1995

Up rugged and isolated paths : Helen M. Stoddard as president of the Texas Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1891-1907

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UP RUGGED AND ISOLATED PATHS:
HELEN M. STODDARD
AS PRESIDENT OF THE TEXAS
WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION, 1891-1907

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Rhonda Jane Jones

May, 1995

UMI Number: 1374594

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ABSTRACT

UP RUGGED AND ISOLATED PATHS:
HELEN M. STODDARD AS PRESIDENT OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION, 1891-1907

by Rhonda Jane Jones

This thesis evaluates how Helen M. Stoddard achieved legislative reform in Texas to benefit women and children. She lobbied tirelessly and crisscrossed Texas to deliver countless speeches and organize networks of women to achieve her goals. Her toughest fights were over the age of consent for girls, the sale of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs to children, and the establishment of Texas Woman's University. The analysis of her accomplishments is based primarily on her own words, her activities as reported in the WCTU paper the Union Signal, and legislation passed through her efforts.

Stoddard is indicative of previously unrecognized women who achieved significant legal reforms. This analysis, when viewed as part of a larger context illustrates how women were able to achieve so much in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries although they were unable to vote.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are so many people who aided me in this work that it seems an impossibility to remember them all here. I thank my graduate advising committee, Drs. Billie Barnes Jensen, Richard Cramer, and Elizabeth Van Beek, for not only correcting my blunders, but also for providing useful and insightful comments. Also at San Jose State University, my deepest gratitude goes to Professor Irma Eichhorn, who first suggested I write this thesis and who suffered through my early drafts.

There are many people who aided me in my research at libraries, universities, and historical societies to whom I owe a debt of gratitude, but I cannot name all of them here. I also thank my friends who endured me during this entire process.

My greatest debts I owe to family members, especially my grandmother, Isabel Gerrells Mitchell, who cherished and preserved diaries, pictures, and letters from her Aunt Helen, my cousin, Janee Trybyszewski, who provided me with copies of materials unavailable in California, and my

brother, Jonathan Jones, who insured that I had computers, printers, hardware support, and moral support in order to complete this project.

Most of all I owe my heartfelt gratitude to my mother, Marian Mitchell Jones, who not only saved Aunt Helen's things, but helped me every step of the way in the preparation of this thesis. Not only has she been my most ardent supporter, but she provided me with the strength to persevere.

In addition to thanking all the strong women of my family that preceded me, I must thank my daughter, Molly, who put up with a mother at times permanently affixed to a computer, and who, at the moment, detests history.

TO
MOLLY

for all her patience,
with hope that she will be
as strong as her foremothers

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The late nineteenth century saw an explosion of groups and organizations intent on social and political reform in the United States. Many of these groups focused on one particular area, such as women's suffrage, prohibition, or ballot reform. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), founded in 1874, sought the prohibition of alcohol. The group maintained from the beginning that women had the right to legislative action and to seek reform for their own protection, and the protection of their homes against alcohol and its effects. Their most common device for seeking reform was the petition, because without the vote, the strongest weapon available to them was the ability to influence the vote of others. In 1879, Frances Willard became national president of the WCTU. Willard introduced her "do everything" policy by organizing Unions throughout the United States to work for progressive reforms. In 1882, she organized the first Texas Union in Paris, Texas, which was followed by ten more that year. Helen M. Stoddard was a member when the Texas State Union was organized in 1883 and in 1891, Stoddard walked away from a chair of mathematics at

Fort Worth University to become president of the WCTU in her state.¹ Stoddard knew that she could achieve more by campaigning in legislative halls than by wielding an ax in saloons, so she soon mobilized the Texas WCTU into a well-organized network of women. During her tenure as state president from 1891 to 1907, she helped procure many laws protecting women and children from narcotics and vice.

The call for temperance has a long history in the United States. Benjamin Rush wrote and talked about its need in the 1780s. The Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century produced a large and sincere following that viewed temperance as a solution to many moral and economic problems in the early Republic. Some reformers eyed alcohol as a source of moral decay that led men into more degrading pastimes, and induced them to forsake the needs of the women and children entrusted to their care. Other reformers considered alcohol as a meddlesome vice that led men into a life of laziness, and undermined the ideas of work discipline that began to emerge with the industrialization of the United States. These reformers

¹ May Baines, Texas White Ribboners (Austin, TX: Privately printed, 1935), 23.

felt this impeded the economic growth of the entire nation.²

The antebellum prohibition movement that grew out of the Second Great Awakening included a great many women who fought for prohibition on both moral and economic grounds. The movement was beginning to make great strides with legislative prohibition, and the per capita consumption of alcohol had decreased when the Civil War intervened. During the War, most antebellum temperance legislation was repealed as the nation turned to its more pressing problem of saving the country itself.

Following the Civil War, many women were welcomed into the prohibition movement. Their actions were accepted by both men and women because they were seen as valuable workers for the good of mankind, without abandoning their prescribed domestic sphere. Those who had been involved in the earlier movements for temperance and prohibition, and many who joined the movement following the war, became disenchanted with the male leaders and their failure to allow women to participate in any meaningful way.

In 1873-1874, thousands of women joined the Women's

² A good example of scholarly work that illustrates the relationship between temperance reform and industrialization is Paul E. Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

Crusades in Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Illinois, New Jersey and New York. They participated in demonstrations and prayers in front of saloons, pleading for their closure. In hundreds of communities the protests of the women resulted in saloon closings and the passage of prohibition legislation. The success of the Crusades demonstrated to women that they could be effective without being subordinate to men. As a result, most women withdrew from the male dominated temperance movement, and formed their own organizations, including the WCTU. This break, which the men surely felt was a proper return of women to their own domestic sphere, actually was the impetus for producing strong nationally organized groups of women who learned to operate within the public, and previously male, domain in order to achieve not only a Prohibition Amendment to the United States Constitution, but also one granting women's suffrage.

Some historians who have mentioned the WCTU depict a group of white, Protestant, middle-class women intent on legislating the morals of American citizens, pointing to the ultimate repeal of the Prohibition Amendment as proof of the frivolity of their attempts. Others state that the women of the WCTU were anti-feminists who did not wish to receive suffrage, but only wanted to use their virtue and moral

superiority to improve the morals of the nation, while maintaining their own domestic sphere as defined by nineteenth century culture.³ A study of the works of historians in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s on the WCTU provides a view not only of the transitions in opinions about these women, but also of the changes that took place in women's history as a whole.

In the early part of the twentieth century, scholarship dismissed the impact of the WCTU. For instance, noted historians, Mary and Charles Beard mentioned the WCTU only twice in their massive The Rise of American Civilization. They see the Union as a part of the "respectable middle class," and state that it was the Anti-Saloon League, an all male organization, rather than the Union, that finally helped to gain the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment.⁴ Arthur M. Schlesinger also mentioned the WCTU twice in Political and Social Growth in the United States, 1852-1933;

³ Virginia C. Knight, "Women and the Temperance Movement," Current History 70 (May 1976): 201-203; James H. Timberlake, Prohibition and the Progressive Movement, 1900-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); Steven M. Buechler, Women's Movements in the United States: Woman Suffrage, Equal Rights, and Beyond (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

⁴ Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, The Rise of American Civilization (New York: MacMillan Co., 1933), 401, 763.

however, his only notations of the Union's success are that it helped push public awareness of the problems of alcohol in the nation and that it "became the most militant force in the movement. It waged merciless war against the foe on every front, inducing legislatures to require 'scientific temperance instruction' in the schools, and battling everywhere for restriction or destruction of the liquor business."⁵ Both of these volumes are indicative of historical scholarship that was dismissive of women's contributions to the development of the United States, either politically, socially, or in any other way that would merit more than a line or two to acknowledge their existence.

The woman's movement of the 1960s remedied such trends. Eleanor Flexner, in Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States, credits the WCTU with being so effective that "no other woman's organization approached it in scope and influence for many years."⁶ Flexner concisely described the conflict that arose at times between

⁵ Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Political and Social Growth of the United States: 1852-1933 (New York: MacMillan Co., 1935), 221, 356.

⁶ Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959; reprint, New York: Atheneum, 1968), 184.

suffragists and Union members but also revealed how the two groups cooperated and how membership in both organizations often overlapped. Flexner showed that the WCTU did not consist of just white, middle-class, Protestants as many historians proclaimed. She illustrated how the Union's "do everything" policy succeeded in drawing in a wide variety of women from many races and backgrounds to participate in the large array of departments and causes the National WCTU championed.

Another early historian, Joseph R. Gusfield, writing in 1963, interpreted the temperance movement, and especially the work of the WCTU, as a conflict between classes. Gusfield maintained that the WCTU was dominated by white, middle-class, Protestant women who used the influence of the Union in an attempt to instill their values on an ignorant and degenerate lower class and a frivolous and degenerate upper class. Gusfield found a symbolic meaning in the WCTU's attempts to introduce scientific temperance instruction into the public schools across the United States. He stated that the use of legislation for temperance instruction represented the "dominant culture's" fear of trusting teachers with their children's education, and that "the appearance of political demands was indeed a sign of the weakened position of Temperance forces in the

prestige structure of American life."⁷ Gusfield found nothing noble in the attempts made by the WCTU to improve the lives of other women and their children. Instead, he portrayed them as self-serving members of a class that felt threatened by a degenerate lower class that did not adhere to middle-class values. He explained that the women turned to coercive reform in "a reaction to a sense of declining dominance."⁸

James H. Timberlake, in Prohibition and the Progressive Movement: 1900-1920, returned to the tradition of Schlesinger by referring to the WCTU as merely helping the Anti-Saloon League to procure the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment. Timberlake did concede that the Union was important in gaining public favor for Prohibition, but he could not quite admit that women could be responsible in any way for such a milestone in American history. He revealed himself to be a strong proponent of history for and about white men and even quoted Frances Willard, while president

⁷ Joseph R. Gusfield, Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement, 2d ed., (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986) 85.

⁸ Ibid., 86.

of the WCTU, as saying that the Knights of Labor did more for temperance than the WCTU.⁹

During the rise of women's histories in the 1970s, one of the most common failings in scholarship was the treatment of the WCTU as an organization ruled completely by Willard. Rather than viewing the Union as diverse and democratic, pursuing many different interests and reforms at one time, historians equated her convictions and ideas with those of the group as a whole. Even those historians who tried to interpret the different factions within the Union did so only as they agreed or disagreed with Willard. This led to a misinterpretation of the goals and accomplishments of the WCTU and the deletion of the significant contributions of tens of thousands of American women to nineteenth century social reform.

In a work that emphasized the antagonism between suffragists and the WCTU, Virginia Knight also brought in a heretofore unknown conflict between rural and urban women. Knight maintained that the Union was instrumental in teaching women in small towns and on farms the importance of the vote but that urban middle-class women did not take

⁹ James H. Timberlake, Prohibition and the Progressive Movement, 1900-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 157.

woman suffrage seriously until the advent of the labor movement. She never stated how the labor movement succeeded in turning these women to the suffrage cause and obviously was unaware of the considerable number of WCTU members in large cities, including Willard, who were early suffrage crusaders. Knight focused on women's concerns over the economic and moral conditions within their own homes; she saw neither the WCTU nor the women involved as part of a larger reform movement, but perceived their work only as "a way to exert more control over their own lives."¹⁰

Sheila M. Rothman's Woman's Proper Place is more indicative of the changes that took place in women's history in the 1970s. She stated the purpose of the WCTU was to "organize virtuous womanhood so as to transform the masculine world, to have feminine traits counterbalance men's brutal and animal qualities."¹¹ She perceived the Union, and most women's organizations of the late nineteenth century, as working to expand their virtues and morality beyond their traditional domain, into the wider society. As a result, Rothman viewed the women of the Union as an

¹⁰ Virginia C. Knight, "Women and the Temperance Movement," Current History 70 (May 1976): 201.

