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Mama Signed the Pledge

Inez S. Whitney

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an example to follow

Mama Signed The Pledge

By Inez S. Whitney



At the age of eight in the year 1885 Mama signed a solemn pledge never to allow one drop of alcoholic beverage to pass her lips. She kept this promise for eighty-nine years until her death at the age of ninety-seven.

The commitment was made in a one room country school near Auburn, Indiana. This came about as part of a nationwide crusade of the W.C.T.U. against drinking. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was founded in 1874 and was an outgrowth of the Woman's Temperance Crusade in 1873.

Temperance meant moderation in eating and drinking, in work and play, and all other activities of life. The W.C.T.U. had a different interpretation. They believed in total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks. After its organization in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1874, it grew rapidly and worked through schools, churches, and other organized groups.

Mama had many opportunities to break the pledge, especially as a young bride in the Oklahoma Territory. Here, as the expression went, "everything was wide open."

Liquor in every form could be purchased legally anywhere in the Territory. The nearest town was Weatherford, twenty miles away. From far and near, people traveled by wagon to buy groceries, clothing, and other necessary supplies. Although the population was less than two thousand, Weatherford boasted twenty-two saloons.

I have heard my mother say, "Every other door is a den of iniquity." Many a farmer sold his wheat, entered a saloon, and after a few hours of entertainment, left for home penniless.

Of course no LADY ever set foot in one of these establishments and Mama prevailed upon my father to stay away also.

Mama had strong convictions about right and wrong. I am certain the thought of breaking the pledge never entered her mind. During her lifetime she made quite a collection of temperance poems. Some were pasted in a scrapbook. Others were copied in a tablet. I have all of them. Her favorite, which she read over and over to me, was "The Two Glasses."

THE TWO GLASSES

THERE SAT TWO GLASSES FILLED TO THE BRIM,
ON A RICH MAN'S TABLE, RIM TO RIM;
ONE WAS RUDDY AND RED AS BLOOD.
AND ONE WAS CLEAR AS THE CRYSTAL FLOOD.
SAID THE GLASS OF WINE TO THE PALER BROTHER,
"LET US TELL OF THE TALES OF THE PAST TO EACH OTHER.
I CAN TELL OF A BANQUET OF REVEL AND MIRTH,
AND THE PROUDEST AND GRANDEST SOULS ON EARTH
FELL UNDER MY TOUCH AS THOUGH STRUCK BY BLIGHT;
THEN I WAS KING FOR I RULED IN MIGHT;
FROM THE HEADS OF KINGS I HAVE TORN THE CROWN;
FROM THE HEIGHT OF FAME HAVE HURLED MEN DOWN.
I HAVE BLASTED MANY AN HONORED NAME;
I HAVE TAKEN VIRTUE AND GIVEN SHAME;
I HAVE TEMPTED THE YOUTH WITH A SIP, A TASTE,
THAT HAS MADE HIS FUTURE A BARREN WASTE.
FAR GREATER THAN ANY KING AM I.
OR ANY ARMY BENEATH THE SKY.
I HAVE MADE THE ARM OF THE DRIVER FAIL
AND SENT THE TRAIN FROM THE IRON RAIL:
I HAVE MADE GOOD SHIPS GO DOWN AT SEA,
AND THE SHRIEKS OF THE LOST WERE SWEET TO ME;
FOR THEY SAID: 'BEHOLD, HOW GREAT YOU BE!
FAME, WEALTH, GENIUS, BEFORE YOU FALL,
AND YOUR MIGHT AND POWER ARE OVER ALL'.
HO! HO! PALE BROTHER!" LAUGHED THE WINE;
"CAN YOU BOAST OF DEEDS AS GREAT AS MINE?"
SAID THE WATER GLASS: "I CANNOT BOAST
OF A KING DETHRONED OR A MURDERED HOST:
BUT I CAN TELL OF A HEART ONCE SAD.
BY MY CRYSTAL DROPS MADE BRIGHT AND GLAD:
OF THIRST I'VE QUENCHED AND BROWS I'VE LAVED:
OF HANDS I HAVE COOLED AND SOULS I HAVE SAVED.
I HAVE SLEPT IN THE SUNSHINE AND DROPPED FROM THE SKY

AND EVERYWHERE GLADDENED THE LANDSCAPE AND EYE.
 I HAVE EASED THE HOT FOREHEAD OF FEVER AND PAIN:
 I HAVE MADE THE PARCHED MEADOWS GROW FERTILE WITH GRAIN.
 I CAN TELL OF THE POWERFUL WHEELS OF THE MILL
 THAT GROUND OUT THE FLOUR AND TURNED AT MY WILL.
 I CAN TELL OF MANHOOD, DEBASED BY YOU.
 THAT I HAVE LIFTED AND CROWNED ANEW.
 I CHEER, I HELP, I STRENGTHEN AND AID:
 I GLADDEN THE HEART OF MAN AND MAID:
 I SET THE CHAINED WINE-CAPTIVE TREE
 AND ALL ARE BETTER FOR KNOWING ME."
 THESE ARE THE TALES THEY TOLD EACH OTHER.
 THE GLASS OF WINE AND ITS PALER BROTHER.
 AS THEY SAT TOGETHER, FILLED TO THE BRIM.
 ON THE RICH MAN'S TABLE, RIM TO RIM.■



INEZ SCHNEIDER WHITNEY, a resident of Arlington, Virginia, is a member of a writers group which oversees the publication of SENIOR SCRIBES. She is an alumna of Custer City High School and a former student at SOSU. Her Master's degree is from Georgetown University.

provider

Bread-Maker

By Margie Snowden North

Mama made bread
 in a dishpan,
 a bulbous mound of dough
 in a bed of flour,
 hands adroit, sure,
 kneading, punching, molding,
 (this artist)
 her face flushed with heat from the stove.
 Melting hoglard in the breadpans
 she worked,
 shaping loaves and buns,
 letting them rise in the warmth
 until all the house was filled
 with lovely fragrances
 of bread and security.

MARGIE SNOWDEN NORTH, Erick writer, adds to her many WESTVIEW credits in this issue.



feeder

The Scissortail

By Margie Snowden North

The Scissortail
 hovers,
 touches down,
 intercepts the grasshopper
 midair
 and hurries home
 to fill empty stomachs.