

PART III

12

Whene'er a Wrong Is Done

Women suffer from this injustice all their lives, but its hideousness becomes apparent in all its baldness when we see one throttled to death in obedience to a law which neither the criminal nor any other woman had any voice in framing.

—Dr Amelia Yeomans,
Manitoba Morning Free Press, 21 Dec. 1899

The ominous tolling of 'there hanged until you are dead' brought about an unlikely and important side-episode in Blake's story. Two very different women, who would not otherwise have met, crossed paths: one, orphaned, a servant grasping awkwardly for status, was now a murderess condemned; the other, canny and highly educated, was both a doctor who could presume to speak with authority about female criminals and a Woman's Christian Temperance Union leader planning the strategy that would eventually give Manitoba women the provincial vote (not just an occasional municipal vote) before women anywhere else in Canada.

The meeting between Blake and Dr Amelia Yeomans of the Winnipeg WCTU occurred on 25 November, 10 days after the trial, as Yeomans made a Friday evening trip 120 miles west to Brandon, planning to spend several days 'for the spiritual benefit of Hilda Blake'.¹ But she only met with Blake for an hour and a half on Saturday. Clearly disappointed with Blake's response, Yeomans, nevertheless, did not fail to put the interview to use in her suffrage campaign, and her role did introduce Brandon to broader crises in Victorian