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PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF
TAXATION

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PRINCIPLES AND
METHODS OF TAXATION

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PREFACE

THE object of this work is to present in a concise and simple form an account of the British system of taxation and the principles on which it is based, together with some of the leading historical facts in its evolution. Taxation is a complex subject, and one on which there is no perfect consensus of opinion. Though in practice it compels the attention of every one in some degree, yet its principles are by no means universally understood; familiarity with the concrete facts does not impart principles of method, while the trouble of acquiring them is a barrier to many. One reason perhaps is that the subject has for the most part been discussed in general treatises on economics, or, when separately treated, has been handled with much elaboration and detail, so that few except economic students have followed up its intricacies and subtleties; the average citizen with little leisure has small acquaintance with the more learned and exhaustive analyses.

There is room, and indeed need, for a brief and logical statement of the bases of taxation and an exposition of the incidence of the tax system of this country. No topic has occupied more of public attention in recent

years, nor is any likely to exercise a greater influence on the immediate future of the nation in its application. It is desirable in the highest degree that all citizens should be able to think out the economic consequences of taxation for themselves; to this end some assistance, analytic and historic, is necessary. To satisfy the need in a succinct form is the aim of this book; it offers no new theories, but seeks to aid clear perception in a difficult and somewhat controversial field of enquiry. The task necessarily implies considerable condensation. It is hoped that the work will be found helpful, and that it may induce many readers to prosecute the enquiry in the larger classical writings on taxation, a list of which is supplied in the short bibliography at the end of the volume.

In this edition the text has been revised so as to incorporate all important changes effected by recent legislation, including financial and statistical alterations, up to 1918. The changes in taxation, public debt and general finance, created by the War, are so exceptional that it is not desirable here to discuss them in detail until a position of greater stability has been attained. However, important additions to taxation and to debt, as results of the War, are noted in the Appendix, pp. 199-200, for information. It would be foreign to the object of this volume to attempt to do more.

G. A.-S.

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