

THE CALIFORNIA  
ELECTION

The election in California certainly indicates a tendency toward more radical democracy in the more recently settled States, if not throughout the United States. The referendum, the initiative, and the recall have been adopted by decisive majorities; woman suffrage has been adopted by a majority that is very much smaller. The figures at the end of last week were roughly reported as follows:

For initiative and referendum, over 60,000.

For recall, about 100,000.

For woman suffrage, 2,050.

Altogether there were twenty-three amendments submitted, but fifteen of these dealt with only five distinct subjects. One group of five amendments gave larger powers to the railway commission and privileges to its employees; another group of six gave larger powers to cities and counties in making their own charters; another group of three pertained to the courts of the State; and a group of two put in practice the principles of the short ballot. One important amendment provided for workmen's compensation, and one provided for civil service reform, which in California has been strangely lacking. All of these are, according to unofficial reports, adopted. At first the amendment providing for woman's suffrage was reported as defeated; and immediately the advocates of woman's suffrage announced their intention of having recourse to the newly adopted process of initiative to bring the question anew before the people of the State next year. Nobody seemed to think it worth while to consult the women themselves on the question, though their wishes should be decisive of the question. If a majority of the women desire the suffrage, it should be and would be generally given, because, whether it is desirable or not, it is not so undesirable to have women voting as it would be to have half the

women of the State believe that their just rights were denied them by the men. If, on the other hand, only a minority of the women desire the suffrage, there is a palpable inconsistency in asking the men to force upon the other women as their right a burden from which they wish to be relieved. The referendum, initiative, and recall have been adopted in California, as they have been proposed elsewhere, as a remedy for bossism. It remains to be seen whether the remedy will prove efficacious. We think it is one to be held in reserve; that the short ballot principles, as expounded by Mr. Childs in his interesting book of which we wrote last week, should be made a precedent reform, and the direct appeal to the people for town-meeting legislation should be reserved for a last resort. The Outlook is strongly opposed to applying the recall to the judicial office and thus making it possible at any time to transform a town-meeting into a court of appeals. But we can understand why recent events have led the people of California to adopt the perilous remedy for the injustice wrought by technicality and traditionalism, if by nothing worse, in the courts. And we are quite sure that unless the courts in other States learn a lesson from the California election—the lesson that substantial justice is far more important than a blind adherence to technical rules or past traditions—they may expect the example set by California to be followed in other American communities.