

* ' TWIXT GOLD AND SINEW.

BOOK TWO—PART VII.

BY C. J. MESSER.

“DON'T you remember Dover?” asked Priscilla, half covering her face with her handkerchief.

“Dover!” Bill seemed puzzled.

“And the red-headed man a-selling gold rings?” added Priscilla, with a giggle.

Bill's flush and a stealthy look at Miranda told that he did remember. Again Priscilla was unable to control her mirth.

“Here's a pretty go!” sniffled Miranda. “Dover 'n' gold rings.” There was an exceedingly baleful look in her eye. “I allers s'posed Mr. Munsey's friends were respectable!”

“Are you referring to me, ma'm?” asked Priscilla, in a shrill voice. Her face was flushed, but not with laughter.

“If there's anybody here as the shoe fits, let 'em wear it!” snapped Miranda, starting for the door.

“Are you goin' to set there and see your wife insulted?” asked the now thoroughly angry Priscilla of her husband.

“P'raps a little explanation by my friend William,” sarcastically, “would set matters to rights.” Mr. Durkee answered, sitting very straight, partly from pique and partly on account of the collar which had aggravated his neck into a white blister.

“Oh, indeed!” glaring at him. “What do you mean, you big turkey-buzzard? I knew Mr. Munsey seven year ago, afore I ever set eyes on you, while you was living with your third or fifth or ninth or how many wives you've had! It's no business of yours if I did know him, so crawl in behind that there collar and don't let me hear anything more from you! I know you, too!” pointing to Miranda. “I know that you've been a scoopin' down on widdersers these twenty years, like the old bald headed eagle you are! Oh, you needn't bluster to me! You aint got a spear of hair of your own, nor a single tooth in yer head! You've missed a dozen widdersers, and you're a goin' to miss this one!”

“I aint used to such elegant language,” said Miranda, with tantalizing asperity. “I'll go into the kitchen till yer callers go, Mr. Munsey.”

“Don't ye let her go,” warned Priscilla. “If ye want to git rid of her, and ye look as though ye did, ye'd better git rid of her now! She's told me how much ye value her,” sneeringly. “I'll agree that she won't bother ye with no breach o' promise suit! If she does, I'll go on the stand and say my say, and it's my belief she'll lose the case. When a woman gits jealous of a man afore she's got him, 'n' when he's a payin' of her wages, it makes me ashamed for 'em!” scornfully.

“P'raps ye're a little hasty,” suggested Mr. Durkee, meekly. All signs of anger had disappeared from his face.

“P'raps you'd better walk round the barn till you get some sense back,” Priscilla returned, icily.

“I'm all right now, Priscilla,” he said, humbly. “Course I was a fool ter call up anythin' as happened when ye was a girl, and as ye say, I think this lady

aint done jest the right thing by Bill, s'long's Bill's payin' o' her wages.”

“I owe her for a month,” put in Bill. He kept his eyes away from Miranda. “I guess I'd better pay her arter what you've said.”

“Willum Munsey, don't ye forgit Miss West's oldest boy!” solemnly warned Miranda.

“He peeked from behind the door,” explained Bill, nervously. “I don't know but what—”

“She'll never call on the West boy to testify,” said Priscilla. “Don't you be afraid!” eying Miranda disdainfully.

Miranda changed her tactics. “Ain't I done everythin' I could for ye, Willum?” she said, tears of disappointment rolling down her cheeks.

“You've done too much,” said the merciless Priscilla.

“Arter what this lady says I couldn't think o' keepin' ye longer, Mirandy,” said the hypocritical Bill. “I'll pay ye, 'n' this lady 'n' gentleman 'll see me do it. P'raps ye'd better git yer things together, 'n' I'll tell the West boy ter carry ye over to your brother's.”

Bill never looked at her. He talked with a nervous quickness, but went for the money with alacrity.

“You're a meddlin' hussey!” cried Miranda, white with rage.

“Don't call me names!” shrieked Priscilla, springing toward her.



“DON'T CALL ME NAMES!”

“Ladies! ladies!” implored Mr. Durkee, stepping between them.

Bill reappeared at this moment.

“She was a goin' ter strike Priscilla,” said Mr. Durkee in alarm. “She's a violent woman.”

“You set down!” commanded Priscilla, sharply. “I can take care o' myself.”

“I'm sorry ye've been insulted in my home,” said Bill.

Miranda took the payment for her services with a very bad grace and slammed herself from the room.

“I'd take it kindly if ye'd stay till she's gone,” said Bill, with a cowardly sinking of his heart.

“Course we will!” said Mr. Durkee, noisily congratulatory. “We come ter see ye righted, didn't we, Priscilla?”

Priscilla turned on him a look of contempt.

“Ye'd better go along with her,” she said. “Mr. Munsey wants a housekeeper, and I calculate I can