FOOD SUPPLY AND COST OF LIVING.

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

Article.	New South Wales.	Victoria.	Queensland.	South Australia.	Western Australia.	Tasmania.	New Zealand.	Australasia.
Grain— Wheat Rice Oatmeal Potatoes Sugar Coffee Coffee Cheese Butter Salt Meat— Beef Mutton Pork and bacon	$\begin{array}{c} 1b.\\ 360\cdot 0\\ 11\cdot 2\\ 8\cdot 7\\ 204\cdot 5\\ 91\cdot 3\\ 8\cdot 3\\ 0\cdot 6\\ 5\cdot 9\\ 17\cdot 6\\ 42\cdot 0\\ 156\cdot 3\\ 108\cdot 4\\ 13\cdot 7\end{array}$	1b. 338·2 7·7 7·3 301·3 94·5 7·4 0·9 3·2 12·6 19·4 133·3 86·1 11·0	lb. 346·1 18·6 4·4 169·9 114·0 8·3 0·5 3·7 10·3 50·3 280·0 90·0 	lb. 3800 11.8 4.5 172.1 94.1 7.7 1.1 10.8 	lb. 3800 20.8 6.4 132.9 117.3 10.2 1.2 15.9	1b. 393·3 8·2 547·7 84·5 6·6 0·4 18·7 153·5 107·3 17·7	1b. 455.55 8.77 423.1 83.00 6.6 0.55 4.55 33.1 90.00 110.00 	$\begin{array}{c} 1b.\\ 378\cdot 5\\ 10\cdot 6\\ 7\cdot 2\\ 275\cdot 7\\ 93\cdot 5\\ 7\cdot 7\\ 4\cdot 5\\ 15\cdot 2\\ 30\cdot 8\\ 145\cdot 3\\ 97\cdot 9\\ 12\cdot 7\end{array}$

It will be seen that the consumption of wheat ranges from $338\cdot2$ lb. in Victoria to $455\cdot5$ lb. in New Zealand, the average consumption being $378\cdot5$ lb. per head. Rice varies greatly in the quantity used, only 7.7 lb. being the consumption in Victoria as against 20.8 lb. in Western Australia. The consumption of oatmeal is larger in New South Wales than in the other colonies. The use of tea is universal in Australia, the consumption being largest in Western Australia, with $10\cdot2$ lb. per head, while New South Wales and Queensland come next with $8\cdot3$ lb. per head in each colony. Sugar also enters largely into consumption, the average in the two principal colonies being $91\cdot3$ lb. per head in New South Wales and $94\cdot5$ lb. in Victoria. Coffee is not a universal beverage

in Australasia, the consumption being only one-eleventh that of tea. It is used most largely in Western Australia and South Australia, where the annual demand amounts to 1.2 lb. and 1.1 lb. per head respectively.

In some of the colonies the consumption of potatoes per head of population is possibly less than is shown in the table. It is probable that the high average consumption of 547.7 lb. in Tasmania and 423.1 lb. in New Zealand is caused by the failure of the New South Wales and other continental markets in some years to absorb the production of potatoes in excess of local requirements in those colonies, with the result that a quantity has to be given to live stock and poultry. Under these circumstances, it is impossible to determine with exactitude the quantity entering into the food consumption of the population.

The consumption of meat has been ascertained with exactness for only five colonies, but these may be taken as fairly representing the whole group. The average quantity of beef consumed in the year amounts to $145\cdot3$ lb. per head; of mutton, to $97\cdot9$ lb.; and of pork, $12\cdot7$ lb.; in all, $255\cdot9$ lb. It would thus 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 five persons. It is obvious, therefore, that much meat must be wasted.

The quantity of meat used by the Australasian people, as shown by the above figures, is the most remarkable feature of their diet. The consumption per inhabitant in Germany is 64 lb., while in Australia it is four times that quantity. In the United States, a meat exporting country, the consumption is little more than half that of Australasia. The following table shows the meat consumption per head for the principal countries of the world :---

Country.	Per inhabitant.	Country.	Per inhabitant.
Great Britain France Germany Russia Austria Italy Spain Belgium	lb. 109 77 64 51 61 26 71 65	Holland Sweden Norway Denmark Switzerland United States Canada Australasia	1b. 57 62 78 64 62 150 90 256

Judged by the standard of the food consumed, the lot of the population of Australasia appears to be far more tolerable than that of the people of most other countries. This will be seen most clearly from the following table, the particulars given in which, with the exception of

