

ALCOHOL AND HEALTH.

(Extract from "Lyttelton Times,"
December 16th.)

The effect of alcohol on health was the subject of a remarkable Prohibition rally in the King's Theatre last night, at which many of the leading city doctors took the platform on behalf of the Prohibition cause. Dr. Lester presided, and on the platform were Drs. Orchard, Acland, Fenwick, Pearson, Hand, Newton, Simpson, Sandston, Wallis, Slater, Brownlee, Currie, Gossett, and Irving. There was a crowded audience, including many ladies.

DR. LESTER'S INTRODUCTION.

Dr. Lester said that he had received a number of apologies for absence from medical men who, although whole-heartedly in favour of the cause of Prohibition, had been prevented by various duties from attending. Dr. Stanley Foster regretted his absence on account of an unavoidable prior engagement, but stated that he was with them in the cause. Dr. Blackmore, one of the busiest men in the city, also regretted his absence; Dr. T. L. Crooke apologised on account of another special meeting, but was in full sympathy with the cause. Dr. McGibbon also expressed full sympathy with the meeting. Dr. A. Tempe was absent through illness, but the cause had his whole-hearted support. Dr. Brown was kept away by professional duties. Dr. Lester added that it gave him great pleasure to appear on the platform in the cause of Prohibition. He would have been on the platform a year ago but for ill-health. He was glad now to be able to state his settled conviction that Prohibition was right and good. He had been a prohibitionist for the last three years, and he would be a prohibitionist until prohibition had been tried in all the civilised countries of the world and found wanting, but he regarded that as a very remote contingency. In introducing Dr. O'Brien, the Chairman said that he was an athlete and a doctor, and had shone considerably as both, and was also Catholic, and had many firm friends. Dr. Lester went on to refer to the great strides that had been made in the Prohibition cause, especially in the rallying of men quite outside the wild, pale-faced, narrow-chested enthusiast (more honour to him) who

used to be so prominent. Nowadays they got real good beefy sportsmen, who had shone in the fields of sport, and there was hardly one of the medical men behind him who had not been more or less distinguished in the athletic field. Moreover, on the previous evening there had been on the Prohibition platform leading men in commerce, and the Church of England, coming down from the fence for once, was represented by its leading dignitary, who was supported by all the other elements which made up civic and national life. There had been a great broadening of the outlook. The appeal for Prohibition now was made to men as rational beings on a broad basis as a necessary thing for any nation that wanted to go ahead, and it was up to the nation to make the sacrifice. (Applause.) He would have liked to give a lecture on the red herrings that had been drawn across the trail, and on the bogeys of the beer barrel—the bogeys about the liberty of the subject, and the miserable gloom-sodden world Mr A. Boyle prophesied if they gave up liquor. (Laughter.)

DR. O'BRIEN.

Dr. O'Brien, who was very enthusiastically received, said that it was easy to-day for anyone to speak on the Prohibition platform, for they knew, in the ordinary economy of life, that alcohol was no good. It was useful in commerce, as a preservative, and as a drug up to a certain extent, but as a beverage it was totally and absolutely discredited by every reasonable scientific man. He regarded it as unique in the history of New Zealand that a body of medical men should be the sole occupants of a platform in any cause at all, and he thought that the meeting would mark a new era, in which other men, who had been a little timid, would come out in various parts of the country and join with the medical men of Christchurch in expressing a similar view. (Applause.)

SOME MEDICAL ADVICE.

A year ago, Dr. O'Brien said, the epidemic began to gain ground, and the representative men called together the doctors, and offered to do what they ordered. Similarly alcohol had to be met, and the community must look to their medical men again. "We as representative of the majority of Canterbury doctors," the speaker continued, "tell you what to do, and we look to you to do it." He added that

the ordering of alcohol in the epidemic was really a feather in the cap of the profession, for it showed that while totally opposed to it as a beverage, they were reasonable-minded enough to order it when people needed it. It might be replied that alcohol must be some good. He did not say that it was no good, but as it was taken in New Zealand it was no good, and even in medicine there were better remedies, but alcohol was used occasionally because it was handy. But even under Prohibition alcohol would be available when wanted, but it was by no means the universal panacea it was represented to be. The slave trade, like the drink trade, had been carried on from time immemorial, and it had been supported in England by the upper classes, and even by the clergy. Thus the liquor trade was supported by persons who, in smug self-satisfaction, from their birth had not enquired into the circumstances, and were in a position that enabled them not to be dragged in the mud when drunkenness arose in their families. With the spread of knowledge, however, the people would triumph, and the slavery of drink would be abolished.

Just as they were thankful that the slave trade had gone, so they would be glad when the drink trade had gone. (Applause.)

EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL.

Alcohol had little food or heating value, and destroyed health and impaired efficiency, Dr. O'Brien added. In health, the man who swallowed alcohol had a feeling of warmth and well-being, and digestion was stimulated, but if the process was repeated it had a contrary effect, and the engorged stomach secreted mucus, and catarrh of the stomach followed. To put alcohol into an empty stomach caused the stomach to engorge itself to secrete when there was nothing to do, and it was like whipping a tired horse. It had been found that man could live without a stomach, but he could not live without a liver, and alcohol taken even once or twice was stored in the liver, causing an engorging or enlarging, and there was an overgrowth of the fibrous tissues, causing the liver, normally about 3½ lb., to become 8 lb. or 10 lb. in weight. Nature was inexorable in its reaction, and the overgrowth of fibrous tissue shrinking eventually destroyed the living cells of the liver, bringing the hobnailed state. There