

ASKING QUESTIONS.

To know how to ask questions is a great art. It needs training, skill, and patience to do it well; for in nothing do we reveal ourselves more than in the questions that we ask. Why, our temper, character, manner of life, knowledge, and tastes, and preferences lie behind these questions we are constantly putting to one another. It was said to be an education to answer the questions that Socrates was in the habit of asking; and it was so because he put the real stores of his thinking, experience and knowledge into them. When we are really conscious of what it is that we want to know, and when we can roll our feelings and desires on the subject into a definite searching question, we are on the high road to the thorough mystery of it; for has not Bacon told us that "a wise question is already half the answer."

What a wonderful gift children have for asking questions. They are to the manner born, and somehow their questions go to the very heart of things. There is no beating about the bush with them. With an insight and inspiration that astonish us, they touch the mysteries that lie at the centre of life in the questions they put to us, and when we stand before them bewildered, without any answer, it would be well frankly to say so, for while their questions are educating us, our answers too often confuse the issues, and contradict the experiences of child life, and thereby do permanent injury to the youthful mind. What makes the child's questions so interesting is that they grow out of the situation in which it is, and the necessities of the moment, and the spontaneous suggestions arising out of them. It is always so striking how much a child's question is to the point. Children hardly ever ask silly, foolish questions, and their questions throb with life and meaning, and it is so because they grow out of their inner life and outward activities. Nor must we forget that our children sorely torment and embarrass us with their questions, especially in regard to our visitors, when they put into a question in their presence the harsh criticism we made on them when they were coming up to call on us; but on the whole their questions are in the interests of knowledge and the development of character, and are well and kindly meant.

How poor and dull a thing life would be without its questions. It is the questioner who provides so much of our joy or sorrow. In the House of Commons, as well as in private life, it is the questions that are being asked that make us wise, alert, and abreast of the movements around us. The beauty of it is that questions come from every degree of intelligence and class of the community, and indeed they are a condition of our progress, and enlargement of the mind and faculties, for when we cease to ask questions we are practically ceasing to learn. Hence it is that children and young people ask for more questions than old people, and the silence of the latter bores us to a greater degree than the ever-flowing stream of questions of the former.

It is sad to think how this great privilege is abused when questions are asked that we have no right to ask, or to open up some old sore, or to gain advantages that mean ruin for others. Nothing can recall the vanished ghosts of the past like a question; nothing can give sting to a sarcasm like a question; nothing can make white black so quickly as a question; nothing can provoke anger and jealousy like a question, and it is in a question that the great opportunity comes to be impudent, unjust and cruel! Let us always handle this Divine gift so tenderly that it will be a means of grace, education and blessing to us and to others. It is very striking how freely Christ used the method of question in His ministry. Indeed His teaching is largely made up of questions and answers. When He was not asking questions He was answering them. He began this habit at the age of twelve in the temple, though the family circle at Nazareth knew of it

long before this, and He kept it up to the end of His life. Nor must we overlook that Christ was silent and reserved till questioned, and that it was questions that drew forth His sympathy and help for the suffering, and His discourses that fell with showers of blessing on those that heard them. How a question in the days of Christ changed the whole course of the life of many young and old people, and it is doing so still. In "Jessica's First Prayer," when the minister and his sexton stood by the bedside of Jessica—a waif-child of London—Daniel Standring, in a great confession to his minister, said, "God wanted somebody to ask me that question—Are you a saved man? and He could not find anybody in the congregation, so He sent this poor little lass to me." H.

TO-DAY.

Oh, do not wait till afterwards,
Today's the time for deed and smile,
Just now dispense your gifts of grace:—
Just now, as you meet face to face.
Tomorrow's grief can not atone,
If we have fail'd to love our own,
Or leave a bit of sunshine fall
Along our little path for all.
Life in its worth to me and you
Will always lie in what we do
For others, with a touch of heart,
As day by day we meet and part.

From darkness here, and dreariness,
We ask not full repose,
Only be thou at hand, to bless
Our trial hour of woes.
Is not the pilgrim's toil o'erpaid
By the clear rill and palmy shade?
And see we not, up Earth's dark glade,
The gates of heaven unclose?
Bear up, bear on, the end shall tell
The dear Lord ordereth all things well!
—J. W. Whittier.

