

FOOD SUPPLY AND COST OF LIVING.

CONSIDERING the comparatively high rate of wages which prevails, food of all kinds is fairly cheap, and articles of diet which in other countries are almost within the category of luxuries, are largely used, even by the poorest classes. The average quantities of the principal articles of common diet annually consumed in the various Colonies of Australasia are given below :—

Average
consumption
of food in
Australasia.

Consumption of Foods, &c., in Australasia.

Article.	New South Wales.	Victoria.	South Australia.	Queensland.	Tasmania.	New Zealand.	Australasia.
Wheat .....lb.	405	384	...	366	371	443	374
Rice .....lb.	12·5	15	4·5	24	9	8·5	13
Potatoes .....lb.	215	282	195	250	389	412	279
Sugar .....lb.	94	100	87	59	86	78	89
Tea .....lb.	8·2	7·2	6·4	8·7	6·4	6·7	7·5
Coffee .....oz.	13	17	21	14	8	10	14
Cheese .....lb.	5·7	...	...	..	...	4·5	5·2
Butter .....lb.	16	...	...	..	...	16	16
Salt .....lb.	38	...	...	43	20	29	35
Meat—Beef .....lb.	157	155	...	280	...	...	175
Mutton .....lb.	80	98	...	90	...	...	89
Pork, &c. ....lb.	12	12	..	...	...	...	12
Tobacco and Cigars.....lb.	3·4	2·7	2·1	3·5	1·8	2·0	2·8

It will be seen that the consumption of wheat ranges from 366 lb. in Queensland to 443 lb. in New Zealand, the average being 374 lb. per head. Rice, which is almost entirely imported, varies greatly in the quantity used, only 4·5 lb. being the consumption of South Australia as against 24 lb. in Queensland. The use of tea is universal, New South Wales and Queensland being the largest consumers, with 131 oz. and 139 oz. respectively. Sugar is also

extensively used, the average being 100 lb. per head in Victoria and 94 lb. in New South Wales. Coffee is not much in favour as a beverage in Australasia, the consumption being scarcely more than one-tenth of that of tea. It is used most extensively in South Australia, where the annual average amounts to 21 oz. per inhabitant.

Consumption of Meat.

The consumption of meat has been determined with exactness for only three colonies, but these may be taken as fairly representing the whole group. The average quantity of beef consumed in the year amounts to 175 lb. per head, that of mutton to 89 lb., and of pork 12 lb.; in all, 276 lb. It would, therefore, appear that each inhabitant of these colonies requires daily about three-quarters of a pound of meat, and that during the year two sheep are killed for each member of the community, and one bullock to every four persons.

Consumption of food in Australasia as compared with other countries.

Judged by the standard of the food consumed, the population of Australasia must appear remarkably prosperous, compared with that of other countries. This will more clearly be seen from the following table, the particulars given in which, with the exception of those referring to Australasia, have been taken from Mulhall's History of Prices:—

Articles of Consumption.	Australasia.	Great Britain.	France.	Germany.	United States.
	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.
Grain	374	330	455	166	305
Meat	276	105	74	69	120
Sugar	89	72	21	21	23
Salt	35	40	30	25	39
Butter.....	16	26	7	12	18
Potatoes.....	279	315	550	1,060	150
	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.
Tea	120	73	1	1	21
Coffee	14	15	52	83	115

Comparative thermo-dynamic effect of food.

Taking only the principal articles of the foregoing list, namely, grain, meat, sugar, butter, and potatoes, and reducing them to a

common basis of comparison, it will be found that the amount of thermo-dynamic power capable of being generated by the food consumed is largely in favour of Australia. For purpose of comparison the figures of Dr. Edward Smith, F.R.S., in his well-known work on Foods, have been used, the heat developed being reduced to the equivalent weight lifted 1 foot high :—

Thermo-dynamic effect of Foods per day.

	Tons lifted 1 foot high.
Australia	3,179
Great Britain	2,695
France	1,947
Germany	2,797
United States	1,931

The substances included in this estimate are largely supplemented both in America and Europe by other foods, but not more largely than in these colonies ; and in the table just given will probably be found a fair view of the comparative quantity and food-value of the articles of consumption in each of the countries mentioned. The comparison will appear much more in favour of Australasia when we take into consideration the average amount of work which each individual in the community is called upon to perform. In Australasia, too, the proportion of women and children engaged in laborious occupations is far less than in Europe or America, and the hours of labor of all persons are lighter, so that the amount of food energy required is not nearly so great.