¹¹ Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), 67.

enthusiastic and diverse group of both rural and urban women who were "staunchly committed to securing the vote for women: the ballot would further its campaign to recast social institutions."¹² Although Rothman viewed the WCTU and other women's groups emerging from the doctrine of true womanhood, she saw them as true social reformers who no longer felt that the prescribed woman's sphere of domesticity was adequate to hold women. To illustrate this point, Rothman often quoted Willard as saying, "woman will bless and brighten every place she enters, and will enter every place."¹³

Scholarship in the 1980s addressed some of the gaps in the literature. In 1981, Ruth Bordin published the most recent scholarly book focusing on women in the temperance movement, Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900. Bordin stated that she felt feminists of the 1960s and 1970s neglected women's role in temperance reform because they seemed to be part of an "anti-liberation tradition."¹⁴ She lamented this as a serious deficiency in

¹² Ibid., 68.

¹³ Ibid., 14, citing Frances E. Willard, "The Work of the WCTU," in Annie Nathan Meyer, Woman's Work in America (New York, n.p., 1891), 410.

¹⁴ Ruth Bordin, Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), xviii.

women's historical scholarship, especially as the feminists ignored the contributions of the WCTU. Bordin states two important roles of the Union: "it was the national voice through which women expressed their views on social and political issues, and it was also a vast grass-roots organization that worked for charitable and political solutions to social problems."¹⁵

Bordin saw the importance of the WCTU as a proving ground for thousands of women, and though she conceded that Union members were not early participants in the suffragist campaign, she also believed "the Union elevated the personal and civic consciences of large numbers of women and provided the underpinning for the surge of interest in woman's suffrage after 1900 that made the Nineteenth Amendment possible."¹⁶ Not only did Woman and Temperance give the first account of women's experiences and triumphs through the history of the WCTU, it also gave much credit to the countless women who played important roles of leadership in the organization. Fortunately, Bordin gave more than just a footnote to the innumerable women who first found the road out of their domestic sphere through the thousands of local Unions that arose during the late nineteenth century.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 157.

Along with Bordin, many others in the 1980s began to view the WCTU from a new angle. These scholars began to investigate and interpret the actions of the Union women as viable members of society who used the WCTU as a springboard into other movements. One of the first of these was Mari Jo Buhle, who revealed that many women of the early Socialist and labor movements "had been indelibly marked by the nineteenth century woman's movement, especially by its W.C.T.U. component."¹⁷ Buhle used remarks made by Willard and other WCTU members to illustrate that the movement from the WCTU to Christian Socialism was an easy transition, because they could see the values of socialism espoused in the doctrines of Jesus and the early Christian church of the Bible.¹⁸ Although Buhle asserted "such Socialist women still clung to the notion of the home as a traditional source of woman's power, domesticity as a special feminine preserve," she also stated that "transcending all differences was foremost a universal commitment to women's enfranchisement that found its ideological and organizational base for women of varying backgrounds within

¹⁷ Mari Jo Buhle, Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 113.

¹⁸ Ibid., 116-17.

the WCTU."¹⁹ Buhle, while building on the socialist ideas and concerns of the women involved in the Union, brought the group into an important and prominent position within the entire social reform movement of the period.

Other historians have brought a regional focus to the issue. Anne Firor Scott's writings on the Woman's Christian Temperance Union concentrated mainly on Southern women, who had been dismissed by most earlier historians. In her collection of essays, Making the Invisible Woman Visible, she stressed that "women have been prolific and effective builders of social structures beyond anything we had previously realized."²⁰ Scott also upheld the WCTU as a training ground for women in the nineteenth century, that "whatever function they served initially, the missionary societies and W.C.T.U. . . . provided a school for women leaders of considerable significance in the shaping of southern society and even southern politics in the ensuing decades."²¹ Scott also agreed with earlier historians who claimed these early benevolent women's groups acted to impart their middle-class values to the poor. However, she

¹⁹ Ibid., 84, 117.

²⁰ Anne Firor Scott, Making the Invisible Woman Visible (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 149-51.

²¹ Ibid., 208.

did not see this as an attempt to control the lower classes, as these women lived by the values they espoused. Rather, she viewed their attempts at educating the poor as a means of elevating them from their impoverished condition, and emphasized that these were women of the past, upon whom the reader cannot impose late twentieth-century values and prejudices.²²

Nell Painter, in Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919, saw the WCTU, especially under Willard's leadership, as an important group that was not confined to white middle-class Protestants. Painter felt the WCTU

shared two characteristics with twentieth-century women's organizations. First, the religious convictions of WCTU members supported their belief that they were acting in the interests of the society as a whole. And second, the 'Do everything' approach reached women across class lines.²³

She portrayed them as the strongest supporters of woman's suffrage at the time and as adherents to Prohibition because they saw alcohol not as a cause of poverty but a symptom.

Although Carolyn De Swarte Gifford referred to the WCTU as Evangelical Protestant women, she showed how the women of

²² Ibid., 284-85.

²³ Nell Irvin Painter, Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987), 234.

the Union used it to break from the constraints of "True Womanhood." Gifford did not equate the WCTU only with Willard, but used other members to illustrate the Union as an enormous network of sisters working for the improvement of both the private and public spheres of American life. She illustrated how the Union built a strong, broad based organization with national, state, and local levels, and "in these structural divisions the True Woman as voter and political being could learn the workings of American politics and simultaneously attempt to legislate morality."²⁴ Although Gifford did see the Union trying to legislate morality, she looked beyond this to interpret the importance of the group as a whole in raising women's consciousness and abilities, thus helping them to reach beyond their formerly, narrowly restricted lives.

Although Eleanor Flexner, in the 1950s, first began to view the women of the WCTU as important players in the late nineteenth-century reform movements, her work was largely ignored until the 1980s. During most of the 1960s and 1970s, historians maintained either that the Union women

²⁴ Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, "Home Protection: The WCTU's Conversion to Woman Suffrage," in Gender, Ideology, and Action: Historical Perspectives on Women's Public Lives, ed. Janet Sharistanian (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 111.

were detrimental to women's suffrage or that they were trying to impose unwanted middle-class values on the lower classes. Once into the 1980s, historians of women began to view the women of the nineteenth century as more important and began to interpret the WCTU as crucial to the breakdown of the previous idea of True Womanhood.²⁵ Women's participation in this group was then seen as influential in preparing women to move into the broader arena of society and politics in the twentieth century.

In the early years of this century, members of the WCTU wrote histories of their group and the women who played vital roles in the state and local Unions. These were not scholarly works; they were written to record what these women viewed as history in the making. In 1909, Helen Stoddard's personal secretary, Fanny L. Armstrong published a book entitled To The Noon Rest. This volume is a compilation of twenty-two of Stoddard's speeches, sketches, and anecdotes of her life, and letters written by others acclaiming Stoddard's work for the people of Texas. The publisher inserted a note in the Noon Rest, explaining:

²⁵ In a groundbreaking essay on women in the nineteenth century, Barbara Welter describes in great detail the concept of "True Womanhood." Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," American Quarterly, XVIII (1966), 151-74.

Many of us who are not actively connected with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, have failed to give full credit to that organization for the noble work it has done. This book will give its readers a comprehensive view of the achievements of the organization, particularly in the state of Texas, and incidentally in other states and the world.

There is nothing frivolous or light about Mrs. Stoddard's addresses. Every sentence says something and something worth while [sic]. They will be found of absorbing interest and profitable to all who have at heart the cause of temperance and the welfare of humanity.²⁶

Although Stoddard's words were spoken a full century ago, they do not cease to inspire their readers, and they help us to understand the battles being waged by our foremothers of the nineteenth century. Her words reveal why women of the late nineteenth century joined women's organizations in unprecedented numbers to pursue progressive laws and reforms.

As historians today have discovered, there is more to understanding history than just recounting battles and reviewing the deeds of statesmen. Woman's history, once it was acknowledged, became a roster of the few women of national renown who made a contribution in some way to the story of mankind. These women should be studied and their contributions to the human drama should be known, but there

²⁶ L. H. Higley, "A Word from the Publisher," in Fanny L. Armstrong, To the Noon Rest (Butler, Indiana: L. H. Higley, 1909), 8.

are many thousands of others, whose stories have been left untold, who left their mark on others and thus history itself. Through them, we can better understand the past.

Helen M. Stoddard was one such woman. She abandoned a successful career as a mathematics professor to spend weeks and even months trudging over the vast frontiers of Texas in at times deplorable circumstances to rally women and men to fight for legislative reforms. Stoddard was a woman denied the right to suffrage by the country she loved, but she was willing to stand before large conventions of men, and male legislators to demand that she be heard and that she be taken seriously. This was not a light task in the 1890s and early twentieth century, when she united thousands of diverse Texas women under the white banner of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union to fight for their own equality with men and legislation to benefit to their children and other women.

Stoddard's contributions to the American people must be acknowledged. Understanding her motivations provides insight into the society and culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States. The primary focus of this study is to analyze what compelled her to lead the Texas WCTU for sixteen years to fight for legislative reforms. Understanding Stoddard provides an

insight into how and why the WCTU became the largest woman's organization in the United States during this period, and why thousands of women devoted their lives and their livelihoods to improving society at large. These were strong, intelligent women whose lives might otherwise have been wasted, constrained by the domestic drudgery that imprisoned their mothers. All women of this country owe a debt to these first feminists who were willing to stand toe to toe with men and demand a better life for themselves and their daughters.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LIFE OF HELEN M. STODDARD BEFORE BECOMING TEXAS STATE PRESIDENT

Helen M. Stoddard was born in a log cabin, in Sheboygan Township, Wisconsin, on July 27, 1850, to Hawley and Esther Ladd Gerrells, the fifth of eight children. Her father, a teacher educated at Henrietta Academy near Rochester, New York, was originally from Connecticut. Her mother was a descendant of those who were excluded from Massachusetts and founded Providence, Rhode Island, in order to practice their religious beliefs. Hawley Gerrells and Esther Ladd met and married in Monroe County, New York, in 1837, then moved to Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin, about 1846. In Sheboygan Falls, Gerrells taught school and owned a lumber mill and a grist mill.

Stoddard was educated at home by her father and older sister Emily until she entered the public school at the age of ten. Her family had taught her so well that she was immediately placed in the fourth grade. Stoddard later attended Ripon College in Wisconsin, before continuing her education at Genesee Wesleyan Seminary, Lima, New York. Part of her early education was religious training. Every

winter Hawley Gerrells would sit before the fire in the evening and read the Bible to his family as her mother sewed or knit. As Helen grew older she joined her mother, sewing, knitting, spinning, and weaving linen thread to make clothes, towels, and sheets for the family.

In 1870, while Stoddard was attending Genesee, the evangelist Reverend A. B. Earle held a revival at the school. Stoddard had long studied the Bible, but had never publicly professed her Christian beliefs, assuring herself that her own private studies would suffice, although the Bible instructed otherwise. On March 6, 1870, Stoddard put aside her Latin studies to attend the evening revival service in the college chapel. During the service, her friend and classmate, Mary Stewart whispered, "Come, Helen: come forward to the altar and I will go with you."¹ Stoddard went forward to publicly profess her belief in Christ, had a profound spiritual experience, and spent the remainder of her life devotedly practicing the tenets of the Methodist Episcopal Church. More than thirty years later, Stoddard said that she had a changed heart and life from that day forward, and she asked, "How many other young girls and young boys all over the land are waiting to-day for some

¹ Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 30, 31.

such encouraging word and kindly invitation?"²

That same year, 1870, Stoddard first exhibited her organizing ability by cofounding the Browning Literary Society at Genesee Wesleyan Seminary to honor Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Stoddard was elected president of the Society and delivered speeches to their public meetings.

On July 12, 1871, Stoddard graduated as valedictorian and delivered her graduating address, entitled "Frost." In her speech she spoke of the frost that had descended on the people of the United States in the form of overwork, strife, unbounded ambition, and greed, especially on the young and middle aged.

