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EDITORIAL

A Useful Memorial.

At the Iroquois theater fire in Chicago three years ago, two nieces of Mr. Charles R. Crane lost their lives, and the tragic circumstances inspired Mr. Crane to employ Mr. John R. Freeman, president of the Society of American Engineers, to devote himself to the solution of the problem of making such disasters impossible. In consequence, a book on the subject by Mr. Free-

man has just been issued by Mr. Crane as a gift to the public. Whether so intended or not, this book is the noblest possible memorial to the children whose death inspired it.

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Bryan and the Car Shortage.

It hardly needs explanation that the car shortage in the Northwest, causing widespread and intense distress for want of coal, was deliberately planned by railroads interested in coal production, for the purpose of increasing the price of coal. Not many more experiences like this will serve to prove how tremendously right Bryan was in his New York speech when he warned the people of the growing power and greed of the railroad monopoly, and argued for government ownership.

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Sources of Wealth.

It was a curious fallacy into which Mr. Carnegie fell, when in his speech before the National Civic Federation in New York he confused fortunes earned by useful work with fortunes appropriated by levying tribute upon useful workers. His illustration of two farmers of equal industry, one of whom gets a farm where population does not multiply and consequently remains poor, whereas the other gets a farm where population does multiply and consequently grows rich, does not exemplify, as Mr. Carnegie assumes that it does, the financial benefits of partnership with the community. It is an illustration of the financial benefits of despoiling the community.

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The Debtor Class and Cheap Money.

In connection with the remarkable explanation by Moody's Magazine of the effect upon the working classes of the country of the depreciation of gold, upon which we commented last week (p. 891), that magazine made the concession, no less remarkable, that the depreciation of gold has given us the cheap dollar which Mr. Bryan tried to secure through the remonetization of silver. But it seems that the resulting prosperity, the very prosperity that Mr. Bryan predicted as an effect of cheap money, has not been shared by the poorer classes. "The rich debtors," says Moody's, "are pocketing the great bulk" of the advantages of depreciation. Not only have wages

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-