

The Connecticut Woman's Story.

(By Mrs. O. W. Scott, in 'Union Signal'.)

'Yes, it's true. It makes me believe that when women put their strength together and mean business they can bring something to pass.'

'Won't you tell us the whole story, Aunt Judith? You only said the saloon was closed. I'm sure the ladies will like to hear about it.' And yet as she spoke Katherine Vance glanced with some doubt towards Mrs. Van Dusen, whose aggressive style of speech and pronounced Roman nose had advertised her as a woman of ideas.

Her companion was a silent little lady who crocheted fleecy shawls out of white wools, and besides these there were two society women with worn-out nerves who usually sat rocking on the piazza, which looked out over a bit of wild New Hampshire scenery. That gray August morning none of them could venture beyond the roof's shelter, for the clouds hung so low that any moment might see them pierced by the rocky peaks of old Moose mountain.

Happily for Katherine's peace of mind, Mrs. Van Dusen's deep voice responded, 'Yes, tell a story if you have one, but don't be surprised if we go to sleep. That's our first duty.'

Mrs. Judith Pierce looked round doubtfully. 'I'm no story-teller,' she said. 'But my niece, Katherine, stayed with me a while down in Pontocook,—that's in Connecticut—and she got quite interested in our temperance work down there, so she wanted to know how we got rid of the saloon next to our church.'

'Let us have the story,' said Mrs. Harcourt, one of the New York ladies, with a patronizing air. 'These gray days are dreadful for one's nerves, and even a temperance lecture'—she finished the sentence by elevating her eyebrows and smiling toward her friend, who bowed to indicate her gracious toleration.

Mrs. Pierce was not stupid, and her face flushed; but after a moment's hesitation she began in a story-telling voice:

'There were three wise men called county commissioners, appointed to look after the saloon business in our county. If there were folks in any town who wanted to keep out some special saloon, they could enter a protest and have a hearin' before the commissioners. Both sides could appear, you see, on a set day. Well, our Union women found out that a new saloon was to be opened next to the Methodist church on the one side, and the room where the boys' club met on the other.'

'Excuse me,' interrupted Mrs. Harcourt, 'but do women have those dreadful "unions" in your state?'

'Labor unions she means,' explained Mrs. Van Dusen's deep voice.

'Why, no!' Katherine's aunt spoke with a gasp. 'I mean the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. I supposed every—'

'Oh!' Mrs. Harcourt nodded vaguely, 'go on, please.'

'Well, the members of our Union and the church officials got the business men near by to join, and they had what you might call a three-fold protest, and appointed their attorneys. I mean those that would speak for 'em,' and she turned toward the New York ladies as if she thought they required footnotes.

'We all went down to the office where the hearin' was to be early one mornin'. The three commissioners sat behind a long table on their right was a railin' and behind it stood some business men, the saloon sup-

porters, newspaper reporters and so on. In front and at the left was our minister, us women, and Father De Bracque, the Catholic priest, who had a protest of his own to communicate. One of the commissioners asked why we had remonstrated, and our president said, "Because a saloon is a nuisance always and everywhere, but this particular one will expose the boys that come to our night school and reading room to great temptation." She made a good speech, Mrs. Gage did, and referred to their own children, and made 'em drop their eyes as she talked. The men said, "But this saloon is going to be a quiet, respectable place." "Quiet!" "respectable," echoes us ladies, and there was a laugh from all the men. Then they asked the church officials, "Do you think this saloon will interfere with church work?" "I do," says Mr. Hunt. "The sidewalk is narrow there, and when ladies go to church, especially in the evenin', it will be most unpleasant, if not dangerous. Our entire church membership join in this protest." Then our minister spoke. He said the town had voted license, and we must endure the saloon on the streets where they were, but to open a new one next door to a church that for fifty years had been trying to save souls and elevate the community, was an insult not only to Christianity but to good morals and decency. I tell you he gave 'em one good temperance lecture if they never heard another.'

'That should have been sufficient,' proclaimed Mrs. Van Dusen's bass voice. 'The American citizen has rights which ought to be respected.'

