

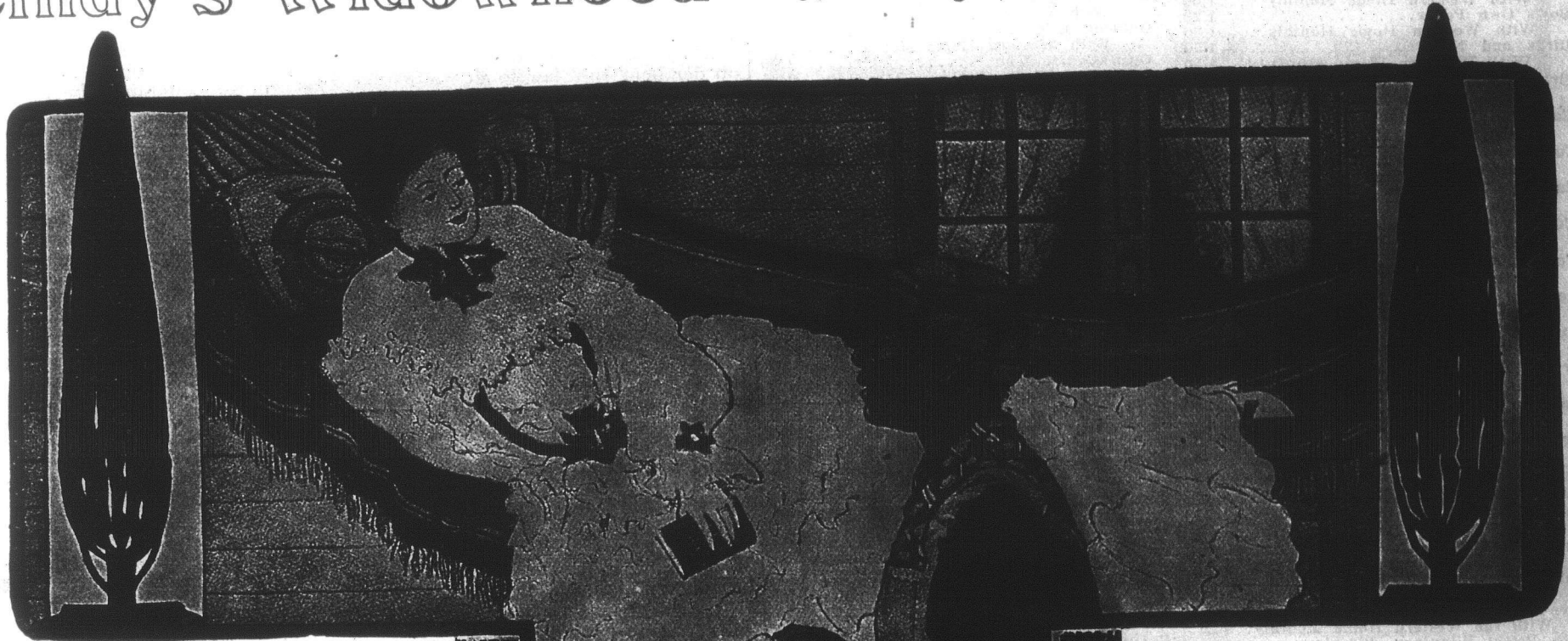
THE
WESTERN HOME MONTHLY

Vol. VII. No. 10.

WINNIPEG, CANADA, OCTOBER, 1906.

PRICE { 5c. per copy.
50c. per year

Cindy's Widowhood By Charles McIlvaine.



ARE you a single woman, Cindy?" "Yes, Miss Julia, I is a single woman. Dat is, I is half a single woman—I is a widow. I is a two times widow. Dat is, some folks say I is. I dunno zactly what I is. Some says dis an' some says dat. Squire Rideback red de law on me an' he say dat de law on me am all mix up."

Thus Cindy Hurlock answered a bride of a fortnight. When the bride, Mrs. Merrill, came to the family homestead belonging to her planter husband, she found Cindy as much a part of it as the great scycamores on the lawn. She was a superb specimen of African womanhood, strong, shapely, with eyes soft as a seal's when love filled them, or wild as an angry cat's when passion fired them. Her coaxing voice brought the pigeons to her hand, the cows from the lowlands, the horses from the pasture; but when constrained, low, quivering with anger, it told of unconquerable resolve, and danger to be dreaded. Often she sat in the kitchen door gazing dreamily over the highlands—an ebony Evangeline. Again, she filled it with her erect figure tense in every muscle—a Nemesis—glaring with the fixity of a sphinx. Now, having taken a great liking to her young mistress she was in her softest mood, loving, gentle, full of confidence. In a moment of loneliness, her mistress had called her. She sat, sewing, on the porch edge. Mrs. Merrill swung near her in a hammock.

