

[*This Bill is the Administration Bill passed last year, save the alterations in Italics.*]

Hon. Colonel Whitmore.

Administration.

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A BILL INTITULED

AN ACT to amend the Law relating to the Administration of the Estates of Deceased Persons. Title.

WHEREAS it is expedient to provide for the administration of the real estates of deceased persons by their executors or administrators, and otherwise to amend and simplify the laws relating to the administration of such estates, and the practice of granting probates and administrations, and to provide for the succession to property in certain cases of illegitimacy: Preamble.

BE IT THEREFORE ENACTED by the General Assembly of New Zealand in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. The Short Title of this Act shall be "The Administration Act, 1878." Short Title.

2. This Act shall come into operation on a day to be fixed by the Governor, by Proclamation in the *Gazette*; such day to be not less Commencement.

than one month from the day upon which notice of Her Majesty's approval of the same shall be published in the said *Gazette*.

Repeal.

3. The Act and Rule mentioned in the First Schedule hereto, to the extent to which such Act and Rule are in such Schedule expressed to be repealed, shall be and the same are hereby repealed, except as to acts done, liabilities incurred, estates rights interests and privileges acquired, appointments rules or orders made, and proceedings taken under any of the said Act and Rule, which proceedings may be continued and completed as though this Act had not been passed.

Interpretation.

4. In the construction of this Act, unless the context be inconsistent with the meaning hereby assigned,—

“Real estate” shall mean and include messuages, lands, tenements, and hereditaments, and whether corporeal or incorporeal; and any share, estate, or interest in them or any of them, whether the same shall be freehold or chattel interest; and any possibility, right, or title of entry or action, and whether the same shall be in possession, reversion, remainder, or contingency :

“Court” shall mean the Supreme Court or the District Court, as the case may be, granting probate, or administration, or (in the case of the Public Trustee) an order to administer :

“District Land Registrar” shall mean the District Land Registrar of a Land Registrar's district under “The Land Transfer Act, 1870,” or any Act amending the same :

“Registrar” shall mean the Registrar of the Supreme Court, or the Clerk of the District Court, as the case may be, or the Deputy for the time being of such Registrar or Clerk :

“The Public Trustee” shall mean the Public Trustee under “The Public Trust Office Act, 1872,” or any Act amending the same :

“Administration” and “administrator” shall respectively mean and comprehend letters of administration of the estates of deceased persons, and administrator, whether with or without the will annexed, and whether granted for general, special, or limited purposes :

“*Statute of Distributions*” means an Act of the Parliament of Great Britain, passed in the twenty-second and twenty-third years of the reign of His Majesty King Charles Second, chapter ten.

Probate or administration may be granted where any person leaves real or personal estate.
Real estate to vest in executors or administrators.

5. The Court shall have jurisdiction to grant probate of the will or administration of the estate of any deceased person leaving estate, whether real or personal, within the Colony of New Zealand.

6. Immediately upon the granting of probate of the will or administration of the estate, or an order to administer the estate, of any deceased person, all the real estate then unadministered of such person, whether held by him beneficially or in trust, shall vest in the executor or administrator to whom such probate, or administration, or order shall be granted, as the case may be, for all the estate therein of such person.

If there shall be more than one such executor or administrator, such estate shall vest in them as joint tenants, and the title of such executor or administrator shall, so far as relates to persons dying after this Act comes into operation, relate back to and be deemed to have arisen immediately upon the death of such deceased person, as if there had been no interval of time between such death and the grant of such probate or letters of administration, or an order to administer, as the case may be.

Real estate to be assets for payment of debts.

7. The real estate of every deceased person shall be assets in the hands of his executor or administrator for the payment of all duties and

fees payable under any Act making or charging duties or fees on the estates of deceased persons, and for the payment of his debts in the ordinary course of administration; and for such purposes it shall be lawful for such executor or administrator, *in as full and effectual a manner*
 5 *in law as the testator or intestate could have done in his lifetime* to sell, lease, or mortgage such real estate, or any part thereof, with or without a power of sale, and to convey, demise, or assure the same to a purchaser, lessee, or mortgagee ~~in as full and effectual a manner in law as the testator or intestate of such executor or administrator could have~~
 10 ~~done in his lifetime.~~

Any sale or lease may be either by public auction or private contract, and subject to such conditions as the executor or administrator shall think fit, and such executor or administrator may buy in, and rescind any contract, without being responsible for any involuntary
 15 loss thereby occasioned.

