

positions or to sway a wide commanding influence over multitudes of their fellows, but that too many are content to be "midding," at best, is very evident. Middling saints, not very good; middling sinners, not grossly bad; middling men, not exceptionally expert; middling preachers, not especially eloquent; middling pottfoggers, not strikingly wise; middling men and women abundant on every hand and in every walk of life. Mediocrity is common to nearly all in some cases; unnecessarily so in many more; unpardonably so in the most of all.

"Why?" For many reasons, but chiefly because our young people are not living up to, nor striving to rise up to, the full capacity of either character or usefulness. Low ideals, selfish aims, narrow vision, short-sighted purposes, hurried processes—all combine to dwarf powers that would otherwise grow and expand into a degree of super-excellence, and limit the whole being to a narrow and circumscribed boundary. "Be first-class in something," was the advice one father gave his boy. "Make yourselves as big as you can—on the inside," was the counsel of a wise teacher to his class.

Lacking this controlling purpose in all study, prayer, and effort, mediocrity is sure to be the lot of the self-indulgent or indolent. To rise above such low quality and estate should be the constant aim of every one. Poverty of temporal circumstance is the condition of many because of lack of thrift and wise economy, and poverty of soul is none the less traceable to similar shiftless habits in the realm of character. It is there that mediocrity is all too common, and there above all else is where we should seek to excel. As Owen Wister causes the Virginian to say, "A middlin' doctor is a pore thing, and a middlin' lawyer is a pore thing; but keep me from a middlin' man of God." The greatest need of the age is superior men of God, not only in the ranks of the professional clergy, but everywhere and in all callings. Whatever else you may be, remember you need not be a middlin' Christian. The higher character will be yours if you so will.

A STRIKING sentence caught my eye the other day: "*Don't carry your wishbone where your backbone ought to be.*" It provoked first, a smile, for who can decide where his bones of any kind shall be? But it suggested, next, a reflection, that after all there is a lot of fruitless wishing where there might rather be a lot of fruitful willing. The message of the pretty card is a good one; do not think that to wish and to will are in any sense the same. Is there something you need and really want to possess? Then all the wishing in the world will not bring it to you. Willing may make it yours if you seek its possession with firm resolve and steady purpose. This is true of us all and in every sphere of study or toil.

Is it intellectual culture you desire? Merely to wish for it can never give it you, but a determined will and constant application to work bring the coveted accomplishment. Every phase and nature of education call for the same resolve and to greater or less degree demand the payment of a similar price. Is it high moral attainment you would realize? To sit down and simply wish you were good will not make you so. Nobility of character is possessed by none who perform no noble deeds. We have only by doing, and failing to do we soon lose what we seemed to have. No mere longing for goodness will make it ours.

We must will to be good, to be noble, to be true, and when the willing is strong enough and prompts to well-directed activity, the results are sure.

The same is true in the realm of Christian activity. Plenty of people wish the world were better who are doing little if anything to make it so. The world is not to be transformed into a moral Eden by anybody's wish, nor by the accumulated wishing of everybody. The saving of humanity is the most stupendous enterprise ever undertaken, and if we are to be participants in the blessings of the ultimate salvation wrought, we must be snarers in the toil involved. You may say to your pastor, "I wish you well in your work," and fall utterly to help him accomplish it. You may wish success to your Sunday School and League, to all your friends and acquaintances, but your wish amounts to nothing unless it is followed by your assistance. Whether for yourself or others, in personal achievement, or concerted organized enterprise, stop saying "I wish," and say "I will," and prove for yourself and them the power of applied purpose.

THE voice spoke, not in audible tones, but none the less clearly and with deep impression, "My child, act as if I were with you, and thou shalt know that I am." The hearer was Lady Somers, now so renowned because of her Temperance work. The voice was as the voice of God and it reached and roused her one June day in 1885, as she sat under a great elm at Kelgate. Up to that time she had been living as a fashionable society woman in her outer life, but inwardly she was conscious of something lacking that left her unsatisfied. She says, "Though I was living in society, and had enough to keep my head above water, and though I was a woman of the world, I never saw the day that I would not gladly have left parks and palaces for fields and woods." Her strong keen intellect, her deep vigorous nature, were unsatisfied until the voice reached the depths of her soul and brought her the conscious presence of God. From that time her record of influence and power in work for God and humanity began, for that day she was led to devote thought and time, labor and wealth to that work.

