

professional examinations. Every facility is afforded the junior officers to acquire a thorough knowledge of the work of the Office and to attain the utmost efficiency.

*Feilding Branch.*—Fifty-two estates, of a total value of £105,803, and nine investment agencies, amounting to £9,458, were under administration at this Branch at the 31st March, 1925. During the year twenty-nine new wills, of a declared value of £96,531, were deposited, the total number of wills held by the Branch being 214. The Town of Feilding is the centre of a rich agricultural and pastoral district which affords good prospects for extension of office business.

*Taihape Branch.*—Very satisfactory progress has been made by this Branch during the year. The new estates accepted being twenty-three of a total value of £42,301. Sixty-four estates, of an aggregate value of £88,044, and six investment agencies, amounting to £3,699, were under administration at the 31st March last. Thirty-six wills were introduced during the year, of a declared value of £151,962, making a total of 320 for the Branch.

*Marton Agency.*—Steady progress is being maintained at this Agency, and the business of the Office is conducted in a very satisfactory manner by the Agent and his staff, who are optimistic regarding the prospects of increased business in the future.

*Raetihi Agency.*—Through pressure of his official duties, Constable McCowan was obliged to resign the position, and Mr. Herbert Rieper was appointed Agent in his stead. As pointed out in previous reports, the opportunity of developing the Office business in this district is limited, and it is satisfactory to record that progress has been made during the year.

*Advertising.*—The policy of the Office in enlightening the public by way of advertising regarding its functions has been fully justified. Instead of being known to but a few, the advertising is bringing prominently before the public generally the advantages and service that the Office makes available to its clients. It is abundantly evident that the majority of the public are ignorant of the functions and activities of the Office, and advertising is an effective means of acquainting the public with the work of an institution that exists for its benefit.

*Prospective Business.*—The district controlled by the Palmerston North Branch affords considerable scope for the expansion of Office business, and the prospects are encouraging. The advertising is stimulating an interest in the Office, and the efficient organization which it possesses for the administration of estates is becoming more generally known. This has been quite evident in the satisfactory record for last year; and as the knowledge of the Office extends and the advantages and safeguards it offers become more extensively known, it can be safely anticipated that further progress will be manifested. A satisfactory feature of last year's work was the fact that the Office attracted all classes of testators, indicating that the influence of the Office was becoming widespread.

## 16. TIMARU.

*Conditions obtaining in the District.*—Generally speaking the year just closed has been a prosperous one for this district. Following on a previous dry summer and consequent shortage of feed for stock, we were favoured with a very mild winter, which was much appreciated by the farming community. Very beneficial rains were experienced during the spring, with the result that in a short space of time the whole country was looking better than it had done for many years past. The amount of growth was phenomenal—in fact, too much for the liking of many of the grain-growers. A number of crops went to straw, and the quality of the grain was not good, besides being very light. The prices for wool were very good for the first two sales of the series, but after that there was a decided drop in the market. Taken all round, however, the prices for this product were very satisfactory. There still appears to be a great demand for sheep, with the result that prices have been high. As a result of the year's work the financial position of a large portion of the farming community has been decidedly improved, and they are gradually overtaking the losses incurred during the slump period of previous years.

*Administration.*—The administration of estates has received careful attention during the year, and the progress made has been very satisfactory. Numbers of complimentary remarks have been made by clients in respect of the prompt and satisfactory manner in which their affairs have been handled by the Office. The regular reviews of all Branches of the Office work conducted by the Office Reviewing Inspector ensures promptness in dealing with our business, and at the same time affords considerable protection to our clients in that they are assured of their affairs being carefully scrutinized by high-class experienced officers. The adverse financial conditions which were in existence during the previous year were not nearly so acute this year, and as a result very little difficulty was experienced in the collection of rents and interest moneys on behalf of estates. With one or two exceptions all tenants and mortgagors in this district can be classed as good. During the year several farm properties came into the hands of the Office, and in those cases where a sale was necessary it is very pleasing to report that in every case very successful sales were effected. The subsequent clearing sales were also a decided success, and were capably conducted by the mercantile firms concerned. Large numbers of the public were present, and splendid prices were obtained. A number of town properties were also put up for sale, and with only one or two exceptions these were all disposed of at prices acceptable to the beneficiaries concerned. Successful realizations are of considerable assistance in the administration of our estates.

*New Business.*—The new business introduced into the office during the year is easily a record. In obtaining this new business due credit must be given to the very able assistance rendered by the Agents at Waimate, Temuka, and Geraldine. These men take a keen interest in the welfare of the Office, and their services have been valuable indeed.