The most remarkable feature of the diet of the Australasian people is the large quantity of meat they use. The consumption per inhabitant in Germany is 69 lb., in Australia it is four times that quantity, while in the United States, a meat exporting country, the consumption is considerably less than half that of Australasia. It is notorious that there is a very great waste of meat in all the Colonies, and the existence of a large surplus supply has made this waste possible. The people of Australasia in ordinary years consume by far the greater portion of the meat

Meat consumption of Australasia.

Increase of
Stock.

produced in the country, and even in the most abundant season the surplus exported forms but a small fraction of the quantity raised. The total increase, both of cattle and sheep, averages about 10·4 per cent. per annum, and of this there is needed for the ordinary requirements of food supply, excluding exports, 9·4 per cent. of cattle, and 6·8 per cent. of sheep, so that the net increase of the herds of Australasia is about 1 per cent. per annum, and of the flocks about 3·6 per cent. Under the most favorable conditions, that is, if there were no losses from failure of grass or water, the increase of sheep would be about 24·3 per cent. and of cattle 24·9, giving a net surplus of 17·5 and 15·5 per cent. respectively. Unfortunately, conditions are not always favorable, and droughts are by no means infrequent, so that the actual increase of sheep is scarcely more than 20 per cent. of what is possible, and that of cattle scarcely more than 6 per cent. Although it is improbable that these Colonies could under any circumstances find sustenance for a continued increase of stock at the maximum given above, there is still an ample margin between the rates of increase which are possible and those now obtained, in saving a portion of which capital might be profitably invested.

Waste of stock.

If it were possible by water and food conservation to save one-fourth of the natural increase of the stock, the lavish use of meat which now obtains could be continued, while any increase above that named would be available for export. Unless, however, steps are taken to mitigate the effects of the frequent droughts which afflict the country, and to save part of the astonishing and unnecessary waste of animal life, the demand for beef will eventually exceed the supply. But even in such a contingency it will always be possible to again overtake the demand, if measures be taken to minimize the disastrous effects with which a failure of the season is now attended. With regard to sheep the case is different, the supply is never likely to be seriously trenched upon, and a very large surplus will always be available for meet- in the requirements of markets outside Australia.

In the table at the commencement of this chapter the consumption of tobacco is shown as well as that of food. The use of tobacco appears to be more prevalent in Queensland and New South Wales than in any of the other Colonies, while the smallest consumption is in Tasmania. Compared with other parts of the world the average consumption of Australasia will not appear excessive. The following figures are from the "Dictionary of Statistics":—

Annual consumption of Tobacco per inhabitant.

	oz.		oz.
United Kingdom	23	Spain and Portugal	32
France	29	Switzerland	82
Germany	72	United States	59
Russia.....	24	India ..	30
Austria	80	Japan	39
Italy	22	Brazil	70
Holland and Belgium ...	84		
Turkey	70	Australasia. ..	45

Taking Australasia as a whole it compares very favourably with most European countries in regard to the quantity of intoxicants annually consumed by each inhabitant, as the following statement shows. The figures would look even more favourable to Australasia were the fact of the large preponderance of males over females in these colonies made a feature in the comparison :—

Consumption of Alcohol in various countries—in Proof Gallons.

Country.	Consumption.	Country.	Consumption.
	gallons		gallons
United Kingdom	3·57	Portugal.....	3·00
France	5·10	Holland ..	4·00
Germany	3·08	Belgium	4·00
Russia	2·02	Denmark	5·00
Austria.....	2·80	Scandinavia	4·36
Italy	3·40	United States	2·65
Spain.....	2·85	Australasia	2·85

Consumption of Alcohol in each Colony.

The following table shows the consumption for all the colonies. The figures for New South Wales and Victoria refer to 1888, and for the other colonies to 1887. The largest consumption of spirits per inhabitant is in Queensland, Victoria being second. Wine is used most freely in South Australia and Victoria, and beer in the same two colonies. The average consumption of alcohol in all the colonies amounts to 2·85 gallons of proof spirit per inhabitant, ranging from 4·10 gallons in Victoria to 1·83 gallons in New Zealand. The total for Victoria shows a large increase over the consumption of previous years, and is nearly 50 per cent. larger than that of New South Wales. It may be that the occurrence of the International Exhibition in Melbourne during the year to which the figures refer tended to raise the consumption above the normal average. The consumption of alcohol in Victoria during 1886 was 3·68 proof gallons, and in 1887, 3·77 :—

Consumption of Intoxicants in the Australasian Colonies.

