

2. It will be seen that there is a considerable difference between the net increase in the value of estates and funds under administration and the value of estates and funds accepted for administration during the year. This difference is, in a large measure, represented by the value of estates the administration of which has been accepted and closed during the year. During the year the administration of 2,541 estates and funds valued at £2,297,059 was carried to completion, and of these estates 624 had been reported for administration after the 31st March, 1929. These latter estates comprised those whose assets permitted of prompt and favourable realization, for of course care is taken to prevent forced realization or sacrifice.

3. The Public Trustee's report and the figures which I have just given convey a very good idea of the magnitude, and the utility to the public, of the work of the Department. To cope with the ever-growing volume of business a very comprehensive organization, both as regards personnel and representation throughout the country, has been provided. As to the personnel, the Department has devoted particular attention to the provision of staff qualified in all phases of the work, so that those whose affairs are entrusted for administration may have all the benefits that can be conferred by technical skill. A noteworthy feature of the efforts of the Office to provide adequate staff is the attention which is being bestowed upon the training of its promising juniors in the practice and theory of the work by means of well-organized classes conducted under the supervision of qualified instructors.

4. The growth in the number of wills on deposit has been phenomenal. 6,893 additional wills were deposited with the Public Trustee during the year, and the total number now held stands at 68,253, an increase of 5,412 over the previous year's total. The difference between the number deposited and the increase in the total represents wills withdrawn through deaths of testators or for other reasons. When it is remembered that on the 31st March, 1914, the wills deposited after forty-two years of Office activity numbered only 6,427, some idea will be gained of the extraordinary advance in this department of the Office work during the sixteen years which have elapsed since then. New wills are now coming in at the rate of over six thousand per annum, and thus the yearly increase exceeds the total accumulations up to 1914.

The prospective business represented by the wills on deposit is very large indeed, but the figures I have just quoted do not fully indicate the number of estates which will ultimately come to the Office for administration, since many wills nominating the Public Trustee as executor are known to be held by private solicitors, banks, &c. Moreover, in many cases where wills nominate private trustees the administration will be transferred to the Public Trustee through the executors renouncing the administration in his favour.

The advisability of making a will will be obvious to every thinking person, because it enables a testator to dispose of his assets as he determines, not as the law dictates, and to provide for the special needs and circumstances of any of his dependants, which, of course, cannot be done under an intestacy. It may be safely said that in the preparation and safe-keeping of wills the Public Trustee is performing a most useful service, and one which is clearly appreciated and utilized by a very large number of persons. It must be a source of satisfaction to a testator to know that every due precaution is taken by the Public Trustee to see that his wishes are clearly expressed in a well-prepared document, to preserve the absolute secrecy of its contents, and to ensure its competent and safe custody during his lifetime.

5. Estates administration and trust work is of a very special nature, and in a marked degree the conduct of it calls for efficiency, safety, and, in addition, kindly dealing with the beneficiaries. It is not too much to say that the Office administration adequately provides for all these features in the State guarantee of the Public Trustee's integrity, the extensive organization of the Department, the accumulated knowledge and practical experience of nearly sixty years, and the long-recognized policy of assiduously preserving, so far as is warranted and practicable, the personal element by officers expert in this class of work. The many expressions of appreciation on the part of clients bear witness to the efficient and sympathetic manner in which their affairs have been handled, and go to show that nothing is being left undone by the Public Trustee to secure the proper fulfilment of his vital obligation