

strength, Leiter, who added to all these opportunities extraordinary pluck and almost exceptional indifference to the welfare of his kind, might have succeeded. But he has failed disastrously—more disastrously than was supposed when we commented last week upon his career.

That Leiter did hold up the price of wheat to a degree and for a time is doubtless true. But as soon as the world's markets began to respond to the reports of more extensive seeding and better crops, the doom of his exploit was sealed. Had he gone on with it, though with limitless capital, his work would have been like that of the old woman who tried to dip up the ocean with her little tin cup. The greater his corner grew, the more would crops have increased. There was probably never a time when Leiter's corner held the price of wheat much above the point to which it would have risen without him; but even that difference has now disappeared. It is likely that for a time wheat will bring less than it is really worth, just as for a time it brought more. That is the law of action and reaction. But the tendency to a new equilibrium has now set in, and unless the new crops fail we shall soon find the price of wheat not far from where it was when the Indian famine first gave it an upward impulse, and awoke Mr. Leiter to the possibilities of one of the grandest opportunities in the whole history of gambling.

THE MARCH OF EMPIRE.

To say that the United States has turned away from the principle of local self-government in which it was founded would have a dolefully pessimistic sound. Yet such a tendency has certainly set in. If one would recognize it, he has but to read some of the very legible signs of the times.

One of these signs is connected with a recent decision of the United States circuit court of appeals for the 9th circuit. That court decided that an act of congress relative to matters of local concern in the territory of

Alaska is valid, notwithstanding that the act did not apply to territories generally and that no authority to make such a law is conferred upon congress by the constitution. According to the opinion of the court, the territories of the United States "are not organized under the constitution, nor subject to its complex distribution of the powers of government as the organic law, but are the creation, exclusively, of the legislative department, and subject to its supervision and control;" and so the court lays down the comprehensive rule—a startling rule when its possibilities of undermining popular government in the United States are considered—that as regards any territory of the United States not a state in the union, the central government "has the entire dominion and sovereignty, national and municipal, federal and state."

Upon the strength of this decision a powerful sentiment is being worked up in favor of retaining the territory we may capture in the present war, and governing it forever from Washington without the consent of the people so governed. Indeed it is distinctly argued, and so far as we can see correctly argued, that the decision will sustain any kind of government, either with a limited suffrage or without suffrage, that congress may choose to impose. In other words, it is proposed upon the basis of this decision to have the United States, originally organized as a mere federation of states with limited and carefully defined powers, take one more and a tremendous stride in the direction of unlimited empire.

Outlying territory has been taken into the union heretofore. The great Northwest Territory, since divided up into several states, came within the jurisdiction of the United States just before the adoption of the constitution. The ordinance established for its government by the congress of the old confederation exhibits the spirit of the makers of the constitution. A pure democracy was secured to its people. And following that precedent, all new territory thus far acquired has been acquired with a view to statehood. Though congress has regulated territorial governments,

it has done so in the spirit of democracy and with a view to the admission of the territories—as soon as the number of their inhabitants would justify the change—to all the rights of the several states, including the right to local self-government. The exercise by the government of the United States of "entire dominion and sovereignty, national and municipal, federal and state," in perpetuity, was never contemplated as to a single acre of earth outside the District of Columbia, until now. Local self-government is of the essence of the American policy.

The District of Columbia has, indeed, been governed for 20 years exclusively by congress, the people there having no voice whatever in either the making or the execution of the laws under which they live. This has been done under express constitutional sanction. The experiment is widely boasted of as successful. One ex-senator has mentioned it as an example of the most successful government's being one in which the governed have no voice. It is a successful government, however, only from the point of view of the richer classes. Landowners in the District of Columbia are under this system enriched without being really taxed. Naturally, such a government is the best from the standpoint of large landowners. There is not a large landowner in Christendom who would not like to live under a government of that kind. It robs other classes to enrich his. But when all the people who live in the District of Columbia are considered, the superimposed government there is not the best. A Tweed or a Croker would give a better government to the largest proportion of the people. But whether apparently better or worse, the government of the District of Columbia is un-American, in which simple and seemingly dogmatic expression there is really a whole battery of argument.

The fact that the District of Columbia has been so long governed in this anti-American fashion, added to the fact that it is now proposed to take Hawaii, the Philippines, and the Spanish West Indies, and establish this kind of government there in perpetuity, shows that we are drifting away from democratic moorings. Let

this policy be that far extended, and what with federal injunctions as part of the machinery of our criminal law, with the assumption over state legislation by the federal judiciary of what amounts to general jurisdiction, and with a large standing army of hireling soldiers, for which a demand is being fostered, the American republic will soon be transformed into an American empire with all that empire implies. And one thing that empire implies is an emperor. Even if we only call him "boss," he will be emperor none the less. What is an emperor but the "boss" of an empire?

