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## COUNTRY LIFE IN EUROPE

### FARM LIFE ABROAD And Its Lessons to America

The following review of Dr. E. C. Branson's book "Farm Life Abroad" published by the University of North Carolina Press appeared in the *Manufacturers Record*, April 2, 1925, and was written by Richard Woods Edmonds, editor in charge. The first edition of the book has been exhausted. Orders already received will practically exhaust the second edition now being printed. The book appeals strongly to the general reader who is interested in improving the rural end of our civilization. Yet, to the surprise of its author, large orders for "Farm Life Abroad" have been received from colleges and universities where the book has been adopted as collateral reading in courses dealing with rural life. The book's strongest appeal should be to the general reader in North Carolina who is interested in the farmer. It was for our home folks primarily that it was written and published. A copy of the book, price \$2.00, may be had by writing the University Press, Chapel Hill, N. C.—S. H. H., Jr., Editor.

Many an American reading "Farm Life Abroad," whether he be farmer, merchant, manufacturer, banker or broker, will envy the happy lot of the Danish farmers. There are a few things our farmers might learn to their advantage from the German farmers, and a few they might learn from the French farmers. Most of them own their farms. None of them live in remote, solitary isolation. They live in compact little farm villages, go out daily to their work, and enjoy a degree of social life with life-long friends and neighbors that is impossible for the great majority of our farmers. Professor Branson says:

"In south and central Germany there are 2,000,000 of these small, home-owning farmers, dwelling in compact social groups, not in solitary farmsteads a few to the square mile in vast open spaces as in the United States. It is loneliness alone that accounts for much of the cityward drift of country people in America. It is the social life of home-owning farmers in farm villages that will save the country life of Europe from falling into the decay that threatens America."

On the other hand, these French and German farmers can teach our farmers much of what to avoid. The back-breaking drudgery of women and children, who are the beasts of burden on German and French farms, and scavengers pushing carts along the roads to gather up the manure dropped by passing animals—such work for women and children is intolerable alike to Danish and American farmers. It is therefore with a feeling of disquiet that one reads, "Our own small-scale farmers are moving little by little toward the low estate of the knee-farming peasants of the Old World countries, where the farm burdens rest in the main upon the backs of women and children."

But when we come to Denmark! There, it seems is the paradise of farmers. There the chief business of the nation is farming, and the State is organized and run by the farmers for the benefit of the farmers. "Do the farmers of Denmark ever work any?" Professor Branson asked a Dane. "If they do, I have never been able to catch them at it. In a single afternoon in a single landscape anywhere in central and south Germany you can see more people at work in the fields than I have seen in the fields of Denmark in six weeks of travel from one end of the state to the other. What's the answer?"

The Dane this question was fired at spoke English, and was the university-bred son of a farmer who was a seasoned member of Parliament.

"My answer would be," said he, "that the Dane is lazy by nature. He never sweats his back if he can get there by sweating his brain."

And this, to judge by the chapters that follow, is a modest manner of saying that the Dane is a thinker. He has his farm work so perfectly organized that animals, machines, or cooperative farm societies do most of the work for

him. Professor Branson finds: "He picks his farm animals in the fields and they harvest his crops for him during seven or eight months of the year. He is a livestock farmer on a machine basis, which means minimum workers and minimum hours in the field. As for marketing his crops and getting the money into his pocket, he hardly bothers with it at all; the cooperative societies attend to that."

But the cooperative societies are the farmers' own organizations, to eliminate the middleman and give the farmer whatever profit is made on his produce. The cooperative reduces his pigs to bacon, ham and so forth and sells the products to the ultimate consumers. Some of them even maintain retail food shops in London and Manchester, and the profits from those stores go right back to the farmers in Denmark. Professor Branson has seen better farmers than the Danes, but, he says, he has never seen better business men anywhere than the Danish farmers.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. "The Danish farmers are rich," asserts Professor Branson. "Man for man, they are the richest farmers in the world. And they have risen to this pre-eminence in this short space of seventy-five years. I say seventy-five years because they began to combine their resources in credit unions as long ago as 1850. During the sixty years immediately preceding this date they were struggling with landlessness, illiteracy and poverty." One hundred and thirty-five years ago, or about the time the thirteen American states were adopting their Constitution, the Danish farmers were freed from serfdom by their king.

It appears that while Americans of pronounced business ability have gone into industrial life, the Danes, having no such natural resources on which to base industries and knowing only agriculture, were staying right on the farm and developing farming along scientific business principles. Thus the best brains of the nation have gone into farming, with the unique result Branson so vividly describes.

While the cause of their success is therefore that peculiar form of laziness, the instrument by which they have achieved success is the cooperative enterprise. "They keep their hands on their own farm wealth every inch of the way from the farmers' fields to the consumers' tables," reports Professor Branson. "I asked, in the innocence of a greenhorn from the States, whether or not it was against the law in Denmark for a farmer to act alone and to do things for himself by himself. The answer was, 'Not at all, but the Danish farmer who hasn't sense enough to see the direct advantage of cooperative business is so rare that he is almost unknown.'"

