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TWENTY-FIFTH ISSUE.



BY AUTHORITY.

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PREFACE.

THIS is the twenty-fifth issue of the Victorian Year-Book; and the information in regard to Victoria is brought up to the end of 1904. It is recognised 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, as indicated in the table of contents, 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 1903, and many of the comparisons made were for that and previous years.

In the part relating to Constitution and Government, a few brief remarks have been added, detailing the history of the early discovery and settlement of the Australian continent; also a chapter on the Physical Geography, Geology, and Fauna of Victoria, by T. S. Hall, Esq., M.A., of the Melbourne University; and one on the Flora of Victoria, by G. Weindorfer, Esq., Chancellor of the Austro-Hungarian Consulate. The development of the Constitution of the State from the time of separation from New South Wales to the establishment of the Commonwealth is traced, and the present Constitution is given. The principles of local government in Victoria are also described.

The second part deals with the population of Victoria and the other States, estimated according to a method agreed upon at a recent Conference of Statists, and compared with previous estimates and Census enumerations. The population of Victoria for 1904 has only been increased by 1,450, *i.e.*, the natural increase of the year, 15,370, less the loss by emigration, 13,920.

The part dealing with the social condition of the people includes information regarding the Melbourne University and affiliated colleges, and particulars of the system of national education, with an interesting report by F. C. Eddy, Esq., M.A., Inspector of Schools, on the Junior Cadet System of the State. Some important statistics relating to defective children and their education are also added. Public libraries, charities, and cognate matters complete this portion.

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.

Matters relating to wealth and the investment thereof will be found under the head "Accumulation." The capital value of rateable property continues to show increase since 1900, fairly distributed over both urban and rural lands. With the aid of the municipal returns an estimate is given of the unimproved or ground value of the lands of the State. The condition of 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.

The municipal statistics are dealt with separately. The principal particulars given relate to ratepayers and rateable property of the various municipalities, their revenue and expenditure, assets and liabilities, and loan receipts and expenditure. Detailed information is furnished respecting a few of the most important of the municipalities, and of the Melbourne Harbor Trust, the Metropolitan Board of Works, and the Fire Brigades Boards.

Under "Law, Crime, &c.," the constitution of the High Court of Australia is set out, and the chief features of the Commonwealth Judiciary Act, followed by a brief exposition of the legal system of Victoria. The decline in litigation, pointed out in previous Year-Books, still continues.

In "Vital Statistics," the law relating to marriage and registration is summarized. There was no further decline in the birth rate of 1904. The rate in Victoria is below that obtaining in the other States of Australia, and New Zealand. The whole question is thoroughly discussed under the various headings of birth, death, and infantile mortality rates.

The part relating to production deals with land settlement, water supply, irrigation, agricultural, dairying, and pastoral industries, mining, and manufactures. The lands available for occupation at the end of the year are shown under each county, the conditions under which they can be obtained being fully set out. Details are furnished respecting village and closer settlement; also particulars of the various institutions connected with agricultural education. Several informative papers are also introduced treating

on matters of interest to producers. For the past year, 3,000 copies of this part have been procured and issued direct to leading agriculturists, pastoralists, manufacturers, and others interested in the producing industries of the State. It is hoped, by thus bringing directly under the notice of persons largely connected with primary production the latest information in regard thereto, to secure from them intelligent and liberal assistance in the future work of collection. The large issue of this special part also enables me to place before the public useful knowledge in regard to the resources of the State at the earliest possible moment.

The trade of Victoria, shown in part "Interchange," still continues in a satisfactory condition. It is a matter for regret that suitable arrangements are not yet completed with the central Government for the tabulation and publication of the trade statistics of the State. Generally, however, the figures for 1904 show 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.

A complete lexicographical index precedes the work.

W. McLÉAN,
Government Statist.

Office of the Government Statist,
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