"Have you any children?" I have been here such a short time that I know little about the servants." "Children? Bress you, no, Miss Julia. I ain't had no husband; dat is, some says I hab, some says I habent. De Lo'd an' me knows, an' dat's enough."

Mrs. Merrill laughed. "I am as

much mixed as Squire Rideback's law, Cindy;—a single woman, twice a widow, who never had a husband. Who ever heard of such a state! I do not understand it."

"Yes'm. I reckon you is mixed. De squire say dah wuz no law to fit me. Ef I git hold ob de man dat I done mahied fo' my shu' enough husband. I'll make de law fit." She laid her sewing down and looked off into the distance. After a moment she said: "I is fixin' to tell you 'bout it Miss Julia. I was layin' out to do it de first time you gib me a chance. You is mighty good to Cindy. I don't want to disappoint among you all. I is fixin' to tell you de troof. Den you'll hab it straight. De folks round yeah hab to hab a heap ob help fo' to tell de troof. I is had hard luck, Miss Julia. I is goin' on twenty-three an' I is had my share fo' certain. De good luck signs am poo'ly yit. Mr. George Ebeny, dat was my father, he went off to de war an' nebber come back. Miss Ebeny, dat was my mother, she died sudden of it in her head, an' I've had de keer ob de children eber since. An' I is had to take keer ob myself. Dat was de ha'dest job. De yeah

"A single woman, twice a widow, who never had a husband. Who ever heard of such a state!"

af'o' de big war dar wuz a black debble dat had a bad name, tried fo' to make up to me. I was a chunk ob a girl wid no mo' sense dan girls hab when dey gits dere first co'sets. His name was Eph Raster. De Rasters is plenty in dese parts. Ef you says 'Good mo'nin', Mr. Raster,' to a passel ob cullud folks dat you meets in de big road, de half ob dem 'll answer back 'Good mo'nin', an' de res' ob dem 'll answer back dat dey name ain't Raster but dat dey is kin to 'em. Dis Eph Raster kep' comin' to de cabin fo' to see me, an' I kep' sendin' him 'bout his business.

"Den de big war broke out. Daddy, he went off wid ole Colonel Merrill—de ole Mastah—fo' to take keer ob his horse. An' de nex' day, mammy she took it in her head an' died. Dat lef' me an' six children in de cabin. An' me fo' to take keer ob dem.

"On de sixth day ob Aprile, de yeah de big war broke out, long in de dark ob de ebenin', I seed a man step out ob de bush an' come runnin' to hy cabin, up dar in de grove, where I wuz sittin' on de do' step. Fust I thought it wuz Eph Raster. I got ready fo' to tell him to git. He come close, an'

I seed dat it wuz de best lookin' young colo'ed gentleman dat I eber seed. He took off his hat an' he bowed. Dat wuz de fust fo'—shu'—nough—take-off-your-hat bow dat I eber got. I raise right up an' I made my curtesy mannehs, jes' like ole Miss Merrill showed me how fo' to do it. I dunno what made me do dat. It jes come in my laigs. De young colo'ed gentleman he say: 'Scuse me. Kin you tell me de road to Danville?"

"When I wuz 'bout sixteen, de debble shuly did come in my head af'o' sense do. I up an' answered him back: 'De ribbeh, dah in de lowlands, runs clear down to Danville. If you kin swim, jes' follow it an' you'll get dar.' "He looked at me kinder confused. I seed he wuz dead earnest; his face wuz sot an' dar wuz no foolin' look in dem eyes ob his'n. Den he told me dat he wuz runnin' away; dat he wuz gwine to de norf fo' his freedom; dey wuz after him fo' to ketch him an' take him back. I told him fo' to come in de cabin an' rest hisself an' git somethin' to eat. I seed dat he wuz hungry; it wuz in his eyes. De children wuz playin' tag in de mule pasture. He eat like he been starved. He tell me he been sleep in de woods by day an' trabble by night, an' he been done tired. I tell him fo' to go up in de cabin lof' an' rest hissef, dat I take keer ob him. He went up de laddeh, and I broke de laddeh up an' chuck it on de fiah. I tell him fo' to gib me his shoes; he drap 'em down. I put 'em on an' went down to where de wood path crossse de run, and I make tracks wid 'em in de sand, like he been jumpin' across. Den I took 'em off an' come to de cabin bare foot.

"Shu' 'nough, jes' ez I got back, up came two men, ridin', a huntin' him. Fust I done tole 'em he had not been dar; den dey cussed me an' I let on to be skeered. Den I showed 'em de way he jump de run an' took to de woods. De head man gib me a cut wid his