

## "The Parting of the Ways"

By Newel K. Young

"Sh—!" whispered the boy with up-raised hand, as he turned to his companion.

"A mocking bird?" asked the girl in a low undertone.

By one glance at the lad's face, as he turned to her, she had seen that he was enraptured by the first notes of the bird's song. He, too, in that glance and in the tone of her brief question, knew that in this girl he had found a kindred spirit.

The boy climbed from his horse and stepped behind a big tree. The girl dismounted and followed him. He soon located the bird and led the way to a spot where they might both hear and see it. For a long time they watched and listened in silence, as the bird flitted from branch to branch, singing his varied and thrilling songs, or glided in swift flight to catch an insect.

"What a picture!" the girl finally said, as much to herself as to the boy, as the bird, in full view, sang his choicest songs from the limb of a pine tree near by. "I left my kodak in the saddle-bag."

Noiselessly the boy went for, and returned with the kodak, giving it to Miss Cooper without speaking. After getting several good pictures of the bird, they went on through the forests.

When the boy pointed out a big, fat buck deer, with his great horns, each with its eight or ten antlers, without making any effort to shoot it, the girl inquired, "Why don't you shoot him? Do the game laws forbid it?"

"No, there ain't no game laws that I know of; but we don't need him. I killed one and Perfessor Carelton killed two bucks this morning before we joined you fishers on North Creek. Gee! but the Perfesser's a great shot and a real sport. He ken shoot as well as you can fish. He cut a turkey-gob-

bler's head off with a rifle ball nearly a hundred yards away. Then, when that Johnson kid (he's a purty good shot, but he ain't no sport) was goin' to shoot a wild parrot the Perfessor caught him by the shoulder and said: "Why shoot it, boy? It isn't a game bird." I tell ye the Perfessor's some sport. I'd sure like to spend a month in the mountains with him and you."

"How old are you, Shock?"

"Thirteen."

"You are too far advanced, then, to be in my room this winter? I am going to teach the fourth and fifth grades."

Disappointment showed in the lad's face as he replied: "No, I am only in the third grade. I ain't goin' to school. I hate school! I'm goin' off to San Pedro to work!"

As the boy spoke he threw his foot from over the horse's neck into the stirrup and turned to go on; but Miss Cooper detained him.

"I am so sorry, Shock. I was planning for us to spend lots of time together in your wonderful canyons and mountains. I'll be so lonesome."

Shock was touched by the sincerity of her words.

"If I had a teacher like you or Perfessor Carelton, I'd go to school. And I know I could learn. But our teachers here don't have no sense. They nag and ding at me until I can't stand it any longer, then I play hookey. Pa and Ma make me go back to school; then the teacher bawls me out. If I spit out a word they send me home, and then Pa licks me and makes me go back. Ugh! I just hate school!"

"It's an outrage! They don't understand you, Shock. Learn? Why of course you can learn. You know very much more than I do about the hills and trees and birds and animals."

With flashing eyes and tight-set lips

the girl struck her horse with the quirt and led in a gallop along the mountain trail for half a mile or more. She suddenly stopped and asked, "What is the name of that high mountain peak capped with snow?"

"That's Casa Blanco. We call it Old Blanco. But that ain't snow. The top of it is a solid ledge of rock. It is the highest mountain for a hundred miles around."

"Can we climb to the top of it?"

"Yes; but we will have to leave our horses and walk the last half mile."

"Go on, Shock; I'll follow."

