

## ADVISORY TRUSTEES.

40. It is found that the provisions of section 4 of the Public Trust Office Amendment Act, 1913, permitting of the appointment of advisory trustees to co-operate with the Public Trustee, are becoming increasingly availed of by testators in cases where they desire the special knowledge of a solicitor, kinsman, or business friend to be at the disposal of the estate. The appointment of such trustees in suitable cases is welcomed by the Public Trustee, and the system has worked well in those instances where it has been adopted.

## SOLDIERS' WILLS.

41. Many wills were prepared by the Public Trustee during the war for soldiers about to leave on active service, and some thousands of such wills are still deposited in the Public Trust Office. As many returned soldiers were under the impression that the wills were cancelled on the termination of the war, the following information was circulated to branches of the Returned Soldiers' Association. The information was also notified through the public Press :—

- (1.) That wills made by soldiers prior to going on active service and deposited with the Public Trustee remain valid for all time, unless revoked by a subsequent will or by the marriage of the testator.
- (2.) That the termination of the war did not render the wills so made inoperative.
- (3.) That soldiers who made such wills should communicate with the Public Trustee if they wished to revoke or alter the existing wills, and that any returned soldiers who married subsequently to the date of any such will should immediately notify the Public Trustee of the fact.

## ADMINISTRATION OF ESTATES.

42. There has been a satisfactory number of new estates entrusted to the Public Trustee for administration. During the year a total of 2,803 new estates came into the Office. The estates are of the following classification :—

Wills estates	..	..	..	..	..	652
Trusts	..	..	..	..	..	232
Intestate estates	..	..	..	..	..	755
Mental patients' estates	..	..	..	..	..	480
Soldiers' estates	..	..	..	..	..	154
Miscellaneous	..	..	..	..	..	530

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2,803

43. As the year proceeded the financial depression, largely due to the fall in the price of staple products, adversely affected many of the estates, particularly those in which farming operations were being carried on and those instances where farm properties were sold at highly inflated prices with but a small deposit and with a large amount of purchase-money outstanding. The position has called for the most watchful care in order that the interests of beneficiaries and other interested parties may be fully safeguarded.

44. The administration work of the Office has hitherto been carried out both at Head Office and at District Offices in divisions corresponding to the nature of the estates administered—*e.g.*, Wills Estates, Intestate Estates, Mental Patients' Estates, &c. During the year a rearrangement of the work on a new basis has been carried out. The whole of the work is now organized alphabetically irrespective of the nature of the estate under administration.

The new arrangement possesses advantages both for the public and for the staff. It enables any inquirer to be directed without difficulty to the officer who is dealing with the estate concerned, and it also permits of each officer being trained in the administration of estates of all classes, instead of his experience being confined to one class of estate. The amalgamation has been carried out without any dislocation of work, and savings in staff and other economies have resulted from the change.