This section shall apply to any executor or administrator to whom probate, or administration, or an order to administer shall have been granted previously to the coming into operation of this Act, as to any estate then unadministered.

20 8. The executor or administrator or any person beneficially interested may from time to time by petition, and after such previous notice as may be prescribed by the rules of the Supreme Court in that behalf, apply to such Court, and the said Court may, upon such terms as it shall think fit, order and direct the course of proceeding which
 25 shall be taken in regard to the time and mode of sale or lease of any real estate passing under this Act, the application for maintenance or advancement or otherwise of shares or interests of infants, the expediency or mode of effecting a partition if applied for, or the expediency of mortgaging any of such real estate, and generally in regard to the
 30 administration of the property for the greatest advantage of all persons interested.

Executor or administrator may petition for and Court may order generally as to estate of deceased person.

Provided always that nothing herein contained shall render it compulsory for the executor or administrator to apply to the Court for leave to exercise the powers of sale or lease hereby given.

35 9. In all suits in equity concerning the real estate of a deceased person, his executor or administrator shall represent his real estate and the persons interested therein in the same manner and to the same extent as, in suits concerning personal estate, the executor or administrator represents such estate and the persons interested therein.

In suits, executor or administrator to represent real estate.

40 10. Subject to the provisions of this Act, the executor or administrator shall hold—

How real estate to be held by executor or administrator.

(1.) The real estate of any person who dies ~~after this Act comes into operation~~, leaving a will according to the trusts and dispositions of such will, so far as such will devises or affects such real estate:
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(2.) The real estate of any person who dies intestate as to such real estate after this Act comes into operation, upon trust for the person or persons who, if such real estate were personal estate, would be entitled to such personal estate; and such person or persons shall in all respects have the same shares, estates, powers, and interests in and over such real estate as he or they would have in case the same had been personal estate:
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(3.) The real estate of any male person who shall have died after the first day of October, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-five (and before this Act comes into operation), intestate as to such real estate, leaving him surviving a wife, or child or children, or any lineal descendant, upon trust for the person or persons who would have been entitled thereto under "The Real Estate Descent Act, 1874," if this Act had not been passed:
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- (4.) The real estate of any person (other than a male person leaving him surviving a wife, or child or children, or any lineal descendant) dying intestate as to such real estate after the first day of October, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-five, and before this Act comes into operation, upon trust for ~~his or her heir-at-law~~ *the person or persons who would have been entitled if this Act had not been passed.* 5
- (5.) The real estate of any person who died on or before the first day of October, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-five, intestate as to such real estate, upon trust for ~~his or her heir-at-law~~ *the persons who would have been entitled if "The Real Estate Descent Act, 1874," and this Act had not been passed.* 10

Partition may be ordered.

11. In any case wherein upon inquiry the Court shall be satisfied that a partition of the real estate would be advantageous to the parties interested therein, the Court may appoint one or more arbitrators to effect such partition, and to exercise in regard thereto, under its directions and control, powers similar to those of Commissioners acting under a decree in equity for partition; and upon the report and final award of the said arbitrators, setting forth the particulars of the land allotted to each party interested, the executor or administrator shall convey or transfer the same accordingly. 15 20

Rights and duties of executor or administrator.

12. The executor or administrator of any deceased person shall have the same rights and be subject to the same duties with respect to the real estate of such person that executors or administrators heretofore have had or been subject to with respect to personal estate, and shall perform the duties imposed on the executor or administrator by any Act making or charging duties or fees on the estates of deceased persons. 25 30

Probate to be evidence of wills concerning real estate.

13. The probate of any will, or letters of administration with a will annexed, granted after the coming into operation of this Act, shall be evidence of such will upon all questions concerning real estate, in the same manner and to the same extent as heretofore in questions concerning personal estate, and every probate or letters of administration shall in all cases be *prima facie* evidence of the death and the date of the death of the testator or intestate. 35

All specialty and simple contract debts to stand in equal degree.

14. In the administration of the estate of every person who shall die after this Act comes into operation, no debt or liability of such person shall be entitled to any priority or preference by reason merely that the same is secured by or arises under a bond, deed, or other instrument under seal, or is otherwise made or constituted a special debt, but all the creditors of such person, as well specialty as simple contract, shall be treated as standing in equal degree, and be paid accordingly out of the assets of such deceased person, whether such assets are legal or equitable, any Statute or law to the contrary notwithstanding: 40 45

Provided that this Act shall not prejudice or affect any lien, charge, mortgage, or other security which any creditor may hold or be entitled to for payment of his debt. 50

Form of rule to Public Trustee.

