Shaw is reported as saying that she does not believe the Catholic vote was cast against the woman suffrage amendment. That Dr. Shaw is right, is a reasonable inference. It is a mistake for non-Catholics to assume that Catholic voters are obedient to priests in political matters. Unfortunately, though, Catholic voters are as a rule disposed to be so reserved about their independence as to confirm impressions in non-Catholic circles that ecclesiastics do control them. The particular reason for the mistaken notion in Ohio with which Dr. Shaw's name has been unjustly associated, was the wholesale distribution inside of Catholic churches in Ohio on the 1st—two days before the election on the Constitutional

*See Publics of October 27, 1911, page 1091, and November 3, page 1118.