'That's a fact,' said Mrs. Judith Pierce, approvingly, 'but the American citizen sold his birthright to the saloon long ago. Our minister told 'em so, and they squirmed good. He drove the truth right home. He shook his right hand at 'em, pulpit fashion, as he said, "You can save our town from this disgrace; you can protect our wives and children from this pest if you will; and I want you to understand, gentlemen, that the God whom I serve both day and night will hold you responsible if a saloon is allowed to open its doors next to his house of prayer." Well the commissioners recovered themselves and said, "We call on property owners to express themselves. Mr. Thompson, do you consider this saloon a desirable neighbor?" Mr. Thompson has a large grocery store near our church. He stepped up inside of the railin' and says he, "No, sir!" "Why not?" "I think it does not carry on legitimate business. I think it lowers the value of property." "Do you think your business will be injured?" "I do," says Mr. Thompson, as firm as you please, and when they asked him in what way, he says, "I think women who have been accustomed to come for supplies in the evenin' will be likely to go to some grocery that isn't so near a saloon." But you know, Katherine, that Thompson's is the best grocery we have.'

The two New York ladies had drawn their chairs nearer, for in the Connecticut woman's quaint narrative and dramatic presentation of characters they had found a new sensation. Mrs. Van Dusen, too, was still awake.

'Well,' continued the narrator, 'after one or two other business men had testified, a stranger in a plaid suit come in and tapped one of the commissioners on the arm and he went out. The minister turned towards us women and shook his head kind of dejected, but I didn't know what he meant. Then they called on the Catholic priest. He's a slender old man with a profile such as you

see on Roman money—a Belgian by birth, and he's been in our town a long time. He spoke with a beautiful brogue and says he, "I come to ask the suppression of saloons in our street. There was a time when my prayers were answered. Down that street every day come three hundred children to parochial school. They must see the saloons, they must see the liquor, they must see the sad sights and hear the profane talk. It is all bad, very bad. They should be spared from it. There is no need for these saloons. They are there for money only, and you know what that means to my people. They take the wages of the poor man away from the wife, away from the children and put them in the rumseller's pocket."

'That's true! poor things; the laboring man that spends his money that way ought to be hung,' and Mrs. Van Dusen rubbed her eyes and Roman nose vigorously.

Then quiet Katherine spoke. 'There is room for a difference of opinion as to which party should hang,' said she.

'But I don't belong to either of the "parties," so you don't catch me there. I'm an Independent,' retorted the self-convicted woman-politician. Katherine and her aunt laughed, but the New York ladies begged to know what was the effect of the priest's pleading, which led again to the story.

'I wish I could recall all he said, but I remember he looked like an accusing spirit as he bent toward the three men—whose faces were red enough by that time,—and says he, "And what are these rum-sellers? I could wish they were lame or blind or unable to work; but no! Every one is strong, able to earn a decent living. Oh! why will some of my own flock engage in this too terrible business? They know I have pleaded with them, they know my teachings, and you know how I have lived among them. I would die for my people!" Well, ladies, I for one felt that he meant it,—every word. For a minute he stood with his head lifted and then he remembered where he was and says, in a depressed tone, "I can do nothing more. I therefore appeal to you who have the power to refuse these licenses, for the sake of the mother, the wife and the child." Well, then the commissioners called for the defence to answer these objections, and Connors himself, the man that was going to open the saloon, shuffled to the railing. "I don't seem to have anybody to speak for me, so I'll speak for myself," says he.'

'What could the man say?' interposed Mrs. Harcourt, with mild indignation.

'Well, they said to him, "What kind of a place do you expect to keep?" "Oh, a nice, respectable, quiet place," he says. "Are you going to have it open Sundays, and have any disturbance on week nights?" "No; it'll be a quiet, orderly place; you can bet your life on that."

'They asked him a few more questions, and told him that would do. We women went out, and as soon as we could we asked the men what they thought. We thought Connors had no case at all. "But," says our minister, "you saw the man in a plaid suit?" "Yes," we said. "Well, they tell me he's bought the commissioners. If they grant these licenses we can be pretty sure of it. Otherwise our side must win." "There's one thing left for us women," says I to our president; "if the saloon next to our church is opened we can pray every time we pass by that God will shut it up. I'll do it for one." "So will I;" "So will I," said the others, and then we went home. Next day the paper stated that the licenses had been granted!'

'What an outrage upon the rights of