15. Whenever the Court shall grant an order to the Public Trustee to administer the estate of any deceased person, the same shall be in the form in the Second Schedule hereto.

Entry to be made in the register-book of appointment of executor or administrator.

16. Upon the receipt of the office-copy of the probate of any will, or of any letters of administration, or of an order to administer granted to the Public Trustee, whereby it shall appear that any person has been appointed the executor or administrator of any deceased person, the District Land Registrar shall, on an application in writing of the executor, administrator, or Public Trustee, as the case may be, to be registered as proprietor in respect of any land therein described, enter in the Register Book, upon the folium constituted by the grant or 55 60

certificate of title of such land, a memorandum notifying the appointment of such executor, administrator, or Public Trustee, and the day of the death of the proprietor when the same can be ascertained.

5 Upon such entry being made such executor, administrator, or Public Trustee shall become the transferee, and be deemed to be the proprietor of the estate or interest of the deceased proprietor in such land, or of such part thereof as shall then remain unadministered, and shall hold the same subject to the equities upon which the deceased held the same; but for the purpose of any dealings with such land
10 every such executor, administrator, or Public Trustee shall be deemed to be the absolute proprietor thereof.

If in any case probate or administration shall be granted to more persons than one, all of them for the time being shall join and concur in every instrument relating to the land.

15 17. The practice of the Court in its probate jurisdiction shall, except where otherwise provided by this Act, or by the rules to be from time to time made under this Act, be regulated, so far as the circumstances of the case will admit, by the practice of the Court in its ecclesiastical jurisdiction heretofore in force.

Practice of Court in its probate jurisdiction.

20 18. It shall be lawful for the Judges of the Supreme Court to make rules for regulating the ordinary guidance of executors or administrators in relation to real estate, and for prescribing the forms of probate or letters of administration, and for regulating the practice in obtaining a grant of probate or letters of administration, and the procedure and practice of the Court and the duties of the Registrar, and
25 generally for carrying the provisions of this Act into effect, and to revoke, amend, add to, or alter any such rules as to them may seem fit.

Power to make rules.

30 All rules to be made under this Act shall be *gazetted*, and shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament within ten days after their being promulgated, or, if Parliament be not then sitting, within the like time after Parliament shall thereafter assemble for the despatch of business.

35 19. When an estate of any intestate, of which administration shall have been or shall be granted to the Public Trustee, shall not exceed one hundred pounds after payment of debts, and such intestate shall have left any child or children under age, the Public Trustee may pay or cause to be paid the balance of such estate, either in one sum or from time to time, as he thinks fit, after payment of the debts of such
40 intestate, to his widow or to any person having the care or custody of his children, without seeing to the application thereof, and without incurring any liability in respect of such payment, and shall certify to an account in favour of such widow or other person accordingly.

Public Trustee may pay balance of estate not exceeding £100 to widow of intestate.

45 20. It shall be lawful for the Supreme Court to allow out of the assets of any deceased person, whether such person died before or after the coming into operation of this Act, to his executor, administrator, or trustee for the time being, in passing his accounts, such commission or percentage, not exceeding five pounds per centum, for his pains and trouble, as shall be just and reasonable.

Executors, &c., may be allowed commission.

50 No such allowance shall be made to any executor, administrator, or trustee without a special order of the Supreme Court or of a Judge, on the final passing of accounts, unless the Court, or a Judge thereof, shall otherwise order.

55 21. Every person to whom a grant of administration shall be made shall, previous to the issue of such administration, execute a bond to the Registrar of the said Court to inure for the benefit of the Registrar for the time being, with two sureties approved of by a Judge of the Court, conditioned for duly collecting, getting in, and administering the real and personal estate of the deceased, which
60 bond shall be in such form as the Judges of the said Court shall

Administration bond to be executed.

by rule direct, and in the meantime shall be in the form heretofore in use :

Provided that it shall not be necessary for the Public Trustee, or for any person obtaining administration to the use or for the benefit of Her Majesty, to execute any such bond. 5

Amount of penalty in administration bond.

