

RETIREMENT.

32. During the year Mr. A. Purdie, Chief Auditor to the Office, retired on superannuation. Mr. Purdie joined the Department as a cadet in the year 1891, and on the completion of forty years' service with it was granted leave of absence for a period of six months as from the 15th January, 1931, prior to retiring upon superannuation. Mr. Purdie at various times filled the positions of Accountant, Secretary, Chief Inspector, and Chief Auditor to the Office.

ADMINISTRATION OF ESTATES AND FUNDS.

NEW BUSINESS.

33. New estates and funds to the total of 3,651, aggregating £9,251,035 in value, were accepted for administration. These figures constitute a record for the Office, and exceed by over three-quarters of a million the total for the previous year, which up to that time had represented the largest total for any one year since the inception of the Department.

The new business for the year 1930–31 is made up as follows:—

					£
Wills	..	..	..	1,279	4,413,879
Trusts	..	..	..	307	1,052,040
Intestate	..	..	..	588	400,159
Mental Patient	..	..	..	451	504,051
Miscellaneous	..	..	..	1,026	2,880,906
				<u>3,651</u>	<u>£9,251,035</u>

WILLS AND TRUST ESTATES.

34. The outstanding feature of the business for the year is the proportion of new business represented by wills and trust estates accepted for administration, and the wills of living testators deposited with the Public Trustee. The number of estates of this class accepted was 1,586, and their value £5,465,919, or approximately 59 per cent. of the total value of the new business, while the wills deposited during the year with the Public Trustee totalled 6,812. Considerable thought and extreme care are devoted by testators and settlers to the important matter of the selection of an executor or trustee, and it is indeed gratifying to record these particularly impressive figures, which evidence the increasing recourse of the public to the services of the Public Trustee for this class of work.

Large as are the totals for the numbers and values of these estates accepted during the year, the prospective business for future years is even greater, for the total of the wills of living testators held on deposit is now 73,523, the estates represented by which will come under administration in the future. More detailed reference is made in another portion of this report to the deposit with the Public Trustee of wills of living testators and the work in connection therewith.

INTESTATE ESTATES.

35. On previous occasions I have mentioned that the intestate estates reported for administration show a tendency to diminish in volume as in comparison with the increasing population of the Dominion, owing to the fact that the precaution is now more widely taken of making wills, so as to ensure that property will descend in accordance with the owners' desires and with due regard to those with claims on their bounty, in preference to allowing the estates to be distributed in accordance with the rigid statutory rules which operate in the case of intestacy. During the year 588 intestate estates, of a total value of £400,159, were accepted for administration. In accordance with the general trend which I have just mentioned, these figures show a reduction both in number and values as compared with the year ended on the 31st March, 1930.

Intestate estates are often of small value, and in the ordinary course the necessary formalities of providing an administration bond and of obtaining a grant of administration and the administration of the assets would prove expensive to the beneficiaries. In the majority of intestate estates the beneficiaries can ill afford