Year.				Marriages.	Legitimate Births.	Proportion of Births to every Marriage solemnised in the Preceding Year.
1891	...	...	...	3,805	17,635	4·64
1892	...	...	...	4,002	17,283	4·54
1893	...	...	...	4,115	17,514	4·37
1894	...	...	...	...	17,824	4·33
1894	...	...	...	4,178	...	...
1895	...	...	...	4,110	17,711	4·24
1896	...	...	...	4,843	17,778	4·32
1897	...	...	...	4,928	17,911	3·70
1898	...	...	...	5,091	18,154	3·68
1899	...	...	...	5,461	18,006	3·54
1900	...	...	...	5,860	18,640	3·41
1901	...	...	...	6,095	19,544	3·34
1902	...	...	...	6,394	19,734	3·23
1903	...	...	...	6,748	20,835	3·26
1904	...	...	...	...	21,737	3·22

If the average result be taken out for the ten years 1885-1894, it will be found to represent 4.80 births to a marriage. Dealing similarly with the figures for 1895-1904 the result is an average of 3.59, so that regarded annually or decennially there is a decided fall to be observed.

In the Australian States a similar decrease is noticeable.

New Zealand had in 1880 the highest birth-rate (40.78); in 1900 the case was reversed; but in 1904 the New Zealand rate was higher than that of Queensland (1903), New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia.

The movement over ten years is calculated as under :—

Birth-rates per 1,000 of Population.

State or Colony.	1895.	1896.	1897.	1898.	1899.	1900.	1901.	1902.	1903.	1904.
Queensland	32·85	30·06	29·92	28·28	27·31	30·21	28·28	27·68	24·71	..
New South Wales ...	30·66	28·35	28·42	27·14	27·10	27·43	27·60	27·17	25·28	26·73
Victoria	28·56	27·33	26·59	25·72	26·71	25·82	25·77	25·23	24·46	24·65
South Australia ...	30·23	28·46	26·97	24·98	25·51	25·78	25·39	24·85	23·43	24·89
Western Australia ...	26·30	22·65	25·82	29·35	30·64	31·46	30·32	30·09	30·27	30·34
Tasmania	30·09	28·16	27·73	26·24	25·98	28·25	28·40	28·95	28·61	29·59
New Zealand	26·78	26·33	25·99	25·74	25·12	25·60	26·34	25·89	26·61	26·94

This table also shows that although New Zealand had in 1900 the lowest birth-rate in Australasia, the fall was less in this colony from 1895 to 1903 than in others, while the rate in this colony for 1904 is actually slightly higher than that ten years before.

A declining birth-rate is noticeable in many civilised countries, and attention has been drawn by statisticians and political economists to the serious consequences that may result. That fertility among women in New Zealand is decreasing, from whatever causes, further facts will tend to show.

Taking the number of married women in New Zealand at what may be considered the child-bearing ages (*i.e.*, from 15 to 45 years, inclusive) as shown by each census since 1878, and for the same years the number of legitimate births (excluding plural) registered, the birth-rate per 1,000 married women of the above-stated ages is easily found, and is shown to be steadily declining. In 1878 the rate was 337 per 1,000, in 1896 it had fallen to 252, and in 1901 to 244; or, in other words, in 1878 one married woman of the ages specified in every three gave birth to a child, while in 1901 the rate was one in four only. The figures for each census year are given below.

Birth-rates (Legitimate) per 1,000 Married Women at Child-bearing Ages for each Census Year, 1878 to 1901.

Year (Census).				Number of Married Women between 15 and 45 Years of Age.	Number of Legitimate Births (Confinements).	Birth-rate per 1,000 Married Women of from 15 to 45 Years of Age.
1878	...	...	...	50,995	17,196	337·2
1881	...	...	...	57,458	18,003	313·3
1886	...	...	...	62,704	18,532	295·5
1891	...	...	...	63,165	17,455	276·3
1896	...	...	...	69,807	17,596	252·1
1901	...	...	...	79,406	19,355	243·8

And another table is given, showing for a period of twenty years the numbers of married women at the quinquennial periods of age belonging to the full term 15 to 45 years, with the proportions that those numbers bear to every 100 married women living at 15-45.