

accumulations of property, or of confiscating for the State all inheritances beyond a permitted amount.

This might tempt the student to digress so far as to consider whether laws of this general character are really in the public interest or whether they are purely socialistic and a distinct discouragement to the saving habits of a people; but any such consideration would be idle. This class of legislation is not a peculiar product of American democracy, whose aim is sometimes said to be to tax the rich out of existence, but is as firmly established in Europe as on this Continent. Indeed, it took its rise in Europe. So far as socialism (whatever the term may in these days mean) is concerned, the most monarchical country in Continental Europe is more prolific of legislation of a so-called socialistic tendency than any State in the American Union. Nor is Great Britain far behind.

In defence of these laws it may be said that there is no natural right by claim of which a human being should be permitted to influence the ownership of real or personal property for one instant after his death; that the sanction permitting him to designate the next possessor, or designating it for him, is merely a rule adopted by the public in order to obviate the inconvenience and disorder of property being left from time to time open to continual seizure, upon the death of its owner, by any chance finder; and that the community may with justice impose such tax upon the succession to ownership as it deems desirable: *Mager v. Grima*, 8 How. U. S. 490; *U. S. v. Perkins*, 163 U. S. 625. Whatever the reason advanced, it is at this day clear that these laws are too well established to be successfully opposed as unjust or unconstitutional. They are also too important. From taxes of this nature Great Britain derives ninety million dollars a year, or one fifth of her total revenue. Similarly, France collects over fifty million dollars, and the German Empire an even larger amount.

Thirty-eight States of the American Union, as well as Hawaii and Porto Rico, now possess Inheritance Tax Laws; every Canadian Province may also be included. In the operation of these