Lutheran Observer:—Compare Jesus, in this respect, with the most renowned thinkers, originators of widespread pagan religions, say Gautama Buddha, with his long years of painful self-discipline, ascetic seclusion, laborious study and artificial mental elaborations; or Confucius or Zoroaster with their recondite speculations and utilitarian maxims. A comparison of this cannot fail to make us conscious of the immeasurable transcendence of the mind of Jesus, leaving ever in unique elevation, freedom, readiness, clearness, breadth and spontaneous self-consistency, giving to the world such a vision of religious and spiritual truth as has been presented nowhere else and which holds, in ever-widening circles through the world, the reason and confidence of mankind.

United Presbyterian:—Let the rich still remember that Jesus is sitting over against the treasury. In proportion to their means the poor are casting in of their penury more than the mighty. The Lord has a commendation for all who give, but on some offerings he can see the marks of sacrifice.

Presbyterian Standard:—Dare to aim at the highest things, even though you may not reach them. We have the words of Jesus for this: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." This is, he ye as perfect in your sphere as he is in His.

DAILY READINGS.

M., Apr. 2. Keeping the pledge by trust. Ps. 118: 1-9.
T., Apr. 3. Keeping it by striving. Luke 13: 23-30.
W., Apr. 4. Keeping it by the Bible. Acts 17: 10-12.
T., Apr. 5. Keeping it by prayer. Luke 18: 1-8.
F., Apr. 6. Keeping it by testimony. Matt. 10: 32-39.
S., Apr. 7. Keep it by giving. Mar 12: 41-44.
S., Apr. 8. Topic—Our pledge, and how to keep it. Matt. 28: 20; Eccl. 5: 1-7; Ps. 51: 6.

KEEPING OUR PLEDGE.

Some Bible Hints.

No pledge could safely be made to an absent God; any pledge He asks may safely be made to a present God (Matt. 28: 20).

If we know ourselves inwardly true to the pledge, we need never think about the appearance of pledge-keeping outside (Ps. 51: 6).

An ounce of explanation of the pledge before it is signed is worth a ton of exhortation to keep it after it is signed (Eccl. 5: 2).

It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay; but far better than either is it to vow and to pay (Eccl. 5: 5).

Suggestive Thoughts.

We shall not keep our pledge if it is made to man, but only as it is made to Christ.

It is quite as much a question of our pledge's keeping us as of our keeping our pledge.

A pledge is never broken so badly that it is not better to mend it than to throw it away.

You keep the pledge in doing—not the part you find easy, but the part you find hard.

A few Illustrations.

A pledge in the old days was a gage of battle; so I sours,—battle against sin and sloth.

The pledge is not a jailer's chain to bind you, but a surveyor's chain to mark out the way.

The world's business is based on a system of pledges—money, checks, bargains, deeds, notes, partnerships. So is "our Father's business."

A pledge is like articles of agreement in a business partnership; both parties are the gainers.

To Think About.

Is my pledge a burden or a help?

Am I keeping my pledge in the spirit as well as the letter?

Am I trying to keep the pledge in my own strength alone?

A Chester of Quotations.

Who kneels before the King

In true surrender,

May lift his loyal head,

A brave defender.

—Marianne Farningham.

Speak truly, and each word of thine

Shall be a faithful seed;

Live truly, and thy life shall be

A great and noble creed.

—Horatius Bonar.

He who persists in genuineness will increase in adequacy.—T. T. Lynch.

The root of honesty is an honest intention.—Malthie D. Babcock.

Why Christian Endeavor?

Why is the Christian Endeavor society most likely to be the form of young people's society useful in your church?

Because it has stood the test of a long experience, in tens of thousands of churches, under all imaginable conditions.

Because it is found in eighty denominations, and is one of the best tokens and agencies of Christian brotherhood.

Because it is found in all lands, and connection with it wonderfully broadens the Christian's view.

Because it is flexible and adaptable, its constitution and pledge may be changed to fit it to the needs of any church and the preferences of any pastor.

Because it has proved itself to be self-perpetuating. The young people like it, feel responsible for it, carry it on themselves, with the expenditure of the least energy and time on the part of the pastor. It teaches them to be originating, responsible Christians in the older work of the church.