

The war revenue bill as it came from the lower house to the senate, backed by the votes of most of the republicans and some of the democrats, is utterly wicked. How grossly wicked is demonstrated by Thomas G. Shearman, who, without prejudice or partisanship, has analyzed it. According to Mr. Shearman's analysis this bill puts only 10 per cent. of war taxation upon the principal owners of invested wealth, while it puts 30 per cent. upon the middle class, who have some wealth but depend mainly upon their earnings, and the enormous proportion of 60 per cent. upon those who depend exclusively upon their daily earnings. So it appears that 90 per cent. of these "patriotic" taxes is to be paid by the two classes that will do most of the fighting, while the rich class, though it escapes most of the fighting, will pay only 10 per cent. of the taxes. In other words, the bill is a measure for virtually exempting the rich. Yet the plutocratic press, and plutocratic members of congress, and plutocrats of every degree—from the poverty-stricken lickspittle to corrupt and corrupting "captains of industry"—shout themselves hoarse with the cry that he who wishes to alter this unfair law is "unpatriotic." Dr. Johnson appears to have been not so very wrong when he described patriotism as the last refuge of a scoundrel.

Owing to the strict censorship of the press in both Spain and Italy it is impossible yet to appreciate the seriousness of the riots in either nation. Evidently, however, they are in both a manifestation of industrial war. Each country imposes octroi duties upon merchandise coming into cities. This enormously enhances the price of food to the working classes and makes taxation an obvious burden, thus associating poverty with government. Added to the burden of taxation is the burden in both countries of landlordism. In Italy, the latter is so grievous that in some districts the peasants are forced to live upon putrid corn, and have conse-

quently become afflicted with a species of disease somewhat like leprosy. From the fruits of their hard labor they have hardly anything left after taxes and rents are paid.

To some it will seem strange that the suffering among Italian peasants is greatest where the land is richest. In localities where soil and climate make it possible to raise three crops a year the peasants are worse off than where only one crop can be raised. But in fact there is nothing strange about this. The same thing may be observed in the United States—indeed, all over the world. For example, what richer land have we in the United States than in our great cities. Though it may not be fertile, it is far better than fertile land. Yet it is right in our cities that poverty is keenest. The reason here as in Italy is that where the land is best the competition for the privilege of using it is most intense. Consequently the owner can rack rent his tenants more harshly there than where the land is poorer and competition for it is consequently less pressing. Landlordism and taxation evidently lie at the bottom of the Italian difficulties. This is probably true also of Spain, but the war is a disturbing factor there. In Italy not only is there no war, but there is a good king, as kings go, a good government for a paternal government, and the cause of rioting is clearly traceable to the fundamental cause of all such commotions—landlordism and oppressive taxation.

In our own country the same causes of discontent exist as in Italy, but they are hidden from public view. Though we have not the octroi in name, we have it in substance. No officer stands at the gates of our cities to levy a tax upon vegetables as they come in from the country; but officers sit at the city hall to collect license taxes from market gardeners, who add those taxes to the price of their commodities. How does that differ in principle and effect from an octroi tax? Only in this, that those who pay

it do not know that they pay it. The same is true of all the business taxes that we impose. Every storekeeper is made a collector of what are in effect octroi taxes, and in ignorance of the great burden of taxation that rests upon them, the poor of the United States are loaded down with taxes as they are in Italy. Coupled with this tax burden is also the burden of landlordism. We do not distinguish our landlords as a separate class, but rents, heavy rents, fall all the same upon our industrial classes. So heavy are these rents that speculative minds are tempted by them to buy up land for which the rent would still be low and hold it for a rise. This has been done until nearly all the vacant land of the United States is monopolized. In consequence, all kinds of employment are abnormally restricted, and men walk the streets begging, not for pennies, as do the beggars of Italy, but for work.

Occasionally this condition is brought dramatically to public attention, by the vivid writings of a Wyckoff, or the despair of some poor victim of our unhappy industrial maladjustments. An instance is before us. One day last week Albert Noha, of 1008 West Eighteenth street, Chicago, committed suicide so as to give his family the benefit of his life insurance policy. His motive was inability to secure employment. This is only one instance among thousands, happening all the time, and differing only in detail. Through landlordism and the octroi principle of taxation, the American people are being differentiated into classes of leisure and wealth on one hand, and of poverty, dependence and despair on the other. Should this process continue, the beginning of the end may be inferred from the bread riots of Europe. Social disease—and this is social disease—is the inevitable precursor of social disaster.

The appointment of civilians to important military offices is breeding a scandal for the administration. In