

## THE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL.

A consolidated school is formed by the amalgamation of two or more separate rural districts in order to erect a well-equipped central school.

Consolidated schools are in operation in Manitoba, but, as previously explained, I was not able to see the schools of that district at work. There are several in Ontario, but they are in the northern part of the province, and were too far distant for me to visit. However, I was able to see a number at work in Iowa, Colorado, and California, and I have no hesitation in saying that the consolidated rural school was the most remarkable educational development that I saw in the course of my travels.

I have already stated that, speaking generally, the rural school in the United States is very far from being efficient. The building is usually poor, the equipment scanty, and the teacher is often untrained. The consolidated school is very different, and its institution usually effects an amazing transformation in the district generally. To convey some idea of this transformation I give a brief account of one of these schools. It is one of the best in Colorado, but it is in every way typical of the others that I saw.

The "Sargent" consolidated school is situated in the open country about eight miles from Monte Vista. The consolidation campaign was started in 1916, and it took two years to complete the community organization, for the idea was new in that part of the country. After a brief educational campaign, three districts were consolidated, but the schools were not centralized at once, for the campaign was continued in order to get more schools into the combination. A year later other districts joined, making an enlarged district about as large as nine ordinary districts. The resulting consolidated district is approximately square in shape; it contains about 100 square miles, 250 farm homes, a population of about one thousand people, and an assessed valuation of £1,000,000. A fine new school was erected by the beginning of 1918; this, it was thought, would serve the needs of the community for a quarter of a century. They also built a garage, 48 ft. by 60 ft., with a gymnasium above. This was to accommodate the twelve large motor-buses that had been bought to transport 350 children daily, and also to provide a suitable place for indoor games. They also erected modern nine- and eleven-roomed residences for the headmaster and for the lady assistants respectively.

Almost before the school was started the people had begun to plan a variety of uses for their "community plant." A community Sunday school was first organized, and its success was just as marked as that of the day school. With both the day and the Sunday school in successful operation, it was next suggested that a community church should be organized. This was done, and public school, Sunday school, and community church, are now all growing and flourishing institutions using the same building. With the school enrolment about four hundred, the Sunday school attendance about the same, with regular church services, and with numerous community meetings all requiring more rooms and a still larger auditorium, the people decided to extend their building programme. Last year a further loan of £30,000 was voted to erect a still larger building to serve as a junior and senior high school, with a fine auditorium seating one thousand people, and still another residence, this for the headmaster of the high school. These buildings are now completed and in use. They are situated on a fine ground, 14 acres in area, in the centre of the district, and the whole concern has a value of at least £50,000.

The school itself has been a marked success from the very beginning. Twice as many are in attendance as were at the old schools; the daily attendance is 50 per cent. higher than it was; a well-equipped elementary school with a four-year high school has been provided. Thus the educational opportunities of four hundred country children have been made equal to those of children in a progressive town, and in an environment as nearly ideal as can be imagined. Practically all the children are in school, and ten times as many are enrolled in the high school as ever went away from home to attend high school before this one was built. All the standard subjects are found in the course of study, and, in addition, vocational courses in home-making, agriculture, and farm shopwork are also offered. Outdoor games and athletics are directed and supervised by competent teachers, with the result that the school has been very successful in its competitions with neighbouring town institutions.

The community church is governed by evangelical standards, and is not controlled by any one denomination. Men and women representing nine different denominations, together with many who before uniting with this one were not members of any, now worship together in the same way and at the same time.

As previously mentioned, at this school, motor-buses are used to convey the children, and it was a most interesting sight to see twelve large motors, each laden with from thirty to forty children, draw up at the school-door within seven minutes from first to last. Eleven of the twelve drivers were teachers; nine of the eleven were women.

There is no doubt that these consolidated schools develop a community feeling and a spirit of co-operation. At one newly-built consolidated school I saw some fifty farmers with a dozen teams at work ploughing, levelling, fencing, and planting the playing-fields, an area of some 14 or 15 acres. One thing that helps to develop this community feeling is the fact that each community school is equipped with an assembly-hall large enough to accommodate all the pupils of the school or all the adults of the district. General meetings, more or less of an educational or social character, are held frequently (dancing is not usually allowed), and adjournments are made to the gymnasium, where games of basket-ball, volley-ball, &c., are played, and the people thus get to know one another in a way they would never otherwise do. One farmer told me that he hardly knew his next-door neighbour until after the community school was built.

These schools are rapidly increasing in number. Colorado has displaced 1,425 one-teacher schools by the erection of 146 consolidated schools, at a cost of £1,500,000. Iowa has reduced her one-teacher