

**THE BROWNS OF WILLOWTOWN.**

(By Mrs. D. C. McKillip.)

For the Courier.

Willowton was a typical Nebraska town, full of push, rush and energy. It had its quota of lawyers, doctors, merchants, real estate men, bankers, stockmen and preachers. It supported two weekly papers, one devoted to saving the country along republican lines, the other engaged in counteracting the pernicious teachings of its rival and inculcating equal portions of democratic and populist principles. The majority of the inhabitants of Willowton had come from the east to make their homes and fortunes in the west, and as a consequence had imbibed the spirit of the western pioneers and were free and easy in their manners, but hearty, whole-souled, generous and hospitable. Most of the women of Willowton did their own housework—and the religious work for their families on Sundays. The men seldom went to church; they generally went to the fair-grounds and exercised their horses on the track, for about the only dissipation in which the inhabitants of Willowton indulged in was riding. It was a very poor family, indeed, that did not keep a horse and buggy. And Willowton being the county seat the fair-grounds were the pride of the masculine portion of the community, whose members in pleasant weather felt it their communal duty to drive around the race track, smoke and talk politics.

Mr. George Brown was the editor of the Willowton Mirror. He had come west eighteen years before. He had an eye for business and was said to be well fixed. He owned three farms, the controlling interest in a bank, the Willowton Mirror, a good, comfortable home, a fine span of horses, a wife and three children. Mr. Brown was a good man. He was kind to his wife and to his cow and provided well for the comforts of all, but that his wife had any interests or aspirations outside of her home pasture of four walls, where she had everything provided for her, any more than his pet Jersey had with plenty of fine clover and water never entered his head. Mr. Brown did not believe in the intellectual equality of the sexes. Had he been called upon to define his position on the subject he could scarcely have done so. He had a vague idea that the Creator must at some time have stood in front of a large binful of intellects in skulls; that He took up one after another, examined it carefully, tapped it with a little hammer to see if it were sound and perfect, and if so tossed it onto a heap to be used in making men; while one of inferior quality, deformed, cracked or soft, was thrown on the woman's pile. The largest, most perfect and soundest brain in the whole collection, he thought, had been used to finish Mr. George Brown, editor of the Willowton Mirror.

Mr. Brown had no patience with the doctrine of equal suffrage. It almost gave him spasms. He affirmed often, "When my wife votes I will not; when she goes to the polls I will stay at home. If she is going to wear the breeches I will not." Yet he never informed his hearers whether in disgust he would drape his manly form in a mother-hubbard or invent a new and protesting costume. Sometimes he came home all wrought up and informed Mrs. Brown if Nebraska ever had equal suffrage he would leave the state and that he would never live under petticoat government, not he. She might vote if she wanted to, but if she did he wouldn't. And his wife would say: "Why! papa, what's the matter? I'm not trying to vote—I haven't said anything about it. If I had the right you

would have to tell me who to vote for, because you are posted in politics and I am not—what do I know?" And Mr. Brown would answer, "Why, nothing, of course; what an absurd idea anyway; but those confounded suffragists are such fools, they make me mad."


Mrs. Brown was one of those little women who are blessed with tact. She never waved the red flag in her domestic pasture, but she always influenced the movements of her bovine husband with a bran-mash. Women's clubs were another thorn in the side of Mr. Brown, who declared the country was going to the demnition bow-wows.

One Sunday morning after looking over his exchanges, he told his wife that he really did not know what we were coming to; that he had not picked up a paper for a coon's age but what he had seen something about women's clubs. "What, about them?" inquired his wife; "what are they doing?" "What about them?" replied he. "Do you suppose I read the stuff? Do you suppose I have time to read the vaporings of short-haired women who are neglecting their homes and children to thrust themselves into notoriety? I don't know anything about them, nor I don't want to either. I never read any article where I see the word 'club,' and I only hope to goodness that this town will escape the craze. It is a worse scourge than the bubonic plague." "But what do they do at them?" asked Mrs. Brown. "Do at them!" cried Brown. "Didn't I say I never read the stuff? Jump up and down and pull hair, I suppose. That's about what a lot of women would do if they got together," and Mr. Brown sniffed his contempt. He had a vein of rhythm in his make-up, and the Willowton Mirror was often embellished with his original thoughts having a jingle at the end of each line. While freeing his mind on the woman question, he generally rhymed club with scrub, and in his mental gymnastics he so arranged matters that a man was always at the end of the scrubbing brush. While the woman was away—all the blessed live-long day—at the club.

It was the very last day of May, a warm, beautiful morning; everybody in the world seemed happy but Mrs. Brown. She stood by the kitchen window looking out with a clothespin in her hand with which she toyed idly. The children were off for school. Her husband was down-town, and she had just finished the dishes. Now she had the morning's work to do and dinner to get on time, and, O, dear, what was the use of living, anyway? It was the same old grind over and over again. What pleasure did she ever take any how? She worked from morning till night day after day, week after week, year after year, for her family. As long as her husband had his meals on time and the children were clothed and fed, what did they care for her happiness? They took all her toil, all her kindnesses, all her loving attentions as a matter of course, with never a word of appreciation. What was she getting out of life? Nothing, but just one round, and round, and round again of every-day existence, "where life stretched out before her like a level plain, with nothing to break the monotony but the shadow of a tombstone in the distance." The alpha and omega of her life was to wash, iron, bake, scrub, sew, cock and wash dishes.

Here Mrs. Brown turned and hurled the clothespin straight at the dishpan. When a man wishes to relieve his overcharged feelings he uses emphatic language—a woman throws something.

There was a cause for Mrs. Brown's mood; she had run up the back stairs that morning, when the children

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