Colony.	Spirits.		Wine.		Beer, &c.		Equivalent in Alcohol (proof) per inhabitant.
	Total.	Per inhabitant.	Total.	Per inhabitant.	Total.	Per inhabitant.	
	galls.	galls.	galls.	galls.	galls.	galls.	galls.
New South Wales	1,104,975	1·10	805,861	0·76	11,713,000	11·01	2·88
Victoria	1,257,835	1·24	1,166,959	1·14	19,202,080	19·41	4·10
Queensland	619,846	1·75	198,282	0·56	3,472,613	9·79	3·21
New Zealand	459,007	0·77	117,959	0·20	4,563,086	7·65	1·83
South Australia	143,975	0·46	496,477	1·58	4,443,746	14·11	2·77
Tasmania	87,216	0·62	26,684	0·19	1,352,785	9·67	1·93
Total and Means	3,732,854	1·03	2,812,222	0·77	44,747,310	12·33	2·85

Strength of Australian Wines and Beers.

It is popularly supposed that Australian wines and beers are not heavily charged with spirit as compared with the imported articles; this belief is erroneous. Several descriptions of Australian wines have a natural strength of 30 per cent. of proof spirit, while from analyses it would appear that the strength of these wines offered for sale varies from 24 to 37 per cent. of spirit, and that imported beers range from 13·88 to 15·42 per cent. in

the case of English, and from 9·58 to 11·76 per cent. of proof spirit in Lager, while the local manufacture varies according to the make from 11·21 to 15·12, the average being a little short of 13·75 per cent.

Sufficient data are not available to enable calculation to be made of the cost of living in all the colonies, but with the materials to hand an estimate can be arrived at for New South Wales. The conditions of life and style of living are much the same in the Colony named as in the other colonies of the group, and the following figures may be taken as fairly indicative of the state of things obtaining in Australasia generally.

It appears that out of £54,000,000, the total income of persons living or holding property in New South Wales, about £48,700,000 were absorbed in meeting the actual expenses of living, leaving a balance of £5,300,000, which represents the annual savings of the people and the income drawn from the Colony by persons whose property is in New South Wales, but who reside abroad. Grouped under comprehensive heads the expenditure may be set down as:—

Distribution of Expenditure of the Population of New South Wales.

Food and non-alcoholic beverages	£15,750,000
Fermented and spirituous liquors	4,680,000
Tobacco	780,000
Clothing and drapery	7,470,000
Furniture	900,000
Rent or value of buildings used as dwellings	6,000,000
Locomotion	1,640,000
Fuel and light	1,780,000
Personal attendance and service	1,990,000
Medical attendance, medicine, and nursing	920,000
Religion, charities, education (not including State expenditure)	860,000
Art and amusement	1,050,000
Books, newspapers, &c.	600,000
State services, postage, telegrams, succession dues	730,000
Household expenses not included elsewhere	1,550,000
Miscellaneous expenses	2,000,000
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	£48,700,000

Cost of living in
the Australasian
Colonies.

Cost of living in
New South
Wales.

DAILY EXPENDITURE PER HEAD.

Comparative Ex-
pense per diem.

The yearly expenditure, as shown in the foregoing statement, amounts to £45 15s. 3d., or at the rate of 2s. 6½d. per day. According to Mulhall the expenditure per head in the leading countries of Europe and in the United States is :—

Daily Expenditure per head in various countries.

Countries.	Expenditure per head.
	pence.
United Kingdom.....	20·8
France	15·4
Germany	12·8
Russia	6·6
Austria	10·1
Italy	7·6
Spain	8·4
Belgium and Holland.....	13·8
Scandinavia	11·1
United States	15·6
Australasia (New South Wales)	30·1

Earnings of the
People.

The table just given affords but a partial view of the question of the cost of living ; for if the total earnings of the countries above enumerated be considered as an element of comparison, it will be found that few countries approach Australasia in the small proportion of income absorbed in providing food for the people. The following table, given on the same authority as the preceding, shows that, while the actual cost of food and drink is £19 4s. in the Colony of New South Wales, as against £13 9s. in Great Britain and £6 3s. in Russia, the earnings required to pay for this food are not larger proportionately than in the United States or Great Britain, the countries which show most favourably in the table.

The number of working days in the year is assumed to be 300, Expenditure and allowing for thirteen days' sickness and fifty-two Sundays :— earnings.

Comparative Cost of Food and Beverage.

Country.	Average cost per inhabitant yearly.	Ratio of Food to earnings per cent.	Days of Work equal to Food.
	£ s. d.		
United Kingdom	13 9 0	37·8	113
France	10 8 0	40·6	122
Germany	9 5 0	51·8	155
Russia	6 3 0	60·2	180
Austria	8 8 0	53·1	159
Italy	6 6 0	53·3	160
Spain	7 11 0	56·4	169
Belgium and Holland	10 14 0	45·5	136
Denmark	11 8 0	50·6	152
Scandinavia.....	8 6 0	50·0	150
United States.....	10 9 0	37·0	111
Australasia (New South Wales)	19 4 0	37·8	113