

Warner

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HOW PROHIBITION CAME TO TENNESSEE.

Address by Mrs Florence E. Atkins before the National W. C. T. U. Convention, Omaha, Neb., October 23, 1909.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Tennessee covenanted with herself and with her God that the homes of Tennessee should be delivered from the tyranny of the rum traffic, and in 1907, in September, it was borne in upon the heart and brain of Silena Moore Holman, the state president of the W. C. T. U., that the time was ripe when we should strike out boldly and bravely for state-wide prohibition.

In November our Convention met at Columbia. During this Convention a resolution was offered declaring for state-wide prohibition and pledging ourselves to work for the election of only such men to the legislature and to the chief executive office as should put themselves on record as favouring state-wide prohibition. Prohibition became the battle-cry of that Convention. Hearts were quickened. The women by the hundreds went back to their homes in the mountains and down by the rivers to talk and pray and work for prohibition as they had not done in the days gone by. Some of us went up to Nashville, and you, beloved, you came to us—and had I the tongue of a seraph, I could not sing your praises as I would. You caught the spirit. You soon discovered that we were out for prohibition, and prohibition became the battle-cry of the National Convention. It was there that that wonderful collection was taken, and

I declare to you that the liquor men of the State of Tennessee took the chills and the fever while the people laid 8,000 dollars on the altar that night.

I do not believe there is a state in the Union which has at its head a greater woman, a more magnificent general, a wiser director, than Tennessee, in the person of

Mrs Silena Moore Holman.

We had scarcely said "Good-bye" to you and gone back home when that marvelous woman began active and aggressive work. The first thing she undertook was to write a letter to every preacher of every denomination in the state of Tennessee. She laid our plans before the ministry. She asked them to preach a sermon on state-wide prohibition and to keep the subject constantly before the people. She sent a copy of the letter to the Anti-Saloon League—for up to this time they had not declared for state-wide prohibition—and asked them to state their position in the matter. There came back this answer, "Go ahead, Mrs Holman, we are with you and we will stand by you."

From that hour up until the present time there has never been a lack of harmony. With united forces we went to work to free our state, and I verily believe that tonight we would have the liquor traffic fastened upon our state were it not for the fact that there was absolute harmony in the temperance forces. (Applause.)

There went out a letter to the local unions which read something like this: "Sisters, we are in the beginning of an awful struggle," and called for

a day of fasting and prayer.

Knowing that all the forces of darkness were against us, and that we had a struggle such as few states have ever had, we yet knew in Whom we had our trust. And from that hour there came upon that state, as it were, a baptism of power.

Mrs Holman was the leader in the whole campaign. She sent a letter to every newspaper in the state, setting forth the plan of prohibition, appealing to the voters to support us in our effort to elect only such legislators as would declare themselves in favour of prohibition. About this time Mr Carmack, the grandest statesman of the South, declared himself a candidate for the gubernatorial office. We knew he would stand on the temperance platform, but we did not know whether he would stand for state-wide prohibition, and the abolition of the breweries and distilleries. Imagine our joy, if you can, when the news was flashed throughout the state, "Carmack has declared unflinchingly that the liquor traffic has sinned away its day of grace," and that he stood for the overthrow of the manufacturers. (Applause.)

We saw victory ahead.

Then began the active, hand to hand struggle.

Mrs Holman herself wrote two leaflets that we published by tens of thousands, setting forth local conditions. We had dodgers printed, with a picture of a boy and a girl, and these words, "A vote for prohibition is a vote for us. Please help us."

I want to say that while there never was a greater general than Mrs Holman, I verily believe that