

Agricultural Prosperity in Denmark

Being an Analysis of H. Rider Haggard's Great Agricultural Work on "Rural Denmark and Its Lessons."

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AMONG the recent books of interest to farmers is Haggard's "Rural Denmark and Its Lessons." It shows how, by a proper system of farming and general cooperation, they have triumphed over the difficulties of soil and climate and low prices, until from a nation on the verge of ruin they have become one of the most prosperous of the agricultural nations. Their cooperation is of the most practical kind, and every advantage is taken of market conditions. In their cooperative dairies, the collection of the milk is made by the dairy, that is, the individual farmer does not bring in his own milk as in most of our cooperative dairies. Except for one day a week, in many of the large dairies no butter is made, the cream being exported to Germany, where there is a duty on butter but not on cream.

Starting Dairies.

In starting their dairies the necessary capital is borrowed and guaranteed by the local farmers in proportion to the amount of milk to be supplied by each of them. As the failure of a cooperative dairy factory is almost unheard of, this guaranty is not a source of anxiety to the guarantor. The milk is tested once a week by experts, and if a farmer's milk is below the test he is warned, and if the deficiency continues he is dropped, but this very rarely happens. Many of the dairy farmers milk three times a day, as it is said the increase in quantity of milk obtained more than compensates for the extra labor. The farmers in a neighborhood hire cooperatively a highly educated, expert woman, who visits them once a fortnight to test the milk for butter fat, and prescribes the proper amount of food for the cows. The milking on many dairy farms is done by machines and the "stripping" by hand.

An Unusual School.

In Denmark they have a rather unusual kind of high school, which helps to account for the high percentage of education in Denmark. This school is nearly self supporting, that is, it receives very little government aid, and has some private capital, but its chief support is the tuition of the students. These are young men and women of from seventeen to twenty-five years of age, who pay for the six months session \$75.00 tuition and fees. The school is in session for six months for the winter term, which is largely attended, and for three months in summer, which is attended annually by a small number of very young women. This term of six months permits young people to work half the year to pay for the schooling the other half. There are no examinations, and no degrees which open doors to a career. They go to school for learning, and for learning only, and the surprising thing is that ten per cent of the population go through these high schools. It is no uncommon thing in Denmark to find a farm hand that speaks French and German, and reads English. Another partial cause of the high state of education in Denmark is the fact that books are sent out postage free from several of the large libraries.

Denmark has also an interesting system of schools for farmers, especially the small land holders. There is a summer and a winter session of six months each. The pupils are admitted without examination, at any age above eighteen years. It costs a little over \$11.00 a month. This covers instruction, board and washing. These schools are very popular, and attended often by persons of advanced age.

Acquiring Small Farms.

The Danish system of acquiring small farms by state aid is interesting, but is still in the experimental age. The system is as follows: The farmers are allowed to borrow of the state nine-tenths of the value of the small farm to be purchased, the farmer being in possession of the remaining one-tenth before he makes application for state aid. He pays three percent interest for the first five years. After that he pays four percent interest to the state. At first three per cent of this is interest and one per cent goes to the liquidation of his debt, but as the debt decreases the amount paid for interest

decreases, and the amount for payment increases so that the debt to the state is liquidated in 98 years. One of the arguments against the success of the system as practiced at present is that the sale of land is not compulsory, and the land owners charge more than the value of the land. The purchaser being eager to secure a holding, and getting the money on such easy terms from the state, purchases at this inflated price. The second argument is that the state receives only three per cent interest, but cannot itself borrow at less than three and a quarter to three and a half per cent, and the loss comes out of the taxpayers for the benefit of a single class. It is generally felt that one-tenth is too small a proportion for the small holder to have in his possession at the start, and does not give him sufficient to stock his farm and stand the stress of accident.

Cooperative Societies.

The Danish farmers buy and sell entirely through cooperative societies. Without these they say it would be impossible to get along successfully.

Denmark has a system of credit unions or banks, which are private cooperative institutions, and are not guaranteed, though carefully inspected, by the government. The interest paid on loans is from three to four and a half per cent. The sinking fund, as a rule, is one per cent. These unions or banks are very successful.

In closing his book Mr. Haggard shows that the agricultural prosperity of Denmark depends upon three things: First, their having turned from grain farming, for which their country is ill fitted, to dairy and pig farming; second, their almost universal system of cooperation, both in buying and selling; and third, their system of small land holdings, under which ninety per cent of the farmers own their own farms. Mr. Haggard is an English farmer, farming 500 acres, 250 of which he owns, 250 of which he rents. His comparisons throughout the book are with English conditions. It would be exceedingly interesting if we could have such a comparative study of Denmark and the United States. However, this book brings to the American farmer many most suggestive ideas concerning really productive agriculture. It is well worth purchasing.

France has 20,994 mutual benefit societies with an aggregate membership of 5,040,735 and annual receipts of \$18,000,000.

I SHALL BE WORTHY.

I may not reach the heights I seek;
My untried strength may fail me
Or halfway up the mountain peak
Pierce tempests may assail me;
But, though my goal I never see,
This thought shall always dwell with me—
I will be worthy of it.

I may not triumph in success
Despite my earnest labor;
I may not grasp results that bless
The efforts of my neighbor;
But, though life's dearest joy I miss,
There lies a nameless strength in this—
I will be worthy of it.
—E. A. Wheeler Wilcox.

GOLDEN EGGS.

I wish I owned the faltered goose
Which laid an egg of gold,
A shining nugget ere / day,
To make her master glad and gay,
For if I did I'n not turn loose
On her my axman hold.
Instead I'd christen her "Macduff"
And quote her Mr. Shakespeare's stuff.

And when she would "lay on" to praise
And pet her I would seek,
And I would gather every day
And treasure up her golden lay,
And at the end of each four days
(Or maybe every week)
I'd trade her product for one treat—
One fresh 'd chicken egg to eat.
—Kansas City Star.

Mr. Merchant!

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