22. Such bond shall be in a penalty equal to the amount under which the property of the deceased shall be sworn if such amount shall not exceed five thousand pounds, and shall be in a penalty of five thousand pounds where such amount shall exceed that sum ; but the Court may in any case dispense with one or both of the sureties, 10 or direct that such penalty shall be reduced in amount, and may also, if it shall think fit, direct that more bonds than one shall be given, so as to limit the liability of any surety to such amount as the Court shall think reasonable, and may, in place of such bond, accept the security of any incorporated company or guarantee society, approved 15 by the Governor in Council, in such form and under such regulations as the Judges of the said Court shall from time to time by rule direct.

Executor or administrator to exhibit accounts.

23. Every executor or administrator to whom ~~land~~ *real estate* shall pass under the provisions of this Act shall make and exhibit the like accounts in reference to such ~~land~~ *real estate*, and shall be liable 20 to the like penalties for neglect, as may for the time being be required to be made or exhibited by, or as may be enforced against, any person to whom letters of administration of the personal estate of any person dying intestate is granted by the said Court :

Provided that in case of an administrator one bond shall be 25 sufficient as to both real and personal ~~property~~ *estate*.

Proceedings where conditions of bond broken.

24. The Court may, on application made on motion in a summary way, and on being satisfied that the condition of any such bond has been broken, order the Registrar to assign the same to some person to be named in such order, and such person, his executors or 30 administrators, shall thereupon be entitled to sue upon the said bond in his or their own name or names, as if the same had been originally given to him, and shall be entitled to recover thereon, as trustee for all persons interested, the full amount recoverable in respect of any breach of the condition of the said bond. 35

Trustee may relinquish trust in certain cases.

25. No executor or administrator shall be required, against his own consent, to continue the duty of a trustee by managing the property during an enforced suspension of sale, but shall be entitled, upon such suspension being ordered, to relinquish his trust to such officer of the Court, or to the Public Trustee, or to any other person as the 40 Court shall appoint.

Executor or administrator acting *bond fide* protected.

26. No executor or administrator acting under the provisions of this Act, who shall make any payment or do any act *bond fide* under or in pursuance of any letters of administration or probate as aforesaid, shall be liable for the sums so paid or the acts so done by reason of 45 the existence of any will of the deceased owner, or any such will other than that of which probate has been granted, if the existence of such will or such other will, as the case may be, was unknown to him at the time of such payments made or act *bond fide* done as aforesaid :

Provided that nothing herein contained shall affect or pre- 50 judice the rights of any person entitled under such will against the person to whom any such payments shall have been made as aforesaid, but the person so entitled shall have the same remedy against the person to whom such payments shall have been made as he would have had 50 against such personal representative if the money had not been distributed under the provisions of this Act.

Caveat may be lodged.

27. Any person may lodge with the Registrar a caveat against any application for probate or administration at any time previous to such probate or administrat'on being granted, and every such caveat 60

shall set forth the name of the person lodging the same, and an address within the judicial district at which notices may be served on him.

28. In every case in which a caveat shall be lodged, the Court
5 may, upon motion on behalf of the person applying for probate or
administration, supported by affidavits upon which, if there had been
no caveat, probate or administration would have been granted, make
an order *nisi* for the grant of probate or administration to the person
applying, and every such order shall name a time for showing cause
10 against the same, and the Court may enlarge such order from time to
time.

Where a caveat
lodged, Court may
grant order *nisi*.

29. Every such order *nisi*, and every order enlarging the same,
shall be served on the caveator, by delivering a copy of the same at
the address mentioned in his caveat.

Service of order *nisi*.

30. If, upon the day named in the order *nisi*, or upon the day
15 to which such order shall have been enlarged, the caveator do not
appear, such order *nisi* may be made absolute, upon an affidavit of
service, but, if the caveator appear, the hearing shall be conducted in
the same manner, as nearly as may be, as upon a trial at law, and the
20 order *nisi* may be made absolute or discharged, with or without costs,
as may be just, and, if the Court shall so direct, such costs may be
paid out of the estate.

Proceedings where
caveator does not
appear.

31. Upon the hearing of any order *nisi*, the parties shall be at
liberty, subject to regulations to be made by such rules as aforesaid,
25 to verify their respective cases in whole or in part by affidavit, but
so that the deponent in every such affidavit shall, on the application
of the opposite party, be subject to be cross-examined by or on behalf
of such opposite party orally in open Court, and after such cross-
examination may be re-examined orally in open Court by or on behalf
30 of the party by whom such affidavit was filed.

Evidence on hearing
of order *nisi*.

