



HOME MAGAZINE



Life, Literature and Education.

Our "Eastern" Debate.

Some time ago, it will be remembered, we announced a debate which was to be carried on between the Maritime Provinces on the one hand, and Quebec and the Eastern States on the other, the decision to be made by Ontario and elsewhere (i.e., by all subscribers of "The Farmer's Advocate," exclusive of those in the Maritime Provinces and the Eastern States).

The subject of that debate was to be: "Resolved that a general system of Macdonald Consolidated Schools, such as those instituted by Dr. Jas. W. Robertson, would be more advisable for rural districts than the present rural-school system."

To-day we present our readers with the essays which have been selected. We think it is not necessary to state that the writers have been fully alive to the importance of the subject in hand. That they have written in conviction of how much the settlement, not of this debate, but of the whole question itself, must mean to the future of Canada, is self-evident.

Shall we have Consolidated Schools or not? Surely every parent who has a child to be educated must have something to say about this, and we hope that not only the present members of the Literary Society, but all the thinking fathers and mothers of the appointed territory will be interested enough to send us their decision in this debate. Kindly send us your answer so that it may reach us by June 28th at the latest. This will be the last work of the Literary Society until the long fall evenings come again; then we shall resume our work with renewed vigor. It is quite in order that the F. A. & H. M. Society have a short vacation. In the meantime, use your eyes. When the Society reopens again, our first essay contest will be on what you have seen during the summer, whether you take a holiday trip or not. After that we shall begin a systematic study of Tennyson; so, if it come in your way, as members of the Society, you may find it useful to read up as much as possible of this poet during the summer.

Now, send in your answer to the school debate as soon as possible, and give us a good rally and a good send-off to our Literary Society vacation. We should like to receive 10,000 opinions on this question. Put on a post card the words, "Consolidated School," or "Ordinary Rural School," as your judgment directs. Kindly address, "Literary Society Dept.," Farmer's Advocate, London, Ont.

Consolidation vs. Ordinary Rural Schools.

AFFIRMATIVE.

For a system of centrally-located Consolidated Schools in place of the individual district miscellaneous rural schools, as at present, I shall always hold up both hands. In the light of present-day teaching, when the trend is toward the practical, and the old methods of studying the child with a lot of undigested knowledge is deservedly becoming obsolete, the small rural schools cannot, necessarily, compete in efficiency with the properly-equipped, large central school. Since, however, we are restricted to an essay of 800 words, it will not do to waste them in generalities, but discuss, first, the objections to consolidation:

(a) Expense of the System.—Now, my knowledge of consolidation, as started experimentally in Maritime Canada, especially those fostered by the Macdonald grants, shows a greater expense than necessary. In most cases where money for an enterprise is granted liberally, and little account is made of economy, the expense is heavier than would be considered necessary if the people who carried it out were compelled to furnish the funds. This may not always be counted a mistake, but it certainly is where an experiment is being carried on to prove that a projected system is to be more beneficial, advantageous or economical than one at present existent. In this regard I maintain that the Consolidated Schools, as established at Middleton, N. S., for example, should never be taken as criteria of the success or failure of the system in general. The expenses throughout, from the building with its equipment, to the salaries of teachers and drivers, have been a maximum instead of a minimum. "Macdonald's money is doing it!" has been the keynote of the extravagances from the beginning.

A consolidated system of rural schools is a bringing together of four or five, or more, isolated schools, and combining forces, so that the scholars may receive more and better instruction, from the fact that each class or grade may have all or a large part of one teacher's attention, have better apparatus or equipment, and other advantages that the individual school could not enjoy. The system does not imply academic conditions, or outfitting expensive laboratories for advanced work, only such work as would be less efficiently done in the rural schools; those requiring advanced teaching could go to Provincial academies. Thus, the only extra expense over the sum of the individual rural-school expenses, would be the carrying of the children to and from the central school. The incidental expenses of the separate school should, in some cases, be lessened in the Consolidated, e.g., heating, cleaning, maps, globes, physical and chemical apparatus, etc., should not cost five times as much as they would in five separate schools. This should make up, in some small measure, for the carrying. The teachers' salaries should not, at least, exceed that in the separate schools, since the work would be less looking after one or two

grades than nine or ten. Then, undoubtedly, there could be a saving in the number of teachers. From my own experience, I would prefer teaching sixty pupils in two grades to thirty pupils in ten grades. Still, with all wise economies, there will be greater expense, chiefly because of transporting the children; but what wise parent would hesitate at paying higher taxes in the light of the greater advantage of the consolidation?