Ambition and strife have fallen upon many of them, chilling the tender buds of trust and faith that spring up in the heart, and cannot endure the icy cold as we can the rank weeds of selfishness and desire for wealth and fame. . . . Before us is life, life more varied, more rugged and fuller of care than the arduous one closing today. Usefulness should be our aim and duty place our burdens, and faith bear them. . . . If we cherish ever the perfect life of our blessed Savior, our own will will be an onward path with "No steps backward."³

In this early speech, Stoddard laid down her strong conviction that a life must be useful and practical, and

² Ibid.

³ "No step backward" or *Nulla Vestigia Retrosussum* was the motto of the 1871 graduating class of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary. Armstrong, The Noon Rest, 36-38.

always bent to duty and the noble improvement of life for all people. She felt anguish even at this young age over the fact that people had abandoned morality and what she felt was noble in life for the pursuit of money. Stoddard never wavered from these early beliefs and was to follow these convictions daily for the next seventy years.

On April 9, 1873, Helen Gerrells married a fellow student, Shepherd D. Stoddard. The Stoddards moved to Nebraska, where their son, Robert William, was born, followed by a second son, Oren Carl, who died within a few months. When her husband was diagnosed with lung trouble the family moved to Florida in 1877; he died there Christmas Day 1878. Left without financial means, Stoddard and her son Robert returned to Nebraska where she taught in the public schools, but she was soon called to the Chair of Mathematics at the Nebraska Conference Seminary, in York, Nebraska.⁴

In 1880, Stoddard and young Robert moved south to be with her family in Indian Gap, Texas, a town founded by her father. Hawley Gerrells had moved to Hamilton County, Texas, in 1878, for health reasons, and bought hundreds of

⁴ Ibid., 24; and John William Leonard, ed., Woman's Who's Who of America (New York: American Commonwealth Co., 1914-1915), 786.

acres of land at fifty cents per acre. From this land he provided for the townsite of Indian Gap and the school, opened the first general store, served as the first postmaster, and continued to farm. Here, Stoddard taught in the first school house in the area, established a Sunday School and a literary society, and succeeded her father as postmaster. To the residents of Indian Gap, the Gerrell's rock house became the religious and cultural center of their small community.

In need of more financial security, and seeking better educational opportunities for her young son and a nephew she was rearing, she moved to Comanche, Texas, and took a position teaching at Comanche College. In 1884, speaking before a public meeting held in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Comanche, Stoddard commemorated Robert Raikes for founding the first Sunday School in England in 1781, and emphasized the importance of such schools:

That the future of the family, the church, the nation and the world rests with the little children is too evident a truth to be repeated here. . . . That which is written first upon the mind of the child, remains longest, and remains as a potent influence in shaping destiny.⁵

Stoddard firmly believed that all children should be educated and that they should receive adequate religious

⁵ Ibid., 39-41.

instruction to insure that they became moral, responsible adults; they were the future, the destiny of the world. She often quoted Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." Another of her favorite sayings, which she was to repeat in countless speeches, was, "An ounce of formation is worth several tons of reformation."⁶ Stoddard firmly held that a child, properly instructed and trained in youth had a better chance of evading temptation as an adult. Her conviction that the elevation of mankind depended on the moral and spiritual elevation of the future leaders of the world, led her to seek many laws to safeguard the innocence of children.

In 1885, Stoddard moved to Fort Worth where she occupied the Chair of Mathematics at Fort Worth University, a Methodist institution, and became an active member in Saint Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Here, she was often called upon to address the church and the local literary societies. In one such address, entitled "Ernst Ist Das Leben," she condemned the majority of mankind for wasting their lives on frivolities, failing to devote

⁶ Ibid., 12-13; and Baines, Texas White Ribboners, 23.

themselves to a useful and practical endeavor.⁷ She said:

Could we but remember that nothing is trifling, that everything, though light as thistle down, has an influence that shall endure forever. In the human soul there is no state of rest, no standstill, either it is advancing or retrograding. We must go on, every moment of our life a blessing or a blast forever. . . .

Should duty point in directions we had not thought to go, up rugged and isolated paths that we had a choice we would not choose to tread, yet why falter since duties are ordered of God, and He doeth nothing amiss.⁸

To Helen Stoddard, life was serious. One must use all of his or her God-given talents to work to improve the conditions of that life. She felt that children must be raised to follow a moral, Christian life and that women, long the guardians of their children's character, were as useful and important to the development of the human race as men. As the appointed guardians of children's character, Stoddard believed women should be granted more power to direct the welfare of the children of the United States. Participating in the legal and political system was vital in accomplishing such a goal. With these increased powers, Stoddard believed that women could improve the lives not only of the children in this country, but those of children

⁷ Stoddard often used poet Johann von Schiller's motto which means "life is a serious thing." Ibid., 43.

⁸ Ibid., 45, 46.

around the world.

In a speech before the Methodist Episcopal church, South, Fort Worth, Stoddard represented the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. In this address, she sought support for their newly organized Society in that church, and spoke of the importance of American women in reaching those of foreign nations, especially Asian countries where women were forbidden to hear male ministers. These nations she said were still in darkness, not having been enlightened by the Bible, "this Bible which is 'woman's emancipator, woman's eulogy, woman's heaven.'"⁹ Stoddard talked of the importance of women ministering to women as vital in Asian countries, but also of the great work women nurses and physicians were accomplishing through the Missionary Society throughout the world. These women were so successful because they could reach into the homes of other women, "...women who are able not only to heal the body, but bring healing to the sin-sick soul!"¹⁰

As important as she felt the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was to the women and children of foreign nations, Stoddard realized there was much work of the same nature to be accomplished closer to home. In the United States there

⁹ Ibid., 47.

¹⁰ Ibid., 49.

were also bodies and souls that needed the guidance of strong women. In the WCTU, Stoddard found the forum to employ her own talents to help women and children.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION

In 1879, the capable and visionary Frances Willard became national president of the WCTU. Willard began to introduce her "do everything" policy by organizing Unions throughout the United States to work for progressive reforms. She firmly believed that prohibition of alcohol could be achieved more expediently if the WCTU worked to expel other vices from the country simultaneously, including gambling, prostitution, and the use of tobacco, cocaine, and opium. In addition to these, Willard led the women of the WCTU to fight against child labor, for the instruction of children on the effects of alcohol on the human system, for the protection of children through laws governing the age of consent for girls and boys, and many more reforms.

Under Willard's leadership, the WCTU expanded in many directions, and it became the largest woman's organization in the United States. It was the only one that excluded men from full voting membership. The structure of the organization was based mainly on that of the United States government system, beginning on the national level and

proceeding down to the local. Each Union was autonomous, deciding which programs and causes it would pursue.

The National WCTU, at its annual convention each year, established departments and elected superintendents of each of them. The establishment, and at times dissolution, of departments was based on the democratic vote of delegates present. Delegates were elected from each state, based on the number of paid members in that state.

The WCTU was divided into six major branches: Organization, Preventive, Educational, Evangelistic, Social, and Legal. Within each branch were departments which varied over time, generally increasing in number through the years, as some woman was discovered by the WCTU leadership to be talented and interested in a particular specialty or field. This newly elected superintendent was then given jurisdiction over a new department and an office. As Willard said, "We find a woman with a mission and we give her a commission."¹ At times the national leadership saw the need for a new department, then sought the proper woman to elect as superintendent. Although each state and local Union was encouraged to participate in as many departments as possible, each could decide which of these, if any, they

¹ Union Signal, 18 May 1893, 8.

wished to implement and pursue. Some were superfluous in certain areas, for instance, the Unions in New York would have had little work for the Department of Work Among Miners.

The departments encompassed a wide range of progressive reforms. Under the Preventive Branch could be found the Departments of Heredity and of Health, in addition to one of Sanitary and Economic Cookery. The Educational Branch included a Department of Work Among Foreigners, which provided literature in seventeen different languages in 1893; a Press Department; a Department of Narcotics, that worked to eliminate tobacco, cocaine, and other drugs; a Department of Kindergartens and one of Schools of Methods. The Legal Branch contained various departments, one which worked for woman's suffrage, another for the passage of favored legislation, and even a Peace Department that worked to encourage all the nations of the world to solve their grievances by arbitration rather than by armed conflict.²

Some of the causes pursued by a majority of the WCTU membership, in addition to Prohibition and woman's suffrage, were the implementation of scientific temperance instruction

² The Departments are listed in each issue of the Union Signal; however, the paper printed during the National WCTU Convention each year provides more in-depth information.

in all public schools, raising the age of consent for girls, and assuring through legislation that tobacco could not be purchased by minors. These issues were given wide coverage in the WCTU weekly newspaper, The Union Signal, with articles written by members and guest authors of national renown. The newspaper regularly provided reports to the membership on how each cause was progressing in the individual states. These reports were often supplemented with advice from the national superintendent of the department on how best to procure effective legislation within the states. As the members saw the passage of these laws as vital to the success of the organization as a whole, lists were often printed in the Union Signal showing each state's current law, with notice of their legislative conquests receiving special mention.

One principal reason for the overwhelming success of the WCTU was the fact that it reached into so many diverse areas of progressive reform, providing fields of work and departments that interested its widely varied membership. As the Union's name implies, the membership was largely Christian, predominantly Protestant, and the women used Christian ideology to further their goals of reforming the people of the world. Protestantism was not a pre-requisite for membership; the Union welcomed Catholics and non-

Christians as long as they supported the prohibition of alcohol and were willing to make the pledge of total abstinence required for membership.³

³ The most complete source on the membership of the WCTU is Ruth Bordin, Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).

CHAPTER FOUR

HELEN M. STODDARD TAKES THE HELM

Helen M. Stoddard was a member of the WCTU when the Texas Union was organized in 1883. During the next few years, she maintained her dues, attended meetings, and served on several committees before being named State Superintendent of Scientific Instruction in Public Schools, under Texas State President Sarah C. Acheson in 1890.¹ The Department of Scientific Temperance Instruction was an important aspect of the National WCTU educational program. The purpose of this Department was to gain compulsory education for all public school children in the United States on "the nature and effects of alcohol and narcotics upon the human system."²

In March 1891, Stoddard and Acheson, with the help of WCTU National Organizer, Fanny Griffin of Alabama, appeared before the legislative committee of the Texas Legislature to plead for the passage of the Scientific Temperance

¹ Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 8; and Union Signal, 21 May 1891, 10.

² Union Signal, 18 May 1891, 10.

Instruction Bill. The bill, presented by Representative Kirkpatrick of Wise County, received a passing vote of 71 to 22 in the House on March 19, 1891. When the bill was presented to the Senate, however, the Free Conference Committee tabled it, fearing that temperance instruction in the schools would lead to Prohibition.³ In 1887, Prohibition supporters in Texas had attempted to pass a Prohibition Amendment to the State Constitution. It had been a bitter fight, which the anti-Prohibition forces won only with the help of brewers and liquor dealers from other parts of the nation. Many Texas legislators perceived any mention of temperance as another attempt to secure a Prohibition Amendment.

President Acheson asked Stoddard to serve as the Recording Secretary at the State WCTU Convention at Tyler, Texas, in May 1891. At this meeting, Acheson announced that she was retiring because of ill health. Although prior to the convention, Stoddard was relatively unknown to the majority of the members of the Texas State Union, she was elected president on the first ballot.⁴

Upon her election to the presidency of the Texas

³ Ibid., 26 March 1891, 11.

⁴ Baines, Texas White Ribboners, 29.

Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Stoddard returned to her home in Fort Worth and resigned her chair of mathematics at Fort Worth University, where she had taught for the previous six years. Her father had died in the spring of 1890, leaving Stoddard a profitable farm in Indian Gap, which enabled her fully to devote her energies to the WCTU and the social reforms she sought.⁵

Stoddard believed that legislation was the only sure way to gain progressive reform, so she soon embarked upon the first of many journeys across the state. She worked diligently to mobilize the women of Texas into a well-organized network that aided her in procuring many progressive laws from 1891 to 1907. This network was to aid her efforts by obtaining thousands of signatures on petitions to present to the legislature, in addition to writing many letters to individual legislators, and praying, especially at predesignated times when Stoddard was facing the opposition.

When Stoddard assumed the presidency of the WCTU, there were only 372 paid members in Texas, although there had been about 1600 in 1888. Many women had abandoned the

⁵ Ethelyn Gerrells, interview by author, written record, San Jose, California, 2 December 1993; and Baines, Texas White Ribboners, 29.

organization after the unsuccessful campaign for a Prohibition Amendment to the Texas State constitution in 1887, and most of those remaining were disheartened.⁶ The WCTU was the first woman's organization in the South to endorse woman's suffrage in 1888 as the surest route to Prohibition. However, there had been little work accomplished toward this goal. The Texas state suffrage movement had collapsed by 1891, leaving the WCTU as the only group in the state actively seeking women's right to vote when Stoddard took the helm.⁷ Stoddard ardently believed that women were capable of exercising the ballot intelligently and by procuring the right to vote, they would use it to improve the condition of themselves and their children. She felt this could best be accomplished, along with the other social reforms she sought, through the efforts of a strong, properly organized Union. As she said, "it is the most difficult thing in the world, if not utterly impossible, for one class to legislate for another class; for one sex to make laws to govern the other."⁸ Stoddard

⁶ Ruthe Weingarten and Judith N. McArthur, eds., Citizens at Last: The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas (Austin, TX: Ellen C. Temple, 1987), 79.

⁷ Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 81.

⁸ Ibid., 92.

ardently believed that women, long upheld as the protectors of the home and the guardians of morality in the United States, could best determine what legislation should be enacted to protect themselves, their children, and their homes.

To this end, in 1891 Stoddard embarked upon her mission to strengthen the Texas WCTU. With her mission to better the lives of women and children, and through them the entire country, Stoddard set out traveling from town to town, organizing local chapters of the WCTU. She traveled on horseback, by horse and buggy, in row boats, and on the train through often inclement weather to rally women to the causes she championed. And she had many. In a speech before the State WCTU in 1897 she said:

You do battle for those who cannot strike a blow for themselves; the drunkard; the drunkard's wife; the little children under the curse of drink; the fallen woman, bruised and bleeding, who pleads for a chance to rise. . . . We started out to crush the awful drink evil, and soon found that it was linked to every other evil; and, that if this evil be destroyed, every other evil must be attacked. No reform can be isolated; we must advance with all of them together. This truth justifies our "Do everything" policy.⁹

By the end of June, 1891, Stoddard was in Beaumont, Texas, where she organized a Union on the 29th and 30th, following

⁹ Ibid.

two public mass-meetings and Bible readings in the Beaumont Opera House, and meetings in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, attended by numerous men as well as many women. This new Union was christened "Stoddard Union" in her honor. Throughout the summer and early fall, Stoddard traveled, conducting meetings and "belting our state. . . with white ribbons," the National WCTU symbol for temperance.¹⁰ By October 1891, she was reported to have visited Palestine, Galveston, Whitt, and Pecos City to revitalize and inspire the local prohibitionists, while many other Unions across the state were reporting a new enthusiasm in their members as a result of the fervor of their new state president.¹¹

As president of the Texas State WCTU, Stoddard attended the first meeting of the World's WCTU on November 10 and 11, 1891, and the eighteenth convention of the National WCTU on November 13 through 18, both in Boston, Massachusetts. In the morning session of Tuesday, November 17th, Stoddard was appointed as a member of a committee of seven to escort Frances Willard to her chair on the stage upon her overwhelming reelection as the president of the National

¹⁰ Union Signal, 18 July 1891, 12; and 3 September 1891, 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1 October 1891, 8.

WCTU.¹² In her acceptance speech, Willard remarked of these women:

You sent seven dear women--the Scriptures reversed--seven have come to find one. They were fine representatives, too, from all parts of the nation; seven dear, true, loyal friends of mine. . . . In our beautiful band we have peculiar politics. . . . If you want an office you must not seek it. You must stand in your allotted place, like a sentry on duty, intent and alert for whatever comes, never seeking and never denying.¹³

In only six months, Stoddard had risen from a member of a local Texas Union to prominence in the National and World WCTU by fulfilling duties thrust upon her by others.

That evening Willard asked each state president to make a two-minute presentation on the progress in their states during the preceding year. In her first national address as a national officer, Stoddard expressed her belief that "pre-eminence should be placed legislative work."¹⁴ She was to reiterate this sentiment thousands of times during her sixteen years as president of the Texas WCTU. Stoddard fervently believed that the surest route to prohibition was through legislation and that this could best be achieved by the thorough organization of the women of Texas and the

¹² Ibid., 17 November 1891, 6.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 18 November 1891, 5.

United States. She reported in this presentation that the WCTU membership in Texas had more than doubled since May, and that the number of Unions had increased by over one hundred twenty percent.¹⁵ She was on her way to building a strong organization to aid her in her future assault on the legislative halls of the Texas State Capitol.

Upon her return to Texas in early December, Stoddard continued traveling and organizing across the state. While embarking on her crusades, she often turned to the Bible, quoting many passages that enforced her belief that women and children were to be exalted and protected, not shunned or repressed. Through her study of the Bible, she found the idea that formed the foundation of many of her speeches: "An ounce of formation is worth several tons of reformation."¹⁶ Stoddard used this idea again and again to convince legislators to vote in favor of legislation benefiting minors. She also employed Scripture in her daily meetings of Union organizations, especially during Schools of Methods.

The Schools of Methods was a Department of the National WCTU, under the Educational Branch. This Department, run by

¹⁵ Ibid., 18 November 1891, 5.

¹⁶ Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 40, 87.

a national superintendent, provided individual Union leaders with literature and instruction on how best to arm new members with the weapons to pursue the "do everything" policy of the WCTU. Stoddard conducted many Schools of Methods in her travels across Texas. At these she would provide Bible readings and explain their importance and significance to the cause. State Reporter, Elizabeth Strong Tracy explained that these schools "were revelations to most of us, some hearing the Bible explained by a woman for the first time."¹⁷ In addition to training women on how to employ the Bible in their WCTU work, the Schools taught the women how to educate prospective members on the history of the WCTU and the existing laws of the land, with suggestions on how they should be improved to best reflect the policies of the WCTU regarding such issues as scientific temperance instruction and woman's suffrage. Another important lesson of these Schools was to instruct women on proper parliamentary procedure for conducting meetings. In 1898, Tracy wrote, "through the efforts of the W.C.T.U. women, many of whom belong to the reading clubs and press associations, parliamentary law has come to be recognized as 'an aid to self-confidence and the only way to preserve the

¹⁷ Union Signal, 14 April 1892, 10.

rights of all.'"¹⁸ These schools were conducted for four or five days in order to insure that the women involved in the local Union had sufficient training and knowledge to carry on the work once the leader left that town. Stoddard conducted a great many Schools of Methods during her presidency. She also made an annual journey to Bay View, Michigan, to participate in the annual Chautauqua or Schools of Methods held there. In Bay View, she joined such notable speakers at the podium as Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and Dr. Anna Shaw, along with other nationally renowned doctors and attorneys.¹⁹

In addition to organizing new Unions and inspiring members in existing ones, Stoddard also worked with groups other than the WCTU. She was a member of the Texas Woman's Press Association, the Rescue Society, and the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. On April 26, 1892, the Texas State Prohibition Convention met in Waco, attended by ninety-five delegates representing thirty different countries. Stoddard delivered an address to the delegation

¹⁸ Ibid., 24 February 1898, 12.

¹⁹ Kellogg gained notoriety in the nineteenth century for his Battle Creek, Michigan health spa and the production and marketing of cereals through his breakfast foods company; Shaw was a physician, minister, and president of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association from 1904 to 1915.

resulting in the passage of resolutions in support of the efforts of the WCTU.²⁰

Meetings of other organizations awaited her. On May 18, 1892, the tenth annual Texas State WCTU convention was held in Dallas, with Stoddard presiding. At this meeting she revealed that she had traveled 12,406 miles and had given 186 addresses during the previous year. This and the fact that the number of Unions in the state had grown from 22 to 64 in the same period, assured her overwhelming reelection as State President.²¹

After taking a few weeks off camping on Padre Island, Stoddard resumed her sweep of the state beginning with a School of Methods held at Corpus Christi which included a close study of the laws of Texas. From there, she went to Kennedy, where she organized a small Union, and then to San Antonio. The State WCTU Reporter, Cornelia Keith Carter was present during Stoddard's work in San Antonio, and she detailed her itinerary in the Union Signal. Upon her arrival on a Thursday in September, Stoddard gave a speech on scientific temperance instruction to an almost full West End church. The next morning a Loyal Temperance Legion

²⁰ Ibid., 14 July 1892, 11.

²¹ Ibid., 14 July 1892, 11; and 22 September 1892, 9.

(LTL), the WCTU auxiliary organization for children, was founded with forty-two members, followed by another address on scientific temperance instruction by Stoddard at the Travis Park Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the evening. Saturday, she spent visiting several ministers in San Antonio, seeking their assistance in organizing more Unions and LTLs. On Sunday morning, Stoddard spoke to the children's Sunday School classes at West End Church and then was asked to give a sermon at the eleven o'clock service, as the pastor was absent. She complied, speaking on Mary and Martha, before returning to Travis Park Church, where she organized another LTL. On Monday, Stoddard spoke at the Protestant Home for Destitute Children, where she started an LTL with thirty-two members. That afternoon she met with the existing San Antonio Union, and delivered a speech on the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs. As a result of Stoddard's five-day visit to San Antonio, the number of Unions increased from two to five, and the number of LTLs from two to six.²²

Stoddard resumed her travels, in the following month visiting San Marcos, Luling, Lufkin, Taylor, Waco, and Corsicana where she organized new Unions before proceeding

²² Ibid., 6 October 1892, 11.

to Denver to represent her state at the annual National WCTU convention. She stopped in Iowa Park, Waco, and Runge, as she returned to Dallas, organizing new Unions at each stop.²³

In March 1891, while assisting then Texas President Sarah Acheson, Stoddard had made her first plea before the state legislature speaking for passage of the Scientific Temperance Instruction Bill. Though unsuccessful, Stoddard was still convinced that the best and most expedient route to social reform was through legislation. In that vein she proceeded to Austin in order to be present when the legislature convened on the second Tuesday of January, 1893. The passage of an instruction bill was not only important to Stoddard, but was seen as an essential role of the National WCTU, which maintained a Scientific Temperance Instruction Department, under the direction of Superintendent Mary H. Hunt. Although the laws varied from state to state, the National Superintendent provided guidelines and standards for each state to follow. One aspect of these standards was the necessity for local Unions to oversee the selection of textbooks on temperance instruction by school boards. The

²³ Ibid., 22 December 1891, 8.

National Superintendent recommended that only those text books that taught the following should be used:

1. [According to] proven findings of science . . . alcohol is a dangerous and seductive poison. . . beer, wine and cider contain this same alcohol. . . and it is the nature of a little of any liquor containing alcohol to create an appetite for more. . . .
2. The effect of these upon the "human system," that is, upon the whole being--mental, moral and physical [must be illustrated].
3. This instruction must be as well graded to the capacities of each class of pupils as the modern school readers are.
4. This is not a physiological but a temperance movement. Temperance should be the chief, not the subordinate topic. . . .
5. [The books] should purposely avoid reference to the medical use of alcohol. . . the question of its use as a remedy may properly be relegated to medical treatises. . . .²⁴

The Superintendent of Scientific Temperance Instruction also provided information for the enforcement of the laws. The recommendations included the minimum time to be spent on temperance lessons each week by grade level, the use of textbooks by all students accustomed to using them, and oral instruction for those unfamiliar with textbooks.²⁵ The

²⁴ Ibid., 25 June 1891, 9.