	Lb. per Inhabitant.						fee	
Country.	Grain.	Meat.	Sugar,	Butter and Cheese.	Potatoes.	Salt.	Tea and Cof Uz.	Daily Energ Foot ton
United Kingdom	378	109	75	19	380	40	91	3,739
France	540	77	20	8	570	20	66	3,993
Germany	550	64	18	8	1,020	17	78	4,708
Russia	635	51	11	5	180	19	6	3,532
Austria	460	61	18	7	560	14	28	3,502
Italy	400	26	8	4	50	18	20	2,152
Spain	480	71	6	3	20	17	6	2,597
Portugal	500	49	12	3	40	17	18	2,659
Sweden	560	62	22	11	500	28	112	4,012
Norway	440	78	13	14	500	40	144	3,627
Denmark	56 0	64	22	22	410	25	140	4,071
Holland	560	57	35	15	820	20	240	4,635
Belgium	590	65	27	15	1,050		142	5,034
Switzerland	440	62	26	11	140		110	2,766
Roumania	400	82	4	9	SO		8	2,414
Servia	400	84	4	9	80		8	2,422
United States	370	150	53	20	170	39	162	3,415
Canada	400	90	45	22	600	40	72	4,013
Australasia	396	256	94	20	276	31	134	4,442
		,					-	

the figures referring to Australasia, have been taken from Mulhall's Dictionary of Statistics:---

Taking the articles in the foregoing list, with the exception of tea and coffee, 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 in Australasia is only exceeded by that eaten in Germany, Holland, and Belgium. For the purpose of comparison the

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figures of Dr. Edward Smith, F.R.S., in his well known work on Foods, have been used, and the heat developed has been reduced to the equivalent weight lifted 1 foot high. In estimating the thermo-dynamic effect of food, grain has been reduced to its equivalent in flour, and regard has been paid to the probable nature of the meat consumed. The figures for potatoes are given as they appear in the Dictionary of Statistics; but it is a probable supposition that but a small proportion of the quantity over 400 lb. set down for any country is required for human consumption, and the figures relating to some of the countries-notably the three just mentioned-are therefore excessive. The substances specified above are largely supplemented by other foods, both in America and in Europe, but not more so than in these colonies, and the figures in the table may be taken as affording an accurate view of the comparative quantity and food value of the articles of consumption in the countries To make such a comparison perfectly just, however, the mentioned. average amount of work which each individual in the community is called upon to perform should be taken into consideration. In Australasia the proportion of women and children engaged in laborious occupations is far smaller than in Europe and America, and the hours of labour of all persons are also less, so that the amount of food-energy required is reduced in proportion.

In his *Dictionary of Statistics*, under the heading of "Diet," Mulhall gives a measure of the aggregate amount of work performed by persons doing physical and mental labour, and it would appear that when burnt in the body the food of an average man should be equal to at least 3,300 foot tons of work daily; of a woman, 2,200; and of a child, 1,100 foot tons. For Australasia the average of all persons would be about 2,125 foot tons, whereas from the table just given it would appear that the amount of work to which the daily food consumed by each individual in the colonies is equivalent is not less than 4,442 foot tons.

It must be admitted, however, that the method of comparison adopted in the table is not entirely satisfactory, as the different functions of various kinds of food have not been considered. Experiments and observations made in Europe show that a standard may be set up by which the amount of nutrients required to maintain different classes of people may be measured. Professor Voit, of Munich, whose authority is accepted by European specialists, has ascertained that to sustain a labouring man engaged in moderately hard muscular work there are required 118 grams of protein and quantities of carbo-hydrates and fats sufficient with the protein to yield 3,050 calories of energy. There are 454 grams in a pound avoirdupois, and the calorie is the amount of heat that would raise the temperature of 4 lb. of water 1° Fahrenheit. Applying the ascertained values of the various foods, the consumption of which has just been given, it will be found that the daily consumption per inhabitant is equivalent to 114 grams of protein and 3,472 calories, or about the quantity Professor Voit declares to be sufficient for a labouring man. If allowance be made for the fact that only 40 per cent of the population are adult males, 33 per cent. women, and 27 per cent. children, the quantity of food consumed in Australasia would appear to be far in excess of the actual requirements of the population, and though the excess may be looked upon as waste, it is none the less evidence of the wealth of the people whose circumstances permit them to indulge in it.