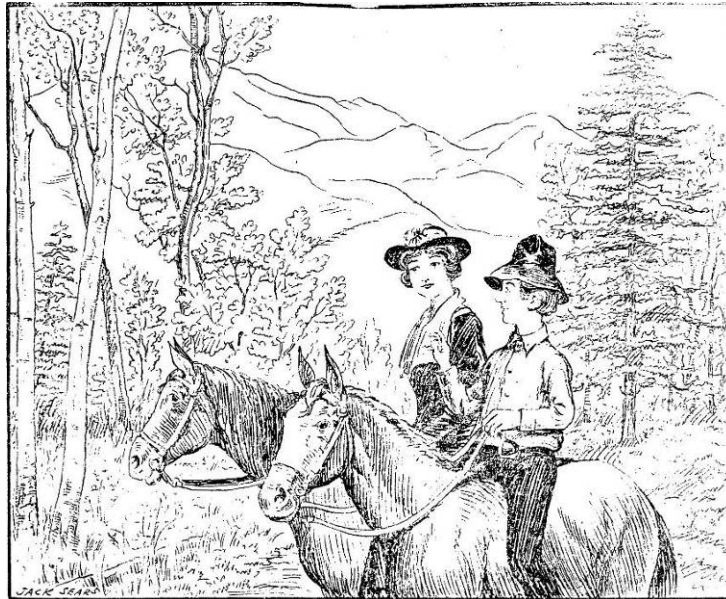
From the top of Old Blanco they looked out upon the wonderful panorama about them. There were forest-covered ridges aglow with autumn's rich colors; deep canyons darkened by the shadows of approaching evening; bejeweled vales or grassy mesas dotted here and there high among the mountains; and in the far distance a valley through which meandered a silvery

brook among the fields of golden grain.

When the canyons and valleys, and even the surrounding ridges and peaks were in the gloom of the coming night the white tip of Old Blanco blushed crimson with the last good-night kiss of Old King Sol, the lord of day.

The two were standing on the top-most stone of this mighty giant of the sierras. The teacher turned from the glories of the world about them to the lad at her side. His old, home-made straw hat was lying at his feet; the great shock of red hair that crowned his freckled face bristled in the evening breeze; his gray eyes sparkled with enthusiasm and joy as he stood, all unconscious of his rough beauty and rugged strength, pointing out to the seeing eyes of his companion objects of rare beauty and interest.

"Shock!" Miss Cooper spoke the boy's name in voice subdued and calm; yet it stirred his soul to the center. He



“SH\_\_!” WHISPERED THE BOY WITH UPRAISED HAND AS HE TURNED TO HIS COMPANION

turned, squarely facing the teacher, and looked intently into her face and eyes. She stepped up to him, laying a hand on each of his shoulders with a firm grip.

"Shock, you are not going off to work. You are going to school. You shall be in my room. You are the equal of any boy in this town; and you will take your place among the best of them in school. I will help you. We are to form a partnership, spending our spare hours and Saturdays exploring these woods to get pictures of the wild scenes and creatures with which they abound. We can make considerable money from the photographs. Will you do it, boy?" challenged the girl.

"I'll stay home and be pards with you; but I won't go to school, for I know they won't let me be in your grade."

"They shall! Professor Carelton will understand, and he is superintendent of your schools as well as principal of the Academy at Juarez. He will do it. I will fight that battle for you. Here, Shock, let us strike hands as a pledge that we are friends and partners."

Grasping her hand the boy spoke in a broken voice, "Pardners for the year, and friends for life."

From first to last Shock's interest in school was unbounded under Miss Cooper's tuition. He soon led and then left far behind all the pupils in the fourth grade. And before the Christmas vacation he was promoted to the fifth, soon taking a place in the forefront of the classes in that grade.

One evening during the last week of the sixth month of school, Miss Cooper sent for Shock to come to the home where she was boarding. When he arrived she took him immediately to her room and said, "Shock, I have just received a telegram calling me home. My mother is very sick. I must go tonight."

The boy turned pale, and in spite of himself his eyes filled with tears. He

simply asked, "When are you coming back?"

"I cannot come back, Shock. I want you to have the books I have here that are of interest to you. Now that you have learned to read and love good books you have the key to learning. I will send you more books. You can finish the eighth grade in two years."

"I can't go to school after you're gone. I just know I can't."