32. If any question of fact shall arise in any proceeding under
this Act, the Court may, if it shall think fit, cause the same to be
tried by a jury before the Court itself, or before any Judge of the
Court, and may settle an issue for that purpose. In such case the
35 subsequent proceedings in respect of such issue shall be the same as if
it had been settled in an ordinary action.

Questions of fact co
be tried by a jury.

33. In any case in which a caveat is lodged by the Public
Trustee, the Court may, if it thinks fit, order costs to be paid to the
said Public Trustee out of the estate, whether the rule *nisi* be dis-
40 charged or not.

Where caveat lodged
by Public Trustee,
costs may be paid out
of estate.

34. In any case where the executor named in a will shall neglect
or refuse to prove the same, or renounce probate thereof, within
three months from the death of the testator, the Court may, upon
the application of any person interested in the estate, or of the
45 Public Trustee, or of any creditor of the testator, grant an order *nisi*,
calling upon the executor to show cause why probate of the said will
should not be granted to such executor, or, in the alternative, why
administration, with such will annexed, should not be granted to the
applicant; and upon affidavit of service of such order if the executor
50 do not appear, or upon cause being shown, it shall be lawful for the
Court to make such order thereon for the administration of the estate,
and to make such order as to costs, as shall appear just.

Proceedings where
executor neglects to
prove will.

Where the Public Trustee applies, and the executors are out of
the colony, the Court may exercise the powers given by this section
55 and grant administration to the Public Trustee with the will annexed,
without first granting a rule *nisi* calling upon any executor who is
out of the colony to show cause.

The Court may, upon the application of any executor (or of his
attorney) who was out of the colony when the grant to the Public
60 Trustee was made, and who has not refused to prove, and has not

renounced, grant probate to such executor, in such manner and subject to any limitations or conditions the Court thinks proper.

No such application shall be made until after seven days' notice in writing of the intention to apply shall have been left at the office of the Public Trustee.

Immediately on the grant of such probate all the powers, rights, and duties of the Public Trustee (except the rights reserved hereby) in relation to the testator's estate, and all liability of the Public Trustee, under any contract or agreement entered into by the Public Trustee, or otherwise affecting or relating to such estate or any part thereof, shall cease; and, subject to and on the allowance and payment of all moneys due for commission, necessary outlay, disbursements, costs, charges, and expenses affecting such estate, including the costs of and incidental to the application for probate, and consequent thereon, and subject also to the provisions of this section, such portion of the estate of the testator as is then unadministered by the Public Trustee shall vest in the executor obtaining probate.

Widow and mother succeed to intestate estate of illegitimate child.

Proviso.

35. After this Act comes into operation, when any male illegitimate shall die intestate, leaving no issue, the widow and the mother (if surviving) of the intestate shall succeed in equal shares to the real and personal estate of the said intestate: Provided that, if the mother of such intestate at the time of his death be deceased, the widow shall succeed to the whole of the real and personal estate of the said intestate; and provided that, if the intestate leave no widow, his mother, or if she be dead her next of kin, *under and according to the Statute of Distributions*, shall succeed to the whole of the real and personal estate, excluding his father and all persons claiming through him.

Illegitimate children succeed to mother where no legitimate children or husband.

36. Where, after this Act comes into operation, any female illegitimate shall die intestate, leaving no husband or legitimate children, or their issue her surviving, but leaving illegitimate children or their issue, such illegitimate children or their issue shall succeed to her real and personal property in all respects as if such children were legitimate; and if she shall leave no legitimate or illegitimate children or their issue and no husband, then her mother, or, if she be dead, her mother's next of kin, *under and according to the Statute of Distributions*, shall succeed.

Illegitimate children of female intestate to succeed in certain cases.

37. Where, after this Act comes into operation, any female shall die intestate, leaving no husband or legitimate children, or their issue her surviving, but leaving illegitimate children or their issue, such illegitimate children or their issue shall succeed to her real and personal property in all respects as if such children were legitimate.

Schedules.

SCHEDULES.

FIRST SCHEDULE.

"THE Real Estate Descent Act, 1874."

Rule 4 of the rules touching the administration of estates of persons deceased, mentioned in an Ordinance of the Governor and Legislative Council of New Zealand, Session IV., No. 1.

SECOND SCHEDULE.

In the Supreme Court }
of New Zealand. }

The day of , 18 .
UPON reading the affidavits of , it is ordered that the Public Trustee shall be administrator of all the real and personal estate of deceased [with the will of the said annexed].