²⁵ Textbooks of the 1890s had not yet been standardized and their usage was still not universal, thus many students across the country were not familiar with them.

Superintendent also recommended that regular examinations should be administered with their scores averaged into the student's overall academic grade.

The Union Signal periodically carried a report from the Superintendent of Scientific Temperance Instruction that listed the states in which scientific temperance instruction laws were in effect. As of June, 1891, there were thirty-four states with such laws, and in 1886 a federal law had passed "covering all ten territories, the District of Columbia, all military, naval, and other schools under Federal control."²⁶

In late nineteenth century America, children were being tempted by the liquor industry in an effort to combat the successes of the many temperance organizations of the day. Stoddard cited the practice by saloon keepers of operating "Kinder-Saloons" in most cities in the United States. The president of the Brewers' Association had suggested this practice as a method to cultivate the taste for alcohol in young children. The owner of a saloon would furnish a room adjacent to the bar area with child-sized furniture, toys, and hobby-horses, and then invite neighborhood children in to play. While the children were playing they would be

²⁶ Union Signal, 25 June 1891, 9. Included in the "other schools" were Indian schools.

served sweetened wine and told to invite their friends to come play. The children were taught to enjoy the taste and effects of alcohol. This practice had long been in existence when revealed to the world by the press, and in 1901, twenty such "Kinder-Saloons" were discovered operating on one street in Chicago.²⁷

Stoddard had often told her enthusiastic audiences, legislation was the most important and effective way to obtain progressive social reform, so she was determined to see the passage of a Texas State Scientific Temperance Instruction Bill. The bill required that all children in the public schools of Texas were to receive instruction on the physical effects of alcohol and other narcotics on the human body. It was to be a state law with the necessary curriculum outlined for each school to follow. This prospective law was most important to Stoddard as it would provide children the education necessary to make decisions about their own lives. With this information, they would have the ability to make choices regarding the formation of their own character, rather than having to make future decisions to reform bad habits. As she said:

We must not forget that although science is with us, appetite is against us, and every part of our work which touches the young life of the people

²⁷ Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 150.

must be emphasized. We must protect the children from their hereditary taints. I am always pained to find a union without active juvenile work. "In the morning sow the seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand." The enemy places full value upon securing children for its customers.²⁸

The bill as first introduced was incorporated within an educational bill, as it was in most other states. When the bill was discussed in the House, however, the legislators were convinced that the words temperance and alcohol as used in the bill would surely lead to Prohibition. In order to appease them, Representative Finly of Galveston introduced an amendment that eliminated the offensive words and replaced them with "special reference to narcotics." This satisfied the objectors and the bill was overwhelmingly passed in the House.²⁹

During the proceedings, Stoddard lobbied vigorously for her cause. She met with as many members of the legislature as she could, spoke before several committees, and implored members of the Union throughout Texas to write letters to the representatives, to pray on her behalf for strength and perseverance, and to pray for the proper vote from the legislators. This proved to be to no avail, however, as a Senate committee on education cut the temperance section of

²⁸ Ibid., 149.

²⁹ Ibid., 66.

the bill and then the entire education bill was reported adversely to the Senate. The senators still felt this was a first step in a process to an attempted constitutional amendment for Prohibition, as had been tried in 1887.

Stoddard best described the night she learned of the bill's defeat:

Yes, you have lost little ones, and will understand how I felt when I was told the bill was killed, I was more broken hearted, wept more uncontrollably than when I held my lifeless baby in my arms. My little one was safe--this sinless angel doth evermore behold the face of our Father in Heaven, but the thousands of little Texas children, for whom the bill was framed--snares are everywhere made for their thoughtless feet, and the knowledge that should teach them where these snares are, and why they are snares, was denied them by their fathers who are elected to represent them.³⁰

She then described a long, sleepless night, after which she went immediately to the Senate chamber. In the weeks that followed, Stoddard met with all senators available, attempting to convince them that the bill was not a precursor to prohibition, but an educational bill to protect the youth of Texas. Several weeks later, Senator J. M. Presler of Comanche, with the support of Senator J. S. Sherrill of Greenville, resubmitted the scientific temperance instruction bill to the Senate and it passed,

³⁰ Ibid., 66.

with a vote of fourteen to eight.³¹ Stoddard had fought for three years for the education of the youth of Texas, and had finally won her first victory. Though this was certainly cause for celebration, Stoddard did not relax, for she had many more battles to wage.

³¹ Ibid., 67.

CHAPTER FIVE
AFTER THE PASSAGE OF
SCIENTIFIC TEMPERANCE INSTRUCTION

Stoddard was soon back on the road, covering the state before the Texas State WCTU convention met in Paris at the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, on June 2 to 5, 1893. The State Reporter bemoaned that the convention was attended by only sixty delegates and guests due to the town's remote location. Stoddard presided over the meeting although she was "pale and weak from recent severe illness." She presented a banner furnished by Francis Willard honoring Texas for the largest membership increase in the Southwest during 1892, and she delivered her annual address to the convention, describing her eleven-week stay in Austin and her arduous fight procuring the passage of the scientific temperance instruction bill.¹

The convention granted Stoddard three months leave, due to her ill health; however, idleness was not in her nature. Stoddard set off for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago to learn ways to improve the work of the Texas WCTU.

¹ Union Signal, 27 July 1893, 12.

She spent much of the following month in Chicago. As an educator, she certainly spent many hours at the Scientific Temperance Exhibit in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. This Exhibit displayed not only a large map of the United States with those states without a scientific temperance instruction law in black, but exhibited framed copies of the temperance education laws of the forty states and four territories portrayed on the map in white. There was a large bookcase filled with textbooks that had been endorsed and approved by the WCTU available for all visitors to read, in addition to another case of books and pamphlets providing direction and help to both teachers and temperance workers.²

Following her visit to the World's Fair, Stoddard went to a Chautauqua held in Bay View, Michigan, where she spent many summers leading the annual Schools of Methods. At this School, provided by the WCTU, which met July 20 to 31, 1893, Stoddard was a featured lecturer, delivering a speech entitled, "The Ethics of the W.C.T.U."³

Late that summer, Stoddard returned home to Dallas to prepare for her annual trip to the National WCTU convention.

² Ibid., 10 August 1893, 5.

³ Ibid., 24 August 1893, 5.

In October, 1893, representatives assembled in Cleveland, Ohio, for the World and National WCTU Conventions. Here Stoddard delivered her annual address, and received one vote for national treasurer.⁴

Stoddard's actions received good press coverage back home. The Texas State Reporter, Cornelia Keith Carter of San Antonio, reported faithfully every few weeks to the Union Signal on the work Stoddard accomplished across the state. She told of her addresses in orphanages, in churches, and in personal residences, sometimes speaking three or four times in one day to huge crowds, while organizing new Unions between speeches. Although the actual number of miles she traveled in 1893 is not reported, Stoddard logged thousands of miles criss-crossing the state. By March, 1894, she reported that the WCTU membership in Texas had reached three thousand and the LTL membership was 2,128. This was an enormous increase from the three hundred members just three years before.

Stoddard firmly felt that her most important work could be achieved working in the legislative halls of the Texas Capitol. However, the legislature met only in odd numbered years. In the interim she traveled extensively and wrote

⁴ Ibid., 2 November 1893, 17, 18.

encouraging and informational letters to each Union in the state.

Letter writing was second nature to Stoddard and she reserved a part of each day to correspond to friends and family. She was so faithful in writing letters and answering those from her many friends and associates, that they often withheld writing to her. Mrs. S. J. "Mother" Sweeney, a renowned evangelist who traveled throughout the United States and Europe, served as Texas State Superintendent of Evangelistic Work under Stoddard. In To The Noon Rest, Sweeney wrote that she often would destroy letters she had written to Stoddard. Sweeney said that she feared for her friend's health and that she should not be bothered by so many letters to acknowledge, because she never left one unanswered. Sweeney described one instance while Stoddard was in Austin working for the passage of a bill, that she withheld writing for three weeks and received a note from Stoddard that read, "Why don't [sic] my dearest write to me?" Sweeney went on to say, "I had been holding her up at a throne of grace for weeks, not daring to intrude on her time and over taxed strength. . . I felt that in the midst of her labors, I had a place in her thoughts."⁵

⁵ Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 18.

At the State Convention in May, 1894, the Texas WCTU voted to work towards raising the age of consent for girls from twelve years of age to eighteen. At that time, the Union asked Stoddard to lobby the Texas Legislature for the passage of such a law, but she declined. She refused to take up the work because she felt mothers should not have to approach lawmakers concerning such a disgraceful law. She felt any decent man should want to change the law, if only for the sake of his own good name. This was not to be, and that year an incident occurred that propelled Stoddard into the most highly publicized battle of her legislative endeavors.

In the little town of Indian Gap, Texas, a man seduced a severely mentally retarded twelve-year-old girl into a sexual relationship. The girl became impregnated and was forced to bear a child, even though she could not understand what had happened to her. As the man had not broken any laws, he was not punished, nor was he made responsible in any way for his child's welfare. When Stoddard heard of this, she vowed that it would not happen again in the State of Texas.⁶

⁶ Marian M. Jones, interview by author, written record, Los Gatos, California, 29 November 1993.

Although that spring Stoddard had refused to confront the legislature regarding the age of consent on the grounds that "lawmakers ought not to wait for mothers to ask them to remove such a foul blot from the statutes,"⁷ by the winter of 1895, she had decided to meet the challenge:

I wrestled long in prayer pleading that the duty might be shifted upon other shoulders, but the answer always came, "See thou to it." After weeks of struggle I got the victory. I said, "Lord I'll do it. But you must go before me. Be 'round about me, give me words and wisdom and patience. For thy sake and the girls of Texas, I'll go." And in this surrender the burden lifted, the man-fearing spirit left me, and I forgot all save that I was serving my Lord in serving humanity.⁸

As she had done in her previous battle with the legislators, she rallied the WCTU members behind her with their letters and prayers. This issue did not involve temperance or Prohibition, and it so touched the hearts of parents across Texas that she received support from many unconcerned with the WCTU or its programs. Stoddard personally received and answered letters from women in every corner of the state, some writing in disbelief that such a law stood and some writing that they needed her written confirmation to convince their husbands that such a deplorable law really existed. She presented her arguments

⁷ Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 78.

⁸ Ibid., 8.

in the press and personally spoke with all the legislators opposed to raising the age of consent.

In January 1895, Stoddard's former ally on the scientific temperance instruction bill, Senator J. S. Sherrill, endorsed Senate Bill No. 59, submitted by W. L. Harrison, which would have raised the age of consent to eighteen by amending the existing Penal Code to define rape as:

the carnal knowledge of a woman without her consent, obtained by force, threats, or fraud; or the carnal knowledge of a female under the age of eighteen years, with or without her consent, and with or without the use of force, threats, or fraud; or the carnal knowledge of a woman other than the wife of the person having such carnal knowledge with or without consent, and with or without the use of force, threats, or fraud, such woman being so mentally diseased at the time as to have no will to oppose the act of carnal knowledge, the person having carnal knowledge of her knowing her to be so mentally diseased.⁹

The bill was sent to the Judiciary Committee for review, where the Committee Chairman, Senator Agnew, advised the members to pass the bill with the amendment of raising the age of consent to fourteen years of age, not eighteen.

On January 21, 1895, Stoddard appealed to the Judiciary Committee of the Texas Senate for the age of consent to be raised from twelve to eighteen:

⁹ Ibid., 59-60.

