

heavier burden, he feels keenly and poignantly the failure of one small outpost.

But I think perhaps the heaviest burden of all that the General Officer has to bear (and this may help you to see that I am not really depressing at all) is for him to be made to feel that his plan of campaign is being rendered effective, not by the enemy, but by the inactivity, indifference and sometimes even ignorance of many of his subordinate officers in Conference and District organizations. Perhaps you do not believe that this is true. Well, for my part I believe that the letter files of our General Officers—to say nothing at all of all the personal experience of the Secretaries—would reveal sufficient evidence, direct and circumstantial, to prove the truth of my statement. What we need to do as ministers and Epworthians is to pray more for our General Officers, and then, if we are in earnest at all, the reflex influence of our prayers will speedily send us out to “co-operate” instead of “stagnate” or “knock.”

The efficient District Officer must have an Outward Vision, an Inward Vision, and he must have a vision of God. Some of you will possibly say, “Why did you not put this first? Is it not the first essential?” Not in the sense in which I use it. This is not a vision of God to qualify the District Officer to be a servant. It is a vision of God to quicken and empower the servant who, by the outward and inward visions has been made to feel his responsibility and need. The Epworthian surely has had a vision of God before he becomes a District Officer, but he needs then a fresh vision to qualify him for this new service. As a District Officer you need a vision of God as the great inexhaustible source of *sympathetic power*. Then you are qualified and armed to carry out your tasks. Let me say to you District Officers, if in your work you have been seeing chiefly such things as physical distances, inaccessibility and unresponsiveness, and have become discouraged—get a new vision of God. Say with Paul:—

“Shame on the flame so dying to an ember!
Shame on the need so lightly overset!
Yes, I have seen him; can I not remember?
Yes, I have known him, and shall I forget?”

Vision—outward, inward, and upward, will go far toward making you an efficient District Officer.

The second transforming influence of which I would speak is that of *Ideals*. Mr. Alkous told us last night that the Christian life is not a set of rules. And this is certainly true in the conduct of an Epworth League. A set of rules or standards will never vitalize your Leagues or your District work. *Standards never vitalize. Ideals do.* There is a vast difference between a standard and an ideal. A standard is fixed and unprogressive. Its ultimate is altogether too near and too easily attained to be inspiring. An ideal is never fixed. It is always progressive. It ever leads you on and on, and out and out, and up and up. Its ultimate is never attained because it naturally, and, if I may use the word, *empoweringly* leads you on to higher things.

Let me illustrate this in a way which I am quite sure will have a universal appeal. I do not know how it is on this side of the line, but over in our country there are a number of well-intentioned persons who seem to think themselves charged with the task of picking out what we sometimes call “regery”

services; or, in other words, young ladies whom they think should be “set apart” for the position of mistress of a parsonage. Now just as long as the subject remains impersonal it is all right. So long as they simply say that the fair “*Regervist*” measures up to every standard set by the “*Assigned*” Boards of Ladies’ Aids, and would make a splendid wife for *some* Methodist preacher, that is fine. But when it becomes personal it is quite a different matter. Then the young “*M. P.*” has his say. The young lady, without doubt, is all that is claimed for her, but—she doesn’t quicken his pulse, she doesn’t stir his heart with a great desire to give his own life to and for her, and an equally strong desire to claim her for himself. She doesn’t fill him with greater and nobler ambitions than he ever knew before. In a word, she is not his ideal. And if he is as sensible as he should be to be an “*M. P.*,” he doesn’t marry the “*Standard*,” but waits for the “*Ideal*.” Someone has wisely said, “*When you fall in love with a Standard it becomes an Ideal.*”

Now, my friends, that to my mind is just the difference between a Standard and an Ideal. The Ideal has a quickening power absolutely lacking in the Standard. The Ideal has life, enthusiasm, buoyancy and high hopes and compelling ambitions. So I would say to your District Officers, if you would vitalize your Local Leagues, you must possess and impart *high Ideals*.

