

In 1895 a Select Committee was appointed under Lord Loreburn (then Sir Robert Reid, and Attorney-General) to inquire into the administration of private trusts in England. It is interesting to see that this Committee reported that a case had undoubtedly been made in favour of the establishment of a system by which private trusts could be administered, if so desired, by or under the control of some official authority. In making its report the Committee stated that "the evidence puts it beyond question that large sums of money are annually misappropriated by private trustees, and that much loss and consequent suffering is caused by this malversation." It was known that these losses had amounted to several millions of pounds in the course of a few years, while the actual money lost was by no means the greater part of the evil involved.

The late Lord Halsbury gave evidence in favour of a State Trustee before the Select Committee to which I have just referred, and in opening the new offices in Kingsway now occupied by the Public Trustee bore striking testimony to its usefulness. On that occasion the veteran ex-Lord Chancellor remarked that there was a pathetic side to the question of trusteeship. When he was in a judicial position it came to his notice that a great many people were defrauded by their trustees, and it became a scandal that such a state of things should continue. It was not always the intentional fraud, but there was a perpetual conflict between the trustee and the *cestui que trust*. The result of speculation on the part of trustees was often poverty and misery, instead of what had been intended for a comfortable provision for life. Breaches of trust were constant, and serious injury was done. Now the beneficiaries had a trustee who could not be induced by any kind of persuasion that there were going to be wonderful results from this, that, or the other investment. The Public Trustee was iron-hearted in this respect, and would not yield to the flattering words of the tempter. According to Lord Halsbury, what the Department had to do was to go on as it had begun, for nobody could observe the wonderful organization which the Public Trustee had created, and the valuable work which was being done without a penny of cost to the taxpayer, without realizing what a magnificent establishment it was.

The English Public Trust Office has made rapid strides in the twenty years of its existence. The new business for the year ended 31st March, 1928, amounted to £11,041,018. The total number of estates accepted since the Office was instituted is 25,065, representing approximately £273,000,000. Of these cases 7,972 have been completely distributed, leaving 17,093 still under administration. The value of the estates under administration is approximately £200,000,000, with an annual income in the neighbourhood of £10,000,000. It is estimated that the annual turnover of the Office in respect to capital and income is nearly £50,000,000.

ORGANIZATION.

4. With a continuous increase in business the organization of any big concern, if it is to be efficiently run, grows more and more important as its operations extend. This is no less true of the Public Trust Office. In an Office which is handling without respite an enormous and steadily growing business, and which depends for its efficiency upon peculiar care and accuracy in routine, the problems of internal management become year by year increasingly complex, responsible, and varied. It has therefore been necessary to pay special attention to the organization and systems to enable the business to be transacted expeditiously and efficiently. A complex organization is not accomplished by a stroke of the pen, but after years of experience and experiment, and consequently a great deal of care and thought has been devoted to these matters, especially in the past few years during which the volume of business has so phenomenally increased.

In order to conduct its Dominion-wide business satisfactorily it is essential that the Office should be readily accessible to those with whom it deals. Accordingly a very wide scheme of representation has been provided, and it will be recognized that the provision for representation is a conspicuous part of the Office equipment when it is stated that the Public Trustee has branches and agencies in 110 cities and towns throughout the country. Thus clients may, without difficulty, consult the nearest Office representative and obtain his advice or transact their business with