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CRISES IN LIFE,

ADDRESSES DELIVERED BY REV. WILLIAM LLOYD,
BEFORE THE STUDENTS OF EASTMAN COLLEGE.

THERE is an old Greek story of a certain prince named Telamachus, whose education was early confined to Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, who, under the guise of an old man, guided the steps of the prince from land to land in search of his father, enrichting his mind meanwhile with divinest precepts. At length they reached a place where two roads met; then telling Telamachus that now he must choose which path he would follow, suddenly the garb of the old man dropped, and Minerva, the goddess, appeared in perfect beauty, with which she sprang forth from the brow of Jove, stood for a moment before the entranced gaze of the youth and then vanished away. But the lessons of youth remained to bring forth fruit in ripper years. This beautiful myth, which has been immortalized and made familiar to us all by the satirist F. Tenison, very fitly illustrates our present theme. Let that junction of the roads stand as the symbol of a crisis in life; for two paths will once and for all open before you, and your life afterward will be largely influenced if not decided by the choice you make. In every human life critical periods occur, and it is an exceedingly easy thing to mistake or even miss them when they come. According as the choice is made at such times, life becomes invested with happiness or mantled in misery. Much of future character and destiny is wrapped in decisions then made. The immortal Shakespeare says:

"There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries."

And again,

"I had my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious star, whose influence
If now I court not but omit, my fortunes
Will ever after drop."

It is said of Napoleon that when a great battle was raging he would watch the conflict with moody brow and anxious glance until some one movement was made, when his brow would clear and he was at ease. The crisis was passed, and victory sure. Critical periods have marked the history of humanity, ever since; in the persons of its first parents, it stood in Eden, and future destiny hangs upon the choice of their first-born. It was a choice of life or death. For that old garden scene is of far more consequence to us as a symbol than it is as actual history, because that old story is lived over again in our history by every man. Every man is an Adam, and Eves are just as plentiful as apples, and sometimes quite as tempting. Just as we choose when the choice is put to us, and live lives of obedience to law or disobedience, we can make our life pathway bloom with flowers or bristle with thorns. We may walk on through the years of our earthly life beneath a sky of cloudless blue most of the time, or we can fill our lives with clouds and convulse them with tempests. The difference will be determined by the choice made at a crisis. I do not hold that any human life can be free from annoyances, errors and sorrows; disappointment and adversity will be the lot of even the truest soul, but if the choice made in early life be a wise choice, then these things will be simply a few clouds floating across the disk of the sky,

obscurer for a time the brightness of its sunlight, but never mantling it in impetuous darkness. They will be but as the rain storm that washes away the dust from the petals of the flowers and causes the blossoms to grow from obedient love to bloom with greater beauty and fling forth fresher fragrance, not like the tempest that uproots trees in its march.

Life's character, then, must be determined by the passage of critical periods. Life has been classified under three sections,—the secular, the social and the spiritual. That is, that phase which belongs to our ordinary pursuits, that which brings us into contact with the outer world entirely, which includes our choice of a business or of a profession, and the relations and inter-relations that are included therein,—that is our secular life. Our social life includes the choice of a wife and all the associations, the felicities and infelicities which flow out from the formation of a home. And the third is that part of our existence which refers to our moral responsibilities and relates us to God and to eternity. Now, in each of these departments of life critical periods will come: the choice will present itself and you will have to determine what shall be your secular path, what the character of your home and what the nature of your eternal and moral destiny.

But I am not here to-night to preach a sermon. That would be altogether too professional, both for you and for myself. I want here to put in a plea for ministers. It seems to me that ministers labor under a great disadvantage when they speak away from the pulpit. I know it has been the custom to look upon the minister as a sort of paid moralist, so that when he stands before an audience and endeavors to deliver an earnest, soulful appeal to their moral qualities and nobler impulses, they listen with a shrug and say, "That is his business." I remember once a friend of mine who is a very eminent minister taking his little child on his knee in order to tell her a story illustrative of that impalpable doctrine, special providence. He had told her the story—it was a very pathetic story—he expected to see the child very much moved. She looked up into his face and said, "Papa, is that a real true story, or are you only preaching?" [Laughter.] There is the difficulty when we are to stand and talk with you outside of our ministerial barriers. The question arises, "Is it a real true story, or are you only preaching?" I put in this plea for ministers because I stand before you not in an official relation. I was a man before I became a minister, and I hold my manhood a thousand fold dearer than I hold any official honors of a Church. I would sacrifice my ministry before I would sacrifice an iota of my manhood. I want you to take my words as the utterances of a brother man to you and not as those of a minister.

The first crisis, then, is the choice of a business or a profession. Sometimes it seems to be perfectly easy to decide the question, whereas shall be the business or the profession in which a man shall engage.

Especially this is the case where a young man's father and perhaps his grandfather have been engaged in a given line of business or in a certain profession. It is very natural indeed if a father is a dry goods merchant that he should wish his son to follow the same business, and that it should be "Caldie & Son" for the rest of his days. It is very natural indeed if a man has been an usurer or money lender that he should desire his

son to be a money lender also; and "Grading & Company" may go on interminably. And so in relation to the professions; if a man is a physician and has acquired any eminence at all in his profession, he desires to have that eminence transmitted to his son, and to have his son in the same line of activities. An old bachelor being asked why he was a bachelor, answered that he did not know unless it was because his father was a bachelor. [Laughter.] And so there are men to-day in certain businesses or professions who can give no other reason except that their fathers were in the same. And yet, it is not always wise for a parent to predetermine the future of his son, because if the son's tastes run in an altogether different direction to the father's, then it will demand on the part of the father an amount of forcing and distortion that will be injurious to him for the rest of his life. Most men must decide for themselves, and if a parent assumes to decide, I would have him study very carefully the inclinations, tastes and capabilities of his son before a profession is chosen for him. Many have no choice made for them, but must choose for themselves. You pass through your education, and then the question comes to you, "Now my school days are over, and I have behind me the holiday of boyhood and before me stands life with its stern battle for existence; in a little while I shall be flung out into the field to fight my way through with other men. Into what field shall I enter? What department of life's activities shall I choose?" It is to help you in this that I would venture to throw out a few suggestions. The first is, gentlemen, study your own mental tendencies and characteristics. It is said among the English aristocracy when a Lord is burdened with more sons than he knows very well what to do with, if, for instance, there should be three younger sons, the eldest son takes the estate, and there is very little money for the others, the question comes up—"What shall be done with them?" If one seems to have a little more physical courage than the rest, put him into the army. Make a soldier of him. If there is one who seems to possess craftiness of nature, shrewdness in dealing with other men and aptness in extracting the secrets of his companions, make a lawyer of him. Possibly he may become a judge or Queen's counsel. But there is one who seems to have no qualities at all, no mental tendencies or marked abilities, there is nothing left to do with him but make a miscreant in the direction of his life. I would have decided for you in this way, although sometimes there is a predetermining of career on the part of the parent, which is unwise. A boy who is a painter, and whose father never make a dry goods clerk of him. If his taste run in the direction of the counting house, you never can make anything of him except in the line of direction. I would have parents watch their children in their unobserved occupations. By these the natural tendencies are disclosed, and by careful training, by praise or blame judiciously administered, that particular phase of the nature may be developed, and greatness may be reached which otherwise might be missed in the business. It is said that West, the great painter, was seen one day by his mother sitting by the side of the cradle where the baby lay asleep, and the mother leaned over and found that he had drawn a rude picture of the cradle and the baby. It did not need much art to draw the baby's face, for babies all look alike up to a certain age;