

are very pleasing and not to be belittled, but it is of far greater value to beneficiaries—widows, minors, and dependants of the testator or the intestate—to have their affairs attended to with efficiency, safety, expert judgment, and the kind of care which protects the corpus and safeguards the income. Dispassionate critics will agree with the writer who says :—

Personal contact is doubtless an agreeable and desirable thing in trust work, but much more important are the factors of intelligent experience and responsible management.

The first question, therefore, in the conduct of the administration business is the manner in which the work is handled and the quality of the services rendered. If these give satisfaction to the interested parties a valuable goodwill is at once established with those who have been brought into contact with the Department, and the growth of the business will then be the normal and logical result. The tremendous success of the Office in recent years lends adequate support to this statement.

Upon the acceptance of office an executor or administrator must immediately take a lively interest in the management of the affairs of the deceased. He must take prompt steps to protect the assets of the estate and to assume control of them. A number of urgent steps should move synchronously with one another, and danger and delay may result if the administration is conducted in a piecemeal or haphazard fashion. To guard against this, many years ago the Office instituted a system of frequent review and has adopted other means to see that the administration of every estate is advanced as rapidly as the circumstances will permit.

ACCOUNTS AND REMITTANCES.

47. In the administration of estates it is the duty of an executor or trustee to keep faithful and accurate accounts, to produce them to any beneficiary when called upon to do so, and to furnish him with all reasonable information as to the manner in which the estate has been dealt with and as to the investments representing it. If an executor or trustee fails to do this he may be ordered to pay the costs of any application to the Court rendered necessary by his default.

Administration accounts should be as concise and as easy to follow as possible, but at the same time must furnish an adequate and accurate statement of the position of the estate property. Frequently the administration involves a great deal of detail work and numerous and, at times, intricate accounting entries. In drawing statements of account for beneficiaries the problem is to incorporate this detail and to show the entries in a form which may be followed with a minimum amount of difficulty. It will be readily understood that a large number of persons receiving administration accounts are not professional men, are unacquainted with trustee and accountancy practice, and possess little or no business experience. In compiling accounts, therefore, an endeavour must be made to set out the items in such a way that, whilst the statement of account is complete in itself, it is in a form which permits of easy and intelligent perusal by the average person.

Experience has shown that the cash statement is the most suitable form to adopt. The Office accounts are kept upon a system which carries out to the full the principles of double entry, but this is not necessary for each individual estate or trust, and, indeed, statements in this form would not be sufficiently informative to the majority of the beneficiaries. Although accounts prepared upon the commercial system are clear to those familiar with matters of accountancy, they are not so easily followed, in the ordinary course, by inexperienced persons. For this reason the estate accounts take the form of a summarized and analysed cash statement, supported by a list of unrealized assets and liabilities outstanding. By analysing and grouping the items under proper headings the recitation of a large number of entries is avoided and the incidental narration minimized. This accounting system has stood the test of years and meets all the demands made upon it. The accounts are regularly prepared and despatched to those interested, and, though in a trust business of the dimensions controlled by the Public Trustee this is a heavy task, I am pleased to say that this important branch of the administration work is thoroughly up to date.