

not increased in proportion to the prices of necessities, but the rich reap great profits through their indebtedness to the poor. "The hard-working saving people," Moody's continues, "put their money into banks and policies. The stockholders of these corporations take these honest full-value dollars and invest them in bonds, stocks and notes. They pay the depositors and policy holders 3 to 3½ per cent. interest. At the end of say ten years. the depositor or policy holder calls for his money. He receives it back in shrunken dollars that have lost one-third of their value." This seems truly enough to have been the effect of money depreciation. It is a fair assumption, however, that if money were to appreciate, the same rich depredationists who now reap the profits of depreciation by making themselves debtors of the thrifty poor, would turn themselves into creditors in some fashion in order to reap the profits of appreciation. Mr. Bryan never contended that depreciation would not despoil creditors, nor that appreciation would not despoil debtors. He insisted upon the contrary result as to each. Neither did he advocate abnormal depreciation. What he demanded was steadiness of prices. His whole contention rested upon the theory that, with other things the same, bi-metalism would maintain steadiness, so that commodities would rise or fall in price in response, not to changes in money standards, but to changes in the cost of production of the commodities.

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#### Denatured Alcohol.

Public sentiment proposes, but government bureaus dispose. Public sentiment proposed the freeing from taxes of alcohol for use in the arts, and Congress accordingly abolished taxes on denatured alcohol. But the internal revenue bureau, ostensibly for the purpose of guarding against the manufacture of alcohol for consumption, makes regulations that virtually prevent competition in the manufacture of the denatured article. The competitive advantages expected from denatured alcohol are thereby nullified, very much to the satisfaction, no doubt, of the Standard Oil trust, which opposed the enactment of the law.

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#### Hanged on a False Confession.

Last summer a young man, Richard Ivens (p. 292), was hanged at Chicago upon his own confession of a murder which it is evident beyond reasonable doubt he never committed. The murder was a brutal one, the people were wildly indig-

nant, an innocent man has been hanged, and the murderer is still at large. All this is the result of a combination of circumstances that may easily recur. A populace demands vengeance; a detective force too incompetent or too lazy to work out clews, devotes itself to forcing confessions; a weak boy is arrested and, under hypnotic conditions, confesses; a public prosecutor who measures his success merely by the number of his convictions, prosecutes the boy and adds another conviction to his string; a trial judge who cares more for what he would call "putting down crime" than for administering justice in each particular case, ignores the circumstances that point to falsity in the confession; a Supreme Court without the courage to stand between a mob and its victim, refuses a re-hearing upon new evidence of a most impressive character. That the confessions were false is evident from the circumstances which Dr. Christison points out in his recent pamphlet on the case (Chicago); that the boy made them in a state of mental irresponsibility is apparent both from Dr. Christison's pamphlet and the able and interesting psychological article, "Untrue Confessions," which appears in the Times Magazine for January under the signature of Hugo Munsterburg, professor of psychology at Harvard. For the prevention of these miscarriages of justice it is impossible, perhaps, either to restrain the partisanship of prosecutors, or to correct the lopsidedness of weak judges; but it is not impossible to abolish capital sentences nor to put an end to the police "sweat box." Capital sentences serve no good purpose, even at best. When the convict is guilty, they do not reform him nor prevent similar crimes by others; they only satisfy a brutal craving for vengeance. The police "sweat box" is a torture chamber in which men with the mentality of rat-catchers win the reputations of astute detectives by forcing false confessions out of weak suspects, while the real criminals go their unobstructed ways. The Ivens tragedy should be made a point of departure.

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#### The Chicago Traction Fight.

The problem now confronting Chicago with reference to the traction controversy (pp. 874, 891) seems to center about the question of referendum or no referendum. The ordinance is probably a desirable one. But as it is long and complex, there may be hidden away in its verbiage tricky provisions which the companies may use for a club, as they but recently used the 99-year franchise. That there are some such tricky pro-

visions is a fair inference from the fact that the companies, et al., are so eager to make a "hurry-up" matter of the ordinance. The Tribune, which has labored for the stock-jobbing interests steadily, is now so much in love with this ordinance, the supposed principle of which as outlined in the Werno letter it despised last Summer, that it is running a faked referendum with a view to having the ordinance adopted without a real referendum in the Spring. United with the Tribune in trying to rush the ordinance through, are the Lawson papers, which have opposed every referendum heretofore; the Republican business and political clubs, which have always favored the stock-jobbers and opposed referendums; and the "local improvement clubs," which have been organized by agents of the public utility corporations for just such purposes as this. When the same newspapers and organizations that have all along stood by the stock-jobbing traction interests, and opposed the past referendums whereby alone the traction interests of the city have been saved—when these soldiers of plutocracy line up with absolute unanimity by the side of the traction companies in opposition to a referendum on the pending ordinance and in favor of its immediate adoption, there is reasonable ground for grave suspicion. If this ordinance has no tricks hidden away in its verbiage, it will suffer none from a three months' referendum campaign. The people who have waited more than ten years for good service can afford to wait that much longer rather than be buncoed again. If the ordinance has tricky provisions in it, let the people have the opportunity to hunt for them. Any man, any paper, any organization, which demands the passage of this ordinance without a reasonable opportunity for public inspection, discussion and deliberation, is fairly an object of suspicion. Unless approved on a referendum it should be rejected. This policy is not new. Mayor Dunne distinctly pledged himself to it in his campaign, and so did Mr. Harlan, his Republican adversary. So also did the city council unanimously a year ago. For the friends of the ordinance to advise now against this policy, is to indicate that the ordinance will not bear investigation and that they know it.

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#### Is It a Railroad Board of Equalization?

Of the Illinois Board of Equalization it is often said that its membership is owned and its action is dictated by the railroads whose franchise valuations it is required by law to assess. On this

matter we disclaim all knowledge. The Board may be morally immaculate, for all we know to the contrary. It must be admitted, however, that its standards of morality, when considered in connection with its actions, tend to produce confusion in the mind.

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This Board is in law the original assessor for taxation of the value of all railroad franchises within the State. The law very definitely points out its mode of procedure. It must ascertain the fair cash value of the capital stock of the railroads, this being obviously the only reasonable basis for estimating the value of the roads, over and above their indebtedness. Having thus ascertained the net value of the roads, the Board is then required by the law to deduct the assessed value of their tangible property, for the taxation of which other provisions in the law are made. The remainder, as a moment's reflection shows, is the value of the franchises, and it is this value that the State by this means aims to reach for taxation. Without some such process the franchise values would escape taxation altogether. It was evidently the intent of the law that they should not escape. Nevertheless they have escaped, year after year, because the Board of Equalization has established for its own guidance the arbitrary, unlawful and absurd rule that a railroad company's capital stock is worth no more for purposes of taxation than the value of its tangible property; in other words, that franchise values are not taxable property. The courts have always overruled this practice when cases have reached them; but the Board assumes to overrule the courts in the other cases.

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One of the consequences of this lawless procedure by the Board of Equalization has been the financial strangulation of Chicago. Some years ago the Teachers' Federation attacked the Board of Equalization in the Courts and forced it to tax the Chicago utilities corporations on the value of their franchises. This resulted in adding some six or seven hundred thousand dollars to the city's annual income, of which the schools get about \$250,000. But the Board of Equalization has disregarded in other cases the action of the courts in this case. And now Mayor Dunne's law department has taken a step toward enforcing the same rule of law against the steam railroads that the Teachers' Federation brought to bear against the street car companies of Chicago. Corporation