

1910

*Impressions of Town Meeting.*

Town meeting was well attended by non-voters, including a number of feminine ones as well as by all the available voters of Chilmark, and their friends. The Menemsha school was adjourned, to enable the children to attend town meeting, and learn their future duties. That Chilmark can conduct a town meeting in a strictly legal and parliamentary way was a useful lesson to them, and to outsiders.

Besides the usual flow of eloquence, there was a lesson in endeavoring to convince the public that trespass signs are put up to invite visitors to stroll over the enclosed property, and that such signs may be variously interpreted.

There was a lesson in honest voting, demonstrated by raising both hands in the middle of a crowd, to increase the number of votes. Also raising an unassuming hand behind a neighboring back, so that neither side might feel hurt, and financial gain might continue to flow from both sides. There was a demonstration of the accurate use of the English language, especially when conveying the meaning of law terms to the audience, and convince the public that arrest, by any other name even, would have the same result. That those who are weak need a physician, and that a silent partner does not carry much weight. That an intelligent listener can misunderstand a broad allusion to the law as a whip to induce good behavior, and narrow it into a personal application to a local politician.

That he who serves two masters is apt to fall between them, and be of no value to either. Both men and women can learn something each time they attend town meeting, and be able to cast an intelligent, unprejudiced vote. Rubbing up against outside interests smooths angles, and makes men as well as women easier to live with in a community or in the home.

If the women and children see voters voting regardless of sound judgment, or for obviously personal reasons, or because they have an axe to grind, or to help a personal but not suitable friend, of course when their turn comes they will be apt to do likewise, and it will reflect on the voters who have set the example and of whom they have learned. We all have axes to grind, so why not learn to grind them unselfishly, and so they can be useful to all.

FLORENCE B. MAYHEW

Chilmark, March 23, 1910./