

# **PROGRESS AND THE FISCAL PROBLEM**

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Progress and the fiscal problem by Thomas Kirkup

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**THOMAS KIRKUP**

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FISCAL PROBLEM**



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# PROGRESS AND THE FISCAL PROBLEM

BY

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## PREFACE

THE writer of another book on the Fiscal Problem may well be asked why he should add to a pile which is already overgrown. To such an inquiry one might reasonably reply that most of the books already published on the subject bear obvious marks of haste and of bias ; but I would rather give as my main reason for offering such a book to the public my belief that some important points have hitherto been overlooked, and many have not received due attention. These I have tried to bring out, while I have laid special stress on wider aspects of progress which seem to me vitally, if not inseparably, connected with the Fiscal Problem. As the title of my book indicates, it is concerned not only with the Fiscal Problem, but with allied questions of progress.

I have not treated the subject merely as a technical question of economics, nor have I written in any party interest. As it is more than probable that certain limitations of the insular mind may have a serious influence on the question, I may add that I had the advantage of studying at Göttingen, Berlin, and Tübingen, at Geneva and Paris, and have long been familiar with the best German and French works on history and economics.

For the encouragement of prospective readers, I have as far as possible confined statistics to a special chapter, which they can leave alone if they see fit.

In conclusion, I wish to express special obligations on several points connected with commercial geography to the standard work, 'Handbook of Commercial Geography' (Longmans and Co.), of my friend Mr. G. G. Chisholm, who has also kindly revised the proofs. Such revision should be the more valuable because he differs from me entirely on the main question.

T. KIRKUP.

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# PROGRESS AND THE FISCAL PROBLEM

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THE unexpected has happened again. If anyone at the beginning of 1903 had ventured to predict that the all-absorbing topic of the country would soon be a proposal to reverse, or at least seriously to modify, the system of Free Trade which we so long have followed, he would have been refused a hearing. Yet proposals to that effect of the most far-reaching character have been made, and by a statesman of the highest eminence. Everyone has been considering and discussing them, and we may be assured that the subject is not

one of passing interest, but is likely to be a supreme concern for a long time to come.

In the agitation which preceded the repeal of the Corn Laws we may see a notable means of economic and political education. It was, indeed, the first attempt in English history to instruct the mass of the people in economic problems. The present discussion will be a far more effectual training in national and Imperial business. The question put before the country by Cobden sixty years ago was a simple one compared with those we now have to face. To use the common phrase, Britain was then the workshop of the world. In industry, commerce, and finance she had no rivals. Our colonies were wide in area, but in population were insignificant. We had only ourselves to think of, and our industrial and commercial position was unchallenged. The proposal of Cobden was merely to remove old restrictions and let things take a free course—for the Government a very easy proceeding.

At present we need not stop to contrast this simple problem with the proposals now made by Mr. Chamberlain. We can all see how