In 1923 Denmark exported \$233,000,000 worth of farm products, after feeding herself. North Carolina, the leading agricultural state of the South next to Texas, with a population about equal to Denmark's and three times the area, annually imports about \$200,000,000 of food and feed stuffs, although in justice it should be said that she exports large values in cotton and tobacco. The difference is that all of the Danish farmers feed themselves as far as their farms can be made to do it, and their exports are surplus, while a large proportion of the Danish business men maintain small farms or gardens that suffice for their families, while many of our farmers have not yet learned the value of feeding themselves from their own kitchen gardens.

One of the outstanding features of the Danish farm philosophy that all Americans of whatever walk in life should study most carefully is their attitude toward State aid. The statement is made, "the Danish farmers do not believe in salvation by legislation, economic or social. What they do believe in is salvation by organization, and their organizations are self-help enterprises. In which respect they differ radically from the state-supported cooperatives of the Mediterranean peoples—France and Italy for instance."

We have a few farm cooperatives in

### COUNTY GOVERNMENT Bulletins May Be Had

Improved county government is one of the outstanding needs in North Carolina, along with every other state in the Union. We seem to be headed towards a real business-like administration of state government. An even more urgent need is improved county government. Three fine pamphlets on county government have recently appeared, as follows: County Government in North Carolina, by A. C. McIntosh of the University Law School; A New Kind of County Government, by Herbert Quick; and The County Manager Plan, by Richard S. Childs. The library of the Department of Rural Social-Economics has secured five hundred copies of each of the above pamphlets and a set may be had free as long as the limited supply lasts by writing to the Department of Rural Social-Economics, Chapel Hill, N. C.

this country, and they do not expect State aid. They are as independent of it as the Danish cooperatives. But we also have strong appeals for salvation by legislation, for State aid of one sort or another to farmers, and many people believe prosperity by legislation is a possibility. It would be interesting and highly enlightening if we could analyze this sentiment and find how much of it comes from those European races that seem to turn naturally to their Governments for aid, and how much of it—if any—comes from our native Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian peoples. The workings of these State-supported cooperatives are instructive and throw light on the results to be expected from Government support in any line.

The question is, therefore, worth further examination, and it is shown that, "among the Mediterranean peoples the cooperatives are financed by large grants from the State, and the credit organizations are largely managed by state officials. The same thing is largely true of producing, buying and selling cooperatives. The result is what might easily have been foreseen at the start. The cooperators are a large voting bloc, and they make increasing demands year by year—a voting bloc so large in Italy that they threatened bankruptcy to the State until Mussolini called a halt. France at this very minute is facing the same serious problem. Soft-soaping the farmers is the prime business of a Minister of Agriculture in one of the countries I visited last year. I discovered in my interview with him that everything done in his department was done with the purpose of controlling the farm vote in the approaching elections."

What use do the world's richest farmers make of the abundant spare time their skilful organization of their business has left them? To judge from Professor Branson's account, they appear to make excellent use of it. His chapters, besides those devoted to the educational system in Denmark, are liberally sprinkled with references to their intellectual life. "The Danes are farmers, but even more they are business men, \* \* \* and I am assured that they are easily equal to the bankers and brokers in discussing foreign situations and domestic consequences, trade policies and economic laws in general." Speaking of two neighboring farms, Professor Branson writes, "They are operated by a father and son, the one said to have the ripest university culture and the other the best business brain among the farmers of Denmark. Culture and agriculture are one in Denmark, because farming in this democratic Commonwealth is a satisfying way of life as well as a profitable form of business."

There are several interesting chapters on education in Denmark, but the outstanding features of Danish education seem to be, first, the exceedingly

low percentage of illiteracy, compared with which Professor Branson finds conditions in America "humiliating"; and second, the folk high schools that dot the country—an institution peculiarly Danish. One such school that he visited "aimed at waking up the souls of these young Danes to the opportunities of noble living and noble citizenship as farmers in a cooperative Commonwealth. This is an adult school; these students are between 18 and 26 years of age; they come almost entirely out of farm homes; they are in a folk high school for five or six months once or maybe twice in a lifetime, 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." It would be impossible to say how large a part these folk high schools, with their impulse to self-tuition, or to the continuation of study throughout life, have contributed to the intellectual life Professor Branson found on farms throughout the country—the keen interest in art, in literature and world affairs, and in music, such as may be found in this country only in rare spots.

It would be difficult to find a single book more stimulating to the imagination of anyone interested in the happiness and welfare of our farm people than this book of Branson's. But it has a far wider appeal. It possesses considerable value to the student of government or of economics, for it deals freely and broadly with the economic and political philosophy of a highly successful farm civilization.

