

Causerie

CABBAGES AND KINGS

ON March 22, 1765, "the king having had his first attack of insanity," approved the Stamp Act sponsored by Lord Granville, says the historian.

- 1 shilling tax upon ecclesiastical-court documents.
- 6 pounds tax upon a grant or privilege from a governor.
- 2 pounds tax upon a college degree.
- 4 pence tax upon a bill of lading.
- 10 shillings tax upon a public job paying 20 pounds per year.
- 4 pounds tax upon a public job paying more than 20 pounds per year.
- 4 pounds tax upon a liquor license.
- 1 shilling tax upon playing cards.
- 10 shillings tax upon a pair of dice.
- $\frac{1}{2}$ penny tax upon a half-sheet newspaper.
- 1 penny tax upon a whole sheet newspaper.
- 1 shilling tax upon a pamphlet.
- 2 shillings tax upon an advertisement.
- 2 pence tax upon an almanac.
- Etc., etc., etc., through fifty-five items.

This is our first discovery of kingly insanity being joined, in the same breath, with taxes upon industry. Lord Granville may have been aware of the opportune moment for such approval.

It would be enlightening to learn by what manner of sane reasoning Lord Granville proposed a shilling tax upon playing cards as against a ten-shilling tax upon dice; by what logic was the ten-shilling tax upon a 20 pound income jumped to a four pound tax upon an income of 20 pounds one shilling four pence half penny; by what power of deduction a penny tax upon a one-sheet newspaper was boosted to a shilling tax if the news-sheet was folded into a pamphlet.

There may have been a definite distinction between the lordly sanity which created the tax list and the kingly insanity which sanctioned it. This distinction no doubt stems from the "ancient and hoary wisdom" of which we heard so much during our law school days.

These were the days when Benjamin Franklin was actively engaged in opposing the motherland's tax methods as applied to our colonies, whilst, at the same time he was actively furthering the Grand Ohio Company's scheme to acquire twenty millions of colonial acres at a price of about ten cents for forty acres.

The landed gentry's tax torture of Franklin's fellow-men stirred him to action:

"If my countrymen should ever wish for the honor of having among them a gentry enormously wealthy, let them sell their farms and pay racked rents; the scale of the landlords will rise as that of the tenants is de-

pressed, who will soon become poor, tattered, dirty, and abject in spirit."

The Grand Ohio Company, supported by Franklin, made a heroic attempt to acquire enormous wealth by the very same means which Franklin deplored in the home-land's economic set-up.

Verily, kingly insanity may have been cause for national grief, but we find little choice between the sanities and insanities of men who agree to tax industry until revolutions result.

SOLVING MYSTERIES

A mystery which long has mystified our savants—since 1823, to be exact—finally succumbs to scrutiny.

Harking back o'er the centuries we come to a day in 1300 B. C. when a papyrus rolled off the press bearing an inscription as intelligible, to subsequent savants, as is today's Chinese laundry ticket to us. Naturally, being a papyrus, the document proceeded, in a matter-of-fact way, to become priceless regardless of what its unknown message meant. Real, old-time papyrus isn't obtainable on every five-and-ten stationery counter or book-rack. That the papyrus had something to say in an incomprehensive manner was no detraction from its value as a literary leaflet, consequently it escaped being used for kindling the kitchen fire as sacrilegiously as Republicans and Democrats and Socialists use Single Tax pamphlets because the simple language utterly confuses them.

In 1823 the Sardinian government stepped into the literary breach and buckled down to decoding the hieroglyphics. Specifically, the honorable Gustav Seyffart made the first venture at opening this literary oyster on behalf of the Sardinian savants and civil servants, but the best he could do was to analyse the texture of the papyrus and the weave of its fibres. Criminologists use the same methods today when tackling mysteries.

It wasn't until Professor Giulio Farina, the eminent Italian Egyptologist, took over the payprus puzzle ten years ago that the document was doomed as a mystery. In ten years' toil, to the year, this expert exposed to vulgar gaze the paper's meaning which heretofore had meant much less than a Wall Street ticker-tape and almost as little as a Bronx belle's first-year shorthand. Now that the mystery is solved it seems incredible that its exposure was any more difficult than opening a can of sardines in 1823.

The papyrus puzzle is simple. If we gave you ten guesses we are sure that nine of them would be "taxes," and you'd be right nine times out of ten.

And so 'tis now known that 'way, 'way back in 1300 B. C., in the day of Menes, tax lists were published and peddled just as is done by our meanies of today—tax lists which lumined the levies on inhabitants of a Lybian desert oasis (just as our assessors reach out their lean,