The following table gives the annual consumption of tobacco in Australasia and the principal countries of the world. The use of tobacco appears to be more prevalent in Western Australia and New South Wales than in any of the other colonies, while the smallest consumption is in Tasmania and South Australia. Compared with other parts of the world, the average consumption of Australasia will not appear excessive :--

Country.	lb.	Country.	ιь.
Australasia— New South Wales Victoria Queensland South Australia Western Australia Tasmania New Zealand United Kingdom France Germany Russia	$\begin{array}{c} 3 \cdot 38 \\ 3 \cdot 01 \\ 2 \cdot 83 \\ 1 \cdot 94 \\ 3 \cdot 82 \\ 2 \cdot 02 \\ 2 \cdot 09 \\ 1 \cdot 41 \\ 2 \cdot 05 \\ 3 \cdot 00 \\ 1 \cdot 23 \end{array}$	Austria-Hungary Italy Spain Holland Belgium Switzerland Sweden Denmark Turkey United States Canada Brazil	$\begin{array}{c} 3.77\\ 1.34\\ 1.70\\ 6.92\\ 3.15\\ 3.24\\ 1.87\\ 3.70\\ 4.37\\ 4.40\\ 2.11\\ 4.37\end{array}$

Taking Australasia as a whole, it compares very favourably with most European countries in the average quantity of intoxicants consumed, as the following statement shows. The figures, which are reduced to gallons of proof spirit from data given in Mulhall's *Dictionary of Statistics*, would appear even more favourable to Australasia were the fact of the large preponderance of males over females in these colonies made a feature of the comparison :---

Country.	Proof gallons.	Country.	Proof 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	2.09

FOOD SUPPLY AND COST OF LIVING.

	Spirits.		Wine.		Beer, &c.		t in roof) itant.
Colony.	Total.	Per inhab- itant.	Total.	Per inhab- itant.	Total.	Per inhab- itant.	Equivalent Alcohol (p per inhab
New South Wales. Victoria Queensland South Australia Western Australia. Tasmania New Zealand Australasia	galls. 952,170 733,816 398,482 141,953 107,681 57,484 437,053 2,828,639	galls. 0.77 0.62 0.91 0.41 1.46 0.37 0.61 0.68	galls. 983,645 1,285,161 142,708 462,513 104,188 12,678 97,955 3,088,848	galls. 0·79 1·09 0·33 1·32 1·42 0·08 0·14 0·74	galls. 11,101,215 13,003,839 4,026,574 3,209,677 675,354 1,089,715 5,018,898 38,125,272	galls. 8·97 11·05 9·18 9·18 9·18 6·99 6·96 9·18	galls. 2·17 2·39 2·19 2·00 3·07 1·30 1·55 2·09

The largest consumption of spirits per inhabitant is in Western Australia, Queensland being second. Wine is used most freely in Western Australia, South Australia, and Victoria, and beer in the colony of Victoria. The average consumption of alcohol in all the colonies amounts to 2.09 gallons of proof spirit per inhabitant, ranging from 3.07 gallons in Western Australia to 1.30 gallons in Tasmania. There has been a great diminution in the quantity of alcohol consumed in Australasia during the last few years. In 1889 the average consumption was 2.82 gallons of proof alcohol; in 1890 it was 2.90 gallons; in 1891, 2.93 gallons; in 1892, 2.62 gallons; in 1893, 2.20 gallons; and in 1894, 2.09 gallons.

It is popularly supposed that Australian wines and beers are not heavily charged with spirit as compared with the imported articles, but this belief is erroneous. Several descriptions of Australian wines have a natural strength of 30 per cent. of proof spirit, while from analyses which have been made it would appear that the strength of these wines offered for sale varies from 24 to 37 per cent. of spirit. On the same authority it was stated some years ago that imported beers ranged from 13.88 per cent. to 15.42 per cent. in the case of English, and from 9.58 per cent. to 11.76 per cent. of proof spirit in Lager, while the local manufacture varied according to the make from 11.21 to 15.12, the average being 13.75 per cent. It is generally understood, however, that since the imposition of excise duties on colonial beer in New South Wales in 1887, the strength of the article has been somewhat reduced in this colony, and does not now average more than 13 per cent. of proof spirit.

COST OF LIVING.