THOSE LAZY WORKINGMEN.

Wyckoff's story of "The Workers" is continued in the June number of Scribner's Magazine. His experiences are still confined to Chicago, but now he has steady work. It is hard and monotonous and poorly paid, but the best he could find after long drilling in the army of the unemployed.

Mr. Wyckoff's description of his life both in the factory and in the workingmen's boarding house where he lived during this experience, is almost photographic in its fidelity, as indeed all his literary work in connection with his labor investigations has been. For that reason alone it is intensely interesting. But it is more than interesting in the ordinary magazine sense; it offers to the comfortable classes better opportunities than they often come up with of understanding the workingman's point of view. The most important is in connection with the disposition of workingmen, so frequently complained of or sneered at, but little understood, to discourage exceptional industry among their number.

It was not long after entering the Chicago factory before Wyckoff found, as he says, that a workman "was not free to employ his utmost skill when he became an expert." On the contrary, there "seemed to be a tacit agreement in each department of the factory as to what should constitute the maximum of day's labor," below which point "a man might fall if he chose, but beyond it he was not at liberty to go." His liberty in this particular was restrained by his fellow workmen. And this did not ap-

ply alone to hands who worked by the day. It was applicable, also, to piece hands. Indeed, it is of the piece hands especially that Mr. Wyckoff speaks when he notes the restriction.

This restriction has usually been regarded by the people for whom Wyckoff writes as evidence of the unthrift and narrowness of the working classes. Most of them have no ambition to rise in the world, it is argued, and lest ambitious fellows outstrip them, they force upon the whole class their dead-level rule. But Mr. Wyckoff is too observant to be fooled by such a superficial explanation, and too honest to be silent as to the true reason for the rule. It is not founded in laziness nor in any spirit of meanness, but is established as a measure of protection.

"The reason was very obvious," says Mr. Wyckoff, and he explains it fully in these few words, his reference being as before to the piece-worker: "Even a few men, in continually passing, by any considerable margin, the accepted daily average, would inevitably produce the result of a cut in the pro rata price, until wages were down again to the accustomed level."

New as this explanation will doubtless be to hosts of Mr. Wyckoff's readers, it is of course not new to workingmen themselves, nor to people who have taken any sympathetic interest in labor questions, nor yet to large employers of labor. To all these it is as obvious as it was to Wyckoff. Ambitious workmen, straining themselves to outstrip their fellows in industry, skill and thrift, set a pace which the others must emulate or go to the wall. But this pace relates in the outcome not to work and wages, but to work alone. It is not a pace that elevates, but one that kills. Though a few individuals may for a time increase their own wages by better or harder work than the ordinary, they cannot thereby increase wages generally. Consequently, should their extraordinary level of work come to be the established level, compensation for it will be not the higher pay which they receive as exceptional workmen, but the lower pay which their fellows receive as ordinary workmen.

To illustrate: Suppose piece wages

to be one dollar per unit of work, and the ordinary day's wages for work of that grade to be two dollars. An ordinary hand would then do about two units a day. Assume, now, that a few hands appear who do two and a half units. They will, therefore, receive \$2.50 a day, or 50 cents more than ordinary wages. So long as these exceptional men are few—not enough to affect the trade—wages for piece work will remain at one dollar per unit, and they will get \$2.50 a day as against the two dollars which ordinary hands will obtain. But as soon as they have set the pace, and ordinary hands produce two and a half units a day, instead of only two, the latter will come to be regarded as the day's stint. Then, ordinary wages for work of that grade still remaining at two dollars a day, the wages for this piece work will fall from one dollar per unit to 80 cents. If, after that, the exceptional workman would distinguish himself, he must do more than two and a half units of the work.

In other words, workingmen have discovered that those of exceptional capacity for work, if given free rein, would tend not so much to improve their own conditions by outstripping their fellows, as to prejudice the whole working class. For that reason there has come to be a tacit agreement among them, not only in every department of one factory, as Mr. Wyckoff says, but in every department throughout the whole field of mechanical labor, to restrict the industry of workmen within a certain maximum.

But the vital point in connection with this matter is neither the fact that such restriction is made, tacitly or otherwise, nor that the reason for it is a fear of the working class that if exceptional workers were allowed full play, wages, relatively to product, would fall, but why such a cause should have such an effect. Why is it that extra industry and skill tend to reduce wages?

Superficial explanations have it that competition operates to force wages down as production increases. But that implies a very narrow conception of what competition is. Would not a more careful consideration suggest that this result, instead of flowing from competition, flows from the