

## 'TWIXT GOLD AND SINEW.'

BY C. J. MESSER.

BOOK ONE—PART II.

"T WAS fourteen years back," the old man began, "an' this whole point an' half o' Essex town was owned by the Marshfields an' the Burrowses. For twenty years I had been head farmer to Mr. Burrows, Justin's father," motioning toward Burrows, "and my father was farmer to Grandfather Burrows before me. Long years ago the Marshfields and Burrowses had words about dividin' lines, an' when I first come farmer the families wa'n't on speakin' terms.

"Of course, I knew all the Marshfields, from the gouty old man down to little Phoebe, as we used to call her. I used to think what a pity 'twas that Phoebe had to stay cooped up with the old folks, when the Burrows boys was just achin' to be with her. We lived here same's now. Sometimes I'd be workin' right on the creek, an' other times I'd be farmin' a mile away. Mother stayed here always with the boys for company. Phoebe was the dashin'est rider I ever saw. She'd just about fly along on a big black mare, her eyes sparklin' an' her cheeks rosy. Every few days I used to go to the Burrows house with reports, an' I had a lot of short cuts through the fields. Sometimes I crossed Marshfield's land, an' somehow I saw Phoebe most every time I went that way. She was always alone, either ridin' furious like, or settin' on the grass lettin' the big mare feed. When I come on her so she seemed to be thinkin'. One day she spoke to me, said 'Good afternoon,' as pert an' pretty as could be. After that she spoke every time she saw me, but when we was near her home I found she didn't know me.

"I never could tell how it come about, but she got into the habit of comin' an' settin' with mother here. I knew 'twan't right, but I didn't want to say anythin' to make her unhappy, for I thought she liked to be here. She come every day for a long while, then she missed, an' then after waitin' a week we heard she'd gone away to school for two years. When the two years was up she come back to Essex. We thought she'd forgot us, but 'twan't so. She was over here just as soon as she could hook away, an' she brought presents to the children. Well, she kept a-comin', an' sometimes she'd sit close up to mother an' fold her hands an' think. Once in a while she'd cry. Mother says to me, 'She's got somethin' on her mind, father,' an' it did look so.

"After a while I used to meet a sportsman, a stylish young feller' who seemed to be always hanging about

the creek. One day I see the sportsman an' Phoebe talkin' together. I told mother, an' she told me to mind my business an' let Phoebe fall in love if she wanted to. 'She needs love, poor thing,' says mother. One afternoon she brought him to the old house. 'Can 'Gene an' I come in,' she says, shy an' pretty like. Course they come in. I didn't like the feller, he was awful black, but I couldn't help seein' he was over head an' heels in love with Phoebe, an' mother said any fool could see he was a gentleman, so I minded my business ag'in, an' got to likin' him almost. He come every day. Phoebe was mighty quiet when he was around. She'd just set an' fold her hands an' look at him. I knew 'twan't right—they'd be courtin' at home if 'twas. 'Twan't long 'fore there was a rum-pus. The men told me Phoebe was sick, an' the old Marshfield had given orders to have any trespassers on his lands arrested. Then the story came out that this 'Gene was Phoebe's cousin, an' the old man hated him, an' that the old man had someone he wanted Phoebe to marry, an' Phoebe wouldn't do it.

"Phoebe was awful sick—dangerous, they began to say—an' the old Marshfield, who hadn't shown a bit of fatherly affection in his life, began to get scared. 'Gene kept comin' to mother an' askin' about his Phoebe. Mother'd tell him what we'd heard during the day, an' he'd skulk off ag'in. One night, late, Marshfield's man came bangin' at our door. He wanted mother; Phoebe had come to herself an' kept callin' for mother. If mother would go over Mr. Marshfield would pay her handsome.

"Mother went over, an' found that the girl was just dyin' from wantin' to see her 'Gene. It wa'n't long after mother got to seein' Phoebe in the daytime an' 'Gene in the evenin' before the girl began to mend, an' pretty soon she got out doors ag'in an' began to come here. Squire Marshfield was mighty grateful to mother an' wanted to pay her, but mother wouldn't take anything. The Squire supposed 'Gene was gone away, an' he let Phoebe go when she wanted to an' where she wanted to.

"The Squire got to takin' walks in his fields, an' one day I met him. He was mighty sociable and didn't look so ugly as I thought. After we'd talked a while he said Phoebe was probably at my house an' he'd walk along with me an' surprise her. I was mighty shaky, 'cause I knew if Phoebe was there 'Gene was somewhere about. As we was walkin' the Squire said: 'I've been a harsh father to Phoebe. I'm goin' to begin over an' see if I can't make her love me a little.' There was a sort of dryness in his throat, an' I pitied him, for all he was so rich. I felt thankful I didn't have any unkindness to my children to make me feel as he did. He got confidential an' told me all about the young man—'young friend,' he called him—that