gold standard law enacted by congress last winter. The government guarantees the payment of national bank notes. Its security for this guarantee consists of government bonds deposited by the banks to the value upon their face of the amount of the guarantee. That is, a bank depositing in the government treasury government bonds of the face value of, say, $100,000 is entitled to issue $100,000 in circulating notes guaranteed by the government. These bonds are not secured by any pledge or deposit of money. Their value depends entirely upon government credit. So far, therefore, as the guarantee by government is concerned, national bank notes are not one whit more secure than the same amount in greenbacks would be. But as the banks are themselves primarily responsible for their notes, bank note circulation is more secure than greenbacks, other things being equal, to the extent of the financial responsibility of the banks. Inasmuch, however, as the financial responsibility of national banks for their notes would be more nominal than real under circumstances which destroyed the credit of the government, national bank notes are practically no more secure than a greenback circulation would be if of equal amount. In our judgment, therefore, the redemption with non-interest bearing greenbacks of interest bearing bonds to the amount deposited by banks as security for their circulation, and the replacement of national bank notes with these greenbacks, would provide as safe a currency as the bank notes do, while saving to the people the difference in interest and cutting off the power the banks now have of arbitrarily diminishing or increasing the money volume. Of course the government would lose the trifling tax on circulation, but that would doubtless be offset by lost greenbacks. The objection urged against this policy is that the greenback system is inflexible—the volume being fixed regardless of demands for currency. That objection is sound only against abuses of the system, and not against the system itself. If greenbacks were made easily interchangeable for bonds and bonds for greenbacks, the volume of paper currency would adjust itself automatically to demand.

There is pending before congress a bill for the regulation of patents, the principle of which ought to have the support of every anti-monopoly congressman in either house. It is known as bill 2941 of the lower house, and is pending before the committee on patents. It is to come up in the house for consideration next winter. The object of this bill is to alter the patent laws so that any person may manufacture patented articles upon paying a limited royalty for the privilege. Whether the specific provisions of the bill are the best possible for the accomplishment of its purpose we do not pretend to judge. But of the principle there can be no doubt. Under the patent law as it exists, the owner of a patent can wholly prevent its use by the public. In many instances this is actually done. To do so would at first blush appear to be contrary to the self-interest of the owner; but what if the owner, wishing to prevent competition, buys up patents on competing machines and then refuses either to use the improved machines or to allow anyone else to use them? Here is a suggestion of one of the many motives for the well-known practice of suppressing inventions by abuse of the patent privilege. The purpose of the patent law is to promote invention and the use of inventions. It offers inventors protection on condition that they give the public the benefit of their discoveries. If it in fact operates to obstruct that purpose, if it enables inventors to violate their part of the contract by keeping their discoveries from the public, then it needs readjustment. To that end the bill in question seems to be well adapted at least in principle and as an initial step. While it protects the inventor, so as to secure him compensation for the labor and expense involved in inventing, it withholds from him power to make an oppressive monopoly of his improvement. He is guaranteed a fair royalty, but subject only to that compensation he must allow the public the full and unrestrained use of his discovery. This modification of the patent laws might fall short of making them ideal, but it would be in harmony with the principle of patent laws and would go far toward putting an end to the monopolies that rest upon patents.

A tax bill which went by the board for the present year upon the adjournment of the legislature of New York, but which will certainly claim the attention of the next legislature of that state, commends itself to the friendly consideration of students of taxation everywhere. We refer to the bill introduced in the New York senate last winter by Senator Nathaniel A. Elsberg. This bill would secure in methods of taxation a fundamental reform of great importance by means of a few simple amendments of existing laws. In the first place it has a local option feature. It would authorize county legislatures to prescribe by uniform rule the class or classes of property which alone should be subject to taxation. But in the next place, and this is what makes the bill unique, it contains a provision for apportioning state taxes among the counties upon the basis of their own taxes respectively laid for local uses. For that purpose the bill would empower an appropriate board to—

> apportion the taxes on the assessed value of the property, for the general purposes of the state in the ratio of the gross amount of taxes for all purposes (except state and school purposes) laid in each county in proportion to all the counties, on assessed values of property, during the tax year immediately preceding the imposing of such taxes.

