

## THE NEW ENGLISH TAXES.

Now that the income tax has actually been imposed upon us, it may afford those who will be especially inconvenienced by it a modicum of consolation to contrast their condition with that of the corresponding social class in England. This class has been afflicted with an income tax since 1842, and, although the hope was formerly extended to it by successive chancellors of the exchequer that the revenues of the government might increase so as to admit of the discontinuance of this tax, the rise of socialism has now extinguished this hope. Not only has the prospect of relief been cut off, but the present burdens have been materially increased by the revenue act which has lately gone into effect. In addition to the income tax, what are known as "death duties," or taxes levied upon accumulated property whenever there is a change of title by will or intestacy, are henceforth to be charged not only upon personalty but also upon real estate. These duties are progressive, and upon large estates so high as to indicate the adoption of a distinctly hostile policy against the great families of the English landed aristocracy. The taxes are therefore not so much a fiscal as a political measure, and it is from that point of view that we propose to look at them.

It is true that some claim has been made that "symmetry" required that as taxes were levied upon the personal property of a descendant, his real property should also be mulcted. This argument ignores the fact that real property is subject to local taxation, or "rates," in England, from which personalty is exempt. It also ignores the principle of the distribution of the incidence of taxation. No economist will deny that if mortgages are effectively taxed, the rate of interest will be raised to borrowers upon the security of real estate, and that the value of real estate will experience a corresponding decline. It is still more evident that a direct tax upon real estate causes a diminution of its value. It does not increase productiveness, while it subtracts from income. The possessor of real estate upon which a tax is imposed which he does not anticipate when he came into possession, inevitably suffers an impairment of his revenue. But the steady decline in the price of wheat and other agricultural products has notoriously diminished the rent-rolls of the great families of England to an extent which has seriously embarrassed many of them, and this added burden will undoubtedly give the *coup de grace* to not a few.

It is common for theorists upon taxation to speak of the acquisition of property by descent or will as something like a windfall, part of which, as in the case of

treasure-trove, may be seized by the tax-gatherers. It is generally the case, as a matter of fact, that the death of an ordinary man is not a pecuniary blessing to his family, but a serious disaster; while in the case of families of wealth, although the title may be in a single individual, the property is regarded as a family possession. The death of the nominal owner, therefore, can seldom improve the circumstances of those for whom he provided; and it is beyond question that the government in exacting a tax upon the inheritance of the widow and orphans upon the death of the husband and father, generally deprives them of a part of that income of which they have previously enjoyed the possession, though not the title.

The family ownership of property is peculiarly an institution of the English aristocracy. The great estates are all "settled" in such a way that the tenant in possession, after he has satisfied the charges upon the property for the benefit of the female member of the family and its younger sons, has but a moderate income left. The new law, however, allows no exemption on this account. There may be half-a-dozen changes of title in a generation, and should such an event occur—and it is far from unprecedented—the entire income of a large estate for that period would be confiscated by the government. Taxation was carried to this extreme under the later Roman Empire, but it is doubtful if anything like it has been seen under any civilized government. The Duke of Devonshire, in a speech full of dignified pathos, not long since explained to his tenants and neighbors at Buxton that it would be impossible for his family henceforth to contribute as they had done to public improvements. With an honorable pride he declared that neither his predecessors nor himself had looked upon the revenues of their estates as a means of exclusive or personal or selfish gratification. He made it no boast, and claimed for it no merit, that he and they not only regarded it a duty, but found it a pleasure to devote a large, and in some cases the largest, portion of this revenue to objects in which the tenants and the general public had an interest. But as the exactions of the government upon his death would amount to from six to ten, possibly to twelve, years' net income from the property, it required no calculation to see that its maintenance upon the former principles ceased to be possible.

This result is admitted to be probable by all, although many upholders of the new taxes regard it as lamentable. Lord Farrer, in a very earnest, although very feeble, defense of the budget, deploras the divorce from the popular party of the great houses, who for more than a cen-

tury "have loved the people well." He adds:

"Nor can anyone travel through this beautiful England of ours without feeling how much of its beauty, of its charm, of all its inherited 'wealth of hall and bower,' of park and moor and field and forest, traversed by pleasant paths and open to enjoyment by the whole community, is due to the proper pride, the wealth, the taste and the liberality of successive generations of noblemen and squires who have spent in adorning the country the means and efforts which in other countries have been devoted to seaside villas or to urban palaces. It will be an evil time for town dwellers in England when Yorkshire and Sussex, Cumberland and Devonshire are cut up into ten-acre villas or three-acre allotments."

Lord Farrer endeavors to console himself for the coming downfall of the great families by the reflection that rich men will buy and maintain the country seats which these families will be compelled to relinquish. Doubtless this will be so; but the sentiment of loyalty cannot survive the change. The lands once owned by the nobility of France are all occupied and their castles tenanted; but a rich bourgeoisie is not an aristocracy.—*Ex.*

## WORD HISTORY.

Puss, the common name for cat, is a corruption of the Persian word *pers*, a cat.

Gossip was once a sponsor in baptism, next any elderly person, finally a tale-bearer.

Tories were originally bands of Irish outlaws. The Celtic word *toree* means robber.

Vagabond was once only a traveller going from place to place on pleasure or business.

Carbuncle means a little glowing coal, the appearance of the gem suggesting the name.

Mohair is properly Moor hair, or Angora wool, introduced into Europe by the Moors.

Bayonet was so called because it was first made at Bayonne, in France. It was originally a knife stuck in the muzzle of a gun.

Sycophant was once an Athenian government official who inspected the baggage of travellers to prevent the exportation of figs.

Canoe, chocolate, hominy, maize, opossum, tomato, tomahawk and some others have come to us from various Indian languages.

Castanea gave its name to the chestnut, large groves growing near the city, which was anciently famous for its exports of this nut.

Tabby, the name of a peculiarly marked cat, was so called because its markings resembled those of a watered silk made at Atabi.