

ethically by special taxation. A few noblemen, whose ancestors happened to own a part of London, are now drawing millions in yearly rentals from the very people who made the land valuable, and the Government has announced the policy of partial confiscation to use in preserving the health and lives of these people. The men whose ownership has never before been questioned are saying that this is a revolution, and the statesmen are calmly replying that it is only one of the long series of revolutions which the progress of civilization has forced upon the nation peacefully or forcefully, and are proceeding with the plans. Owners of New York are squandering millions in Europe, and owners of London, millions in all parts of the world, while in each city disease and death are present for the want of just such money for sanitation. These are the facts which are directing the serious attention of statesmen to the practical problem of shaping legislation which will enable them to use this property value in defense of the people who created it. Public health is bound to be enhanced if these ideas are spread to a practical application, and the medical profession is more vitally interested than any other.

"The congestion of population of the last few decades has caused enormous changes in medical practice and there is no reason to doubt that the ideas of a few dreamers are bound to make still further revolutions. . . ."

"The tremendous modern concentration of populations is responsible for those remarkable unearned increases of wealth, and it is not at all unlikely that the proposed new taxation, if it is ever levied, will be used to pay physicians for curing the diseases the sanitarians fail to prevent. It all depends upon whether or not it is decided that society owns what it creates."

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The sound ethical and fiscal common sense shown in that editorial makes one wonder if the writer is quite ignorant of the genesis and development of the proposed system of taxation. Probably it is needless to point out to him that "radical socialists" are not responsible for it, and that it is not the idea "of a few dreamers" alone. But it is worth while to emphasize the justice of his view, that for the medical profession in particular this scheme of taxation is vitally important. Not merely in furnishing the means to enable the physicians of a great city to cope more successfully with disease and death among a crowded population, but to do away with this very crowd-

ing, with the greater depths of poverty which breed disease in all great centers.*

It will not be so necessary to furnish money for fighting disease under a just system of taxation. For an economic system which gives more equality of opportunity to every one has no place for conditions which above all are now the chief reasons for preventable disease and death. It must indeed be discouraging to a band of men who give of their mental and physical strength, of all their powers and even their very lives, as do our physicians in the effort to stem the tide of disease, and then to see it daily and hourly grow afresh in our tenement districts. Like the dwellers in the slums, our brave doctors themselves are often the actual victims of wrong conditions, and many a life the country can ill spare has been sacrificed, among the medical profession, to an economic system which permits the few to take what is earned by the many and should be used for the benefit of the many.

The medical profession, first of all, are interested in just taxation, and if the physicians of our country could see this and join the ranks of those who are fighting openly for economic justice, they would prove of inestimable assistance. Many of them are now spending their lives and their strength in a splendid effort to stamp out the White Plague, a splendid fight indeed but one sadly futile, for tuberculosis is not to be eradicated while slums exist, while hundreds of thousands of men, women and children live and work amid unsanitary conditions, ill-nourished, ill-clothed. And such conditions must exist while there exists the blatant economic injustice that puts a double burden on the earning power of the individual, to pour into the pockets of a few riches that the thrift of all has produced.

GRACE ISABEL COLBRON.

*It is for the purpose of coping with this question in this way that the Fels Fund has been organized. Endowed by Joseph Fels, it is managed by a Commission consisting of Daniel Kiefer, chairman (530 Walnut St., Cincinnati), Lincoln Steffens, Frederic C. Howe, Jackson H. Ralston and Geo. A. Briggs.—Editors of The Public.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

THE TACOMA SITUATION.*

Seattle, May 22.

In saying in my previous letter that only one public utility function was reserved by the people of Tacoma, I overlooked the fact that the city owns also its own water system, a circumstance so universal in this State that we have almost ceased to classify

*See The Public, current volume, page 488.