

He must be blind, indeed, who cannot see that this much talked of increase in wages is a voluntary contribution to Mark Hanna's campaign fund. There is no increase among the employes of competitive business. It is only employes of trusts whose wages are advanced. That is proof enough that the increase is given voluntarily by the trusts, and not forced by conditions of the labor market. And being given voluntarily by the trusts, the inference is plain that their object is to remove from the minds of working men the deepening impression that McKinley prosperity is for trusts and speculators alone.

We speak advisedly when we say that in competitive businesses wages are not being raised. An illustrative instance is afforded by one of the largest competitive mercantile houses of Chicago. Its sales have immensely increased. There is every appearance in its business of exceeding prosperity. But its working force has been only slightly augmented, the old force being obliged to handle most of the new business at the old wages. And the wages of employes whose earnings depend upon their sales have declined, though their sales have increased. One salesman whose sales last year were fully \$10,000 greater than the year before, made something like \$200 less; and the firm, of course, reaped a smaller profit upon his larger volume of sales than they had the year before upon his smaller volume. This house is doubtless a fair example. It would appear to be true enough, then, as one of the McKinley trade papers pleasantly explained last summer, that the peculiarity of McKinley prosperity is that it means more business at a lower profit, and harder work for less wages.

In some instances the pretended increase of wages by the trusts, for political effect, is an unblushing fraud. The vaunted increase in the Cleveland factories, for example, still leaves wages there lower than they were when President McKinley took

his oath of office. Of how many other instances the same thing is true we are unprepared to say; but it is doubtless true of most, and we shall not be surprised to learn that when all things are considered the beneficiaries of this arbitrary increase of wages, now so assiduously advertised, will find their annual incomes no better than in 1896, and worse than in 1893.

As to employes who are not classed as "laborers" and are not organized in unions, their wages have notably fallen. Minor experts, clerks, bookkeepers, minor business men, all have suffered; and they are doomed to suffer more. From good incomes to poor ones, from well paid clerkships to badly paid ones, from \$50 a week to \$25, from \$25 to \$18, from \$18 to \$15, from \$15 to \$12, or \$10, or \$9, or even \$6,—that has been the course of wages for employment outside the mechanical and unskilled grades. And the end is not yet. Are these men to be bamboozled by the parrot cry of "prosperity?"

When trusts raise wages because they can't get help without doing it, workingmen of all grades may hopefully welcome better times. But when trusts raise wages out of their own goodness of heart, workingmen who are wise will ask themselves what kind of trap it is that the trusts are thus baiting with small chunks of generosity.

That bloody lesson which the Americans administered to the Filipinos on the 4th and 5th of February was by no means so effective as it was then expected to be. Six weeks have gone by and the Filipinos are still fighting. Not only do they keep up an irritating sharpshooting fire upon the American outposts, and almost daily engage the American line at one point or another in skirmishes, but they fight also within the American lines. Their marksmanship is observed to be improving, and American casualties are increasing.

Gen. Otis is now reported as estimating that this Philippine war, which was to have been over in a day, will be ended in three months. He is arranging, it is said, to utilize the reinforcements now arriving, by penetrating the jungle with parallel columns and driving the Filipinos out. That is more likely a movement of newspaper than of military design. It is exactly the kind of movement, at any rate, that the Filipinos are apparently trying to tempt Otis into making. So far as they are concerned, it could result only in scattering them temporarily; while it would carry many a poor American soldier to his death by exhaustion and disease.

The real trouble at Manila, as some of the reports begin to complain, is that the Filipinos refuse to play according to the rules of the deadly game. If they would only meet the Americans in a square stand up fight, the Philippine question could be settled quickly with modern guns. But they obstinately refuse to do this. It suits their purpose better to worry the American troops, which they appear to be succeeding in to their entire satisfaction. That at any rate is the inference to be drawn from the guarded official reports and the censored news dispatches.

American imperialists may congratulate themselves upon the approval which Cecil Rhodes bestows upon their policy, and increase their sanguinary enthusiasm as they contemplate the programme he marks out for them. Premising that it is the duty of the United States to help to give barbarians "a white man's government," he predicts that in the performance of that duty the United States will not stop with the Philippines, but will go on conquering until by force of arms Mexico, Central America, and all South America, as well as the West Indian islands, have come under its rule. This sounds like the passionate wail of an anti-expansionist. But it isn't. It is the hearty, whole-souled prophecy of as villainous an imperialist as ever tramped

upon human rights in the name of destiny and duty.