"Of course you can, boy. I trust you to do it. It will all be different now that you have a start; but you must not be offended nor discouraged. Look ahead, bear and work for the future. Whenever you are tried or tempted too hard write me just as you would talk if I were with you, and I will help you.

"Shock, I have never loved another boy as I love you. Our only brother died when he was a baby. I am going to tell you a secret. The missionary, Horace Linemore, that I have talked with you about is more than a friend to me. After he returns from his mission we are to be married. I want you to come and live with us then and attend the Latter-day Saints High School. I expect great things of you, Shock. Now, I must say good-bye."

"Who's goin' to take you to the railroad, Miss Cooper?"

"Brother Brown will send his bay team if he can get a trusty driver. He is very choice of them, for he says they are the best team in the country."

"May I drive you down, Miss Cooper?"

"I should be so glad. I'll ask Brother Brown now."

After returning from seeing him, the girl said, "Brother Brown says, 'I'd trust that boy with a horse anywhere.'"

It took them all night and most of the day to make the hundred miles of rough mountain road. They didn't talk much, because of the girl's sorrow; still they enjoyed many of the beauties

on the way. It was a wonderful privilege to the boy to be with this friend in her trouble.

Miss Cooper arrived home only a few hours before her mother's death. She assumed the burdens of caring for her father's home and family. Still in her sorrow and loneliness with the cares of a home in her hands she kept in close touch with Shock. And after her marriage more than two years later her interest in the boy grew even more anxious and tender.

Just after the close of school the year she went home he wrote Miss Cooper:

"DEAR MISS COOPER: I hope you won't blame me too much and think I didn't try. I did my best, but the lessons Miss Burrow gives ain't (this is a slip) have not got any sense especially the compusishions. I just couldn't stand it and I played hooky and went ahunting and killed a deer and two foxes. Then I felt awful bad cause I run away and went to the top of Old Blanco.

"The next day I give the teacher a note telling her how sorry I felt, and then she balled me out and I just bit my lips to keep still and didn't spit out a single word. But ever since that she's had it in for me. And some times I got hot and talked back and she wouldn't pass me."

What comes below is an exact quotation from a letter written to his friend three years later: "It's three years since you went home and I ain't thru the 6th grade yet. I've learned ten times more from your letters and books and writing my letters to you than I have from school. Honest, I've tried to keep at it so I could get thru and go back to Salt Lake to high school and see you. But we've had an awful row.

"Yesterday Mr. Cox wouldn't accept my composition on honesty and said I had to stay in to write it over again. I told him I had promised to go up Larago and get a horse for Jim

Brown. He said it was nuthing to him what I had promised. I said I would write the composition the next morning, and he said I had to write it before I could leave the room. I asked him if he thought it was a good way to teach honesty to make me lie to Jim. He got hot as blazes, and when I went to go he tried to lick me, but I got away and went for the horse.

"Pa's to Colony Dublan, but Ma tried to make me go back, but I won't go. I'm going on the round-up with Jim Brown. When I get back school will be out. They won't pass me, but I don't care. I won't never go to school again.

"It seems funny to call you Mrs. Linemore. I am glad you're in your new home. I am going to earn money and go up there. You are the only one who understands me except the fellers."

The boy was six feet tall now, and his legs and arms and neck seemed longer than ever, and his hair was even redder than formerly. And to plague him more and add to his sufferings and the troubles of his grown-up associates he had suddenly become very bashful.

"Andrew Jackson Bean," (Mr. Bean always called Shock by his full name when he was delivering an ultimatum to the boy) "you have been unmindful of your mother's pleadings, deaf to the reasoning of the school principal, and heedless to the advice of our ward teachers, and you even rebel against the admonition of your father and the bishopric. Patience is no longer a virtue. Listen now to my words."

It was early in the morning, the day school was opening the fall after Shock's trouble with Mr. Cox that this occurred.

