

panic over the Iroquois holocaust, suddenly closed all the theaters in Chicago. At no time in years would every theater, even the most dangerous, have been so safe. But, instead of requiring them to adopt means of safety as the alternative of being closed, the Mayor closed them peremptorily—not because they had become more dangerous than before, but because he was “tired” of being held responsible for allowing them to remain open. Thus thousands of people were turned out of employment in the dead of Winter and without notice. The Mayor was panic stricken. Then the city council also gave way to panic as it framed a new safety ordinance. This ordinance, passed on the 18th, is so drastic that in many useless details it will not be observed and cannot be enforced after the general feeling of fear has passed away. Then the whole thing will be forgotten. From neglecting the useless details it will be an easy step to neglecting others; and by easy stages we shall return to the old conditions, to be again aroused by another preventable disaster. Some idea of the doll-like intelligence with which this ordinance has been formulated may be derived from its requirement as to exits. The word “Exit” must not be used, “lest theater goers might not understand its meaning.” A luminous phrase takes its place—“This way out.” For greater security megaphonic phonographs should be required at every exit, adjusted like automatic sprinklers to go off at a certain temperature with repetitions of the words “This way out”; for theater goers who can’t learn the meaning of “Exit” might not know how to spell.

In the art of thinking without thought, the attorney general of New York appears to be accomplished. Asked for his official opinion as to the effectiveness of the death penalty in his State, he replied that it seemed to be effective because no man who had been subjected to it had ever again committed murder! This is an ar-

gument not merely for sustaining the death penalty but for extending it. If thus effective in preventing second murders it might be made effective in preventing all murders. Execute everybody and nobody would commit murder—unless execution itself is murder, in which case the question is more profound than a question of effectiveness.

It is evident from the reports of Congressional debates in the Record, that Congressman Baker’s speeches on fictitious prosperity (p. 602) have gone to their mark. The verbose Grosvenor and the pretentious but irresponsible Hepburn find it impossible to treat Baker with ordinary courtesy on the floor. Yet Baker has said nothing personally offensive. The stings in his speech were its indisputable facts and its unanswerable logic.

Detroit is to be counted among the cities that have adopted and clung to the Winnetka referendum system (vol. iv., p. 34; vol. v., p. 228). The report of the Detroit Municipal League, recently made, describes and comments upon it as follows:

The amendment to the rules of procedure adopted by the common council two years ago, granting an optional referendum on all franchise ordinances, was unanimously readopted this year and observed by the common council with the same good faith. The optional referendum permits an expression of the wishes of the voters, before the ordinance is passed, when five per cent. of the qualified electors by petition ask for it within 30 days after third reading. These rules thus give the people, when they choose to exercise the privilege, an equal opportunity with the corporation or the promoter to let their wishes be known to the common council. Under such rules the people themselves, only, are to blame if undesirable or harmful franchises are granted, while the aldermen deserve and receive the credit due for enactments that redound to the public good. The franchise speculators’ and trust promoters’ indorsement is lacking, otherwise the approval of these rules would be practically unanimous. The members of the common council and their constituents, so far as your committee learns, earnestly approve these amended rules of procedure that place them in closer touch. The

general public’s participation in the consideration of franchise problems is stimulated thereby, for the optional referendum rules give the qualified voters, when they desire it, the opportunity to formally express their approval or disapproval of a franchise-granting ordinance, before the ordinance is finally passed upon, a privilege heretofore denied the grantor—the public—but always given the grantee—the promoter, or the franchise-seeking corporation. With these rules in force, the chance for the passage of ill-advised or oppressive franchise ordinances, appears remote.

On Ellis Island, New York, a curious case of imprisonment may be observed. The prisoner is confined in a cage; literally in a cage, such as may be seen in menageries. It is about 9 feet long by 8 feet wide; the two ends are closed only with bars, so that the prisoner is never concealed from view; the whole contrivance stands in the middle of the floor of a basement room, and about 15 feet from the windows; and no one is allowed to approach it except in the presence of vigilant guards. The involuntary occupant of this cage is not a dangerous lunatic. He is not a convicted criminal. He is a sane gentleman of education and refinement, a peaceable subject of Edward VII., a man of affairs, a retail clerk (shopkeepers’ assistant) when at home in London, and the head of the shop assistants’ union of Great Britain. He came to New York to arrange for organizing the retail clerks of this country in an international union with those of Great Britain. As soon as he came he was arrested. But not for any crime known to the laws of any modern nation. He was arrested for the medieval offense of “disbelieving” something. The something which this gentleman does not believe in is organized government. It is because he “disbelieves in organized government,” and for nothing else—let us repeat, for nothing else, for that is all the official and the judicial records show—that this man, John Turner, is confined like a wild animal in that cage upon the mere say-so of a member of President Roosevelt’s cabinet. There is probably no place in the