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A PLEA FOR THE RURAL SCHOOL.

While so much is being said and written in various quarters about the centralization of schools in country places, it appears that most of those who write are seeing but one side of the question. They are so busy presenting the advantages to accrue from the change, which certainly are numerous, that they seem to be in danger of forgetting that there are also disadvantages connected with it. Will you allow me to present a few of the latter?

Certainly such a change would be economical from a financial point of view, but I am not certain that this economy would be profitable. It may cost the country more money to conduct a great many small rural schools, but, allow me to ask, where have our best scholars come from? From the hot-bed cultivation of our town and city schools? Have they not rather been produced from the quiet and secluded little country school, as the greatest trees are grown in far-away places apart from the rush and trample of many feet?

My experience goes but a little way, but so far as I have had opportunity of observing, the larger proportion of the best students in high schools and colleges are those who received their earlier education in the quiet of a country school. And almost invariably, when we inquire into the early life of the great men of our land we are pointed to some little country school as the scene of their first public triumphs. Shall we then hastily condemn and do away with this class of schools?

It is argued that, in concentrated schools larger classes can be formed, where keener competition will arouse and call forth all the powers of the child. This result may follow, but is there not also the possibility that the individual may be lost in the crowd?

It is also argued that large classes may be more thoroughly graded. Yes, if that be a consideration. "The machine," as William Hawley Smith calls the system in his State of Illinois, can work better on such classes, but can the child's individuality be so well developed? It is desirable to secure a large number of scholars of like,—of medium qualifications, or is it more desirable to continue to give the stronger characters opportunity to grow and mature and bloom distinct from their fellows as their native abilities make possible?

Graded schools are doubtless desirable in towns and cities, where, without them, general education could not be carried on; and there are certainly many things to be said in their favor for the country, but that it is desirable to have no other sort of schools, I can not admit.

B. S.