

Question No. 4.

Let us turn now to Question 4 of our series, "Does the existence of the Debt entail injustice?" The answering of this question necessitates an inquiry into the incidence of taxation on the various classes of citizens comprising the Nation. In 1909 I had occasion to make certain researches in connection with this subject, and arrived at the following result :—

Class.	Proportion Popula- tion.	expressed in Wealth owned.	percentage. Taxes paid.
Rich (defined as possessing £50,000 at death)	Under 1	About 70	About 33·1/3
Middle Classes (defined as dying possessed of £2,650).....	About 9-10	About 29	About 33·1/3
Lower Classes	About 90	About 1	About 33·1/3
	100	100	100

In arriving at the percentage of taxes paid, I credit the rich with the payment of 75 per cent. of the three items, estate duties, stamps, and income-tax, and with the whole of the land tax.

I credit the lower classes with paying (in proportion to their percentage of the population) 90 per cent. of the Customs and Excise dues, amounting together to about 68 million sterling. These dues embrace the taxes on tobacco, tea, rum, currants, coffee, raisins, cocoa, sugar, spirits, and beer.

I exclude from the consumption of the lower classes brandy, foreign spirits, wine, "other articles," licence duties, railways, and "other sources." Deducting the sum raised from these items from the total of 68 millions of revenue raised from Customs and Excise, we obtain a balance of 60 millions, 9/10ths of which is paid by the lower classes. In my calculations I credit the payment of the eight millions entirely to the rich and middle classes.