Sufficient data are not available to enable a 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. In the year 1892 an estimate was made of the yearly expenditure of the population of that colony, and it was found that it amounted to $\pounds 55,445,000$. Since that year, however, there has been a shrinkage in incomes and a falling-off in the consumption of articles of luxury, so that a revision of the figures now brings out a considerably lower total. In 1894 the expenditure, distributed under the principal heads, was as follows :---

		_
Division of Expenditure.	Total Expenditure.	Per Inhabitant.
	£ 100	
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	16,239,100	13 2 0
Fermented and spirituous liquors	3,930,800	3 3 6
Tobacco	1,207,600	0196
Clothing and drapery	6,567,200	562
Furniture	477,200	079
Rent or value of buildings used as dwellings	5,661,200	4116
Locomotion	1,600,100	1 5 10
Fuel and light	1,853,200	1 9 11
Personal attendance, service, and lodging	1,449,700	$1 \ 3 \ 5$
Medical attendance, medicine, and nursing	1,431,800	132
Religion, charities, education (not including State		
expenditure)	753,800	0122
Art and amusement	998,300	0 16 2
Books newspapers etc	758.200	0 12 3
State services postage telegrams succession dues	578,700	094
Tenschold ernongen net included elsewhere	1 949 800	1116
Minelle and a second se	1 100 200	0 19 5
miscenaneous expenses	1,100,200	010 0
Total	£46,655,900	37 14 1

The expenditure for the year, viz., £37 14s. 1d. per head, was at the rate of 2s. 0_4^3 d. per day. The daily expenditure may be thus distributed :----

Division of Expenditure.	Per day.	Proportion of Expenditure.
Food Clothing and drapery Rent Direct taxes Sundrics (including intoxicants)	d. 8*6 3*5 3*0 0*3 9*4	per cent. 34·8 14·1 12·1 1·2 37·8
Total	24.8	100.0

The conditions of life and the standard of living are much the same in all the colonies, but it would undoubtedly be incorrect to assume that the average expenditure throughout Australasia is equal to that of New South Wales. Making an arbitrary reduction on the New South Wales rates of 10 per cent. for the other colonies, the expenditure for Australasia would be as follows :---

T (1) (1)	Total		Pe	er
Division of Expenditure.	Expenditure.	Int	nabi	tant.
T 1 1 1 1	£	£	s.	d.
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	50.180.300	12	4	2
Fermented and spirituous liquors	12,146,500	2	19	1
Tobacco	· 3 731 500	ō	18	õ
Clothing and drapery	20 293 100	4	18	õ
Furniture	1 474 200	ā	10	ő
Rent or value of buildings used as dwellings	17 409 400	v v	É	ĩ
Locomotion	17,495,400	4	9	1
Fuel and light	4,944,400	ī	4	1
Personal attach	5,726,300	1	7	10
rersonal attendance, service, and lodging	4,479,700	1	1	10
Medical attendance, medicine, and nursing	4,424,400	1	1	6
Religion, charities, education (not including State	, ,			•
expenditure)	2,329,400	0	11	4
Art and amusement	3.084.800	0	15	0
Books, newspapers, &c.	2 342 700	Ŏ,	ĩĩ	Š
State services, postage, telegrams, succession dues	1 788 200	ň	ê	ŝ
Household expenses not included elsewhere	6 094 000	ň	ă	4
Miscellaneous expenses	9 705 600	1	9 10	4
Theoritaneous expenses	3,705,600	0.	18	0
Total£	144,169,500	35	1	5

According to Mulhall, the expenditure per inhabitant in the leading countries of Europe and in the United States is as follows :----

Country.	Expenditure per Inhabitant.	Country.	Expenditure per Inhabitant.		
United Kingdom France Germany Russia Austria Italy Spain Portugal Sweden	$\begin{array}{c} \pounds \text{ s. d.} \\ 29 \ 14 \ 9 \\ 23 \ 19 \ 4 \\ 20 \ 3 \ 4 \\ 10 \ 1 \ 11 \\ 14 \ 4 \ 9 \\ 11 \ 11 \ 0 \\ 15 \ 12 \ 6 \\ 11 \ 5 \ 6 \\ 20 \ 8 \ 4 \end{array}$	Norway Denmark Holland Belgium Switzerland United States Canada Australasia	£ 19 28 20 25 18 32 23 35	s. 0 11 17 8 0 16 6 1	d. 0 5 4 2 0 2 2 5

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 £14 13s. 3d. in Australasia as against £14 4s. 9d. in Great Britain, the earnings required to pay for this food are not larger proportionately than in the countries which show most favourably

