

## Lives that Lift

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### A Turning Point in every Life

When traveling across the Canadian Rockies on the Canadian Pacific Railway, there is one place at the summit of the Kicking Horse Pass, where the traveler passes from the Province of Alberta, over the Great Divide, into the Province of British Columbia. This particular point in the journey has always been of unusual interest to me, and each time I have passed it, has taught me some new lesson.

A rustic sign has been erected here, marked "The Great Divide." From the towering peaks in the distance there comes rollicking a restless little stream, pure and cold and clear, fed by the melting snows of the lofty mountains. As this turbulent little stream, as clear as the blue sky above, comes bounding onto the right of way in plain sight of the train, it reaches the Great Divide, and its waters separate, making two streams, one flowing west through British Columbia, into the great Pacific, and the other flowing down the eastern slopes of the Rockies into Hudson's Bay and the Atlantic.

How often I have wished that this little stream might have taught me its lessons in boyhood. What a picture it gives of life's journey! We start on life's way with the innocence, purity and hopefulness of childhood, romping, prattling along, when suddenly we come to the Great Divide and must choose which way we shall take.

Our decision at this unexpected moment determines whether our lives shall flow westward into the peaceful, sun-kissed waters of usefulness and blessing, or east and north into the frozen solitudes of idleness and selfishness. It is at this fork in the road when destinies are decided, and it is surprising what mere trifles may influence our choice.

Sir Isaac Newton, as a boy at school, was not noted for his brilliance or application to his studies. He would rather make something with tools, and so his books were sometimes neglected. In his class was a bright boy who usually excelled Isaac in his studies. One day this classmate became angry and kicked Isaac violently in the stomach. Isaac's decision just here had much to do with his later life. He determined to have revenge, by getting above the boy in class and excelling him in his studies. From that time on Isaac changed his methods of study and his advancement was phenomenal. This was the place where he took another road, and he traveled on, filling his busy, eventful life with discoveries. Had the schoolmate not kicked him, we might never have heard of Sir Isaac Newton. How will we face trials, punishment, and hardship?

Abraham Lincoln reached the turning point in his life when there fell into his hands a "Life of Henry Clay," then known as the "mill boy of the slashes." If such a poor boy could struggle with poverty, privation, and hardship, and become one of the leading men of his nation, Lincoln felt there was a chance for him to achieve. That biography of Clay inspired Lincoln, and started him on the road to usefulness and the highest office his nation could offer him.

John Davey, an unlettered, underprivileged boy spent fourteen to sixteen hours a day in exhausting labor on the farm. One day, he and another young man were putting slates on a roof, when his companion took a small chip of slate off one of the shingles, and with it wrote his name on another piece of slate. John Davey marveled at such ability, and a longing seized him, a longing that he too might learn to read and write. This incident was the turning point in his life. He studied and worked and persevered. Although at twenty years of age he could not write his own name, he is now known around the world as a famous tree surgeon. And it is acknowledged that John Davey knew more about trees than any other man in all the world.

Florence Nightingale as a little girl was one day playing with her doll, when her dog "Shep" romped away with the make-believe baby in his mouth. When Florence finally rescued the precious child, there was a gaping hole in its side, and the sawdust was pouring from the wound. She gently rendered first aid, binding up the ugly wound with her handkerchief. The dolly had a wonderful recovery, and soon other members of the doll family needed her attention. She had found her calling as a nurse.

Our destiny is not a matter of chance, but of choice, and the choice lies with us. Which way shall we take?

"There are two roads to travel, my brother,  
Just two roads to travel today;  
But travel you must, my brother,  
As you journey along life's way.

There are just two masters, my brother,  
Two masters to serve today;  
'Tis one or the other, my brother.  
Oh, which will you choose, I pray?

Yes, two roads to travel, my brother,  
Just two roads to travel today;  
Oh, shun the broad road, my brother,  
Find, enter the narrow way."

Many a person has wished that he might travel life's road again, that he might be placed once more at the fork in the road. One writer has pictured an old man looking back over a wasted life.

"It was New Year's night. An aged man was standing at the window. He mournfully raised his eyes toward the deep blue sky, where the stars were floating like white lilies on the surface of a clear, calm lake. Then he cast them on the earth, where a few more helpless beings than himself were moving toward their inevitable goal—the tomb. Already he had passed sixty of the stages which lead to it, and he had brought from his journey nothing but errors and remorse. His health was destroyed, his mind unfurnished, his heart sorrowful, and his old age devoid of comfort.

"The days of his youth rose up in a vision before him, and he recalled the solemn moment when his father had placed him at the entrance of two roads, one leading into a peaceful, sunny land, covered with songs; while the other conducted the wanderer into a deep dark cave, whence there was no issue, where hissed and crawled serpents.

"He looked toward the sky and cried in his anguish, 'Oh youth, return! Oh, my father, place me once more at the crossway of life, that I may choose the better road. But the days of his youth had passed away, and his parents were with the departed. He saw wandering lights float over the dark marshes, and then disappear. 'Such,' he said, 'were the days of my wasted life!' He saw a star shoot from heaven, and vanish in the distance athwart the churchyard. 'Behold an emblem of myself!' he exclaimed; and the sharp arrows of unavailing remorse struck him to the heart.

"Then he remembered his early companions, who had entered life with him, but who having trod the paths of virtue and industry, were now happy and honored on this New Year's night.

The clock in the high church tower struck, and the sound falling on his ear, recalled the many tokens of the love of his parents for him, their erring son: the lessons they had taught him; the prayers they had offered in his behalf. Overwhelmed with the shame and grief, his darkened eyes cried aloud, 'Come back, my early days! Come back!'

"And his youth did return; for all this had been but a dream visiting his slumbers on New Year's night. He was still young; his errors were no dreams, however. He thanked God fervently that time was still his own, and that he was free to tread the road leading to the peaceful land where sunny harvests wave.

"Ye who still linger on the threshold of life, doubting which path to choose, remember that when the years shall have passed and your feet shall stumble on the dark mountain, you will cry bitterly, but cry in vain, 'O youth, return! O give me back my early days!'"

Youth is a time of decisions. We choose our playmates, our friends, a companion in life, and these associates influence our lives. What shall I read? is a question you must decide. As you pick your reading think of this thought, "The trend of many a life, for good or ill, for success or failure, has been determined by the reading of a single book." It is said that the infidel Voltaire read a single poem in his boyhood, which made him the arch scoffer of his century.

How shall I spend my spare time? What shall my recreations be? What shall be my life work? There will be decisions to make every day as long as life shall last.

There may be discouragements, hardships, and trials. Sometimes you may have to choose between being wrong and going with the crowd, or doing right and standing alone. Daniel went into the lions' den, the three Hebrews into the fiery furnace, and Joseph to jail, rather than take the first step on the wrong road.

May the Lord be your guide to direct you at the fork of the road. May the Bible be your road map, and may you have courage, backbone, and determination to push on even though the road be rough and uphill. At the journey's end, may you hear the words, "Well done."