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Martha McMillan records in her 1891 journal the gathering of the Women's Christian Temperance Union for a district convention for a couple of days in late March and adds that they're "[h]aving the Demorest Contest to night" (McMillan, 24 March 1891). Two days later, several of the household "attended the Demorest Contest at Charleston" (McMillan, 26 March 1891), indicating that multiple speeches were given around the area. The next year, she adds a new mention of the contest, when, on April 22nd, "Mr Balderige called and he and Harlan attended the Demerest [sic] Contest at Charleston with their friends" (Cramblett and Largent 23). The last named mention of this contest found as yet in Martha's journals establishes only slightly more context for the reader. March 28th, 1893, Martha follows up her comment that "Clara Clayton and Jason were at the Opera house at the Demarist [sic] Contest" with the information that "Jennie Morton took the prize" (McMillan). She does not specify the content of this contest, as details of recurring events do not seem to strike her as important to her text.

However, a closer look into the Demorest Contest provides insight into Martha McMillan's context and reveals Martha's involvement in shaping her time. The association of this event with the Women's Christian Temperance Union hints that this contest relates to civics and moral reform. Additionally, when acquainted with Martha's journals, readers become aware that many of her children at the time of the early 1890s were school aged. Her entries then indicate that most of the attendees she mentions were youths. This contest then, which hails its

establishment from a Prohibition political candidate in New York, aims to educate the youth on societal morals. Understanding the Demorest Contest, its founder William Jennings Demorest, and its relation to the WCTU provides invaluable insight to Martha McMillan's view of education and her values of temperance.

William Jennings Demorest advocated strongly against alcohol consumption. As a dry-goods seller for the beginning of his career, he originally studied to go into ministry (Ross 9). By the time of 1857, Demorest was "dynamically interested in politics" (19) and the political and religious aspects of his society (18). After his marriage to Ellen Curtis and their subsequent development of her skill in fashion, Demorest bought the *New York Illustrated News* in 1864 and merged it with his wife's magazine, *Mirror of Fashions* (43). This gave Demorest a platform in which he later integrated his Prohibition principles, laying "the foundation for Mr. Demorest's solid career as an editor, zealous crusader and reformer" (44). Ishbel Ross declares that the editorials of the magazine "were sober, sound and well-edited until Mr. Demorest's zeal for temperance reform overcame his editorial judgement" (47). However, this zeal inspired much of Demorest's political work. Historians believe "he distributed over fifty million pages of tracts relating to" temperance (Beall 46). In addition to Prohibition, Demorest advocated for abolition and loved children (46). His "affection" for children induced him to add *Young America* to his magazine, which published "natural and truthful" stories that children "could identify with their own lives" (Ross 145). While William Jennings Demorest pursued Prohibition, he often focused his attention on the education and formation of America's youth.

The Demorest Contest, started by William Jennings Demorest, consisted of recitations of speeches advocating for temperance. Officially referred to as "Demorest Medal Contests," the events consisted of yearly "public oratorical competitions" (Cherrington 790) in which young

people would memorize anti-alcohol speeches. Demorest founded the contest in 1886 (790) to encourage the youth of America to become Prohibitionists, as well as spread the Prohibition message to more people. The speakers' texts consisted of pre-written articles from compiled pamphlet books. These books received their form and approval from the "Medal Contest Bureau" (790). Speakers would have three levels of competition they could participate in. The first, and the most localized, would award its best speakers with silver badge-like medallions (790). Those who won silver medals could then choose to compete in a second contest to achieve a gold medal (790). Finally, gold medalists could then compete against each other for a chance at the diamond medal (790). These competitions remained regional, rather than national, but would reach large audiences (790). Such contests encouraged local involvement in teaching moral and ethical behavior, involving children in societal reform.

The Demorest Contest quickly proliferated across the United States, even while still independently run, though often held in conjunction with W.C.T.U. events and conventions. The inaugural contest, held only in New York, became popular enough to grow. The practice of holding such a contest spread to many other states and regions within the next three years, with all medals provided by Mr. Demorest himself (Cherrington 790). The Scranton County branch of Pennsylvania's W.C.T.U. held their first Demorest Contest in 1890 (Chase 73). Carl Sandburg, an acclaimed writer, participated in the Demorest Contest in his hometown of Galesburg, Illinois, though it was his sister who won the silver medal (Shock paras 3-4). During Demorest's lifetime, these contests awarded more than forty thousand medals (Ross 245).