Country.	Average annual cost of food and beverage.	Ratio of cost of food to earnings.	Days' carnings equal to annual cost of food.
United Kingdom France Germany Russia Austria Italy Spain Portugal Sweden Norway Denmark Holland Belgium Switzerland United States Canada	$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	$\begin{array}{c} \text{per cent.} \\ 42^{\circ}2 \\ 44^{\circ}0 \\ 49^{\circ}1 \\ 52^{\circ}0 \\ 50^{\circ}8 \\ 51^{\circ}2 \\ 51^{\circ}2 \\ 59^{\circ}1 \\ 45^{\circ}2 \\ 47^{\circ}6 \\ 36^{\circ}0 \\ 46^{\circ}0 \\ 43^{\circ}4 \\ 45^{\circ}2 \\ 25^{\circ}3 \\ 32^{\circ}5 \end{array}$	days. 127 142 148 156 152 153 154 177 136 143 108 138 130 135 76 97
Australasia	15 3 3	34.1	102

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

PRICE LEVELS.

The following tables have been compiled with the object of showing to what extent the colonies have been affected by the general fall in the prices of commodities during the past thirty-six years. The figures refer to New South Wales alone, but they may be accepted as also indicating in a fairly accurate degree the position in which the other provinces of Australasia stand in regard to this matter. The total value of the exports of each of the colonies is greatly affected by the prices obtained for certain leading lines of raw produce, of which, in the case of New South Wales, wool, silver, and coal are the most important. In the subjoined table the price-level of domestic exports of that colony is given for the thirty-six years beginning with 1860. In order to ascertain the price-level, all the principal articles of domestic produce exported have been taken, the prices of 1895 have been applied to the quantities of each of the other years, and the result has been compared with the actual total of such year, the level of the year being found by dividing the actual value into the value which would have been obtained had the prices of 1895 prevailed. The average for 1895 is assumed to be 1,000, the price levels or index numbers of the other years being as shown in the table. In order to further facilitate comparison of different years, the average of the five years 1870-74 has been assumed to be 1,000, and the prices of other years have been adjusted to that basis. In compiling the price-level for exports, only articles of insignificant value have been omitted from consideration, and in no year does the value of articles included form less than 85 per cent. of the total exports, while in some years the proportion rises as high as 95 per cent., the average of all years being above 90 per cent. It is considered that this system enables a truer estimate of the relative prices to be obtained than that of selecting the prices of certain articles without giving due weight to the quantities of such articles exported :---

	Price-level	of Exports.		Price-level of Exports.		
Year.	1895 prices = 1,000.	Average of 1870–74 prices = 1,000.	Year.	1895 prices = 1,000.	Average of 1870-74 prices = 1,000.	
1860 1861 1862 1863 1864 1865 1866 1867 1868 1869 1870 1871 1872 1873 1874 1875 1876 1877	$\begin{array}{c} 2,284\\ 2,279\\ 2,309\\ 2,181\\ 2,411\\ 2,207\\ 2,287\\ 2,113\\ 2,115\\ 1,929\\ 1,609\\ 1,969\\ 1,969\\ 1,900\\ 1,883\\ 1,978\\ 1,978\\ 1,631\\ \end{array}$	$1,247 \\1,244 \\1,310 \\1,191 \\1,316 \\1,203 \\1,249 \\1,154 \\1,155 \\1,053 \\879 \\1,075 \\979 \\1,037 \\1,028 \\1,027 \\972 \\891 \\$	1878 1879 1880 1881 1882 1883 1884 1885 1885 1885 1887 1888 1889 1890 1891 1892 1893 1894 1895	$1,624 \\ 1,686 \\ 1,654 \\ 1,642 \\ 1,695 \\ 1,695 \\ 1,681 \\ 1,476 \\ 1,419 \\ 1,458 \\ 1,415 \\ 1,437 \\ 1,388 \\ 1,261 \\ 1,194 \\ 1,080 \\ 974 \\ 1,000 $	$\begin{array}{c} 887\\ 921\\ 903\\ 897\\ 926\\ 926\\ 926\\ 919\\ 806\\ 775\\ 775\\ 775\\ 777\\ 773\\ 785\\ 785\\ 689\\ 652\\ 5500\\ 532\\ 546\end{array}$	

