

and clients were properly protected have not been relaxed, and they have in some respects been strengthened where it was thought advisable to do so to meet the special needs of the present position. It is gratifying, therefore, to be able to record that despite these special difficulties encountered the work of administration has proceeded to the satisfaction of those who are beneficially interested, and that this has been evidenced by numerous unsolicited expressions of appreciation received from such persons, and by the marked absence of justifiable complaints or criticisms on the part of those for whom the Public Trustee acts.

#### ADMINISTRATION OF ESTATES AND KINDRED DUTIES.

12. Particulars of the new business reported for administration have already been given. The following additional information regarding the new business reported and the various phases of the administration work will be of interest :—

13. *Wills and Trust Estates.*—This class again forms the most valuable proportion of the new business for the year, comprising 1,591 estates and trusts, of a value of £3,984,705, out of the total of £6,412,123.

The appointment of the Public Trustee to perform executorship or trustee duties is in practically every case voluntary on the part of testators, settlors, or other interested parties, who before making an appointment of such an important nature naturally explore all agencies open to them through which they may have the work performed. That this class of estate forms the main proportion of the business which the Public Trustee is called upon to undertake affords in itself convincing evidence that the confidence placed in the Office is well maintained and that the Office is equipped on all points to which a testator or settlor attaches importance in the selection of a trustee.

14. *Intestate Estates.*—During the year 546 estates of this class, to a value of £361,330, were accepted for administration. In these estates the Public Trustee acts generally at the request of the next-of-kin of the intestate. It is necessary to stress this fact, as it is a common misunderstanding that the appointment of the Public Trustee to administer intestate estates is of an automatic nature.

The figures relating to intestate estates for the past year again show a falling-off as to numbers and value, and this is in conformity with the experience of previous years. As I have stated in earlier reports, the decline is, no doubt, attributable to the fact that the making of a will is a precaution which is being adopted to an increasing extent.

The safety and security which is ensured by administration by the Public Trustee, and the moderate charges made, which cover all the services necessary in the administration of the estates, are of particular value for those small estates which very often represent the sole means of widows and young children.

15. *Agencies.*—The volume of the business recorded under this heading was well maintained during the year. The agency business conducted by the Office forms a large and valuable section of its work. The Public Trustee is requested to act in this capacity principally in cases where property-owners find it necessary or convenient on account of ill-health, advancing years, absence from the Dominion, or similar reasons, to entrust the management of their assets or business interests to another.

16. *Estates of Persons under Disability.*—By the Mental Defectives Act, 1911, the Public Trustee is appointed statutory administrator of the estates of mentally defective persons, where no private committee or administrator has been appointed. In actual practice the great majority of estates of mental defectives are administered by the Public Trustee, it being only on comparatively exceptional occasions that a private committee or administrator is appointed. Even in these cases the Public Trustee, in terms of the Mental Defectives Act, is called upon to exercise supervision over the administration of such committee or administrator.

In acting as statutory administrator of these estates the Public Trustee renders a valuable public service, the extent of which may to some extent be gauged from the appropriate figures. During the year 419 such estates, of a