The boy's father continued: "You shall go to school. I'll not allow you to grow up in ignorance to our shame. Pick up your books and go to school

without another word, or I will punish you, as large as you are."

"Father, I will not go to school among the kids another—"

"You defy me!" shouted the father, as he caught the boy by the collar and struck him with a heavy strap.

The boy, who was several inches taller than his father, caught Brother Bean in his arms from behind and pinning his arms to his side held the man so while he raged and struggled until he was entirely exhausted.

"Father," said Shock, after he had released him, "I will come by this afternoon to get my clothes and say good-bye to mother. I am going to San Pedro to work."

"Don't you ever darken my door again, nor set your foot on my lot, you unnatural reprobate," the father shouted as the son walked away.

For a year and a half the boy worked about the timber and mining camps of northern Mexico and southern Arizona. He did not write home once, and much of the time his parents knew nothing of him. His mother was well nigh broken-hearted.

Frequently during this time Mrs. Linemore received some quaint picture or souvenir of Mexican life, addressed in Shock's hand-writing, and now and then he wrote her a letter. Whenever this woman could locate the boy she sent him a long, newsy, stirring letter, and a package of choice books.

With a pure woman's true instincts, Mrs. Linemore felt that the boy was growing careless regarding the faith of his people. And well she knew that her hold upon him was the only tie during these days that kept him in touch with the better life.

After long weeks during which Shock had not heard from his one steadfast friend, he received a tear-stained letter from her written by a weak, trembling hand. The woman had been sick for many weeks. During

her illness she had buried her first-born child, a baby boy.

Near the close of the letter the woman made this appeal to the boy: "No man can be happy nor continue strong who is not clean and true. Shock, one of these days you will stand at *the parting of the ways*, when all your life, your past and your future, is at stake. Then the decision of an hour, or even of a minute, may be of more importance than years of common living. It may be at a time when gold or love allures you from the path of duty or honor. Or, it may be some moment of terrible temptation of sin. But when it comes, remember that you are at the parting of the ways; be a man then and at whatever cost choose the right.

A few days later Mr. Linemore wrote Shock that his wife was dead. In her last hour she requested that Shock be told of her death, and that certain of her books be sent to him.

How much alone the boy felt during the next few months no one can ever know. Oh, the struggle of those months when the boy felt that he had no friend on earth! There was no hand to lead him in the upward way, no voice in friendly tone that invited to the good or counseled righteousness. The only kindness shown him, the only comradeship offered him, the only places of amusement open to him enticed and allured to evil.

The spring after Mrs. Linemore died, Shock was wounded by a pretending friend who robbed him of all his savings. During the long illness and suffering that followed the boy's heart sickened for his mother; then he knew that his parents were his friends. He wrote home for forgiveness and his father and mother came for him.

The next fall he was numbered among the students of the Jaurez Stake Academy in answer to a call to take the missionary course.

The lessons seemed senseless and

impossible, and he chafed under the restrictions of the school. Many times his heart and will all but failed him, and he threatened to quit school and go off to work. His love of basketball and his mother's letters were all that kept him at school the first few weeks.

A railroad was building through the country nearby and the call for our "Mormon" boys to work, with the tempting offer of big pay, was urgent and constant.

Many of his chums who were at work met Shock occasionally, showing off their full purses and fine clothes. Nor did they ever forget to taunt him with their freedom and his bondage.

One day, after Shock had spent two or three nights in idle dissipation with some of his chums from the railroad camps, and for this cause was heedless in his class, his teacher said, "Young man, you had better turn over a new leaf and spend your nights at your lessons."

"Who should worry?" retorted the boy.

"I won't take any of your sass, young fellow," snapped the teacher.

"Bah! Get off your perch! I'm no kindergarten kid," snapped the boy.

In anger the man ordered, "You may leave the room, Bean!"

Shock whispered to a class-fellow sitting next to him, and they both laughed.