You must have for your own life and for your local officers high Ideals of Duty. I like the spirit of that “*fellow named Rowan*” who unquestioningly took from President McKinley the “*letter*,” and went out to search the jungles of Cuba to deliver it to Garcia. We need today that high sense of Duty.

You must have and give in these days high Ideals of Service, and of its Royalty. The time has not passed when our young people need to be told that “*even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister*,” and that He said, “*If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet, for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*”

Then, too, you must have high Ideals of the capability of your local officers. Be not forever pointing out their mistakes, and encouraging them in their all too ready “*grovelling in the dust*” of past failures. Know your officers first, then. Be constructive. Help them to “*build upon resolve, and not upon regret*,” the structure of their future.”

You must also have high Ideals of Methods, both for your district executive and your local workers. It sometimes happens that one or two “*deadheads*” can clog the wheels of the whole district organization. It is equally and far more vitally true that one or two real “*live wires*” can rouse a whole executive, give a new viewpoint, and new impetus to the whole organization. So I say to you, be a live wire on Methods. Only, of course, you must be sure you carry the right kind of current for the motor you wish to start, or there will be trouble. We are Methodists, but that surely does not mean that the same methods must obtain from Wesley to the millennium. We should rather get the true Wesleyan viewpoint; remember that the Methodist Church rears in itself a most startling and revolutionary innovation, and glory still in being leaders in all new methods, so be it that they do but grip and hold the lives and souls of men.

Put things up to your District Executive and Local Officers. Make them fairly grip with the magnitude of the schemes which you propose. Make great demands

upon their powers and they will nobly respond. Remember Carey’s motto: “*Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.*”

In a word—have ever before you the ideal of *Becoming*. Not—what we have reached and are—but what we will reach and be in the day to-morrow. Not—what was attained by my predecessor and how much must I do to do just a little more, but how much can I attain? Take the word of the great man who, though he had attained so much, said, “*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*” Remember always, “*the ideal of Becoming is vastly greater than the ideal of having attained.*” These ideals will, I claim, vitalize your work as a District Officer.

And now, to come to the apparently more practical side of the subject, let me give you a few suggestions which you may think over at your leisure.

Insist on regular meetings of your District Executive. There will be plenty of subjects for discussion if your Executive is alive.

Make a comprehensive survey of your District—

Geographically. Know the location, distances, accessibility or inaccessibility of all your local chapters.

Sociologically. With all that that word is coming to mean in Church life. (All of which you should learn from some of the good text books on the subject.)

If your district is large or scattered, arrange groupings of Leagues to work and be worked together.

Know the Local Officers of your department. This is most important. If you are to do effective work you must be in real personal touch with your workers. I have known District Officers who at the end of a year of office could not tell me even who their fellow District Officers were. That is unthinkable in a live District organization.

Use the mails. Correspond. Perhaps you will say, “*This long range method is no good.*” Let me say that if you know conditions and have the close personal touch with your workers, there is no “*long range*.” A lot of you young folk here would be shedding bitter tears if you thought that letter you wrote last night was the less warmly received because you are far away. But it isn’t so. The opposite is true. When *spirit goes out to meet spirit* distance is no barrier. If you will put heart and soul into your League correspondence, as well as putting your intellect into it, you will find a close parallel to that which obtains when man’s spirit goes out to meet God’s Spirit.

“*Speak to him thou, for he hears,
And spirit with spirit can meet.
Closer is he than breathing,
And nearer than hands and feet.*”

That kind of spiritualism is real, my friends, and is very powerful. Know conditions, have something to say to the point; put yourself into it; ask questions, and the answers will come.

Be the centre of a Bureau of Exchange for your department.

Visit the Local Chapters.

Have meetings of the officers of your department, for the whole District, or in groups, if necessary. Have these regularly. Nothing will provoke and stimulate general interest like this meeting together of those who have one particular aim in common. Plan to give something new to each meeting yourself, and also to get something from each League.