One of the autocratic fruits of our new military regime is ripening. Not long ago in Manila, Gen. Otis punished a native editor, by military law, which is nothing but arbitrary coercion, for having printed matter objectionable to the military authorities. Last week in Porto Rico, the American military governor suspended the leading paper of Ponce for criticising the military government. Before congress adjourned, a leading McKinley supporter in the lower house, said seriously upon the floor, that if some of the speeches made there in criticism of the president's policy had been made in Manila the speakers would have been tried by court martial and shot. How long will it be, at this rate, before American newspapers are edited at the point of the bayonet, and American orators allowed to speak only what the president approves. Is there nothing suggestive of the early appearance of such a regime, in the disposition of the imperialists to classify anti-imperialism as treason, and their critics as traitors?

Our imperialists have borrowed from the tory imperialists of England what they evidently regard as a seductive phrase—"trade follows the flag." This is their appeal to the instinct of commercial greed, for leave to make foreign conquests and establish foreign colonial systems. It would be only a freebooter's plea if it were true. But it is not true. England has been beguiled with this phrase; and that trade may follow her flag she has established an empire over the world, an empire such as that which the McKinley faction are trying to have this country build up for us. But Lord Farrer, in the Contemporary Review for December, has questioned the phrase. He showed that notwithstanding the enormous growth of the British empire during the last forty years, both in area and in population, there is no tendency whatever for trade within

the empire to grow any faster than trade with foreign countries. British trade with foreign countries at the beginning of the forty years was almost three times as great as with British colonies; and at the end of the period the proportions were precisely the same. Mr. Chamberlain undertakes to weaken the force of Lord Farrer's conclusion; but all he has been able to do is to show that trade with free trade countries, including colonies of the empire, increases faster than trade with protectionist countries. To the benefit of that showing American protectionists who have suddenly developed such a partiality for foreign trade that they are willing to spill blood to promote it, are welcome.

The modicum of truth in the theory that trade follows the flag is easily extracted. A subject people trade with the governing country whose flag floats over them, whether they want to or not, simply because they have to. If another flag be substituted, they will trade with the country to which that belongs; again because they have to. To illustrate: Cuban trade followed the Spanish flag when Spanish law so decreed. It would now follow the American flag should the American congress command it to. But left to itself, it would follow no flag. It would then be determined, as all trade when free is determined, by the best interests of the persons trading. The notion that trade follows the flag is true only when the flag is made a symbol of coercion, and then it is as true of the black flag of piracy as of any other flag.

"I wonder," writes George V. Wells, apropos of the article on "Who Pays the Taxes?" which The Public recently republished from the Des Moines Leader, —if The Public will endorse the unwritten, half-concealed assumption in the argument, that the wages of workingmen would be raised, or workingmen be benefited, by economy in public expenditures.

By no means. The first effect of real economy in public expenditures in

any town or city would be to reduce taxes and improve the public service, which would tend to raise wages; but this very tendency toward higher wages would stimulate competition for opportunities to work, which would react upon the labor market and tend to reduce wages again. In the end, therefore, wages would be lower rather than higher. The only persons to benefit in the long run would be the owners of local monopolies, the largest of which and the one to ultimately absorb all the pecuniary profits of more economical government, being the site of the town—the building lots within the sphere of its influence. An extreme illustration may make the point clearer. If the government of a town could be carried on without any taxes at all, wages there would be no higher for the same work than in a neighboring town where taxes were high and public revenue wasted. But land values would be higher. That this would be so, may be clearly seen upon a little reflection. There would be extra competition for a chance to live and work in that town; and the necessary effect of the competition would be to reduce the value of labor, of which there would soon be an abundant supply, and to advance the value of land, of which there would be no greater supply than before.

It is refreshing to find in a trade paper like the Engineering and Mining Journal, of New York, an acknowledgment of the truth that "high wages promote rather than prevent the lowest cost of production." The Journal's reason for this conclusion is as sound as the conclusion itself. It is that high wages "encourage the introduction of labor saving appliances and increase the intelligence and the efficiency of workmen." In proof of its conclusion the Journal shows that—though the wages we pay are the highest in the world, the total cost of production, and especially the labor item in the cost of production, for nearly everything we produce, is lower here than it is anywhere else in the world,