

PUBLIC SCHOOL DEPARTMENT.

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IN another department occasion was taken last month to speak of the interesting reports of the Model School Masters of Ontario upon the deficiencies of their Pupil-Teachers. It was shewn how alarmingly the lack of energy prevailed among these young people, and the writer indicated in a few words how this might be accounted for; but the subject is so important, and is so far from being exhausted, that it may be recurred to at a future time.

In the meantime we wish to direct our readers' notice to another defect that appears painfully frequent in these reports :

INABILITY TO SECURE AND TO SUSTAIN ATTENTION.

Attention has been defined as "the direction of consciousness." In its absence the mind cannot employ its receptive power in absorbing knowledge, nor its productive power in using it. A person, for instance, may sit in a room for hours and not notice the ticking of a clock at his elbow, nor be able to tell whether it strikes or not. A scholar may have the attitude of a careful listener, but it is only the skilful teacher who can tell whether his consciousness is directed to the lesson that is going on, or to the games of the playground. With young children attention is not the result of an exercise of the will; it is an involuntary effort induced by the pleasurable sensations that accompany or follow its exercise. A child will give attention to a story only so long as the incidents create a pleasant mental excitement. He will look through a book while the variety of the pictures interests him; he will attend to a lesson if it is made attractive

to his senses by pleasant sights or sounds, to his imagination by illustrative stories or anecdotes, or to his thinking powers by giving his mind something to accomplish, which may impart to him a sense of power. Froebel wisely recognized these varied resources for training children, and his system is largely based upon their use. By means of pleasant games and play, children can be led to give attention to subjects that develop their observing as well as their thinking powers, and thus they acquire a knowledge of colours, form, number, etc., without having one formal lesson given on any of these subjects. The great lesson that Froebel's method teaches us is that before we can secure the attention of children we must

AROUSE THEIR INTEREST.

The weak and unwise teacher will try to do this by whipping, but this is like driving unwilling soldiers to fight at the point of the bayonet, or trying to straighten a crooked sapling by an occasional push. The judicious teacher will have means of doing this without violating that harmony which is one of the charms of the school-room. An anecdote or short story, a few discursive remarks, leading up to the subject to be taught, will generally get children's minds into the attitude of attention. We say *generally*, for there will still be some sluggish ones with whom these resources will prove ineffectual. Another resource remains, their self-love. Try to elicit some observations from them, either as information or as criticism, and you will thus create an awakening that may have the same effect on the mind as a stone thrown into still water. In all efforts to secure