I am here to present the prayers of the organized mother-love of the state of Texas as expressed in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and the Rescue Society. And when I think of the womanliness, the prayerful earnestness of the patient, saintly women who have sent me and who are at this hour praying for the success of this bill and for me, I feel brave to address you even upon so delicate a subject. . . . During the years from 14 to 18, the years we are pleading for protection, and this honorable committee think it should be withdrawn, . . . the child is maturing into a woman. . . . Is such a law reasonable? Is it consistent? Is it just? Your judgment, your reason, your father's hearts can make but one answer. It is not just, consistent or reasonable. What does a girl of 12 or 16 know? Accustomed to look up to her elders and obey their requests and not realizing the import of this request; for being innocent she has no experience to assist her judgment,--she acquiesces, which acquiescence frees the man, leaving him guiltless of any crime.¹⁰

She implored the senators to recognize that a girl under the age of eighteen was maturing into a woman and thus, "the emotional nature is developing more rapidly than the reasoning powers; the judgment is not sufficiently mature to decide upon any matter of import."¹¹ Stoddard went on to explain that the State of Texas understood this by disallowing the girl the ability to dispose of property, to make contracts, or to marry without parental consent before the age of eighteen. But, she continued, the members of the

¹⁰ Ibid., 59-60.

¹¹ Ibid., 60.

Senate would allow the girl to dispose of her "honor," without which property held no real value and honorable marriage was out of the question.

In addition to his recommendation of placing the age of consent at fourteen, rather than eighteen, Chairman Agnew added that a male accused of seducing a girl be able to defend himself on the grounds that she was "a female of bad character for chastity."¹² To this Stoddard retorted, "that men of 20 or 30 or 50 years of age should need a proviso to shield them from the wiles of little girls of twelve or fourteen years of age, is greatly lowering to our present ideals of masculine strength."¹³

The Texas Legislature of 1895, after much debate, raised the age of consent for girls from twelve to fifteen years of age, with a penalty of imprisonment and the possibility of execution. At the time, Alabama, North Carolina, and South Carolina headed what Stoddard termed the "black list" with an age of consent of ten years of age, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Wisconsin held the age at twelve. Twelve states had recently raised their age of consent to sixteen, while Florida held the highest honor in her eyes,

¹² Ibid., 59.

¹³ Ibid., 62.

by raising the age to seventeen.

The efforts of Stoddard and the WCTU had aroused the passions of the people of Texas to such fury over the age of consent, that on February 3, 1895, the Houston Post ran the entire text of her speech before the Senate Judiciary Committee meeting of January 21, 1895, along with Chairman Agnew's recommendations regarding Senate Bill No. 59. Years later, she remarked to the members of the WCTU, that her work on this bill had been the hardest and the most repulsive she had done during her sixteen year tenure as president of the Texas WCTU.¹⁴

The following May, Stoddard reported to the Texas State convention of 1895 held in Hillsboro, on her successes and failures with the Legislature that winter. She was not pleased that the legislators had raised the age of consent only to fifteen. During her speech she presented banners to the convention that listed the names of those senators who favored raising the age to eighteen in gold, those who voted for the age to be raised to fifteen or sixteen in gray, and those who had opposed raising the age above twelve listed in black. Katherine Lente Stevenson, a National Organizer, was present at the unveiling of these banners, as she had been

¹⁴ Baines, Texas White Ribboners, 31.

working across Texas, organizing and aiding the state members. Stevenson reported in the Union Signal the unfurling of the banners. "It was a daring thing to do and I almost trembled at first, lest it should arouse the opposition of the voters, but they received it with laughter and applause, and many were heard to say afterwards that it was a very valuable object-lesson and a justly merited rebuke."¹⁵

Stoddard also spoke vehemently in favor of suffrage for women. "We believe woman is an unused factor in government," she said and explained that there were many men in Texas who were beginning to agree that women should be allowed to vote, although there were still many others who believed that the chivalry of Southern men was sufficient

to protect our womanhood. Now that does sound beautiful, and we know our Texas men are unequalled in true chivalry. But do facts bear out such an argument? Does the chivalry of the men of Texas protect our girlhood? Not a community in our great state but has had its pitiable example showing that some man's chivalry was but a sheep's covering to hide a human wolf. We are proud of our truly chivalrous men and want laws to correspond. Indeed we shall never be satisfied until true chivalry is coined into law.¹⁶

Stoddard informed the convention that the legislators had

¹⁵ Union Signal, 13 June 1895, 13.

¹⁶ Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 81.

received many letters and petitions from Texas women, both from women who lived morally, and from those who did not, but who wanted to protect young girls from following their example. She felt that although most of the legislature consisted of virtuous and chivalrous men, she suspected there were others who were using the low age of consent to their own advantage, "for the credit of womanhood, if not for the sake of manhood, let us mothers continue to ask our brothers to think of these things, and to act as if it were their own daughter or sister for whom they would legislate."¹⁷ Stoddard firmly believed that the legislature was the proper place to gain the means to improve the lives of the people of Texas, and that this would best be accomplished if women were allowed within the legislative halls, not just as speakers or lobbyists, but as full and equal participants in the legal system in every capacity, as voters and members of all legislative bodies.

During this same address before the State Convention in Hillsboro in 1895, she laid out the changes she saw taking place for women, their role in politics and the changing relationship she saw between men and women. She revealed that during the previous winter in Austin, she had spoken

¹⁷ Ibid.

with thirty legislators who believed that women should have full suffrage. Four years earlier, during an age of consent debate, "it was considered a disgraceful thing that white-haired, motherly Mrs. Clardy should have heard the arguments," but Stoddard and her associates were welcomed into the legislature for the 1895 debates.¹⁸ Stoddard saw the women of the United States becoming stronger and better empowered to fight the injustice she saw. "I think the long dark age of woman's tears is mostly passed. In the future she will act, not weep. The world more homelike will be better suited to joy than sorrow. Yes, the age of woman's weak unavailing weeping is passing."¹⁹ She envisioned a time in the future when women would participate as equals in the political and legal processes of the United States government, and not be relegated to the hearth and home where they could only weep in despair.

The 1895 session of the Texas Legislature also voted on a bill "prohibiting the sale, barter or gift of tobacco in any of its forms to minors under 16" which passed in the Senate, though it failed in a House committee because the

¹⁸ Ibid., 85, Mrs. Clardy was a representative of the National WCTU who went to Texas in early 1891 to aid the Texas women in the passage of a law raising the age of consent.

¹⁹ Ibid., 85.

representatives declared that the bill led to a sumptuary law.²⁰ Stoddard spoke with every member of the committee to implore them to change their vote, particularly by inquiring how tobacco "furnishes either wearing apparel, nutritious food, or a life-giving beverage."²¹ None of the members would admit that tobacco provided any of these things, but they still insisted that the bill in question would lead to a sumptuary law. Many of them told Stoddard that if the women of Texas did not want their sons to use tobacco, they should instruct them at home. To this Stoddard replied:

We mothers have not been unmindful of our duty. We taught our boys by precept and example the loveliness of a well ordered, intelligently governed life, and they believed us, until they were large enough to open the front gate. Once outside our yard they encountered everywhere the legal traps set for their little feet; by precept and by example men and the man-made laws have approved and encouraged a kind of life and habits diametrically opposed to the holy teaching of the mother, and this warring of the double standards of the mother-hood and father-hood, as expressed the one in law and life, the other in a helpless example only, taught the boy-child to deceive, and before the mother is aware of it, the tobacco habit or the alcohol habit has bound her child in servitude; and when she asks you to protect her child. . . you tell her to go home, continue to rock the cradle, and teach her boys her ideal principles, and you will continue to make it a legal business for men to ruin that boy--body and

²⁰ Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 85. A sumptuary law is one relating to food, drink or wearing apparel.

²¹ Ibid., 85.

soul--as soon as he is old enough to walk alone down town.²²

Stoddard knew that young people are very susceptible to temptation. She agreed that children should be taught proper moral habits at home, but she also felt that they could best be protected by the implementation of laws disallowing these habits until they were old enough to fully understand the consequences. Stoddard had a son that she felt should be protected by law when not under her watchful eye, as all young men should be. She also abhorred the double standard that not only existed in society, but in the law, that protected men when partaking in vice and burdened women with the moral instruction of children, but disallowed women from participating in the legal system that would provide their children with protection from men of immoral character. To combat the committee members' arguments, she turned one of their objections to the bill raising the age of consent to her own advantage. Some of the men adverse to the age of consent being raised to eighteen, had told Stoddard it was because it would send many beardless boys to the penitentiary; they wanted to protect young boys from clever young girls. To this she said, "if they were so much interested in the boys' welfare, why this foul desertion of

²² Ibid., 85-86.

the boys" regarding the tobacco law.²³ These men were willing to protect boys from the evil wiles of girls, but not from the evil dangers of tobacco. She could not understand their inconsistencies.

Many of these men had met their match. By using their own words against them, Stoddard convinced the committee to reconsider the tobacco bill. They in fact had it printed, and sent a favorable report to the legislature as a whole, recommending passage, although the session ended before the final vote on the bill could take place.²⁴

Stoddard spent ten weeks in Austin fighting for the passage of the bills on the age of consent and on the legal age at which tobacco could be purchased. It was reported in the Union Signal that she spent only fifty-five dollars of Texas State WCTU funds during her entire time in Austin. She walked to the Capitol from her lodgings and back four times a day and ate mostly fruit and crackers to save as much money as possible. The State Reporter, Cornelia Keith Carter, remarked that a man given the same task would surely have spent one thousand dollars in the same period. Carter also proudly reported that Stoddard's work on the Age of

²³ Ibid., 86.

²⁴ Ibid., 87.

Consent bill had caused such interest throughout Texas, that the "two largest daily papers in the state," as well as the local papers, had reporters present at the 1895 State convention. She admitted that "this is something new in our history, but since our encounter with the legislature at its last session the press of the state has become a warm friend of the W.C.T.U."²⁵

Following the 1895 convention, Stoddard prepared for her trip to Europe as a delegate to the World's WCTU convention in London on June 14 to 21. On June 5, Stoddard along with the other delegates, sailed on the steamer Berlin from New York City. At the convention Stoddard related the details of the Local Option Law of Texas, which provided for each township or precinct the option of voting for or against Prohibition. This law worked so well in Texas that Oregon copied it exactly and Switzerland used it as a guide for their own law.²⁶ Many of the United States representatives had arranged for a European tour before leaving, so following the convention they toured London and made a side trip to Windsor Castle. They then spent several days in a Swiss chalet, followed by a tour of Paris, France, before returning home.

²⁵ Union Signal, 27 June 1895, 10.

²⁶ Ibid., 26 September 1895, 11.

In 1896, Frances Willard visited Texas for four days, during which she and Stoddard spoke at Marshall, Dallas, and Fort Worth to crowds of hundreds of people. Stoddard continued traveling, lecturing and organizing in Texas and into the Indian Territory to the north. In October 1896, Stoddard purchased a stereopticon, which she used with about two hundred slides to aid her lectures.²⁷ These slides provided pictures of Frances Willard and the WCTU Temple in Chicago, in addition to graphic pictures of the effects of tobacco and alcohol on human organs.

In January, 1897, Stoddard was again in Austin when the Texas State Legislature convened to push for reform legislation, including a law forbidding minors from purchasing tobacco and one seeking the establishment of a College of Industrial Arts for Girls. The WCTU Convention the previous year had declared the members should work towards the establishment of a "school to prepare young women for practical life."²⁸ Arriving in Austin before the Legislature met, Stoddard conferred with Representative A. J. Baker about a bill he had presented in 1891 calling for a school for women. She did not feel the bill went far enough

²⁷ Ibid., 13 June 1895, 13.

