

During the year the balance of £55,897 19s. at credit of the Land Assurance Fund was transferred to the Treasury in accordance with instructions received from the Controller and Auditor-General, who had been advised by the Solicitor-General with regard to the investment of this fund.

UNCLAIMED LANDS.

20. On the 31st March, 1923, the Public Trustee held the sum of £6,560, representing the proceeds of the sale of unclaimed lands and the rents derived from revenue-producing unclaimed lands not yet realized.

UNCLAIMED PROPERTY.

21. The amount of cash held by the Public Trustee on the 31st March, 1923, as administrator of unclaimed property under Part III of the Public Trust Office Act, 1908, was £6,471.

SINKING FUNDS.

22. The Public Trustee is statutory Sinking Fund Commissioner in respect of all loans raised by local bodies from Government Departments, and in addition he is very frequently voluntarily appointed Commissioner by local bodies who have raised loans from private institutions. In the large majority of cases the moneys are invested in the Common Fund of the Office, and consequently the instalments bear interest from the date they are received by the Public Trustee. In very many cases the instalments payable by the local bodies are comparatively small, and in consequence it would be a difficult matter for a private Sinking Fund Commissioner to invest each separate instalment immediately it was received, and as a result a portion of the sinking fund would for a time be uninvested or invested with the Post Office Savings-bank at a comparatively low rate of interest. This factor is no doubt to some extent responsible for the popularity of the Office in this connection.

At the end of the financial year the number of the local bodies' sinking funds under administration by the Office was 1,212, the value of which amounted to £726,960, an increase in value of £130,738 for the year.

In addition to the funds above referred to, the Public Trustee is statutory Sinking Fund Commissioner in respect of various loans raised by the Government of New Zealand, and on the 31st March, 1923, the sum of £7,201,125 was held in this behalf.

During the year the moneys at credit of three of the sinking funds under the New Zealand State-guaranteed Advances Act of 1909 were paid over by the Public Trustee to the Superintendent of the State Advances Department, at the direction of the Minister of Finance, acting under the authority contained in section 26 (3) (a) of the State Advances Act of 1913. The amount so paid was £368,779.

INVESTMENT AGENCIES.

23. In last year's annual report reference was made to the terms upon which the Public Trustee acts as agent for the investment of money either within the Common Fund or in securities outside of the Common Fund without the State guarantee. That those terms are proving attractive to the investing public is evidenced by the fact that the amount held for investment on the 31st March, 1923, was £830,385, which represents an increase of £267,758 over the amount held at the end of the previous year.

Moneys invested by the Public Trustee under investment agency are invested for a fixed term, but in the event of the death of a principal during the currency of the term the capital of the investment and the interest accrued to date are released in those cases in which the Public Trustee is appointed to administer the principal's estate. The advantages of such an investment are proving attractive to investors under whose wills the Public Trustee is nominated executor.

A gratifying feature of the new business transacted under this heading is the large number of deposits made by beneficiaries in estates administered by the Office. This fact testifies to the satisfaction which the Office is rendering to clients in the conduct of their affairs.