

of our great Empire were affected. The answer that I shall receive is, of course, the usual one: "The people of England will never allow a tax on food." If the people of England really wish to give their brethren abroad an inducement to enter a great Customs Union, it is the only way in which it can be done. The Colonies cannot be stimulated in any other way. We cannot put a tax on foreign cotton or wool, or, in fact, on any raw material used in manufacture, which is largely produced in foreign countries. Our success depends in great measure on our being able to produce manufactures at as low a price as possible, and any duty that we place on the raw material would be paid by the colonists themselves when they have to buy the manufactured article.

Wheat has for years been too cheap in this country. It is more a question of averting a further fall than causing any important rise. Even if the price rose 8s. per qr., it would not cost the working man with a wife and family more than 10s. per annum extra. Our import of wheat, with an average harvest, is 18,000,000 qrs. If we had to pay 8s. more on that, it would amount to about £2,000,000 to the country. The remission of the tax on tea would far more than make it good to the consumers. It always seems to me somewhat absurd to make a matter of such small importance into a question of principle. There is no parallel between the present time and 1846, when the sliding scale tended to prevent foreign countries from growing much wheat. We should stimulate growth in our Colonies more than we should stop it elsewhere.

PRICES OF ENGLISH WHEAT.

20 years from	1800 to 1819	.....	88s.	0d.	per qr.
30	„	1820 to 1849	.....	57s.	6d. „
25	„	1850 to 1874	.....	53s.	0d. „
7	„	1875 to 1881	.....	46s.	10d. „
4	„	1878 to 1881	.....	46s.	0d. „

The above table, to which I desire to call your special attention shows what a very important decline there has been in the value of wheat. No doubt in the early part of this century, when wages were little more than half what they are now, and the price of wheat nearly double, a rise or fall of a few shillings per quarter was of the greatest importance to the comfort of thousands of families; but now the tables are turned, and our home production, which is of greater moment to us than any other, is dwindling away, from the simple fact that it will not pay; and surely if we are to allow this state of things to continue we ought at least to