

THE RECEPTION

The Pitt Street Bi-Centenary Hall was fairly well filled for the Official Reception to delegates, held on the Wednesday evening, March 5th. Very good arrangements had been made, and as the Dominion Officers, with Mrs. Mountjoy, Auckland District President, and Mr. and Mrs. Fortune went forward, a pleasant feeling of friendliness prevailed everywhere. Beautiful sprays of flowers, nicely suited to the dresses of the recipients were presented from the hostess union, and a very gay effect was produced.

Mrs. Mountjoy, after the opening, by the singing of the National Anthem and the offering of prayer, welcomed the delegates in a brief pithy speech, hoping that all would enjoy the Convention, and that good work would be done. After the playing of a very fine duet, Mr. W. H. Fortune, M.P., welcomed the Convention to Auckland.

ADDRESS GIVEN BY MR. W. FORTUNE, M.P.

WELCOME TO DELEGATES

After expressing pleasure in welcoming the members of Convention to Auckland and explaining that owing to absence from the City, His Worship the Mayor, Mr. Allum, was unable to perform this duty. Mr. Fortune went on to say that all sections of the community, even though they might not always agree with their views, knew that the W.C.T.U. served no selfish interest, but was concerned very vitally with the physical and moral welfare of the manhood and womanhood of this young nation. "The protection of our Youth is a most serious duty," said the speaker. "It is, in fact, a solemn charge, and never was it more urgent or necessary than to-day. Ever since man, in some bygone age, discovered that process of fermentation by which sugar is converted into alcohol, and experienced the intoxicating effects of the liquor so produced, there has been a temperance question. From the remotest times, efforts have been made to combat the vice of drunkenness. Though always a bad thing, it was never so bad as in our own time and in our own western lands. The abuse of light wines and beverages is bad enough, but the unrestricted use of distilled spirits is devastating in its effects."

The speaker outlined the early beginnings of organised effort to combat the evil in the latter part of the eighteenth century; and the gradual growth of a public conscience in regard to it. Societies were formed as far back as 1800, the movement making rapid progress through the influence of the churches. In 1863, over 6,000 societies with an aggregate membership of over 1,000,000 members were functioning in the several states, while a similar interest was being manifested in the United Kingdom. In our time, the W.C.T.U. is internationally organised. It is the knowledge of the terrible effects of the evil against which we are working that causes women to give so much of their time for no reward but that of a clear

conscience, and the knowledge that legislation has been materially influenced by this devotion to a great cause.

Speaking of the educational needs of the time, Mr. Fortune urged a greater use of the Cinematograph in this field, claiming that the enemy would make use of it if we did not. Continuing, he said: "The youthful mind is very open to suggestion. We remember our own experience. Never shall I forget the influence of a godly home, and those early Band of Hope days—they are indelibly impressed. When overseas, I pitied the men whose only relief from boredom was to be found in excessive drinking, and that was particularly true of some troops. They simply drank to get drunk, and openly said so. There was something fundamentally wrong with their foundations. If the foundation are wrong, what of the superstructure?" Mentioning the slow retrogression in the matter of the sense of responsibility, which is apparently decreasing in relation to our fellows, he said the "Am I my brother's keeper" attitude was becoming more general. "If he wants to go to the devil, let him go" is the position taken up by many. Can any honourable man fail in the duty of helping his weaker brother? asked Mr. Fortune.

"Our children to-day do not enjoy the privileges we enjoyed. They are living in a largely pagan age, accentuated and aggravated by two world conflagrations, with all their evil influences. The ultimate result will be seen in irreligious parents—then, what of the next generation? The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Anything that can be done to help in the strengthening of the moral vigour of our Youth must not be left undone. It is our sacred trust. Because you are gathered in such a spirit of your conference, because you have as your only desire the welfare, moral, physical, and spiritual, I more readily bid you welcome to Auckland, and pray God's richest blessing on all your deliberations."

So ended an encouraging and inspiring address.

Greetings were received, presented by representatives of the various organisations, from the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist Church Guilds and Missionary Unions, also a special one came from Mrs. Stevenson, wife of the Bishop of Nelson; one from the Educational Association, and an amusing welcome from Mr. Falkner, Alliance Secretary.

Mrs. Rattray gave elocutionary items, and then Miss Kirk made her reply to the welcomes offered.

After thanking the many speakers who had spoken so kindly, Miss Kirk went on to give the reasons why the W.C.T.U. stood firm for their great objectives. These were:—Firstly. Because drink is such a terribly strong factor, destroying all that is best in life. Beginning with those engaged in the traffic—what qualifications are essential? A lack of conscience is one. The knowledge of the harm they are helping to do would make it impossible for them to carry on unless they had hushed the voice of conscience. Lloyd Garrison said:—"God

is my witness, that great as is my detestation of slavery and the slave trade, I would rather be a slave-holder, yes, a kidnapper upon the African Coast than sell this poison to my fellow-creatures for common consumption. Since the creation of the world, there has been no tryant like intemperance, and no slaves so cruelly treated as his."

Dealing with the use of alcohol as medicine, Miss Kirk showed by actual figures that in hospitals so little was used that it was practically negligible. The amount per patient in principal hospitals in Edinburgh, spent in a year on alcohol is 2½d., in London 3½d., in Dunedee 1d. and in Aberdeen ¾d. Modern doctors do not order alcohol.

Some defenders of the drink traffic argue that anyone has the right to drink. All the same, the speaker pointed out, no one section of the community has the right to profit at the expense of any other section. No less an authority than Mr. G. Bernard Shaw says:—"If a natural choice were possible in our civilisation between drunkenness and sobriety, I would say, leave the people free to choose. But, while I see a big capitalistic organisation poking drink under people's noses at every corner, and pocketing the price, while leaving me and others to pay colossal damages, I am prepared to smash it." The unjust gains "pocketed" between 1942 and 1945 by the trade in New Zealand by the addition of 20,000,000 gallons of WATER, amounted to the unbelievable sum of £6,840,000.

The WASTE of the traffic was spoken of. "We use grain, which we can grow ourselves, and import grain when people overseas are starving. Surely inferior grain could be used for pig and fowl food. Bacon and eggs would be good food to send away, but instead, we produce less bacon and fewer eggs because those engaged in the Trade want big profits on little outlay," Miss Kirk said.

The CRIME attributable to the use of alcohol was also touched upon. Quoting from the Medical Journal of Australia, Miss Kirk said that in 1915, in N.S.W., 40% of the gaol population commenced a criminal career with a charge of drunkenness, and the same disclosure is made in the Year Book for 1939, twenty-four years after! Then the cautious man of science boils over. "Australia knows what is happening but will do nothing." Had he said, "We Australian doctors know what is happening but will do nothing," he would have gone to the heart of the matter and caused a shaking among the dry bones.

All the time there is waste, waste of time, money and worst of all character and life itself.

"If greater facilities for drinking are made available, it will mean more drinking. Sometimes some of us go to church and sing, 'Can we whose souls are lighted'—yet we are so benighted that we pamper this terrible and gigantic evil of the Trade, the greatest soul-destroyer of the day. New Zealand's drink bill for 1945 was £13,480,850—£8/1/- per head of the population. The amount

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