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**FINANCING THE FARMER**

**XXIV—THE DANISH FOLK HIGH SCHOOL**

The estate of a prosperous farm Proprietor, I said as I turned out of the dusty highway into an avenue of elms leading into a circle of brilliant flower beds; not the folk high school pointed out to me back yonder in the edge of the town, but a beauty spot that I'll explore if nobody arrests my steps. I had been a guest in various Little Lander and Middle Class farmer homes and here, I thought, was a chance to study the more elaborate establishment of a Proprietor. I did not hesitate, because the homes of the Danish farmers have welcoming, wide-open doors.

As I move up the avenue I glimpse plum, apple and cherry trees, flower-lined walks, rustic seats and a summer pavilion on one side, and on the other thickset currant bushes richly red and purple with ripening fruit, and a little further along clumps of heavily loaded gooseberry bushes. The dwelling that faces the flower beds is a vine-covered three-story structure of stuccoed brick. Wing buildings give it the form of the letter E, and the high-pitched roof is broken by dormer windows all the way around. Instead of ringing the doorbell and handing in my card, I move around the house and stray into a tennis court area alongside what appears to be a recreation hall; then into the square of barn buildings in the rear, and on into the poultry house and runs, the vegetable gardens, orchards, grain, forage and root-crop fields. I circle back among the flower beds and hedges, and near the house I chance upon a long shed filled with bicycles, a hundred or more in racks lining each wall.

As I stand in doubt, a young girl comes hurrying in. What is the other building yonder across the flower beds? I ask. It is the community building, she said, where the farmers and their wives will be meeting for ten days of lectures and enjoyable living together when the harvest season is over.

And then it dawned on me that what I had been exploring was not the handsome estate of a farm Proprietor but a school, a Danish Folk High School, a farm-life school on a well-developed farm, housed in a farm building, expanded and arranged for school uses, to be sure, but nevertheless a farmstead in every detail of appearance—a school that looked less like a school than anything I ever saw in America.

**An Illuminating Experience**

The young lady ushered me into the office of the headmaster who led me through the lecture rooms, the gymnasium, the library, the living quarters of a hundred students, the family residence in one wing of the building, and finally seated me with the faculty and the student body for a simple mid-day meal. He is the house-father and sits at the head of one of the long tables. His wife is the house-mother and sits by his side at the head of another long table. I am graciously welcomed into a big school-family circle; into the intimate family life of a school home, a home-school in fact as well as in seeming. The meal hour is a conversation period, an announcement period, a mail distributing occasion, enlivened by the gentle railleury of the principal. It is an illuminating experience for the half-dozen visitors spending the day in the school.

**Waking up Souls**

"I thought I was straying into the farm estate of a Proprietor," I said. "It is a farm," he responded, "and I am the proprietor, the sole owner of it. I am a teacher of course, but also I am a farmer, a farmer-teacher or a teacher-farmer whichever way one chooses to say it. This farm—the whole farm—is a school and this home is a farm-school that does not teach farming at all, or not directly and formally. Our purpose is better than that, it is aimed at waking up the souls of these young Danes to the opportunities and possibilities of noble living and noble citizenship as farmers in a cooperative commonwealth. This is an adult school, these students are between eighteen and twenty-six years of age, they come almost entirely out of farm homes, they are in a folk high school for four or five months once or maybe twice in

a life time, and we do not have a chance to teach them much but we do have a chance to stir the impulse to self-tuition in a thousand directions during all the rest of their lives. What they can be aroused to teach themselves out of school is ten thousand times more than we could ever hope to teach them in a folk school in a few months, and worth ten thousand times more, if only we can get them under a great headway of steam and set them going in the right direction. And the right direction is the best good of the largest number in community and commonwealth life, the high calling of the farmer, and the great estate of Denmark. The final values of life and death and destiny for individuals and nations is what we are busy with here day by day or try to be as an ideal school aim."

**How They Do It**

I found the twelve-hour school day devoted to lectures on the history, biography, legends, literature and art of Denmark, on the history makers and the epoch-making events of other lands, on the heroes of science, discovery and invention, on national ideals and group struggles upward, every lecture beginning with a song out of a high-school volume of Danish poetry. The long school day is relieved by conversation, question, and free discussion periods, by gymnasium exercises and out-door folkplays, games and songs, by meals, rest intervals, reading-room and library hours.

On my round of high-school visits I heard lectures on Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrim Fathers, Lincoln and Emancipation in America, Frederick Sixth and Danish Emancipation, Shaftsbury and Child Labor in England, Plato's Republic and Rule by the Wisest, Alexander the Great and his Weakness, Denmark's Leadership in Cooperative Business and Life, the Land Tax in Denmark and New Zealand, the Siegfried Stories, Longfellow's Hiawatha and Evangeline. These lectures by various teachers in various schools were very quiet in manner and voice, but very competent, very direct, and very effective. In all my high-school visits I found only one lifeless lecturer punishing a class with a dull hour. He is a young teacher with a university diploma and he knows Danish literature thoroughly, but he is lifeless and tedious, does not know young people and cannot probe to the quick of youth. Manifestly he has never been young himself—was born grown with his clothes on and his hands in his trousers' pockets, like Little Pip's ancestors in Great Expectations. He will disappear out of the folk-school faculties in a hurry, for dull teachers mean dead schools in Denmark. Which is a matter of critical importance, for these folk high schools are not public schools but private enterprises and their existence depends on their drawing power. Seventy of the schools established since 1844 have died. The eighty that remain have survived because they were fitly officered, fitly located, and fitly supported by community pride. Only the fit can survive. The number of folk high schools in Denmark will probably remain around eighty or one for every fifteen thousand farm inhabitants.

