

**PROTECTION IN
VARIOUS COUNTRIES:
PROTECTION IN FRANCE**

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Protection in Various Countries: Protection in France by H. O. Meredith

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H. O. MEREDITH

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EDITED BY WILLIAM HARBUTT DAWSON

FRANCE

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PROTECTION IN FRANCE

BY

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PREFACE.

IN writing this short study of Protection in France, I have tried to confine myself to essentials, and to exclude all that did not bear directly upon the main problem, which may, perhaps, be stated thus: "Is the existing tariff fundamentally bad, or are its imperfections (whose existence most people would admit) a mere matter of detail?" This course has compelled the omission of much that is interesting, and, in its own sphere, important. Thus I have not discussed the ramifications of French bounties, because they are simply an outcrop from the general body of French Protection. Similarly I have left the policy of France towards her Colonies untouched. It was, perhaps, wise to establish an approximation towards Imperial Free Trade in 1892. But the wisdom of this step has no bearing on the main question at issue, since it could have been taken as well, or better, under a

fiscal system based on other principles. My answer to the main question propounded is that Economic Science condemns the existing system, whether the individual economist be inclined to hope much or little from Scientific Protection. Something will have been attained if I have succeeded in convincing the reader that Scientific Protectionists and Scientific Free Traders base themselves upon one body of economic science, that they are more concerned where they differ with the application of principles than with the principles, and that Mercantile Protectionists are necessarily opposed to both.

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PROTECTION IN FRANCE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY SKETCH: CHANGES IN THE FRENCH TARIFF DURING THE NINE- TEENTH CENTURY.

A DETAILED account of the changes which the French tariff underwent in the course of the nineteenth century would be beyond the scope of a book which professes only to give a general view of the history of Protection in France. The story of how each particular duty came to be "so high" and "no higher" at successive dates is interesting to the student of politics, and occasionally interesting to the student of economics. But the purpose of the present treatise will be best served by such a sketch of the general course of French policy as will fix in the mind of the reader the broad features of the tariff in each succeeding period, and will make him master of the duration of each phase, and of the chief causes which led one phase to give place to another.

Since the days when, in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the Physiocrats laid in

France the foundations of scientific economics, the tariff policy of France has passed through four phases. In two of these phases (the first and third) the tariff has been made less restrictive; in the other two (the second and fourth) the tendency has been in the other direction. The first phase extends roughly from the ministry of Turgot to the outbreak of war between England and the first Republic in 1793; the second from that date until the beginning of the Second Empire in 1852; the third until about 1880, and the fourth is still in progress. The relative positions of the several phases are easy to remember, since they nearly coincided in time with similar developments in our own country. The reforms during the first part of the Ministry of Mr. Pitt, the set-back towards extreme Protection which resulted from the Napoleonic Wars, the Free Trade reform commenced by Huskisson, and concluded by Gladstone, correspond in our own country to similar changes in the policy of France. It is true that we have not as yet any counterpart of the fourth period to show: its place has been taken here by the "Fair Trade" agitation of the 'eighties, and the present demand for tariff-reform.

In Cæsar's time, if we may believe "The Commentaries," Gaul was divided into three parts. In the reign of Louis XVI., France as an industrial unit can hardly be said to have existed at all. Tariffs barred intercourse between the several provinces—one among many reminders of