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CENTRALIZATION OF SCHOOLS.

The following paper was undertaken, at the request of the editor, with the view of directing attention to a question of some importance in the educational work of the province. Manitoba holds a high place in what she has done, and is doing, for education; and even with the sparse settlement, has placed the means of education within the reach of every family. The rural schools are doing good work in spite of disadvantages. Their results are steadily improving, and will compare favorably with other places better situated as to population and age of settlement. The problem of schools in an agricultural country must always present some difficulty, and the question now being considered is, whether the time is ripe when by a modification of, or change in, existing arrangements, they can be made more efficient.

To those who have been in any way associated with the work of rural schools, the question must often have presented itself, whether the results secured are commensurate with the time and money expended. Just as soon as the requisite ten children are in residence, a school district is formed, a small building erected, and a teacher engaged. At first the number on the school register will be about ten, and the average attendance half that number. As the years go by, the numbers may gradually increase to thirty, with an average attendance of twenty. The school is open for eight months in the year, afterwards nominally for the whole year, with holidays in the winter, but the attendance is so decreased in the cold weather that often the school might as well be closed. Usually there is a different teacher each year, a large number holding third class certificates. Owing to the

number of schools to be visited, the inspector can only visit once a year. The teacher, therefore, has to work alone without the benefit of frequent supervision. The pupils vary in age from 7 to 16 years. Under such circumstances neither teacher nor pupil can work to advantage. The teacher's energies are distributed over too large an area, and due grading is impossible. In some of the schools there would need to be almost as many grades as there are pupils. The result is that not much is taught beyond the general subjects of reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography, and composition. The other branches, such as music, drawing, and physical culture are largely a dead letter, while algebra, geometry, etc., are unknown quantities.

The boy begins going to school when about seven years old. During the summer he attends fairly well, and makes progress, but with winter's approach he must stay at home. There, as a rule, little or nothing is done to keep up the work, and the boy spends the time forgetting much of what he has learned. When he sets out the following spring he has probably a new teacher, and some time elapses before he comes to the point where he left off the previous year. Thus it goes from year to year, and at the age of fourteen, he leaves school, barely up to the standard of a third class examination, and with none of the accessory accomplishments which mean so much in later life.

Contrast this with the work done in the city. There large buildings, airy rooms, and pleasant surroundings constitute a stimulating environment. The enthusiasm of numbers becomes also a valuable factor. The classes are closely graded, and a teacher easily takes charge of fifty