

## CORRESPONDENCE.

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### “PROPERTY AND INCOME” TAX.

*To the Editors of the Assurance Magazine.*

GENTLEMEN,—Much has been written, although perhaps but little to the purpose, respecting the evidence given last session before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the “Property and Income Tax” Act. As it would appear that a misconception has arisen in the minds of some writers with regard to the mode in which a Property Tax, if established on a sound basis, should be levied upon the life-tenants of entailed estates, I may perhaps be allowed to throw out the following suggestions, in the hope that they may be found to simplify the question.

There is evidently a material difference in value between a permanent income derived from existing, tangible, *realized* property, and the precarious income of a professional man or merchant. This palpable difference would modify the tax in this way.

Wherever realized property exists, the *Property Tax* may be levied by the State on the property itself, irrespective of proprietors, life-tenants, reversioners, or other dividend interests.

For the professional classes, on the other hand, it will be a tax on indi-

viduals in proportion to the capitalized value of their temporary incomes, subject to all necessary deductions.

In the case of the life-tenant of an entailed estate, or of the life-renter of money in the funds—the property being in both cases realized—the Government would, as a matter of course, take the full amount of the tax due by that property from the person in possession, leaving the several parties interested to adjust amongst themselves their several shares of contribution, as is now done for poor-rates and other taxes, there being no good reason why the Government should be called upon to interfere in any way in the various subdivisions of the full amount of tax which must be paid by the realized property itself.

The whole question of direct taxation, in its most simple and equitable form, may be looked upon as one of insurance. In exchange for the protection of life, property, and civil rights, the people agree, as it were, to pay the State a small annual premium to insure those benefits, exactly in the same manner as is now done for an ordinary insurance of property against fire. The Fire Insurance Office asks no questions of the intended insurer as to whether he is or is not the owner in fee, or life-tenant, or lessee for a term of years, of the house and property which he wishes to insure; neither would it be necessary for the Government (or State Insurance Office) to ask any of those gratuitous questions.

If the power of entailing estates and settling money be a privilege, which the owners will certainly not deny, they must be content to pay for the privilege as for any other luxury.

Whether an estate be in the hands of the freeholder, or in the occupation of a person whose successors have been selected beforehand, the “risk,” or cost of protecting that property, is the same to the “State Insurance Office,” and therefore it charges upon both the same annual insurance premium or “annual property tax.”

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

J. HILL WILLIAMS.

12, *Waterloo Place, London,*  
22nd October, 1852.

#### UNIFORM ACTION OF THE HUMAN WILL.

*To the Editors of the Assurance Magazine.*

[*Extract of a Letter from HERR LAZARUS, of Hamburgh, dated 7th December, 1852.*]

In a book recently published about Statistics from Austria (*Handbuch des Statistik des Oestereichischen Kaiserstaats*), by Joseph Hain, I found a collection of facts about the laws governing the human will; and as I think they will be of interest to you, I enclose a translation of some parts.

“Marriage is one of those social phenomena, in which the influence of the human will is of the highest consequence; marriages are most cautiously contracted: and nevertheless, even here a certain law is acting. This is proved by the results collected in Bohemia (exclusive of the army) during the period of 18 years from 1830 to 1847, as shown in the following table:—