**A Unique Growth**

I have described one folk high school in detail, but what one of them is all of them are, in beauty of surroundings and interior life, academic ideals, atmosphere, aims and methods. They vary in minor matters and each has its own characteristic personality and flavor, but they are all small groups of young people living with the headmaster and his family on a country estate that is busy with life, country life, and commonwealth life, with life in the large and its spiritual significance.

They are unique schools. They are original and racial. They sprang out of Danish life and conditions as naturally as daisies spring up in our meadows at home. Their purpose is effectively accomplished in a single summer term of five months for the young women and in four winter months for

**CREDIT UNION IDEALS**

1. To stimulate thrift.
2. To save landless men from usury and time prices.
3. To help tenant farmers become land owners.
4. To develop business ability and a cooperative spirit among the people.—Clarence Poe.

the young men. They have no stereotyped course of study and they use very few text books, they assign no lessons and they forbid lecture note books, they have no roll calls and no absence committees, no examinations, no reports, no promotions, no graduation, and no commencement exercises.

What is it you are saying? is the question suddenly fired at me by two American school girls at the table in my Copenhagen boarding house. A school? Where is it? In Denmark, you say? well we thought it was in Heaven, it sounds like Heaven to us, is the irrelevant comment.

**Quality Vs. Quantity**

The simple fact is that the Danish Folk High Schools long ago abandoned education as a quantitative something measured by so many pages in so many books for so many years. They have preserved, and very well preserved, the notion of education as a qualitative something—a contact of spirit with quickening spirit, a flame kindled at a lamp of life, to paraphrase Carlyle's famous paragraph in Sartor Resartus. They have perpetuated the Mark Hopkins college on the end of a log in the woods. Their purpose is not information but the inward formation of character. Not what folks know but how they behave is the main matter, is the way one headmaster puts it.

**What It Leads To**

If these young Danes want technical instruction in farming, they go later on to the twenty-odd agricultural high schools of the state located here and there in Denmark, and to the State Agricultural College in Copenhagen. If they want liberal culture courses they join the six thousand students in the great University. Nearly exactly half of the ten thousand folk high school students from year to year go on into other institutions for scientific training, technical instruction and liberal learning. But whether they go or not, they seem never to get away from the high school that waked them up. From time to time they go back with their wives to the annual ten-day conferences in the fall and live over again their happy high-school life. They arrange the speaking dates of the high-school lecturers who reach every community of Denmark every year. They are the soul of the local organizations that offer the annual programs that we call chautauquas in America. And so on and on.

On a journey to one of these folk high schools, I fell in with a gray-haired Dane from Copenhagen, going to an early September conference at his beloved school. "I am a maltster by profession," said he, "and I was ten years in America. Mr Volstead sent me back home." Later on I found him singing the high-school songs lustily and playing the old high-school games on the school lawn with all the joy of indestructible youth. He has had no education beyond the self-tuition inspired by the folk high school, but he is a director of the Scandinavian-American Scholarship Foundation that every year gives a thousand dollars to each of a half-dozen picked young Americans who want to study the life and institutions of Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

**Worth While Study**

I have in mind a young Tarheel teacher who ought to be here next year on one of these scholarships studying the folk high schools, their origin, their essential character, and the part they have played in the building of modern Denmark. His account of their educational values would make better letters

than mine on this subject to the folks back home. He is a school technician, I am not. Nevertheless I shall be sending in several sketchy letters, such as they are, on the rare schools I have been seeing in Denmark.

Meantime interested students in North Carolina ought to be thumbing Foght's The Danish Folk High Schools, a bulletin of the Federal Education Bureau, and Alfred Poulsen's pamphlet on the Folk High School of Denmark, which is the best account we have of them in English.—E. C. Branson, Paris, Oct. 17, 1923.

**FINANCING THE FARMER**

During the last seven years remarkable progress has been made in providing farmers with the types of credit institutions needed in carrying on the business of agriculture. For many decades the farmer was forced to get his inadequate credit from banks which were designed to serve commercial needs. The farmer was forced to pay high interest rates when he borrowed from commercial banks which were not designed to accommodate his credit needs. Farmers and their organizations were constantly criticising our banking system because they could not borrow sufficient funds at legal interest rates. Finally it became evident that new types of banks had to be created in order to give the farmer the longer term credit his business demanded. Adequate machinery for practically every credit need of the farmer has been devised. The machinery is new and will need adjusting, but the main problem is acquainting the farmer with the banking facilities that have been designed for his use, and getting him to use them.