²⁸ Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 187.

because it did not provide for practical instruction in nursing, child care, and the chemical study of food. Nevertheless, she spoke before the Senate Committee on Education for its support. The Committee reported the bill favorably to the Senate, who passed it; however, the House defeated it on economic grounds.²⁹

The Texas WCTU Convention was held in Austin from May 4 to 7, 1897. In her annual address, Stoddard spoke of the patriotism of women, a sentiment that had existed since Biblical days. "Yes," she said, "we all have been patriots, both the women who bear the soldiers, and the men who bear the arms."³⁰ However, she again bemoaned the inequality of the sexes, an inequality that was slowly being rectified, but there were too many men who still believed that women best served the world from the home, using their gentle and feminine influence.

Men have always told us how much more valuable and irresistible was woman's influence than her active participation in work. We have made a fair test this winter of our influence. We have used influence only, the influence of the personal appeal, the influence of petition (our only right,) the influence of motherly letters. The several laws we asked for all affect the direct happiness, health and prosperity of our homes. When the legislature adjourns they will have made history, and then we can estimate the exact value

²⁹ Ibid., 187-88.

³⁰ Ibid., 89, 90.

of woman's influence in Texas. We are beginning to see how every woman and child is directly affected by all legislation; and in this we read our duty to become interested in all legislation. We are taking new and nobler views.³¹

That winter, Stoddard had no great successes to report in the legislature, nor did she suffer from any defeats of great magnitude, as she had spent part of January in Mexico, at Frances Willard's request.

Stoddard went to Mexico as the World's WCTU and National WCTU delegate to the General Assembly of Missionaries in Mexico City in January, 1897. She spent eighteen days becoming acquainted with many of the Christian missionaries of various denominations in Mexico and speaking, often through a translator, in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Guanajuato, with the aid of her stereopticon and slides.³²

Upon her return to Texas in February, Stoddard resumed her lecturing and returned to the legislature where she again attempted to raise the age of consent to eighteen. This was unsuccessful, although she was able to gain support for a bill to establish a state reformatory for girls. During the State Convention in June, the Legislature invited

³¹ Ibid., 90.

³² Union Signal, 18 March 1897, 5.

the assembled members of the WCTU to visit sessions of both the House and Senate. While the delegates were seated in the House, the members passed a bill appropriating funds for a reform school for girls equal to those appropriated for a school for boys.³³ Stoddard then spoke to the assembly thanking them for their invitation and for the bill aiding the young troubled girls of Texas.

Stoddard returned to Mexico in June for a three-month tour as a National Organizer for the World's WCTU. While in Mexico she set up her headquarters with the Methodist missionaries in Mexico City, then traveled over many parts of Mexico. During her tour of the country, Stoddard spoke in schools, churches, prisons and other public institutions representing the World's WCTU. She held seventy-eight public meetings and organized many Unions in Mexico, traveled over seven thousand miles, received over 2,000 pledges of abstinence and 410 new paid members of the WCTU.³⁴ The first "systematic temperance crusade" of Mexico was an overwhelming success.

In October, 1897, Stoddard traveled to Toronto, to report on her work the previous summer in Mexico at the

³³ Ibid., 17 June 1897, 12.

³⁴ Ibid., 18 November 1897, 10.

World's WCTU Convention. She then went to Buffalo, to represent Texas at the National WCTU Convention. Here she was appointed to serve on a committee to prepare for a special observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Crusades of 1873-1874. She also appealed to the National members to pinpoint someone to devote full-time service to the ripe field of missionary work in Mexico. Upon her return to Texas, Stoddard again set out touring twenty towns across the state organizing Unions.³⁵

In February, 1898, during a meeting of the state executive board, Stoddard collapsed at the home of Catherine Schureman in Houston. She had been traveling from town to town, through central and southern Texas for many weeks, giving lectures and presentations with the aid of her stereopticon. The physician called to Stoddard's side diagnosed malarial fever and grippe, and he told Schureman that Stoddard's lungs were so inflamed and her fever so high that there was little hope of recovery. This was complicated, in the doctor's mind, by the fact that Stoddard had refused to receive any alcohol as part of her treatment. As most medicines and remedies of the late nineteenth

³⁵ Ibid., 13 January 1898, 9; and 9 June 1898, 13.

century incorporated alcohol, the refusal to take any greatly limited what the physician could prescribe.

Each morning, Stoddard would inquire of her hostess as to the health of Frances Willard who was in New York, also severely ill. On February 18, 1898, many of the Houston WCTU members assembled at the Schureman house early, as word had reached them of Willard's death. Elizabeth Strong Tracy, the Texas State Reporter, was chosen to break the sad news to Stoddard, although the women feared it would further endanger Stoddard's health. Stoddard was greatly saddened, but said, "I must get well quick, for Miss Willard's going means more work for each one of us to do."³⁶

Stoddard was soon up and traveling again. In May 1898, she presided over the Texas WCTU convention in Fort Worth. In her annual address before the convention, Stoddard turned to the Bible and claimed that God intended man and woman to be equal in all things, including the suffrage. She supported her view by quoting a passage from Genesis, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."³⁷ She further employed the fact that in the Bible all creatures were paired and "this duality has

³⁶ Armstrong, To the Noon Rest, 98, 99.

³⁷ Genesis 2:18, quoted in Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 118.

been joined together by God since creation, and man has made great bungling in all his attempts to put them assunder [sic]."³⁸ In Stoddard's eyes God had intended that both man and woman would live as equals, but man had managed to distort this great plan. In this speech she also said that Louisiana had granted to all tax-paying women the right to vote on matters of taxation. "Do you wonder that Texas women are asking, Why should we be taxed without consent?"³⁹ She was using the same argument her forefathers had employed to declare for independence against taxation by England without representation.

Although the previous legislative session had not been fruitful, some of her actions did bear results. In 1899, Stoddard was finally able to procure the passage of the law forbidding the sale or gift of tobacco to anyone under the age of sixteen; however, one requiring a prescription for the purchase of cocaine, opium and morphine narrowly failed in the House.⁴⁰ She again presided over the State Convention and over the second annual Texas Woman's Congress, which she had founded the year before.

³⁸ Ibid., 118.

³⁹ Ibid., 117.

⁴⁰ Union Signal, 22 June 1899, 6.

While in Houston later that year, Stoddard discovered that some members of the Legislature were attempting to pass an amendment to the state liquor law that would have absolved owners of saloons from selling liquor to minors by inserting that they would only be prosecuted if they knew that the customer was under age. She hurried to Austin, and through her own persuasion and the numerous petitions procured by WCTU members was able to prevent its passage.⁴¹

At the National WCTU Convention of 1900, Stoddard was able to have Fort Worth designated as the site for the convention to convene the following year. During the months preceding the Fort Worth convention Stoddard and her secretary, Fanny L. Armstrong, submitted numerous articles to the Union Signal trying to acquaint the membership of the WCTU with their state. These articles included the history of Texas and attempts to assuage the women's fears that it was still a wild frontier with raging Indians and no modern conveniences or transportation. They were successful as the convention was well attended by women from across the United States, representing the 300,000 members of the WCTU. Stoddard spoke several times to the convention, most

⁴¹ Ibid., 29 March 1900, 13.

enthusiastically when presented with a banner rewarding Texas for a gain of 2,000 new members.⁴²

Stoddard continued her frantic pace as president. She traveled continuously across Texas, to Bay View, Michigan each winter, to the World's and National WCTU Conventions each fall, always spending several weeks in Austin during legislative sessions fighting for reform through legislation. In 1902, she reported that because of the work of the WCTU, twenty-seven counties and thirty-two precincts had voted for prohibition within their jurisdiction over a six-month period.⁴³

In 1903, Stoddard succeeded in having a child labor law passed. The law required that any factory or establishment where machinery was used would be subject to a fine of "not less than fifty (50) dollars nor more than two hundred (200) dollars, and each day is a new offense" for employing any child under twelve years of age. The law further stipulated that any child employed between the ages of twelve and fourteen "must be able to read and write in the English language," unless she or he provided the sole means of support for a family of a widowed mother or an incapacitated

⁴² Ibid., 28 November 1901, 13.

⁴³ Ibid., 17 July 1902, 3.

parent. Even with the exception, the child could not work before six o'clock in the morning or after six o'clock in the evening. The law continued, "all children under the age of sixteen are prohibited from laboring in mines, breweries and distilleries. No exceptions whatever," and carried the same fine as the employment of a child under twelve.⁴⁴

Although the state legislature passed a law in 1901 declaring C.O.D. shipments of alcohol into dry counties to be illegal, in 1904 the State Court of Criminal Appeals declared the law to be unconstitutional.⁴⁵ As a result liquor dealers increased their business phenomenally. The WCTU and the legislature attempted to find a solution to this problem, but were unable to do so until 1907. In February, 1907, the legislature passed a law requiring all people or companies delivering alcohol into counties with prohibition or local license laws to pay an annual state tax of five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00). The law also allowed any local authority to impose a similar tax of its own.⁴⁶ Stoddard reported that the law served to immediately stop all of the offending C.O.D. shipments, and it was upheld by

⁴⁴ Ibid., 16 July 1903, 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 21 January 1904, 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 25 April 1907, 12.

the federal court as constitutional.⁴⁷

Stoddard worked diligently to procure legislation to protect children from vice and adverse working conditions, and was always a proponent of the idea of the early formation of children's characters. This, she felt, could best be accomplished by providing children with a proper education. She was especially concerned that young women in the United States were not receiving the education necessary to make them productive adults and citizens.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 25 April 1907, 12; and 9 May 1907, 15. This same legislature succeeded in passing a law "making it a felony for any person to run any kind of a gaming house or ten-pin alley or for the owners of any building to permit such to be run in such building," and outlawed all animal fights for entertainment.

CHAPTER SIX

HELEN M. STODDARD AND EDUCATION

Women increasingly moved out of the home in the nineteenth century, due to the growing industrialization of the United States. As a result, the home ceased to be the center of all life's activities. More women were entering the paid labor force, both from necessity and a desire to broaden their worlds and experience. This trend created a need for women's education in practical skills such as bookkeeping, stenography, typing, industrial design, and drafting.¹ Young women who had previously received all their domestic and marital training at their mothers' sides had no one to learn from when their mothers were forced to join the paid labor force. With the advances made in medicine and science in the late nineteenth century came the realization that food preparation, child nurturing, and

¹ The number of women in the workforce tripled between 1870 and 1900. Schlesinger gave figures of women over sixteen in the workforce as 1,800,000 in 1870 and 5,300,000 in 1900, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Political and Social Growth of the United States, 1852-1933, (New York: MacMillan Co., 1935), 222.

nursing were not skills inborn in women but required scientific study and knowledge to perfect. This produced an outcry for the implementation of domestic sciences in institutions of higher learning for women.

Stoddard was a strong proponent of the importance of the education of women in industrial arts and the domestic sciences. She strongly believed that self-respect engendered by independence was necessary for all women and that it was necessary for all people to have an education in order to be useful citizens and human beings. She often quoted poet Johann von Schiller's motto "ernst ist das leben," to emphasize the importance of education for all people. Without an education, she feared they were only concerned with frivolities, like the color of ribbon in their bonnets or whether they could attend a ball game.² To her views on the seriousness of life, she often added that one of the most important aspects of education was its use in practical matters. Stoddard witnessed a great disdain for manual labor among her social peers, and even among the prostitutes the WCTU and other reform groups were trying "save." She quoted one prostitute as saying she would not go into a refuge, even though two days before she had

² Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 43.

attempted to commit suicide, because, "you would want me to work and I wouldn't work for anybody. . . . I haven't got that far yet."³ Stoddard felt that this idea must be overcome and an expedient way to accomplish this was the establishment of an industrial college for women. To this end, she vehemently campaigned for the establishment of a school that would educate women to be useful, both within and without the home, as well as to educate their minds.