"Do you hear, Bean? I have told you to leave the room!" This was spoken in a threatening manner.

The boy, in a quiet voice replied, "Yes, I hear you, and I will leave the room. But if there were no ladies here I would chuck you out of the window before leaving."

Then, in good humor, Shock bowed himself out of the room.

Then, to add fuel to the flames, the coach "ribbed him up for not playing the game" in a local basket-ball contest that afternoon.

Shock went to school the next morning with his mind about made up to quit, but Principal Carelton gave him such a square deal in adjusting the trouble between him and his teacher that it put the boy in a responsive mood. Seeing this, the professor took the opportunity to have a long, heart-to-heart talk with Shock. Never before had anyone talked so to this boy; and to no one had the boy so fully opened his heart to another.

From the principal's office he went to their semi-monthly testimony meeting. For the first time in his life he bore his testimony. He spoke of Miss Cooper's saving influence over him while in the mining camps. He spoke with a spirit that thrilled those who heard him.

At the close of a practice game of ball the coach said, "Bean, you have never played so before. Keep up this gait and you will not only win the center, but will be one of our star players. Keep up your nip and keep fit."

From here he went to the weekly meeting of his missionary class in which students spoke on prepared Gospel themes. As he entered, the instructor asked him if he would open the meeting by prayer. He consented.

During the singing he grew more and more afraid of the task before him. Then in the weakness of his fear he began his prayer. Becoming confused he mixed his words up somewhat, and stopped as though to get hold of himself. But upon hearing a faint, though unmistakable, titter from some of the girls in the class, he broke down and rushed from the class room without finishing his prayer.

Avoiding every one on the way he hurried to his room. An hour later as he was standing outside his room, looking at the mountains in their autumn attire, with an awful hunger in his soul, Joe Peters, one of his intimate chums, rode up.

"Hello, Shock," called Joe, as he came up. "Somebody dead? Or has

your Academy girl given you the g. b.?"

Quick as a flash Shock flung back, "My millionaire uncle in Chicago just died and left me all his junk. I feel the burden of it pretty bad."

"Yes, I just heard about it. Congratulations, Shock, on turning chaplin to your missionary class," jeered Joe.

"Well, if I did make a fool of my-

phone to Mr. Woodbye, Joe. He says he'll send a buckboard down for me tomorrow."

This was Wednesday night. The next day Shock went to Nueva Cacas Grandes with Joe instead of going to school.

Early Friday morning Shock started off for the camp in the buckboard sent for him. As they drove past Principal Carelton's home, the professor



"MY BOY, YOU STAND AT THE PARTING OF THE WAYS"

self you needn't shoot off your head about it."

Joe knew enough had been said.

"Here's a letter from Mr. Woodbye. He'll give ye five dollars gold a day to work with the surveyors," said Joe, as he handed Shock a letter. Mr. Woodbye was the chief civil engineer of the Northwestern & Mexican Railroad.

When Shock finished reading the letter, he looked longingly at the distant mountains for some minutes.

Then he spoke: "I'll do it! Let's

stepped to the gate and called, "Oh, Shock; come here."

The boy walked to the gate troubled in spirit, but determined not to be turned from his purpose. He urged his lack of money and his parents' poverty, and promised to be back at the beginning of the next school year.

In a few kind, plain words the professor hit straight to the core of the matter, brushing aside the boy's excuses and arguments. Shock stood amazed as the man lay bare his past errors and his present weaknesses, re-

vealing his secret thoughts and uncovering his inner heart. This teacher knew the boy better than the boy knew himself.

In a few words the man gave a vivid picture of the boy's glorious possibilities. Then he added: "Shock, this is an awful moment, a human soul is at stake. The path of honor for you and of joy for your parents is for you to be true to your call here. When the President of the Church calls me to do any work, I'll do it or die trying."

Then, laying a hand on the boy's shoulder, with his eyes swimming in tears, the man plead: "My boy, you stand at the *parting of the ways*. The road you now choose will determine your future life. This hour of choice is more vital to you than years of common living. Remember you are at the *parting of the ways*."

