

"to hear my scholars give *any sort* of answer in their own words to the most correctly repeated Definition or rule from the Book; it cultivates the habit of thinking for themselves." Now I admit that no method of school instruction is defensible which fails to make adequate provisions for cultivating the powers which a benevolent and infinitely kind Creator has bestowed,—especially the power of thinking. But why did He endow children with memories so wonderfully receptive and retentive, and with such credulousness in connection with reasoning powers so comparatively weak? Adopt what method you please must you not still place your main reliance on this readiness to believe what is authoritatively presented, and their retentiveness of memory? Is there not a constant necessity for supplying some suggestive idea, fact, or illustration to set their thinking powers in motion in the direction desired? The activity of the mind in so constantly changing its prospect, and the tendency of new impressions to overlay or thrust into the background the old, render this necessary. It comes then to this: Is it better to supply the memories of the pupils in our schools with seed thoughts, such as are provided in Definitions and Rules expressed in words carefully weighed and arranged by authors thoroughly conversant with their subject, and the result of whose labors is approved before the book is put into the pupil's hand or to leave them to be supplied with such ever varying explanations as the several teachers variously qualified may give without requiring the Definitions and Rules to be committed. I suppose, of course, that in the former case all necessary explanation is supplied as well as in the latter, and that the pupils are required to furnish satisfactory evidence that they understand. I am convinced, as the result of personal observation, that there is as much room for, and in reality is as much, parrot-like rote-work under the new system that so ostentatiously aims at teaching the scholar to think for himself as under the old system that quietly aimed at the same result, but insisted on carefully committed Definitions and Rules, as food which the mind was to digest. I don't think that our Creator made a mistake in constituting us as we are, but I do think that He thereby teaches us to regard the memory as standing in much the same relation to the mind as the stomach does to the body. This seems to me to be the view which He authorizes in that authoritative revelation of His Will which we all profess to respect. According to it education is not a process of education—"drawing out,"—but of nurture under authorized and authoritative supervision. Children are to recognize authority and mature under it. They cannot be too early taught that truth possesses authority, not because they have conceived it or thought it out; but of itself, because it is truth: that knowledge—truth—is the mind's food, a necessary condition of its healthful, reliable action, and while we must work for it we must also work from it: that believing and obeying belong as much to right education as does thinking, and are as indispensable conditions of knowledge and happiness. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. I have set a teacher strong in faith in the comparative excellence of the new system, to work to examine a class in arithmetic. Answers and explanations were furnished quite readily. Observing the secret of the apparent success, I take the class in hand myself. I question. No one answers. I explain precisely what I mean but supply no hint as to the correct answer: still there is no answer. Why is this? Oh, your mode of questioning is different from mine. They don't understand you. But I ask simply the *What* and the *How*; there is no mistaking what I want. Didn't these scholars think? I have no doubt of it. But they have been taught to think leaning on the crutch of the teacher's "leading questions," which are to-day apparently the same as the first day the pupils were led over the ground. They have been accustomed to think not so much on the subject presented as on the teacher's method of questioning; and they answer not from their knowledge of the subject but from the hints supplied in the question. Here is the secret of the necessity for much of the putting back. The