After Demorest's death in 1895, the contests were officially taken over by the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The W.C.T.U. and its president, Miss Frances Willard, supported Demorest in his avid antiliquor campaign (Ross 247) and organized events in conjunction with

him. While the Demorest Contests had been run through W.C.T.U. conventions prior, it was not until 1896 that they were fully “adopted” as a department (Stevenson 45). Miss A. E. Carman, who would become the “superintendent” of that department after Mrs. Demorest’s death in 1898, had the “idea... that a system of W.C.T.U. contests might be inaugurated with excellent results to all [their] lines of work” (45). The shared goal of Prohibition facilitated the official unification of the two organizations in 1897 (45). The appropriation of the Demorest Contest granted it better proliferation around the globe. The contest soon became a department of both the “World and National” branches of the W.C.T.U. (45). In the “Report Made to the First Convention of the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union, Held in Boston, U. S. A., Nov. 10-19, 1891,” countries such as Burma, Turkey, and South Africa held their own series of contests (Leavitt 10, 54, 17). The 1897 edition of the Mount Vernon paper declares that “several of our young people attended the Demorest contest at Butler, Saturday night” (“Mount Vernon Democratic Banner June 3, 1897” 2), indicating the long stability the W.C.T.U. afforded the contest.

Martha McMillan’s journals include entries about the Demorest Contest’s connection to the W.C.T.U., mentioning them by other names for the contest. In 1894, she refers to the event that Wesley, a worker on the family farm, and her son Jason attend as the “‘Medal Contest’ at the Opera House” (McMillan, 26 February). Seven boys participated in it as well as Pearl Shears, whom Martha must have known personally (McMillan, 26 February). In 1899, she then indicates the W.C.T.U.’s possession of the contest as she records Jason’s attendance at the “W.C.T.U. Silver Medal Contest” on March 23rd (McMillan). With the transfer of the contests to the W.C.T.U, the events started selling tickets in order to fund the distribution of the medals to participants, and Martha’s addendum that “we had our tickets for reserved seats” reflects this change (McMillan, 23 March 1899).

While Martha McMillan interacted minimally, though regularly, with the Demorest contest itself, she involved herself more deeply in the ideals related to it through the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The Greene County Woman's Christian Temperance Union was organized in Xenia on February 13, 1875, with Mrs. Henrietta L. Monroe as president (Broadstone 633). By the time of Martha's death, the organization had eight changes in presidency, and Martha's sister Mary had filled two of those terms (633). Michael Broadstone claims:

it would be difficult to describe...what the local chapter has accomplished during the twenty-four years of its existence...being of the quiet, unostentatious kind which never reached the public eye. The public at large has never known of the innumerable contributions which the chapter has made for all kinds of charitable and benevolent purposes. (640)

Martha McMillan's contributions to the W.C.T.U. and her community are more tangible and documentable. In 1899, Martha delivered a speech to the Union at a convention in Indiana, encouraging her fellow laborers in their work. She laments the death of Frances Willard and stirs the "white ribbon workers" up, to not lose heart (McMillan, "Women's Christian Temperance Union Address") as they strive to evangelize to others.

Additionally, Martha educated her own children according to her values of temperance and Christian duty. Her antiliquor stance drew its foundations from her strong Christian faith. She first taught her children the Bible, through readings of the Holy Text itself as well as catechisms and books of religion. In her same address to the W.C.T.U., Martha admonishes her fellow mothers, "Let it be remembered to be successful we must begin early. Teach a child to pray as soon as it can lisp its mothers name—Teach it to love and reverence the Bible—teach

them little texts. Teach them obedience” (McMillan, “Women’s Christian Temperance Union Address 1899). Her pursuit of right behavior and her attempts to transform her society illustrate her commitment to God to witness His character to her neighbors.

Martha may not have been a New York political candidate, or magazine publisher and editor. She may not have contributed large sums of money to hand out medals to young people as incentives to promote temperance. However, her faithfulness to temperance through her everyday actions illustrate how the “ordinary” life may influence a community in a powerful way. Her careful record of the events of her daily life and society contain messages as to what Martha valued and promoted. Her children could look back at the years and notice her industry in attending, supporting, and even speaking at W.C.T.U. events. They could notice her movements throughout her town to help those in need. Her journals track her many inclusions of temperance events she would attend, as well as her faithful transcription of sermon notes every Sabbath. Not only would Martha note the words of the pastor, but she would reflect upon them. Her faithfulness to teach her children did not stop at evening readings of Scripture but would include her legacy. Her life provides a case study for the faithful Christian. Perhaps not all of Martha’s actions translate into the 21st century as an example to follow, but her dedication to Christ through the mundanity of everyday life can not only encourage the hearts of her family but also those of Christians beyond her city, beyond her time.

The Demorest Contest, though perhaps not a foolproof way to eradicate drunkenness, spoke to ideals echoed in Martha McMillan’s own journal. Not only a proponent of temperance, but also a strong advocate for the proper education of young people, Martha shared at least some connection with William Jennings Demorest. Her journals provide a critical look into the specific details and instances where policies and societal ideology shape local communities.

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