Blinded by tears, but without answering a word, Shock walked to the buckboard and was gone. The man's parting words rang in the boy's ears with a double voice—the voice of the prophet-teacher by his side, and a voice from the grave—the voice of his friend who was dead.

After traveling all day through the forest-covered mountains and canyons Shock and his companion reached the surveyor's camp, in Hop Valley. When the boys came in from work, Shock joked and swore and smoked with them as one of the crowd. But he could not free himself from Prof. Carelton's parting words.

Every puff of smoke, as it floated off in the air, framed itself into the words, "*The parting of the ways!*" Every joke and oath that he heard or uttered cried out, "You are at the parting of the ways."

The boy ate but little supper, and slipped into an out-of-the-way corner as the men and boys gathered about the tables to play cards. It was pay day and the wine and whisky flowed freely. The men drank and gambled

and quarreled and fought until Shock was sick at heart.

After several hours he went outside and walked about the camp. All the time those fateful words were ringing in his ears, "*You are at the parting of the ways*."

Wherever he turned or went he half fancied that he would look into Prof. Carelton's anxious face, or see Miss Cooper at his side.

He went to bed heartless and wretched, but not to sleep. He turned and tossed in his bed all night. "You are at the parting of the ways," rang in his ears, and burned in his soul, until it seemed his head and heart would break.

Unable to bear it longer, he arose, and in desperation rushed from the camp. In his anguish of soul he cried out, "Yes, I was at the parting of the ways; and I have chosen the road to ruin—to hell—and they know and care. Prof. Carelton cares, he loves me. And she loves me; she remembered me even in her hour of sorrow and death."

The boy hurried on, but the burning words kept pace with him, and his absent friends haunted him at every step. Daylight found him sitting on a rock against a giant pine at the top of a high hill near camp.

He took from his pocket a small volume of Tennyson's "*Idylls of the King*," the last book sent him by his friend before her death. Written on a flyleaf were these words, "You may be all you might have been;" and over the leaf these, "In the fight for right a boy and the Lord are more than a match for the world."

These gave him assurance and peace. As the sun rose over a distant peak, he was kneeling in prayer. Ever after he loved these lines, "And it seemed to me then—and it seems so still—

We are nearer to God on the top of a hill."

Thus girded and armed for the fight



he hurried to the camp. With head erect and face and eyes shining with a new light, the boy went directly to Mr. Woodbye's office, informing the chief that he would not go to work.

The chief questioned the boy, reasoned with him, threatened him, and then cursed him in profane blasphemy; but the boy could not be frightened nor angered, nor moved from his purpose. He was surprised at his own peace of mind, and strength of will. The jeers and mockery of his chums had no more effect on him than Mr. Woodbye's anger.

The chief refused to give the boy any breakfast even for money. So, with suitcase in hand, Shock walked up to the enraged engineer and said, "Mr. Woodbye, I am really sorry that I have put you out. I apologize and offer to pay for the man and team going to Juarez after me."

In angry oaths the chief cursed him and ordered him out of the camp. "If you should come to me starving to

death and beg for food and work, I'd see you die like a dog at my door before I'd give you either."

With perfect self-control, Shock bade the man good-bye and walked away.

Without food the boy walked the thirty-five miles to Colonia Juarez, carrying his heavy suit-case.

The next morning when Professor Carelton went to Sunday School, he saw Shock in the theological class. As he looked into the boy's face and met a cheerful smile of greeting he saw that the battle was won. He knew then that the boy had been born again.

Brother Carelton visited Shock's class and bore his testimony. The Spirit of the Lord was with him, and as he spoke every heart was quickened and every eye was wet.

But Shock—well, he felt more than any other Prof. Carelton's words of life. Now he knew that this good man had lain awake to help him fight his way back to the path of life.

