

* 'TWTIXT GOLD AND SINEW.

BOOK TWO—PART X.

BY C. J. MESSER.

WHEN Fred came out on the Rialwich road it was an hour after noon. The farmers were returning to their fields, and he answered their hearty salutations. As he came down the street he saw a woman, or a girl—she was so very slight—standing by the pump in the village square. A huge draught horse was drinking, and the girl's hand caressed its glossy neck. The horse did not appear to relish the intrusion, for it lifted its head and regarded the man steadily, as though prepared to protect the maid, who's cheeks were so flushed, and who clutched the tawny mane so tightly, and leaned so affrightedly against its broad breast.

"I beg your pardon," began Fred, "but can you tell me which house Bob—"

His gun dropped to the ground. Not till that minute had he noticed the girl's face.

"Marie!" he exclaimed, then stood and stared.

Thoughts of Hawkes crowded through his head. She had run away from him once. Perhaps she would again disappear before he could return to the city and notify his friend. Stifling the elation the discovery had produced, he said quickly, perhaps stiffly, in his wish to deceive her—

"I beg your pardon! My rudeness can only be accounted for by my great surprise at meeting you. May I ask if you are living here?"

"I am," Marie answered, so faintly that the horse turned its head, thinking, perhaps, it had missed a caress.

"I saw you in Linn. I think it was in Linn." No man ever studied harder to throw a little lady off her guard. "I was with my friend Hawkes when I met you. You will perhaps remember him, and then recall me. My name is Kipp."

Not a word could Marie say. One hand was pressed to her heart, which had almost ceased to beat.

"Have you lived here long?" he continued, but in a very disinterested way, as he stooped to pick up his gun.

"Yes," Marie answered.

"I didn't know," pausing to clean the gravel from the shining barrel, "but you might have been in Linn lately, and perhaps you could tell me if my friend has yet returned from abroad. I thought perhaps you might have heard—"

"I have not seen him or heard of him," Marie answered.

Though Fred's eyes were dim his ears were very alert, and her tone made him more than ever desirous to end the interview.

"I shall doubtless see him before many weeks," he said. "He will be pleased to hear that you are well."

Marie broke the awkward silence which followed by saying—

"Mr. Barr lives here. He will be away till evening, but will you come in and see mother?"

"It's nothing; absolutely nothing," after puzzling awhile over the name. "I was gunning. That is, after hay, you know. I'm acquainted with Robert. It's all

about hay. If you'll kindly tell Robert Mr. Kipp called on him—but I'll see him in the city."

He was off without even raising his hat.

Marie watched him up the street, a cold disappointment tugging at her heart. If she could have seen him when he turned the curve and was shut out from a view of the square, her eyes would have been drier as she lay her cheek against the horse's soft neck.

Two hours after turning the curve Fred took a carriage at the Great Northern railway station in the city. With almost uncontrollable joyousness he planned a way to break the news. He would delay it till the very last minute.

"Hello, Fred!" was Hawkes' quiet greeting. "I was thinking of you. I am going away for a time. Things are not moving just well with me. I wanted to tell you that I would return in season to be at your wedding."

"I should hope so," said Fred, who was putting on himself his utmost restraint. The lack of that buoyancy which he loved to hear in his friend's voice almost decided him to speak out at once.

"Have you been hunting?" Hawkes asked, smiling, as he noticed the gun.

"Yes, I've been hunting!" almost shouted Fred, rising and putting out his hand, his eyes glistening with happy excitement. "I've been hunting and I've found your Marie."

Fred Kipp told over and over again what he had said and how Marie had answered.

"I was very dignified and brusque," he exclaimed, beaming with delight, "and such falsehoods as I uttered! How I should see you in a few weeks! I really believe she was quite afraid of me, she answered so timidly. She is very beautiful, much more so than I thought her, but I only saw her once, you know."

Hawkes' face was flushed. There was in his manner a hesitation altogether new to him.

"What would you advise me to do?" he asked, pulling his mustache rather nervously. "I have been so anxious to find her, that until now, when I know she is well and happy, I have not thought she may send me away again," with a forced laugh. "My inclination, of course, is to find out at once, but I have thought a great deal about her of late, and if I have to back down 'twould come a little hard. How would it do for you to see her once more and find out?"

"Why, Hawkes! I'm surprised at you! It's not like you, this hesitancy! You are very meek!"

"Don't be hard on me, Fred." He took a cigar from his case, and lighted it, an old trick of his when he wanted to gain time. The match flickered faintly and went out. Then he turned to his friend with a wistful face.

"I am a little nervous, I believe," he said. "It's queer that a girl can turn a man's head inside out so, isn't it?" *It is queer, but a fact all the same.*

"I should have my doubts removed before I slept to-night," Fred said, firmly. *Fred was not so brave.*

"Would you, though?" Hawkes was plainly surprised by his friend's energy. "I might not sleep if I did find out."

"Come, come, Hawkes! I have a plan by which you can see her, and stop with me at Joe's to-night, beside; and I'll wager you'll be the happiest man on the point."