The voice still speaks. It is silent only to those whose ears are dulled by ease or pleasure, by selfish preoccupation or love of the world. To the enquiring heart anxious for light and guidance, direction and help, it says, "My child, act as if I were with you and thou shalt know that I am." Only so can we learn to practice the presence of God.

AS Methodists, we cannot afford to lose our sense of fellowship, binding us together from ocean to ocean in one family communion, where the members love one another and incite each other by both example and precept to good works. Yet I wonder if this sense of "family communion" is as strong as it should be. We must avoid denominational bigotry, and not narrowly act as if we had a monopoly of all good things, but we cannot afford to allow our children and youth to grow up with the thought that all Churches are of equal worth and importance to them. No patriot thinks less of any other country because his heart most warms towards his own. No father believes his neighbor's children because he pays particular attention to those of his own hearth and home. Our Young People's Societies must inculcate a surpassing love for our own Church if we

would grow Methodists who shall honor the name and uphold the principles for which our fathers lived and toiled. We cannot sacrifice our Church loyalty and be true.

Why do I write this way? Simply because I have noticed a tendency in more places than one to be only locally loyal. In a Sunday School, class loyalty is good, but school loyalty is better; and Young People's Society it is commendable to be consistently true to the requirements of the individual organization, but there is something more than this desired. Connexional loyalty is essential to the success of all our work, and a spirit of loyalty that shows itself not merely by local activity, but by prayer, effort, and gift, that all reach out beyond one's own little locality to the wider sphere of the great family's need, is best of all. You cannot afford, therefore, to ignore the claims of the greater connection, where we are to serve. Methodism is bigger than the little circle of your own personal acquaintance, and you err if you measure it by the narrow horizon of your limited vision. From sunny Bermuda to the frozen wilds of Labrador, from the rugged, rock-bound shores of Newfoundland to the far-distant inland cities and villages of our West China Mission, our family is one, and its vital concerns must engage the thought and affectionate sympathy of all its members. We stand or fall together. We compel success or invite failure by our united efforts or our disunion. The large General Boards, to whom have been committed the direction and oversight of the great enterprises of every loyal Methodist, can accomplish their work only as they are thus generously supported. With them all every member of the family should be familiar, and the work of each department should be intelligently studied until its purposes are well understood. To this I invite all my younger readers, and to any of you I shall be pleased to send what has already been sent to every Pastor, Sunday School Superintendent, and President of Young People's Societies, and President of the Purposes and Powers of the General Board of Sunday Schools and Young People's Societies, as prescribed by the General Conference of 1910. It will increase knowledge, and without this there can be no real or long-sustained loyalty in anyone.

DOUBTLESS we all rejoice because of the increased attention and study being given to the all-important subject of Evangelism. But I would like to remind all young Christians that the best sphere of their real evangelistic effort is not within the walls of the church, whether in Sunday School or League, or other public service. It is a mistake to confine our thoughts or plans to any kind of public meetings, where men and women are gathered in large numbers. We are in error if we expect the professional evangelist to do all the work of soul-winning, or even if we wait for special religious services to see souls won for God. There is opportunity to reach individuals every day. All around us are those who are without any conscious sense of the pardon of sins, and many to whom no personal word of invitation to repent and confess Christ is ever spoken. Why cannot you speak that word? It might be hard and from it you may shrink with every consciousness of your own unworthiness; but it is just what you need to give you a greater joy and a fuller happiness. There will be no difficulty in realizing our standard—20,000 additions to the Church this year from our Sunday School ranks—when one becomes in this way a personal winner of souls. How many can you win?