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FARM VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

XII—A LAND OF LITTLE COUNTRY FACTORIES

While exploring the country-end of things in Germany during the last three months, it has been impossible not to see the industries operating under country conditions, their amazing number and variety, their manifest prosperity, and their marvelous expansion in very recent years. My letters have contained frequent fragmentary references to the country factory life I see on every hand and I am now devoting a special letter to the farm village industries and the larger factory plants located in country regions quite aside and apart from the great cities and industrial areas of North Germany and the Rhineland.

I know, to be sure, of the huge factory plants and syndicates, everybody knows of these, but what most people of other lands know little about is the fact that Germany turns out cheaply produced high-grade specialties, novelties and notions in endless variety and vast volume, and that the cheap production of such goods is made possible by the village life of German farmers. The country village is a fixed fact of the German social order, and it is a fundamental fact that the farmers and business people of every nation may well consider. The village life of home-owning farmers is of course related to a prosperous and enduring country civilization, but it is no less certainly related to manufacture, trade, and banking. Germany, distracted as she is, is aware of this fact today better than ever before in her history, and she also knows that her power to compete with the gross production of big-scale industries in other countries today and in future years is largely based on this distinctive feature of her country civilization.

The country industries of Germany fall into three classes: (1) domestic industries, (2) small factories organized on a semi-domestic basis, and (3) full-fledged factory plants located in country regions or operating under country conditions in city suburbs.

Domestic Industries

1. I speak first of the domestic industries, based on the family as the producing unit, with a hired assistant or two, working in a space behind the shop or in a second-story room alongside the living quarters of the family. They are manufactories in the original meaning of the word, that is they turn out hand-made goods with a minimum of labor-saving devices. They are survivals of a primitive industrial order. Little trace of them is left in western civilization, but in Germany they still exist in the farm villages and are likely to be a detail of her country-town life as long as Germany endures.

Hand-Made Waterproof Shoes

To illustrate. The other day I found my shoes in need of resoling. I was directed into what looked like a shoe store. It was a shoe store, but also it was to my great surprise a shoe factory, filled with hand-made shoes fashioned on the spot by the family and a half-dozen assistants, with almost no shoe machinery. And very attractive shoes they were, not quite up to the mark of American foot wear, but what they lack in style and finish they make up in lasting qualities and comfort. The proprietor is a shoe-mender, a shoe-maker, a shoe-seller, and what is more a seller of cheap shoes that defy wear and weather. If it were not so, he would be forced out of business altogether, for rubber overshoes are almost unknown in Germany. I could not find a single pair in any store in all Augsburg on a soggy day last week. And really no native needed such shoes, for the hand-made shoes are practically water-proof. There are shoe factories everywhere and their number increases daily, but most German shoes are hand-made in little shops like this, and are likely to be so made for long years to come. The shoe-maker in his little shop disappeared in America many years ago. He is now merely a shoe-mender, who mends shoes with electrical machinery which he does not own and for the use of which he must pay to a great organization a royalty that consumes a very large part of his profits.

Country Butchery Artistic

And what I have said of shoe makers and shoes is true of butchers and meat products. Every German village has its butcher and he is apt to be a skilled artisan who not only slaughters all the farm animals, but trims, cures, and packages all the meat products of his little territory—the hams, shoulders and sides, the head cheese and souse, and the sausages that appear in bewildering variety on the farm tables and in the city shop windows. In America this business has been taken over by the big packers who supply a good deal more than half of all the meat products we consume. The metzger in Germany is still an artist not merely a butcher, and his grip on his business is so firm that huge packing plants are never likely to drive him to cover. Packing plants exist and they steadily increase in number, but they are relatively small, and almost invariably they are located in country towns not in the great cities.

Home-Made Confections

The other day in Snaith, a little farm village a mile or so off the railroad, I was hunting up the birthplace of Silcher, the great writer of German folk songs, when I chanced upon another commercialized product domestically produced—a pastry confection that looks like Spanish peanuts and melts in the mouth like cream chocolates. It is as dainty as any product of the American Biscuit Company, and just as attractively packaged, but it is a family product that goes out to the trade from the back rooms of a country-village dwelling. The famous Christmas cakes of Nuremberg had a similar origin and they are largely produced in domestic kitchens for general distribution till this good day. The same thing is true of bake-shop products of every sort. Great cake and candy concerns operating on a factory basis would not have a ghost of a chance in Germany.

Home Industries Galore

Another illustration. My battered hand-bags were mended the other day in a little country factory-town shop in which most of the leather goods offered for sale are made behind the store by the proprietor, his family, and an additional leather worker or two—trunks, suit cases, document cases, hand bags, traveling kits, pocket books, toilet articles and the like. The display of wares was most attractive. Just around the corner was the barber shop for men and women, and as usual it was something more than a shaving, hair-cutting, shampooing establishment: it was a place where braids, wigs, and such like articles are made by the wife and children. There is literally no end to the little family industries of farm village life in Germany.

