

# VICTORIAN YEAR-BOOK, 1903.

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COMPILED FROM OFFICIAL INFORMATION

IN THE OFFICE OF

THE GOVERNMENT STATIST.

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TWENTY-FOURTH ISSUE.

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*BY AUTHORITY*

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## PREFACE.

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THIS is the twenty-fourth issue of the Victorian Year-Book; and the information in regard to Victoria is brought up to the end of 1903. It is recognized that statistics are not of much practical use in every-day affairs unless they are up to date, and published as early as possible after the close of the latest period to which they refer. As each part of the work was completed, a number of copies were struck off and distributed, thus disseminating the information at the earliest possible date. On account of the early publication of these parts, some of the information referring to the other States necessarily referred to the year 1902, and many of the comparisons made were for that and previous years. All Australasian statistics for 1903, which were available up to the time of the issue of the complete work, will be found, however, in an Appendix.

In the part relating to Constitution and Government the reformed Constitution of Victoria, preceded by a short historical synopsis, is described.

The second part deals with Social Condition, which includes the Melbourne University, State school education, public libraries, charities, and cognate matters.

The population of Victoria and the other States, estimated according to a method agreed upon at a recent Conference of Statists, is shown for the latest date, and is compared with previous estimates and Census enumerations.

In the part relating to Finance, information is given in regard to revenue and expenditure, trust funds, Federal, State, and local taxation, railway deficits, cost of public instruction, loan expenditure; public debts, both general and local; and municipal finance.

Marriages, births, and deaths are dealt with in part "Vital Statistics." There has been a further decline in the birth rate in 1903. This question is thoroughly analysed, and it is shown that the decline is mainly attributable to natural causes; that the low birth rate is accompanied by a low death rate; and that in Australia and New Zealand the rates of infantile mortality, which largely affect the birth rate, are the lowest in the world.

The trade of Victoria, as shown in part "Interchange," is in a most satisfactory condition. A new classification of the Customs returns has been adopted for 1903, and the returns of all the States are now compiled on the same basis by the Government Statistician of New South Wales. The figures for 1903 have not yet been made available; but, from progress returns obtained from the Customs department, it is shown that the conditions of Victorian trade have entirely altered since the introduction of the Federal tariff. Consequent upon the establishment of Inter-state free trade, Melbourne would appear to be gradually regaining its distributive trade, and the exports of Victorian products to the other States show a remarkable increase.

Matters relating to wealth and the investment thereof will be found under the head "Accumulation." The returns of the Probate office are used as the basis of an estimate of the private wealth of the people. The capital value of rateable property shows a remarkable increase since 1900 according to the municipal returns, the principal increases being in the values of country lands. With the aid of these returns an estimate is given of the unimproved or ground value of the lands of the State. The recovery in Victorian banking business is also indicated; and the relative values placed upon various representative Colonial stocks by the British investor are shown by a computation of the interest return to the investor, based upon the latest market quotations.

Under "Law, Crime, &c." an extraordinary decline is shown in litigation; and crime and drunkenness in the States and New Zealand are fully dealt with. In connection with drunkenness an estimate is made of the drink bill of the Commonwealth, from which it appears that for spirits, wine, and beer the people spend over £14,000,000 annually.

The last section of the work is "Production," which involves an enormous amount of preparatory work in the collection and compilation of the returns, which relate to land settlement, water supply, irrigation, agriculture, dairying, and pastoral industries, mining, and manufactures.

A complete lexicographical index precedes the work.

W. McLEAN,  
Government Statist.

Office of the Government Statist,  
Melbourne, 12th September, 1904.

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