

## The Parting of the Ways

A Story for Christmas, by E. L. Chicanot. Author of "The Wanderer Returned," "Friends of the Northern Zone," etc.

To every young man with the merest spark of ambition there comes a "parting of the ways," a time when he must decide what is to be his life's work and to divert his energies in that direction. This is a period of great mental torture to a youth when the years he has put behind him seem of little avail—but so much lost time—and the immediate future becomes all important. He is filled with a terrible energy and ambition, and yet knows not what he wants. His ambitions will no longer allow him to plod along in the old way, and Destiny obscures in shadow the path which his feet are to tread.

It was in this position that Cecil Vernon found himself. Since completing his college course he had taught in a country district and life had gone pretty smoothly as rustic life does. But he had just awakened to a realization that there was something more in life than mere material existence. Some inert conception of his capabilities told him that he was meant for greater things, that life called him to a higher plane of action. He had come to the parting of the ways, and his struggle was to discover his penchant, to what sphere of action he was called. Synchronously he had awakened to a realization of another kind—a sweet dream-like awakening, but just as serious to a young man in his position—that he was in love. For a year he had known Winnie Ellis, the teacher in the adjoining district. Their common pursuits and accomplishments had first brought them together, and the friendship increasing throughout the year had blossomed on his part, into a deep and earnest love.

It was on a bright sunny afternoon in the early spring, as they walked through the crocus-covered pasture, that Cecil told his love and then informed Winnie of his intention of attending a Medical College. With her hand in his he told her of his struggle in the choice of a career and of his subsequent resolution to qualify in the medical profession.

"It will be many years if ever, before I can provide a home for you Winnie," he said, "and I cannot expect a promise from you. But I will always love you and my heart will ever be yours, and if when I have gained a good footing on the elusive ladder of life you are still free, I'll come and claim you."

"Don't be afraid Cecil," she said tenderly, "I'll be waiting even if you never come. I have planned to go to college soon too, and I am going to do great things as well. You'll have a clever little wife to help you on," and she smiled up at him.

Dusk was coming on as they returned to the house his arm around her waist. From her eyes shone the love that gleams as a holy light from the portals

of some hallowed sanctuary. It was encouragement enough to hoist a man over unsurmountable barriers, and Cecil felt supremely happy as he planned out the future. Two foolishly happy young things as yet ignorant of the hardship and sorrow of the world. And so in the thickening twilight, as the last rays of the setting sun still tinted the grey sky, they plighted their troth, just as thousands of couples had done before, and a thousand will yet do until this beautiful world of ours be assimilated into the one omnipotent and universal Love. For them locked in each other's arms, there was nothing else animate—they might have been Adam and Eve so alone were they—just they two and the all-conquering love which made them almost alone.

Study and the various activities of college life now engrossed Cecil's attention: there was always something going on. If it was not a lecture or an examination, it was an afternoon in the field or an evening at the theatre or some "rag" with the other students. Loving letters still passed between him and Winnie, but as the term lengthened out his became shorter and fewer, as more exhaustive studies claimed his attention, or some innocent jollity filled up the evening. Thus amongst the various doings of collegiate life other



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both had to wait. Let him then live his life and she her's until he could offer her a home. In short, as can be seen he loved this girl, but it was not the deep powerful love of an older man; he could not worship from afar.

ered. This rather worried him for a while, but after all, life at college was pretty gay; there was plenty of fun after a hard day's study and he had little time for idle regrets. He felt that it was a mistake that he could



Scottish Agriculturists, including Sir John Sinclair and other celebrities who visited Canada in the summer of 1909. Group taken at the Farm Home of Donald McVicar of Portage la Prairie, who is seen immediately behind Mrs. McVicar on her right. Miss McVicar is engaging the attention of two stalwart champions.

things were forgotten. It was not that he loved Winnie any the less—he would have become wroth at any such imputation—but it just seemed too much bother to keep up the correspondence, though he often thought of her. He loved her and she loved him and they

And as time went on the letters between them became shorter and fewer, until they ceased altogether; the few binding links had snapped. Christmas came around but no word from Winnie, and later Cecil's own greetings to her were returned, not having been deliv-

soon clear up—he would attend to it in a day or two. And thus Cecil and Winnie fell apart and dropped out of each other's lives.

The medical course was ended and



Eminent Woman Surgeon, who is also an old Suffraget (to wounded guardsman): "Do you know your face seems familiar to me. I've been trying to remember where we've met before."

Guardman: "Well, Mum, Bygones be Bygones. I was a police constable."

—Punch.

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