This measure if adopted would completely do away with the inequalities that are now caused by equalization boards. The state board's duties would be only clerical. It would have to ascertain merely the gross

amount of taxes laid in the several counties by themselves the preceding year for local purposes; and having done that to work out a simple sum in proportion. Fraud and favoritism by the state would be out of the question, for the basis of taxation would be completely within local control. By increasing its local expenses, a county would automatically increase, while by reducing its local expenses it would automatically reduce, its state taxation. This would be a most desirable extension of the principle of local self-government. And when coupled with the provision empowering each county to select its own subjects of taxation, it would make the principle of almost perfect application. Such a law as this Elsberg bill would very quickly solve irritating problems of taxation in the only way in which they can be solved, namely, by referring them to the people who are to be taxed. It is a gratifying and encouraging fact that the Elsberg bill has the hearty support of the real estate associations of New York.

THE NEW NOBILITY.

The constitution of the United States provides, in article 1, section 9, that—

> no title of nobility shall be granted by the United States.

Why not?

The "Federalist" does not tell us, and there is little said of it in the constitutional debates. Some of the members, indeed, spoke of creating a peerage, but said that such a thing could not be thought of, because of the deep-seated prejudice prevailing against a hereditary nobility. According to Yates's Minutes, Charles Pinckney said:

> There is more equality of rank and fortune in America than in any other country under the sun; and this is likely to continue as long as the unappropriated western lands remain unsettled.

This statesman must have believed as Thomas Carlyle did, when in "Past and Present," book III., chapter 8, that great Englishman wrote:

> It is well said, "Land is the right basis of an Aristocracy;" whoever possesses the Land, he, more emphatically than any other, is Governor, Vice-King of the people.

Conversely stated, Mr. Pinckney's proposition is that with the valuable free lands of the west all taken, there would be danger of a constantly increasing tenant class, keeping pace with the growth of land monopoly and resulting finally in a landed aristocracy on the one hand and complete serfdom on the other; for population must increase, while the area of land cannot. But in view of the vast area of unoccupied land in the west at that time, its complete settlement seemed so remote a contingency that it was scarcely dreamed of by the members of the convention, and had no weight in their deliberations.

They thought it advisable, nevertheless, to put in a clause against the granting of titles of nobility. That clause was a part of the Virginia resolutions. By inserting it, the framers of our constitution showed their aversion to privilege, and their determination that whether privilege existed or or not the government should confer upon its possessors no honorary distinction. But by the use of that phrase they no more rendered their country exempt from the evils of a hereditary aristocracy than they would have made inocuous the serpent's venom by enacting that all snakes shall be called humming-birds. A title is but a name—

> the rank is but the guinea's stamp.

Privilege does not depend for its existence upon honorary distinctions. Mere titles do not create privilege, although privilege does ultimately create titles. Titles of nobility are but the emblems of the power behind them. Thy are dangerous only because of the "nobility" which they imply. It is not the duke who is dangerous, but the dukedom—the social condition of which the duke is but a symptom. The real value of such a title is in the power which it represents.

Such power is always based upon privilege—upon rights accruing solely to the holder of the title, to the exclusion of others not so favored; in short, it is based upon monopoly. From time immemorial the granting of noble titles has, with few exceptions, been either in recognition of power already in possession, or else has been accompanied by a grant of power—usually a grant of lands—commensurate with the supposed dignity of the title.

So long as individuals and private corporations have the power to monopolize natural resources or public utilities they will be the masters of all who do not share in the monopoly. The coal barons, the railway kings, the steel magnates and the whole piratical fraternity of multi-millionaires all subsist, like the regal plunderers of Europe, upon the fruits of privilege. They are an untitled nobility. The sunshine scintillates upon their gilded palaces in every great city of our land; but in the same cities there are dens of squalid misery and want, where sunbeams never penetrate, and where no kindly ray dispels the darkness of despair that lurks within.

According to Charles B. Spahr, Ph. D., author of a treatise on Distribution of Wealth, one per cent. of our families own more wealth than do the whole of the remaining 99 per cent! Now, who are the favored one per cent? Men like John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie; men who own more than any individual could produce in a dozen centuries.

And are they not princes, lords, kings? They have no titles, to be sure. But what could a paltry title add to the man who controls, for instance, the oil-producing lands of the United States? They have no coronets, but they possess that without which the coronet is but a barbaric bauble. The man who bows to the throne really makes his obeisance to the power behind the throne. The king's word, the king's name, is but "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal;" the king's power is everything. Crowns, scepters, robes of ermine and cloth of gold—all these are nothing; nothing but hated symbols. If the kingly power remain, what boots it though we lack the kingly name? A king by any other name is just as bad. The powerful Earl Warwick, known to history as "the king-maker," was no more a king-maker than one Marcus A. Hanna, of Ohio; and if Hanna really wore the crown which he sometimes wears in the newspaper caricatures he would be no more dangerous than he is to-day. And what