

I.—STATISTICS OF EXPENDITURE AND CONSUMPTION IN CANADA.
—BY PROFESSOR JOHN DAVIDSON, M. A., PHIL. D.,
Fredericton, N. B.

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The ultimate test of a nation's prosperity is the quantity and quality of the goods it contains. Other tests are relative and indicate business activity rather than national welfare. All wealth is produced to be consumed, and the whole process of production is carried on for the benefit of the consumer. For him there is seedtime and harvest; for him the factories and the stores are run; for him railroad and steamship lines operate, and banks conduct their business. It is conceivable that the volume of business may be large within a nation which yet is poor and relatively unprosperous. Increased activity does not always mean increased welfare; and that community alone is rich and prosperous at whose command this activity places a large stock of consumable goods; and the most satisfactory evidence of this command is provided by the statistics of the consumption of the community. That is direct evidence; all other evidence is indirect and presumptive.

Unfortunately, direct evidence is not always available. We depend for information almost entirely upon government bureaus and departments; and these are concerned chiefly with their own