

teacher of this, as of all arts, is He whose boyish questions in the temple grew to such answers that no man thereafter dared question him, save only his true disciples.

#### A GOOD QUESTION.

If I were asked to name the chief fault of the average teacher, I should say, "Asking questions that can be answered by 'Yes' and 'No.'" Among my acquaintances was once a teacher in a secular school whose method of questioning was invariably this. He would have before him the statements of the text-book, copied out with painstaking care, and would develop the subject thus: "Is it true or is it not true, Mr. A—, that"—and here would follow the statement or definition of the text-book. The ambiguous answer, "Yes," was amply satisfactory. Unfortunately, when such teachers gain a foothold in the Sunday-school, they are not so easily dismissed as from secular establishments.

Now, a good question merely furnishes the starting-point, and pushes the scholar out along the course toward some goal of truth; but in a question that can be answered by "Yes" or "No" the teacher himself ambles amiably up the track, and condescendingly allows the scholar's monosyllable to pat him on the head after he himself has reached the goal. A question that can be answered by "Yes" or "No" merely formulates the truth as it exists in the teacher's mind, and invites the scholar's assent to it; a good question, on the contrary, provokes the scholar to formulate truth for himself.

Now, it is much easier to express what we see to be true than to get any one else to express original thought. There is also, to the unwise, more glory in laying down principles to which others must agree than in getting others to lay down principles to which we must agree. It will always be true, therefore, that the lazy and the pompous will have no aim beyond educing monosyllabic answers. Most teachers, however, are earnestly desirous of the best, but do not know how to frame wise questions. What must be said of them?

First, that they must not go to school before their scholars. Expert questioning is not learned in the class-room, but in the study. A lead-pencil is the best teacher. A sheet of paper is the best drill-ground. As I have

urged before: Let the Sunday-school worker who aspires to the high praise of a good questioner sit down persistently, after studying the lesson, and write out a set of questions. Nay; on each point, so far as he has time, let him write several questions, criticise them, fancy what kind of answer each will be likely to elicit from the scholar, and choose what appears the best question. Try it on the class, and learn valuable lessons from the result.

This method, laborious as it is, must be kept up until skilful questioning has become instinctive. That there may be hope of this happy result, by the way, the written questions must never be used in the class,—only the memory of them, and the drill the preparation has given. It surely will happen, sooner or later, that the careful student of practical pedagogics will be able to get along without writing, merely formulating fit questions in his mind as he studies the lesson. After a time he may dispense even with this, and look simply after the points to be presented, trusting to extemporaneous question-making.

Not wholly, however. The best questioner in the world gets into ruts. The best forms of questions ever invented are worse than the worst if they are used with dull reiteration. No one can devote careful attention to the form of his questions without falling in love with some particular way of questioning; and this will not always be the best way. A form of question that is irreproachable the first time will be unendurable used six times in succession. It is necessary, then, even to the trained questioner, to revert now and then to his old lead-pencil drill, in order to study variety.

But how may the uninitiated know a good question when they see it, or make it? As said already, it must not be such that a lazy monosyllable may answer it. As said already too, if one is in doubt, he has but to try it on the class, and note results. But further. A good question will be likely to have something piquant about it, if the subject admits. For instance, "James was killed, Peter was freed; why was that?" is better than saying, "How do you account for the fact that while the apostle James was beheaded, the apostle Peter was delivered from the hands of his persecutors?"

Furthermore, the difference between a poor