

any undue expense, and to them the inexpensive and expeditious administration afforded by the Public Trust Office is of the greatest value. The large-scale operations of the Office, its widespread and thorough organization, and the facilities provided for the administration of all classes of estates enable the work connected with the administration of these small estates to be conducted on a basis of moderate and reasonable charges, to the advantage of these beneficially interested.

#### OTHER CLASSES OF ESTATES.

36. *Mental Patients*.—Unfortunately, there are always numbers of persons in the community who suffer under mental disability. It is very necessary in view of the disabilities from which these persons suffer and their inability to look to their business affairs, that some provision should have been made for attention to their needs and for the management of their estates. Such provision is contained in the Mental Defectives Act, 1911, and the amendments thereto. In a matter such as this there is an obligation on the State to provide the means and facilities for the care of the property which such sufferers possess, and the Public Trustee, acting as statutory administrator where no private committee is appointed, performs a very useful and necessary State service.

During the year 451 estates of mental patients, to the value of £504,051, were accepted for administration. The total number of such estates under administration on the 31st March last was 1,768, of an aggregate value of £2,045,274.

To the administration of the estates of mental defectives a great deal of care and attention has to be devoted. In view of the painful circumstances attendant for relatives and friends, the work is at times most trying, and the utmost delicacy and tact are required in carrying it out. Very frequently, by reason of their mental condition, the patients have mismanaged their affairs, and the task of the administrator is rendered exceedingly difficult by complications attributable to the approaching malady. Difficult problems frequently arise where a mental patient has lent to or placed in trust with friends or acquaintances money or valuables, and in these cases it is almost invariably an onerous task to determine the true circumstances. Extreme care has to be exercised in investigating and dealing with such matters, in order that the interests of the person for whom the Public Trustee is acting may be protected and that any moneys or belongings to which he is entitled may be safe-guarded.

37. *Aged and Infirm Persons*.—The main objects of the Aged and Infirm Persons Protection Act, 1912, were referred to at length in my report of last year, and it is not necessary to elaborate on them here. Briefly stated, the Act, as its title conveys, is designed for the protection of persons who by reason of old age or other infirmity, mental or physical, are unable to attend to their own affairs in a reasonably proper manner. The Public Trustee may be appointed manager, and a number of such appointments were made during the year.

38. *Convicts*.—Provision is made in Part III of the Prisons Act, 1908, for the custody and administration of convicts' estates. A number of such estates were reported last year, but there is no matter of special importance arising out of them to which reference need be made in this report.

#### CHARITABLE AND PUBLIC TRUSTS.

39. The settling of property for fixed purposes of a public or charitable character goes back for many centuries. In the first place, the Church was the main recipient of these settlements, but as time went on the donors chose other objects, public and private, for their benefactions. To-day endowments for charitable purposes are often made, and in New Zealand there are a number which have been established by public-spirited members of the community.

Administration by the Public Trustee carries with it substantial advantages for the handling of these trusts, especially where the endowments are long-continuing and permanence in administration is required. Moreover, section 4 of the Public Trust Office Amendment Act, 1912, provides a simple method whereby funds raised by public subscription can be readily vested in the Public Trustee and at the same time the terms of the trust clearly defined. Under this section the representatives of the subscribers of such funds can arrange with the Public Trustee for a scheme of trust to be submitted to the Supreme Court for approval or modification.