Semi-Domestic Industry

2. I speak next of the semi-domestic small factory of the country villages and village suburbs—the factory with a dozen or a score of workmen housed in a special building, with the owner and his family living in the factory yard or next to it or nearby, and preserving in some degree the intimate contacts and fellowships of a family circle. Factories of this type are too numerous to mention in detail. They have passed out of existence in the United States in general, and are fast disappearing in North Carolina. The Holts and Cannons began cotton milling in this fashion, but it is a vanishing fashion.

Two or three factories close at hand illustrate what I mean. One is a factory in which eighteen workmen are turning out gold, silver, and German silver thimbles that go into every country of the world. I passed it many times before I found out that it was a factory and not a farm dwelling. Another is a factory just about as large as my home in Chapel Hill, but it houses twenty skilled artists and artisans busy designing and making gold and silver plate, jewelry, and toilet articles. The owner's dwelling is connected with the factory by a corridor. In another factory which adjoins its owner's dwelling the thirty-odd workmen are making the mechanism that rotates the disk in gramophones. All these little farm village factories have made their proprietors rich within the last five years, and now they are all feverishly at work enlarging their plants or building brand new factories. So far their riches are mostly in paper marks, but they are turning these marks into substantial properties just as fast as ever they can. Which is what the little factory owners are doing everywhere, and it largely explains the building activities I see on every hand.

Larger-Scale Production

3. A more spectacular phase of country manufacture is the full-fledged factory plant in the farm villages or on the outskirts or out in the open country on railway lines that tap the abundant farm labor supply. The Neckar valley from the Swabian Alps to the Rhine is an unbroken string of industrial centers and plants operated by the farm labor of contiguous areas. The same thing is true of the upper reaches of the Danube from the Black Forest eastward, also of the Main, the Saal, and every other stream that flows out of the Hartz mountains and the Thuringian hills in Central and Eastern Germany. Nevertheless these areas remain dominantly rural and agricultural. They are made and kept so by the well-nigh universal ownership of homes and farms by the factory workers. The old men, the women, and the children keep the farms perfectly cultivated, aided by the husbands aud the older boys and girls before and after factory hours. These regions look to me to be just as perfectly cultivated and just as beautiful today as they did fifteen years ago. It is a situation that puts the social incendiary at a clear disadvantage. His nose is out of joint in these areas. The industrial activity, prosperity, and expansion of the last few years are clearly manifest, and entirely beyond doubt or debate.

How It Differs in N. C.

Manufacture under country conditions is nothing new in Germany. Sidney Whitman called attention to it twenty-five years ago. It is a distinctive feature of industrial Germany as it is of North Carolina.

If only our farm and factory workers were home owners settled in compact farm communities as they are in the main in Germany, I should be less disturbed than I am at present about the future of both our farm and our factory civilizations. I do not believe any civilization, in town or country, can be safely based on the landless estate of men. And just as strongly I do believe in cooperative community life and enterprise. Modern life in big cities everywhere looks to me very like a lot of crabs in the bottom of a bucket, every crab crawling over every other crab trying to get on top. It is a sorry spectacle, and it is pagan to the core, no matter how we label it, whether Christian or not.—E. C. Branson, Berlin, July 3, 1923.

COOPERATION

Today business organization is moving strongly toward co-operation. There are in the co-operative great hopes that we can even gain in individuality, equality of opportunity, and an enlarged field for initiative, and at the same time reduce many of the great wastes of over-reckless competition in production and distribution. Those who fear that co-operation is an advance toward socialism need neither rejoice nor worry. Co-operation in its current economic sense represents the initiative of self-interest blended with a sense of service, for nobody belongs to a co-operative who is not striving to sell his products or services for more or striving to buy from others for less, or striving to make his income more secure. Their members are furnishing the capital for extension of their activities just as effectively as if they did it in corporate form and they are simply transferring the profit principle from joint return to individual return. Their only success lies where they eliminate waste either in production or distribution—and they can do neither if they destroy individual initiative. Indeed this phase of development of our individualism promises to become the dominant note of its twentieth century expansion. But it will thrive only in so far as it can construct leadership and a sense of service, and so long as it preserves the initiative and safeguards the individuality of its members.—Herbert Hoover.

ACTIVE SPINDLES

The textile mills of North Carolina are about the most active in the United States. That our mills are in healthy condition is shown by the July report of the Department of Commerce. Although Massachusetts has more than twice as many cotton spindles as we, the active spindle hours in this state in July were 89 percent of the total active spindle hours of Massachusetts. The average spindle in our state ran 267 hours, while in the leading textile state, at present, the average spindle ran only 138 hours. The average in South Carolina was 268 hours.

