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State Normal School Quarterly

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THE CONSOLIDATION OF NORMAL SCHOOLS.

In the four A-grade normal schools there were enrolled last year more than fifteen hundred teachers, not including the summer school students. These four schools are well situated geographically to accommodate all sections of the State. No one is nearer than two hundred and fifty miles of another of the same grade. If these four schools were consolidated into one large normal school, could any one expect the attendance to reach fifteen hundred or even one thousand pupils?

To accommodate this number and give an equipment for adequate training would require an outlay at least of \$1,000,000. It would require a faculty almost as large as the combined faculties of the four schools. The class units would be multiplied until the equipment would necessarily be duplicated over and over again in one place. A large school is not worth as much to the individual student as a smaller institution. The contact of a student with his teacher in a small school of three or four hundred pupils is more helpful than a large institution where the teachers do not know their students by name. Much could be

said just here. Again, our State is developing rapidly and the population will be enormously increased in a few years. There is room for four normal schools and it will require this number to give the State a trained teaching force. What we need is to increase the efficiency of our normal schools, and to confine our work strictly to the training of teachers along the line of a better civilization.

If the four normal schools were consolidated into one large normal school, the cost of maintenance would be as great as that of the four schools, while the outlay for equipment would be as large as that of the University of Alabama and the Polytechnic Institute at Auburn put together. The building and material equipment of the four normal schools are worth more than a half million dollars. What would become of all this property if the schools were consolidated? The State would not only lose more than a half million dollars in this way, but would have to make an enormous outlay for new buildings.

The criticisms in the past are unjust, and the work done by normal schools is now of a high order. Counting the number attending the summer schools and the regular session, nearly two thousand teachers annually are helped and trained by these schools. These are the most vital agencies in educational work in the State and as a matter of fact criticisms and knocking against the schools come as a rule from the uninformed. What these schools need is to be strengthened, enlarged and recognized.

A GREAT LOSS

On the night of September 28th, our best dormitory, Webb Hall, was destroyed by fire. The fire broke out about midnight and spread so rapidly that the students did

not have time to save their trunks and clothing; those on the third floor suffered the greatest loss.

The school lost about \$50,000, including the building and its equipment. This loss was practically covered by insurance.

It seemed at first that the school would suspend, but by great exertion the management has succeeded in providing for two-thirds of the students and the indications are that the school will continue successfully throughout the year.

The session opened on September 14th with the usual full attendance. Two hundred and fifty-four students were registered during the first week and about fifty more had arranged to come later. On account of the great disaster sustained in the destruction of Webb Hall, the attendance now is about two hundred pupils. Plans are on foot and arrangement will soon be made for rebuilding the dormitory. The new building will be larger and will afford better accommodations than the old. The plans call for one hundred bed rooms, besides a spacious parlor, a large dining room and a complete cooking department. The building will be completed by commencement and will be furnished and ready for use before the opening of the next session.