

PUBLIC SCHOOL DEPARTMENT.

(Contributed to, and under the management of, Mr. S. McAllister, Headmaster of Ryerson School, Toronto.)

THE OPENING YEAR.

The best teachers are those who are continually improving.

"Knowledge," says Bacon, "perfects nature, and is perfected by experience." Those, who are constantly aiming to make their experience a handmaid to their efficiency, are not only the best but the wisest teachers, for they learn to secure the highest attainable results upon the plastic natures entrusted to their care by the most economic expenditure of nervous and brain force. Such teachers are the truly scientific ones, they make the rules deduced from the accumulated experience of past days their guide in the coming ones, and thus let no day pass without its lesson to themselves, as well as to their scholars. It is such men and women who, as the poet sings,

"Rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

We once heard a skilful teacher of many years' experience declare that not a year passed but he observed some improvement in his method of discipline, and in his power of imparting knowledge.

We are led to these reflections by considering how many earnest resolves are formed by teachers at the beginning of the year against faults to be avoided, and in favour of improvements to be begun.

There is danger, however, that some, in the flush of their eagerness, may, in trying to do too much, accomplish very little. It is no harm to remind such of the grim fact that a certain place, which we shall not name, is said to be paid with good intentions. How many of our readers are there who look regretfully back on the past year, with its multitude of noble intentions left unfulfilled. If fewer had been formed more would have been accomplished. We say then

DO NOT ATTEMPT TOO MUCH.

The Arabs have a proverb which has much wisdom in it. "Never attempt all you can do, for he who attempts everything he can do, often attempts more than he can do." The steam that by confinement to a narrow compass can be made to drive an engine, may, by giving it a wider outlet, fume itself uselessly away.

It is better to concentrate your energy and vigilance upon a few most essential things, with the firm resolve not to give them up. First make up your mind that what you determine upon is right, satisfy yourself that it is feasible, and then stick to it, that you may succeed. Are you resolved to have

COMPLETE SILENCE IN YOUR CLASS

while you are speaking or a scholar is answering? Do not be discouraged, nor get out of temper by repeated failures, but renew your determination day after day, and enforce it even to the extent of stopping work until silence, which is the best symbol of attention, is secured. You will thus unfailingly habituate your scholars to the attitude of listeners; their being so in reality will depend upon your own skill in securing and retaining their attention.

Have you determined that greater punctuality shall prevail in giving to each lesson its allotted time?

Make your determination known to your class, and they, though perhaps too often from a selfish motive, will materially assist you to abide by it. Do not be cozened into any irregularity by the fact that the analysis of some important sentence has to be finished, some knotty question to be elucidated, or some breach of discipline to be checked. The breach of discipline can be better checked after a little delay, and the sentence