**Three Kinds of Credit**

The farmers' need is for credit of three kinds: long term, intermediate, and short term. For the purchase of land and equipment the farmer needs long term credit. For growing livestock and carrying his crops from planting time to harvest he needs intermediate credit, and for moving his products to market he needs short term credit. The Federal Farm Loan Act of 1916 provides for the major long term credit needs. Its use in practice is limited largely to land owners. The Intermediate Credit Act of 1923 provides the machinery that will supply farmers with intermediate and, to some extent, short term credit. The machinery is new and the act is very complicated in comparison with the Federal Farm Loan Act, but the machinery, once it is set up, will be in constant use by a large majority of our farmers, and by all cooperative marketing and purchasing associations. It is the commercial bank of the farmer and his organizations.

**Credit Unions**

In addition to the machinery provided by the Federal government, the state of North Carolina in 1915 made provision for the establishment of Credit Union Banks. Very few states have a Credit Union Act, and our act is the best that has been passed by any state. It provides that any group of seven or more persons can organize a credit union. A credit union is a community savings bank and a society of borrowers, and its use is not limited to farmers. Such banks are universally used in Europe, and they could perform untold service in this state. The act has been sadly neglected, but renewed efforts are now being made to acquaint the people with the great possibilities of credit unions.

**Ample Machinery**

It is perfectly clear, then, that so far as agricultural credit machinery is concerned the farmer has been well provided. The North Carolina farmer has the use of the banks created by the federal government, and in addition he can enjoy the benefits of membership in a credit union provided he has the initiative to help start one, and sufficient interest to help keep it going in his community.

The point I wish to make is that machinery has been created which, if put to work, will adequately supply the farmer with every credit need. Local bankers should make a study of recent agricultural credits legislation and instruct the farmers in the use of these new banks. But finally it is up to the

farmers themselves to do their part in setting these agricultural banks to work. They must study the banking game. Farmers can now be their own bankers, but until they become so, until they use the banks that the federal and state governments have provided for them, they will continue to pay high interest rates for the use of credit supplied by commercial banks which are not designed primarily to serve their needs.—S. H. H., Jr.

**FEDERAL FARM LOANS**

North Carolina farmers have borrowed \$25,107,650 from the banks of the federal farm loan system, according to a tabulation of these loans up to June 30, 1923, compiled from reports made to the federal farm loan board. This is North Carolina's participation in a grand total of \$1,160,695,516 advanced to farmers throughout the United States by the joint stock land banks and federal land banks.

During the year ending June 30, 1923, North Carolina farmers borrowed \$12,657,150 from the banks of the farm loan system. Of this amount \$9,526,450 was borrowed through the joint stock land banks, and \$3,130,700 through the federal land bank at Columbia. The statistics just issued show that, of the \$25,107,650 advanced to North Carolina farmers by the farm loan system since its organization, \$10,076,600 was supplied by joint stock land banks and \$15,031,050 by the federal land bank at Columbia.

During the year closed on June 30, 1923, the total of loans made through all the banks of the farm loan system throughout the forty-eight states was \$446,389,813. Of this amount, joint stock land banks supplied \$233,920,698 and the federals \$212,469,215.

The billion-dollar mark for the federal farm loan system, which includes both joint stock land banks and federal land banks, was passed on June 30, 1923, when the statement of business done from organization to that date gave the total of loans made by all the banks of the system as \$1,160,695,516. Of this amount, the federal land banks have made \$787,460,304, and the joint stock land banks have made \$373,199,212. However, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1923, joint stock land banks did a larger business than federal land banks.

**THE FARMER'S CHOICE**

It is interesting to note that 75 percent of all federal farm loan business done in North Carolina during the last fiscal year was done by the three joint stock land banks of the state. These banks are just beginning to operate in this state as 95 percent of their total business belongs to the fiscal year ending June 30, 1923. An attachment to the Federal Farm Loan Act provides for the operation of Joint Stock Land Banks. The parent act provides for association banks with cooperative features. It was the hope that these banks, together with the entire Federal Farm Loan System, would ultimately be owned and operated by the borrowing farmer. The hope was not materialized.

The joint stock land banks are now doing a larger business in the United States than all of the association, or farmer-owned and farmer-operated, banks. Our farmers do not like to be troubled with business details. They are not thrifty. They are not acquainted with banking principles. It involves just a little more trouble, a little more work, a little more cooperation, a little more time, to get an association bank organized and loans granted through these banks, than to secure an individual loan direct from a joint stock bank where the officials look after all the details, and charge for the privilege. Our farmers here in North Carolina prefer quick action with the details omitted. The method that involves the least amount of study, thought, and care suits them best. Otherwise they would market their products through strong cooperative associations, and finance themselves through banks owned and operated by themselves.

Federal and state laws have created ample machinery for marketing crops and for financing the farm through farmer-owned banks. It is the farmer's choice to determine whether he shall use the machinery that provides for him greater economic freedom or continue to enrich the coffers of those who do for him what he could and should do for himself.—S. H. H., Jr.