

PREFACE.

The Canada Year Book had its origin in the first year of the Dominion. The need of a publication that would assemble in conveniently accessible and summary form the chief comparative statistics of Canada, together with the necessary descriptive matter, was felt immediately after Confederation, when the "Year Book and Almanac of British North America"—being (to quote its sub-title) "an Annual Register of political, vital and trade statistics, customs tariffs, excise and stamp duties, and all public events of interest in Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, and the West Indies"—was founded. Subsequently the title was altered to "The Year Book and Almanac of Canada,—an annual statistical abstract of the Dominion and a register of legislation and of public men in British North America." The work was edited by Mr. Arthur Harvey, F.S.S., of the Department of Finance, but was not a government publication. It was published annually from 1867 to 1879.

In 1886, after the passing of a general Statistics Act, the "Statistical Abstract and Record of Canada" was instituted as an official book of reference respecting the institutions, population, finance, trade and general conditions of the Dominion, "with comparative data for the United Kingdom, British Possessions and foreign countries." The work was prepared in the General Statistical Office of the Department of Agriculture, and was continued annually until 1904, under the direction of Dr. George Johnson, F.S.S. In 1905 the General Statistical Office was amalgamated with the Census Office (which was at the same time made a permanent organization), the Year Book being remodelled by Dr. Archibald Blue, Chief Officer, and continued under the title "The Canada Year Book, Second Series."

In the reorganization and centralization of statistics which followed the report of the Commission on Statistics of 1912, and the establishment of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics in 1918, the continuous improvement of the Year Book, both in content and method of presentation, was made a primary object. A fundamental purpose of statistical organization is the securing of an *aperçu* or conspectus of the country as an entity, especially as regards its manifold social and economic activities, which are thus viewed both in their totality and in their relations to each other. In addition, therefore, to the branches of the Bureau which deal with specific subjects, such as population, agriculture, mining, trade, education, etc., and which work in collaboration with the various Dominion and Provincial Departments having jurisdiction in corresponding fields, there was created a "General Statistics" Branch with the following functions:—(a) the carrying-on of subsidiary inquiries on a variety of subjects of less extent and complexity than those assigned to special branches of the Bureau, but essential to a complete and rounded scheme; (b) the synthesizing of general statistics and the interpretation of the general economic trend; (c) the preparation of digests and abstracts of statistics relating to group phenomena; and (d) the bringing of Canadian statistics as a whole into relation with British Empire and world statistics, under the necessary reservations suggested by differing political and economic systems in the different nations. In these multifarious activities, the branch builds upon the inter-departmental organizations completed by the other branches of the Bureau (which provide for a pooling of data as between the Bureau and the various executive Departments, Dominion and Provincial), but also supplements these materials with other materials drawn from a wide field.