

TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION.

[Speech of Miss ARBY H SMITH, of Glastonbury, before the town meeting of that place, November 5, 1873.]

It is not without due deliberation that we have been willing to attend this meeting, but we had no other way of coming before the men of the town. Others, our neighbors, can complain more effectually than we can, without speaking a word, when they think those who rule over them rule with injustice; but we are not put under the laws of the land as they are—we are wholly in the power of these we have come to address. You have the power over our property to take it from us whenever you choose, and we can have no voice in the matter whatever, not even to say what shall be done with it, and no power to appeal to; we are perfectly defenseless. Can you wonder then we should wish to speak with you? People do not generally hold power without exercising it, and those who exercise it do not appear to have the least idea of its injustice. The southern slaveholder only possessed the same power that you have to rule over us. "Happy dog," he would say of his slave, "I have given him everything; I am the slave and he the master; does he complain? give him ten lashes." The slaveholders really thought they had done so much for their slaves they would not leave them, when the great consideration was, the slave wanted the control of his own earnings; and so does every human being of what rightfully belongs to him. We do not suppose the men of the town think they have done so much for us that they have a right to take our money when they please. But then there is always excuse enough where there is power. They say all the property of the town should be taxed for the expenses of the town, according to its valuation, and as taxation without representation is wrong, they give permission to a part of these owners to say what valuation shall be made, and how the money can best be applied for their benefit. They meet together to consult who among them shall have the offices of the town and what salary they will give them. All this is done without ever consulting or alluding to the other part of the owners of this property. But they tax the other owners and take from them just what amount they please. We had two hundred dollars taken from us in this way the past year, by the same power the robber takes his money, because we are defenseless and cannot resist. But the robber would have the whole community against him, and he would not be apt to come but once; but from the men of our own town we are never safe,—they can come in and take our money from us just when they choose. Now we cannot see any justice, any right, or any reason in this thing. We cannot see why we are not just as capable of assisting in managing the affairs of the town as the men are. We cannot possibly see why we have not as much intelligence and information, or as much capacity for doing business, as they have. Are we not as far-seeing, and do we not manage our own affairs, as far as we are permitted by the laws, as well as they do? Is it any more just to take a woman's property without her consent, than it is to take a man's property without his consent? Those whom the town put over us are the very dregs of society, those who are making the town and their families continual expense and trouble, for which we are liable, and the authorities make the town the expense of meeting to take off their poll tax, for they can't pay a dollar; and they have taken some from the insane retreat and kept them in a barn over night to vote the next day. Now all these things clearly prove how much more these lawless men are valued by the town than such citizens as we are, who never make it the least trouble or expense. Such men as these are set over us, and can vote away our property, indeed, our property is liable for their support. Now all we ask of the town is to put us on an equality with these men, not to rule over them as they rule over us, but to be put on an equality with them. Is this an unreasonable request? Do we not stand on an equality with them, and every man in this assembly, before the law of God? God is a God of justice, men and women stand alike in his sight. He has but one law for both. And why should man have but one law for both, to which both shall be accountable alike? Let each rise if they can by their own ability, and put no obstructions in their way. Is it right because men are the strongest, that they should go into the women's houses and take their money from them, knowing they cannot resist? It is not physical strength that makes a town prosper, it is mind, it is capability to guide the physical strength and put its resources to the best possible advantage. You are rejecting just half of the very element you need. You well know that a man and his wife must counsel together to make the affairs of their household prosper, they must be one in the business, and if they are one I cannot see how one can rule over the other, from which idea comes all the disturbance between them. Ought not this town to be one great family all equally interested in its government. As it is, its government is no concern of ours whatever. We cannot alter it if we see ever so much injustice. No woman concerns herself about the government of the town, being placed under the men, instead of being placed under the laws, their whole business is to please the men as the slave's business is to please his master, because their living comes from the men; the laws are such they can get it in no other way. The motto of our government is, "Proclaim liberty to all the inhabitants of the land," and here where liberty is so highly extolled and gloried by every man in it, one half the inhabitants are not put under her laws, but are ruled over by the other half, who can by their own laws, not hers, take from the other half all they possess. How is Liberty pleased with such worship? Would she not be apt to think of her own sex? This assembly have put such men as Judge Hunt over us, to fine a woman one hundred dollars for doing what is an honor for a man to do, and denied us a trial by jury. This is the highest court in the land, made by your votes. No man ever had more regard for this town than our father had. He was born and brought up here, and all his ancestors before him. He knew every man in it, and seemed as much interested in their welfare as his own. He was a man that any town would be proud of. He did all its law business for nearly forty years. Did he ever take any of its money without giving full compensation? It was never said of him. Is not this the great law of nations, that compensation shall be made when money is taken from women as well as men? But instead of compensation it is taken from us and every other woman in the place, to strengthen the power of those that rule over us. It is taken to pay the men for making laws to govern us, by which they themselves would not be governed under any consideration. Neither would we, if we could help it. Some of it is given to buy votes which add to their power. A man's wife told me they gave her husband four dollars, which kept him drunk a long time to abuse his family. His wife said if she could vote, her vote would be as good as her husband's, and the men which came after him to carry him to the polls would treat her as well as they treated him. Her hard earnings then could not be taken for his drams. And some of the money is taken for the authorities of the town to meet at all the different hotels in it, to make voters and take off the poll-tax of all the poor vagabonds that they may vote; then the authorities want to meet to consult what would be most for the advantage of half the inhabitants of the town, who do the business and put them into office (the women are not mentioned, of course, for having no power they are of no consequence), and then these officers are furnished with an entertainment at the expense of all the inhabitants of the town. But the roads make the most complaint to every woman that owns property; they all know as well as we do that they would not be made as they are before their houses if they could vote. We have every reason to think the officers of the town add what they please to our taxes. Last year they added \$100 to our homestead without giving us any notice, and the same amount to two widows in the neighborhood, who cannot work their land, and not a man who can work it had his property raised, for he could find it out and a woman could not. We have paid the town of Glastonbury during the past six years more than \$1,000, and for what? to be ruled over, and to be put under, what all the citizens know, to be the lowest and the most worthless of any in the place. We ask only for ourselves and our property. Why should we be cast out? Why should we be outlawed? We should be glad to stay in our homestead where we were born and have always lived, the little time we have to stay, and be buried with our family and our ancestors, but its pleasantness is gone, for we know we do not hold it in security as our neighbors hold theirs, that it is liable to be taken from us whenever the town sees fit.

The town collector called for our taxes on Monday at sunset—the last day and hour he could call. We told him we would prefer to wait till we had been heard by the town, for if they gave us no hope of voting, we wanted them to sell our farm for the taxes, for it was but reasonable, if they owned it, to get the taxes from it—we could not; and we wished they would begin at the east end and come into the street, for we wanted to save our homestead while we lived, and thought it would last us. He said he hoped he should not be collector then. He agreed to all the injustices of which we complained.

[The farm of the Misses Smith, it should be explained, is a strip about three miles in length and only forty feet wide. When they told the collector to commence selling off at the east end, they probably selected the part furthest from the house, calculating that in the natural course of events they should die before the taxes had eaten their way up to the house.]