These figures show that there has been a great fall in the prices of colonial produce exported since 1860, or still greater since 1864, viz., from the index number 1,316 to 546, or over 58 per cent. Marked fluctuations, ranging to about 10 per cent., occurred between 1860 and 1866, when the index number was about the same as in the first-named From 1866 to 1870 there was a drop from 1.249 to 879, or about year. 30 per cent. A rise followed in 1871 to 1,075, or about 22 per cent., after which for four years prices continued fairly steady, until there was a further decline in 1878 to 887. In 1879 the level rose to 921 and for the next four years prices continued without much change, but from 1884 to 1885 there was a fall from 919 to 806. This was succeeded by a fairly even range until 1889, when the level stood at 785. From 1889 there was a steep decline to 532 in 1894, a fall of 32 per cent. for the five years, but in 1895 prices recovered a little, and the level rose to 546, an advance of 2.6 per cent. It will be seen that the purchasing power of money has steadily increased since 1864, if the Customs values of the exports fairly represent the prices ruling in the general com-

munity, whether in the colony or elsewhere, and that 20s. in 1895 would purchase the same articles of domestic export which in 1864 would have cost more than 48s.

It must not be supposed that Australia has been altogether a loser by the fall in the prices of its exports, because the power of those exports to purchase imports must also be taken into consideration. It will, therefore, be necessary to consider also the price-level of imports. As there exist no reliable data on which price-levels for imports can be based prior to 1870, the table commences with that year :---

Year.	Price-Level of Imports.			Price-Level of Imports.	
	1895 prices = 1,000.	Average of 1870-74 prices = 1,000.	Year.	1895 prices = 1,000.	Average of 1870–74 prices = 1,000.
1870 1871 1872 1873 1874 1875 1876 1877 1878	$1,461 \\1,467 \\1,534 \\1,558 \\1,543 \\1,455 \\1,428 \\1,374 \\1,362$	966 970 1,014 1,030 1,020 962 944 908 900	883 1894 1885 1886 1887 1888 1889 1890 1891	$1,315 \\1,304 \\1,195 \\1,174 \\1,185 \\1,179 \\1,228 \\1,216 \\1,160$	869 862 790 776 783 779 812 804 767
1879 1880 1881 1882	1,304 1,313 1,300 1,292	862 868 859 855	1892 1893 1894 1895	1,113 1,071 1,015 1,000	736 708 671 661

It may be said generally that the fall in prices was somewhat in favour of the exports up to the year 1889. Since then the exports have fallen away on the average values at a much more rapid rate than the imports. A clearer view of the operation of the fall in prices will be obtained from the table which is given below, showing the price-levels of imports of merchandise for home consumption and exports of domestic produce, for periods of five years, with the relative fall per cent. :---

	Imp	orts.	Exports.	
Period.	Average of five years, 1870-4, prices = 1,000.	Decline in prices in five years, per cent.	Average of five years, 1870-4, prices = 1,000.	Decline in prices in five years, per cent.
1870-74	1,000		1,000	
1875-79	915	8.2	940	6.0
1880-84	863	5.9	914	2.9
1885-89	788	8.5	787	13.8
1890-94	737	6.2	645	18.0
1895	661	*10.3	546	●15·3

* Decline from average prices of 1890-4 to those of 1895.

It will be seen that, assuming the index. number of the five years 1870-74 to be 1,000, the fall in the succeeding five years was 8.5 per cent. for the imports, as compared with 6 per cent. for the exports. The average value of the imports for the five years ending with 1884 was 5.9 per cent. less than in the preceding quinquennial period, whereas the difference in the value of the exports was 2.9 per cent. During the next five years the average value of the imports declined 8.5 per cent., while the fall in the value of the exports was no less than 13.8 per cent., so that the index number for 1885-89 for both imports and exports was practically the same figure. As already mentioned, the fall for the imports; in 1895, however, the imports fell still further, while the exports recovered slightly.

New South Wales, in common with the other Australasian colonies, is chiefly affected by the fall in prices because it is a debtor country. In the chapter on "Private Finance" will be found certain calculations showing that the annual charge payable by the State and municipalities on their indebtedness to British creditors is £2,025,000 while the earnings of investments made in the colony by private persons, or drawn by absentees, amount to £2,924,000 per annum. As the whole of the interest on Government and municipal loans has to be paid by exports, irrespective of the fall in prices, and as a large portion also of the interest payable to private investors is in the same category, the fall is a matter of very serious importance to these colonies, viewed as debtor States. Fortunately the increase of production, as compared with the population, has been so great in New South Wales as to counteract the fall in prices; but it is hardly possible to believe that the probable increase of production will compensate the colony for a continued fall at the alarming rate of the past five years.