"For Denmark is what no other country in Europe is; indeed, what no other state in the world is—namely, a cooperative Commonwealth in every phase of statehood—economic, social, and civic," declares the writer.

"The Danes believe that home and farm ownership tethers a man to law and order better than all the laws on the statute books, that it promotes industry, thrift, sobriety, and integrity, that it makes a man a stable, responsible citizen, that it breeds in him a sense of proprietary interest in churches, schools and roads, that it moves him to safeguard his home and home community against social contaminations, that it makes him a better husband, a better father, a better neighbor, and a better citizen. And they are everlastingly right about it. Any community, state or country, is in peril so long as its mud-sills are laid down in landlessness, homelessness, and roving, irresponsible citizenship. The Danes are so strongly established in this belief that they have literally moved Heaven and earth in the last quarter-century to reduce town and country tenancy to zero, or as nearly so as humanly possible.

"America has moved steadily in the opposite direction. More than one-half of all the people in the United States live in dwellings that they do not own, more than one-half of all the Southern farmers are renters and croppers, a third of all our white farmers and two-thirds of our negro farmers in North Carolina are tenants, while in our larger cities from two-thirds to three-fourths of the people spend their days and nights, like poor Dante, going up and down somebody else's stairs."

No American business man can read the book without wishing fervently that our farmers would become anchored to their farms by ownership ties, while our working classes and, in fact, all classes—became anchored to moderate, conservative policies of politics through ownership of their homes. No one with a drop of crusader blood in his veins can read the book without resolving to do all his station in life will permit him to do to bring to pass this highly desirable consummation.

### NEED FOR REFORESTATION

In the rush to occupy and use the American continent our citizens have assumed that all land topographically suitable could and would be used for agriculture. Experience has now demonstrated that hundreds of millions of acres of cut-over forest land are not usable except for tree crops. Scores of thousands of forest-land farms have been abandoned. Such regions have reverted to virtual deserts or scrubby wildernesses. Restoration of their for-

ests will revive many dead towns and bring back industrial populations that migrated with the old lumber mills. Some kinds of agriculture can well be carried on in association with permanent forest industries, but not without them. After a hundred years of settlement some of the forested states have much less than half their area in farm land. As a rule the rest ought to be growing trees.—American Forest Week Committee.

### TIMBER AS A CROP

Strange as it may seem, the American people, bred for many generations to forest life, drawing no small measure of their wealth from the forests, have not yet acquired the sense of timber as a crop. Immense stretches of cut-over land, mostly too rough or too sterile for tilling, have not awakened us to their vast potential worth as growers of wood. Fully one-fourth of our land area ought to be kept in forest—not poor, dwindling thickets of scrub, but forests of trees fit for bridges and houses and ships.—President Coolidge.

### A PRIZE WINNING LETTER

With body, heart and soul, I like North Carolina better than I do any other place in America—and I know why.

I have traveled in thirty-seven states—from New York to Texas, from Illinois to Georgia, and from North Carolina to California. After seeing much, I came back to stay, because:

I like North Carolina scenery, which equals Mount Vernon, Sleepy Hollow, Great Lakes region, Pike's Peak, the Royal Gorge, and the Golden Gate.

North Carolina has well-nigh ideal climate. Extremes of heat and cold are unknown here. Enough snow in winter for sleighing and enough heat in summer for an abundance of fruits and vegetables; in short, a climate one loves to touch.

North Carolina has superior government; equal educational opportunity for all is in the making, from kindergarten to university; concrete and sand-clay roads that make travel a joy unbounded; and a system of law enforcement that makes life safe and justice obtainable.

I love the people here—kind, friendly, neighborly—because I feel at home among them. In the words of a North Carolina toast: I'm a Tar Heel born and Tar Heel bred; And when I die I'll be a Tar Heel dead.

—M. B. Andrews, in *Colliers*.

### EXTENSION STUDENTS

In a survey of the last five hundred students to register for correspondence courses with the University of North Carolina Extension Division, interesting information concerning ages, geographical distribution, and occupations has been revealed.

As would be expected, correspondence students are older, on an average, than University resident students. The average age of students in residence is probably about twenty years, while that of the correspondence students is twenty-nine.

Among the last five hundred students to register there are forty-four women over forty years of age, seven above fifty, and one sixty-six. Of the men, seven are above forty, three above fifty.

Eight states besides North Carolina are represented. They are: Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Florida, Washington, D. C., Illinois, and California. Of the five hundred students selected for this study, four hundred and seventy-three are North Carolinians.

The leading occupations are as follows: lumbermen, farmers, housekeepers, office managers, barbers, students, school superintendents and principals, teachers, ministers, college professors, clerks, secretaries, tobacco foremen, and normal school professors.

The most popular subjects studied by these students are Education, College English, Modern History, History of Music, French and Spanish Composition, Economics and Rural Economics, Introductory Sociology, Investments, Advertising, Salesmanship, and Business Law.