Almost the same conditions exist when the South and North are compared. The average southern spindle ran 254 hours during July, while the average for the North was 141 hours. The South is the natural home of the textile industry, and North Carolina possesses more and better advantages than any other southern state. It is the confession of northern mill men themselves.

OUR CHEMICAL INDUSTRY

Pine Products Industry

Everyone familiar with the Old North State knows the part the long-leaf pine has played in its literature and traditions. Yet few realize that it also furnished the resources for two of the state's many industries, namely, the lumber and pine products industries. Long-leaf pine and oak lumber from this state are daily being shipped to the North. In addition to the pine lumber industry, we have an important naval stores industry in turpentine and rosin production. Besides going to all parts of the United States, shipments of rosin and turpentine are being made to many foreign countries, including India and Australia.

In this state there are eight small firms engaged in some phase of the pine by-products business. They represent an invested capital of but $38,650 and an annual output of $107,170. Most of the plants are located in the southeastern part of the state, Brunswick and New Hanover counties being the center of the industry. The industry is concerned primarily with the production of turpentine and rosin, but some of the companies are now producing many other products. Only 62 men were employed in this industry in 1920.

Old Methods and New

The old method for collecting the raw material for turpentine production consisted in boxing or wounding the tree in such a way that it gave off a gum which was collected and distilled. This was a very wasteful process, for it not only sapped the vitality of the tree but also destroyed its usefulness for milling purposes, sometimes killing the trees. This method has given way somewhat to the more economical and productive process of destructive distillation of the pine wood wastes. In this method the wood distiller uses the stumps, knots and other refuse from the lumber mills, the greatest cost being for labor necessary for harvesting the wood and hauling it to the stills. The process consists of the destructive distillation of the wood in the absence of air. The heating is carried on in large steel retorts set in masonry over a fire-box. After being filled with wood the retorts are sealed, the fires started, and in a few hours the distillation begins. The vapors passing off are condensed, and the distillate is redistilled into various products according to the use to which they are to be put.

A Developing Industry

The most important product is wood turpentine, of which about fifteen gallons are obtained from each cord of wood. Besides the turpentine a cord of wood will yield about six gallons of oil, the same amount of a substance called pyroligneous acid, rosin, and charcoal. The oil yields products which can be used for flotation in mining operations, as a solvent in wood and metal paints, for wood preservation, in the manufacture of reclaimed rubber products, for insecticides and as a drug, Oil of Pine Tar. The pyroligneous acid or liquid smoke, the least valuable of the products, is useful as liquid smoke, in dyeing and in the manufacture of synthetic vinegar and various other chemicals. The industry is still in its infancy. Each year the chemists are finding many new uses for the products and the chemical engineers are perfecting new and better methods of production. With the large lumber industry in the state there is an enormous amount of waste wood, to say nothing of the stumps lost, which should be utilized by the wood distiller. One authority has recently stated that if Germany had the pine stumps of the South she could distill them into products whose value would pay the war debt imposed upon her by the Allies. The pine stumps of North Carolina have untold wealth in them.—Division of Industrial Chemistry, Department of Chemistry, University of North Carolina.

ASSEMBLING RECORDS

The University Library is interested in completing back files of North Carolina periodicals, documents, reports, proceedings ofsocieties, etc., for the North Carolina Collection. Some of the periodicals to be completed are listed below. The Librarian will be glad to hear of available issues of the following periodicals.

Periodicals

Academy and Alumnae Record of Salem College. Any issue.
Arator. Issues of 1855-1857.
At Home and Abroad.
Biblical Recorder.
Blum's Farmer's and Planter's Almanac.
Branson's North Carolina Business Directory.
Carolina Cultivator.
Carolina Farmer.
Charlotte Medical Journal.
Everywoman's Magazine.
Farmer's Advocate.
Key-Stone.
Literary World.
Lyceum.
N. C. Agricultural Almanac.
N. C. College for Women Alumnae News.
N. C. Common School Journal.
N. C. Educational Journal.
N. C. Journal of Education. Issues of 1862, 1863, 1864.
N. C. Law Journal. Vol. 2, No. 12, April 1902.
N. C. Medical Journal. Issues of 1858, 1859, 1908.
N. C. Planter.
N. C. Telegraph.
N. C. White Ribbon.
Orphan's Friend and Masonic Journal.
Progressive Farmer.
Racket.
Reconstructed Farmer.
Solicitor.
South-Atlantic. Published in Wilmington. Issues of 1877-8, 1879, 1880, 1881.
Southern Educator.
Southern Furniture Journal.
Southern Good Roads. Issues since 1917.
Southern Pictures and Pencillings.
Southern Public Utilities Magazine.
Southern Review.
Southern Textile Bulletin.
Southern Tobacco Journal.
Stedman's Magazine.
Tarheel Banker.
Turner's N. C. Almanac. Issues for 1868.
Yackety-Yack. Issue for 1918.