(b) Another objection may be that in the graded school the child receives too much attention, and is not thrown on his own resources as in a miscellaneous school. If a child does not grow up independent and self-helping, it is the fault of the teacher or home influences, and not of the system. No good teacher of the 20th century will simply show a child, or do problems for him, but will teach him to do it for himself. This objection applies only too strongly to the miscellaneous school, where, for lack of time, the teacher must, in many cases, do the work for the child, as it takes less time than to teach it.

(c) The objection that the parents are not so closely in touch with the teachers, and therefore are not as likely to gain as sympathetic treatment for their children, etc., is more than counteracted by the fact that many parents lose more than they gain by their suspicious solicitude for their children's welfare.

Second—Advantages of Consolidation:

(a) The extra taxation for carrying will, in many cases, be more than met by the saving in shoes, wearing apparel and doctor's bills, since the children are carried to and from their homes in covered vans, taking less wrapping than if they were compelled to brave inclement weather and bad roads on foot many days in the year; nor would they be as much exposed to dangerous drafts and extremes of heat and cold as in the old country schoolhouses.

(b) There would be a steadier, more permanent and better trained class of teachers in the central school than the young, inexperienced, irresponsible fledglings who are only teaching in our country schools as a means of getting a little money for better positions.

(c) A better equipment for practical work. Suppose each rural school spent \$10 for chemical or physical apparatus for a certain grade where that grade had only two or three scholars. If the five schools combined, the \$50 would buy a much better apparatus, and so with all the expenses of this kind.

(d) More thorough teaching, because of more time to devote to one grade. In most of the Provinces the same curriculum has to be taught, whether a teacher has one grade or ten; then, it can be readily seen that the more grades a teacher has, the more must each lesson be slighted, in order that all the work be passed over—e.g., in the miscellaneous school the teacher may have only time to hear a few rules in grammar, learned by the pupils, without much idea of their meaning or application, whereas in the graded school, time may be taken to apply those rules so each can

be thoroughly understood and remembered, and a commonly dry subject become interesting. For the same reason of want of time in a miscellaneous school, many of the smaller pupils are necessarily idle a large part of the time.

(e) More possibility of instilling a spirit of patriotism, one of the most needed lessons for the young Canadian to learn.

(f) More *Esprit de Corps*. This is hard to define, but we all know that, in rubbing up against a larger crowd of more diversified interests, we lose our individual little conceits, provincialisms, etc., and gain more breadth of vision, as well as a greater feeling of brotherhood and commonality, which serves to make us better and broader citizens as we grow older.

(g) A greater spirit of emulation is fostered in the larger central school, which ensures greater and more substantial progress.

The whole progress of the world to-day is due largely to this competitive spirit, and the larger the number striving to "win out" in anything, the greater will be the individual effort and ultimate success.

R. J. MESSENGER.

Annapolis Co., N. S.

New Brunswick's Word in the Matter.

AFFIRMATIVE.

In order to keep within the compass of eight hundred words in this debate, one cannot do more than offer a brief summary of arguments and facts.

1. Large central schools in the rural districts would provide relatively "prize places" for teachers who would devote themselves to teaching as a life profession. When schools are consolidated it will be possible to secure a male teacher as principal. A man should be at the head of every school. We are leaving the education of our children almost entirely to young girls. This is not advisable; but you cannot keep male teachers at the salaries which small districts pay. Consolidated Schools, offering a reasonable amount as the principal's salary, would induce many young men to stay in the profession. They would teach for many years, and gain skill and experience, and our country boys and girls would be given a fair chance. What golden opportunities gifted children often lose because they have no efficient teacher to instruct, inspire and lead them. "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen."

2. A Consolidated School could give High School privileges to country boys and girls. Not only will this country High School give as good an education as any city High School it will give more; it will be a Training School with a specific object, namely, that of fitting a class for its duties, to put the worker in harmony with his work. This country High School would meet the demand for some sort of power—power to see, to know, to do, and, therefore, TO BE.

3. It would permit a better graded and classification of pupils. Pupils could be placed where they