

CHAPTER XVII

AN EXPERIMENT STATION IN FARMING

Denmark has developed constructive ideas in agriculture, and state aid to farmers farther than any nation in the world. It has in fact become a great agricultural experimental station. The farmer is the first concern of the state. There is little industry. For forty years parliament, education, and thousands of co-operative associations have been working to increase the productiveness of the farm and improve the quality of its produce. Just as other countries have devoted themselves to the upbuilding of industry and commerce, Denmark has devoted herself to the production of food, and to its marketing with the least possible loss to the farmers.

As a result of these efforts, Denmark has become very prosperous. Her people enjoy a high degree of comfort. There is a higher standard of education than in any country of Europe. Illiteracy is only .002 per cent. A

unique educational system has been evolved that has commanded the admiration of experts from England and America. Every well-to-do peasant expects to spend at least one period at the people's high schools.

Tenancy is being ended by legislation. Two generations ago, 42.5 per cent. of the farmers owned their farms. To-day, 89.9 per cent. of the farmers are owners. This has been achieved in large part by the state providing money at a low rate of interest, with which large estates are purchased, and broken up into small holdings, to be sold to tenants and farm-laborers on easy terms. Fourteen thousand farms have been provided in this way since 1900. Their average size is from seven to ten acres. The total capital advanced by the state up to 1914 was \$18,500,000. Farm foreclosures of the small state-aided holdings are uncommon. And they have steadily decreased in recent years.

From Bankruptcy to Prosperity.

All this has been brought about in a very short time. It began about 1880. The Danish farmer was being driven to the wall by the

competition of the wheat-fields of America and the tariff legislation of Germany. To meet these conditions he turned his attention from wheat-growing to the production of bacon, eggs, poultry, butter, and fine stock. Small-scale production was substituted for large-scale production. To-day, Denmark helps to feed England. There is but little emigration out of the country, for any tenant or farm-laborer who has shown the proper attitude for farming, can secure sufficient aid from the state to buy a small farm. All he has to do is to satisfy the state of his intelligence and ability, and put up 10 per cent. of the cost himself. The state supplies the balance. He is given sixty years in which to make repayments.

The exports from Denmark indicate the rapidity with which the country has responded to this new type of agriculture. In thirty years' time, from 1881 to 1912, the value of her exports increased from \$12,000,000 to \$125,000,000. Speaking of this development, Honorable P. P. Claxton, in an introduction to a report on the Danish Folk High Schools, by H. W. Foght, published by the United States Bureau of Education in 1914, says:

“Waste and worn-out lands have been reclaimed and renewed. Co-operation in production and marketing has become more common than in any other country. Landlordism and farm-tenantry have almost disappeared. Rural social life has become intelligent, organic, and attractive. A high type of idealism has been devised among the masses of the people. A real democracy has been established. This is the out-growth of an educational system, universal, practical, and democratic.”

Increasing Wealth Production.

The change which has come over the country and especially over agriculture is a standing demonstration of what can be done on the land. There is no similar exhibit of the wealth that can be taken from a small piece of land, or of the civilization that can be built about intensive, scientific agriculture. The following figures indicate the increasing prosperity of the country:

Average exports of bacon, butter, eggs, horses, and cattle from 1857 to 1908:

1857-1879.....	\$14,500,000
1895-1899.....	50,909,000
1908.....	88,850,000
1913.....	125,000,000

The exports in quantities are even more striking:

AVERAGE FOR YEARS	TONS BUTTER	TONS HAMS AND BACON	EGGS 1000 Gt. HUNDs.
1881-1885	15,630	7,940	478
1891-1895	48,070	41,270	1,243
1901-1905	96,044	76,390	3,531
1911-1915	99,420	128,840	3,596

The average export trade alone for each farm, most of which are small, is \$500 a year. For the country as a whole it amounts to \$12.50 an acre.

Land Distribution.

In this little country, twice the size of Massachusetts, there are 250,000 farms, of which 180,000 are less than 37 acres, while of these 133,500 are less than 12 acres in extent. There are 68,380 farms of less than 1½ acres.

These are the economic aspects of intensive agriculture, aided and encouraged by the state, and developed along co-operative and modern industrial lines.

As a result of home-ownership, small farms, a secure market, and freedom from exploita-

tion, other and even more important gains have come. Among them are:

(1) Voluntary co-operation has developed until practically the entire economic life of the farmer is in the hands of the farmers themselves. All told, there are 4,000 co-operative producing and selling agencies. There are 1,200 co-operative dairies, and 44 co-operative slaughter-houses. The farmer does his own banking in part at least. He gathers and sells his eggs, sends them to Copenhagen, where they are packed, and placed in the hands of the retail-dealer in England, without the aid of any middleman. The same is true of bacon and hams. Insurance of many kinds is handled through co-operative insurance agencies, as is the control of almost everything the farmer buys. There are over 2,000 co-operative retail stores in the country districts alone, with great central warehouses and factories for the production of goods of various kinds.

(2) Education has been developed until the peasant looks upon a high school and an agricultural training for his son and his daughter as a matter of course. There are 100 people's high schools in this little country with but

2,500,000 people. The Danes are a highly cultured nation, and they prize learning for its own sake.

(3) Agriculture has become an art. It is highly specialized. Cattle, horses, hogs, and chickens are studied and bred with the greatest care. And they bring fancy prices.

(4) The farmers have practically abolished tenancy in fifty years' time, less than 10 per cent. of the farms to-day being operated by tenants.

(5) The farmers have also organized politically. They have a party of their own. For more than a dozen years they have controlled the lower house of Parliament. They have not used their power to create special privileges, but to abolish them. They have reduced indirect taxes. The tariff has been lowered to an average of 5 per cent. The railways are operated as an agency for the upbuilding of the state, while social legislation of the most advanced sort has been placed on the statute-books.

Denmark is contented, prosperous, and well-educated. And these conditions have been brought about through the changing of the

economic environment of agriculture, and especially the introduction of home-ownership and the promotion of state-aided farms. Denmark is in effect a nation organized upon the Farm-Colony idea. It is a nation of home-owning farmers.¹

¹ For further reference to the development of Denmark, see the following works: *Co-operation in Danish Agriculture*, by Harold Faber, 1918; *Denmark and the Daxes*, by Harvey; *Special Report of the United States Bureau of Education on Danish Folk High Schools*, 1914. *Lectures of Honorable Maurice Francis Egan*, published by United States Senate, Document Number 992, 62d Congress, 3d Session, 1913.