Before the State WCTU Convention in 1894 Stoddard said:

We must fight all false ideas of labor. The possession of the hand or its equivalent seems to be the first great requisite for the evolution of a high order of intellect. All human arts base themselves ultimately upon the human hand, and there is no high intelligence without a highly developed hand. The skilled hand is necessary to make educated intelligence of practical use.⁴

Stoddard remarked often on the acceptance, by society as a whole, of education as a vital and necessary part of life for both men and women. In an address delivered before the Texas WCTU Annual convention in Terrell, in 1902, she stated:

³ Ibid., 73.

⁴ Ibid., 72.

The value of industrial education is receiving more and more support from educators. With remarkable unanimity they agree to the importance of the plan of instruction which includes physical, mental and moral development of the child as a preparation for life of service and good citizenship.

There is a close relation between a trained hand and a moral decision. The child whose hand is skilled, shows greater carefulness, more accurate judgment and stronger self-reliance and is thereby given the equipment most needed for a successful life, wherever lived.⁵

Texas had provided an institution for the practical education of its young men with the land-grant college, Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College. Now, Stoddard called for the same advantages and benefits for Texas women.

In 1891, her first year as State president of the WCTU, Stoddard began working toward the establishment of an industrial school for women in Texas. That year, she supported a bill introduced by Representative A. J. Baker to the Texas House that would have established a state school for women, though she did not feel it went far enough, as it did not include instruction in the domestic sciences. This bill was defeated. When Baker again introduced his bill in 1897, Stoddard wrote a section of it providing for the curriculum of the new school to include:

⁵ Ibid., 157.

Scientific and practical cooking including a chemical study of foods; also a knowledge of practical housekeeping; also a knowledge of trained nursing and caring for the sick; also a knowledge of the care and culture of children.⁶

This bill passed the Senate, but failed to pass the House.

Stoddard continued speaking at women's conventions across Texas and to any legislator who would listen on the importance of a complete education for women. In January 1899, she went to see V. W. Grubbs, a new member of the Texas House. Grubbs requested a copy of the previous bill, which she promptly furnished, and on January 26, 1899, he introduced it as House Bill No. 323. The bill first went to the House Education Committee where it was met with so much ridicule from members that Grubbs requested a postponement for the bill's consideration. He took Stoddard to the next meeting of the committee. She was so persuasive in her arguments that the committee gave a favorable recommendation regarding the passage of the bill to the Legislature at large. The bill again failed to pass during this session. However, through Stoddard's efforts in the committee and the many petitions and resolutions she secured from organizations and individuals throughout the State of Texas, the bill establishing the College of Industrial Arts for

⁶ Ibid., 187.

women was passed in the 26th Legislature, the following year.⁷

The bill called for the creation of a commission of thirteen persons, one from each Congressional District, appointed by the governor, charged with locating a site on which to build the College of Industrial Arts. Following the passage of the bill, Stoddard wrote to the Legislature inquiring whether the law allowed the appointment of women to the commission. After receiving a negative reply, she then appealed to Governor Joseph D. Sayers who interpreted the "word 'person' in the bill to mean woman as well as man." He appointed Stoddard as the only woman on the commission stating "thirteen men would spoil everything, so I have appointed one woman on the commission who is intelligent enough to choose the site herself without any help."⁸ The committee traveled almost three thousand miles across Texas to review the fourteen towns and cities that petitioned the Legislature to be considered for the location of the new state school. Stoddard was elected Secretary of the Commission, and after one month of travel and examination, she issued a full report to the governor. The

⁷ Ibid., 14, 184.

⁸ Ibid., 157; and Union Signal, 3 March 1904, 5.

Legislature, on the 76th ballot, selected Denton as the site for the College of Industrial Arts, based on Stoddard's report.⁹

On January 10, 1903, Helen Stoddard spoke at the cornerstone laying ceremonies at the College of Industrial Arts. She spoke of the many people who helped to make that day a reality and of the vision they all held in order to build such an institution for the education of the women of Texas:

The vision is becoming a reality, but the completed vision, how may words tell it? When future homes shall receive the women fully fitted for life, women economically independent, women endowed with self-reliance, women with decision of character, women with strength of mind, women with firmness of principle, found only in those possessing the three-fold education of the head, the heart, the hand--what shall it signify?¹⁰

Stoddard had been fortunate in her life, first to be educated enough to support herself and her son when circumstances demanded, but also to have received a significant inheritance that enabled her to pursue the reforms she felt were necessary to the improvement of the women and children of Texas. Education was always of foremost importance to Stoddard, whether it was in the form

⁹ Ibid., 296.

¹⁰ Ibid., 185, 186.

of scientific temperance instruction for school children, religious instruction in Sunday Schools, or the complete education for young women she envisioned and helped institute with the College of Industrial Arts. Though she often spoke about how wonderful it was that women were finally able to pursue careers outside of their traditional sphere, the home, she also felt it was imperative that women be instructed in the proper and "scientific" methods of maintaining a home, because they all must live in one, whether their own or someone else's.

In September, 1903, the College of Industrial Arts opened in Denton. Stoddard addressed the audience of the opening ceremonies, not only as a woman who had worked many long years for the institution, but also as the only woman on the Board of Regents. She gave a summary of the advances women had made through the centuries, quoting several notable figures of the past, but most especially John Amos Comenius, the seventeenth century theologian and educator who said, "We learn to do by doing."¹¹ She often quoted Comenius, who she called the first proponent of education for women and the father of the modern educational system. Stoddard chose this line to be chiseled on the cornerstone

¹¹ Ibid., 191.

of the College, which is not only the motto for the school, but also the principle upon which it was founded.

When asked to describe the College and its curriculum, Stoddard stated that the academic departments were furnished with the best of equipment and their instructors were chosen to insure that these departments equaled any in the state, because, "unless the mental faculties are cultivated and developed thoroughly, there is no sure foundation whereon to build a successful business profession."¹² When she described the Departments of Industry, Domestic Science, and Domestic Arts, however, she went into much detail. There was a Fine Arts Department, which taught drawing and design. The Domestic Science Department taught cooking, where "the work was so carefully and attractively done as to remove any idea of drudgery."¹³ In the Domestic Arts Department the women were taught to design a garment, make their own patterns, cut the fabric and sew it together. Along with sewing, there was a dairy where they were taught to make butter and other dairy products; there was a laundry where the facilities were so attractive, according to Stoddard, they removed all "repulsiveness" from the chore, and the

¹² Ibid., 198.

¹³ Ibid., 199.

students could do their own laundry if they wished. In addition, they were taught "physical culture, elocution and vocal music." The Commercial Department included training in clerical skills and woodworking, while the Rural Department provided instruction in agriculture, bee keeping and poultry raising.¹⁴

With the opening of the College of Industrial Arts, Helen Stoddard saw her vision of education for women fulfilled in the State of Texas, as was true in many parts of the country. Women were now receiving an education that would enable them to meet the growing needs of a changing society. Education for women in the nineteenth century had progressed far beyond the early days of the female academy, to an education that better met their own needs both within the home and without, and provided them with the skills necessary to participate in the growing number of fields opening to them by the industrialization of the American economy.

¹⁴ Ibid., 200.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

On May 30, 1907 the Union Signal published a letter from Stoddard written in San Jose, California. In that letter, Stoddard announced her retirement as Texas WCTU president and her permanent removal to California. She stated:

my health has been far from robust during recent months, and that my physical system seemed to possess less resilient [sic] power than formerly. . . . my son became anxious, fearing a breakdown, and vehemently declared that he preferred a mother to a monument. . . . None of you can ever know how hard it has been for me to lay down the Texas work. It has been like severing my life, for that work has been my life for so many years. . . . I gave you my very best, during the years, and my only regret has been that my best was so poor to give to so loyal and devoted a sisterhood.¹

Stoddard settled in Los Gatos, California, to be near her brother who lived in San Jose. Following a two-year rest, she moved to San Diego where she again became involved with the WCTU. Within a few years she was elected president of the Southern California WCTU and served faithfully,

¹ Ibid., 292.

commuting between her home in San Diego and their headquarters in Los Angeles. She ran for Congress on the Prohibition Party ticket in 1911 when women received suffrage in California. After living a full and useful life, Helen M. Stoddard died in 1941, at the WCTU Home in Eaglerock, California.

Helen M. Stoddard had an eloquent and inspirational style of speaking before crowds. She analyzed each situation carefully; at times sarcasm best fit the circumstances, while at others she pulled at the very heart strings of her audience, filling them with emotion by describing in great detail her innermost thoughts and feelings. Stoddard was fond of employing allegory in weaving anecdotes into her addresses. These were drawn from the many poets and authors she had studied, the Bible, and from her own experiences traveling the continent for the WCTU.

Stoddard felt women's sphere should extend outside of the home. Women, in her view, should have the ability and capacity to influence legislation with a more powerful weapon than just a petition or a pleading speech before male leaders. She was very aware of the confinement of women trapped in their female domiciles. Stoddard envisioned a future where women would use their natural feminine talents

of motherhood to protect the less fortunate or downtrodden and to improve the wider world around them. She often spoke of the changing society in the United States and the importance of training women to shoulder their newly acquired rights.

In the age behind us, woman had to accept her lot, however bitter or cruel, for she was educated but for the one vocation--to be supported. Now the situation is different, three hundred and fifty avocations for self support are opened wide to her, and she will not endure what she used to endure.²

When confronting legislators, Stoddard was adept at turning their words to her own advantage, often pointing out how foolish their remarks were. When arguing for raising the age of consent, men in the state legislature argued that the effect of the law would be the use of blackmail, "especially by debased colored girls against white men."³ She retorted that an innocent white man could never be convicted in Texas, because the defendant would be tried before a white judge and a white jury. She used the same method when fighting for the bill to establish the College of Industrial Arts. She said one legislator:

² Armstrong, To The Noon Rest, 94.

³ Ibid., 62.

put himself down as a prophet, being assured that if the girls were taught how to earn a living they would cease getting married, and within fifty years there wouldn't be a baby born in the State of Texas. This we put down as a rather left-handed compliment to our brothers, that if girls could do anything under the sun to earn a living they wouldn't get married.⁴

Helen M. Stoddard was instrumental in the passage of many laws intended to aid women and children between 1891 and 1907. These included laws regulating the sale of tobacco, the sale of such drugs as cocaine, opium, and morphine, and the use of child labor. She also helped gain the prohibition of gambling in Texas. During the same period, she was instrumental in the passage of laws instituting a pure food standard, establishing a state college for women and abolishing C.O.D. shipments of alcohol into "dry" counties, in addition to maintaining that the best and most expedient way to improve the condition of all mankind was suffrage for women. She faced some of her work unwillingly, but in her eyes, without a choice. She had the means and ability to campaign in the halls of the legislature in an attempt to right what she, and many others, viewed as terrible injustices upon the children of Texas. She had long believed that society was best

⁴ Ibid., 125.

benefited by citizens who were taught to be virtuous as children, and who remained innocent until they were mature enough to make their own decisions. They could then become useful participants in society and make a meaningful contribution to the next generation.

Stoddard's conviction that virtuous adults were best formed from well-educated and protected children, was founded in her strong beliefs in the Bible, her association with the Methodist Episcopal Church and her association with the WCTU and other women's groups. She used this foundation and her talents of writing and oratory to improve the circumstances of women and children in Texas by successfully campaigning in the legislative halls before women had the vote.

Understanding Stoddard and her achievements makes it easier to understand the motivations of all women of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and how they succeeded in building such a strong organization for social reform throughout the United States. These women were influenced by the vision of Frances Willard, but held firm to their own beliefs on how to improve their own lives and society as a whole.

Helen M. Stoddard, strongly believed that what she accomplished in life helped to improve the lives of the

women and children around her. She felt their improvement would result in a better society for all, and she hoped that this would be achieved. As she said in 1903 at the laying of the cornerstone for the College of Industrial Arts:

Surely the consummation is too glorious for our unrestrained eyes to behold with understanding, but a blessed and enlightened humanity shall see it, shall understand it, aye, shall live it!⁵

⁵ Ibid., 186.

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