Co-operation in Danish Agriculture by Harald Faber; Andelsbevoegelsen i Danmark by H. Hertel; E. J. Russell
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extending into another area, will furnish the propelling force needed for a great industrial and trading effort. Englishmen, who owe so much to the military dash and skill of France in these recent days, as they have been proud to assist her on the field of battle, will echo cordially these hopes of prosperity and progress in the economic sphere.

L.L.P.


The modern agricultural renown of Denmark is based upon solid achievements. One of the poorest countries in Europe down to the Prussian War of 1864, she began to adopt, about the time of that disaster, agricultural measures which transformed her within a brief generation into one of the wealthiest. By all available tests her agricultural progress, particularly since the early 'eighties, has been genuine. In 1880, with a total population of 1,969 millions, 888,000 people were "living by" agriculture and fisheries; in 1911, with a population of 2,757 millions, 1,003 millions were so described. Reducing the amounts of corn, roots, hay and straw to a common unit (the "unit of crops") the Danish authorities have computed the average annual total produce of crops for the five-year period 1879-83 at 3,050 thousand units and for the period 1909-13 at 5,390 thousand units. The acreage of Denmark under woods and plantations has increased by 70 per cent. From 1881 to 1914 the number of horses grew from 348 to 567 thousand, of cattle from 1,47 to 2,46 millions and of pigs from 527 thousands to 2,497 millions; but, as in some other countries over the same period (notably in Germany) sheep decreased from 1,549 million to a third of that figure. The records of Danish exports of home produce afford perhaps a more graphic illustration of her progress; taking the yearly averages of the periods 1881-85 and of 1911-15 we find that her exports of butter increased from 15'6 to 99'4 thousand tons, and those of bacon and ham combined from 7'9 to 128'8 thousand tons.

Such results, obtained in a land in so many respects less favoured than the United Kingdom, should hearten our agricultural reformers. Denmark owed her increased food output to a radical change in her practice; no longer relying mainly on corn growing, she began to combine therewith both intensive production of live stock and dairying. During the last half-century the English farmer has tended to direct his chief efforts to meat production, whilst the Danish farmer has gone in for dairy work. As Mr. Russell notes in his Foreword, the choice was momentous. "Events have shown " that it was emphatically the right choice, because dairy farming " produces much more food per acre of ground than meat pro-"duction, and it allows full scope for, indeed it necessitates, those
“co-operative methods of business and production which have since dominated Danish agriculture. . . . The wisdom of the choice was evident in the ’eighties and ’nineties, when Europe was flooded with cheap agricultural produce. . . . Wheat fell to nearly half the price it had commanded in the ’sixties. English agriculture suffered a terrible set back, and did not begin to recover till about 1896. Danish agriculture, on the other hand, was able not only to weather the storm, but even to make headway all the time. The improvement in dairying reacted on the arable farming. . . . the yield of wheat rose from 30'9 to 36'5 bushels per acre. Thus the Danish system has proved to be eminently suitable for the production of wheat from the land.”

“The essential feature of the Danish method is co-operation,” adds Mr. Russell. The brilliant achievements of Danish co-operative institutions have not lacked their English bards (who sometimes, unhappily, allowed themselves rather daring poetic licenses), but the present work is the first complete and authoritative account in English of the origins and working of a many-sided movement, which enforces lessons of such great importance for the future furtherance of agriculture in this country. Mr. Harald Faber, who has gained a deep knowledge of English conditions during his long tenure of the post of Agricultural Commissioner for the Danish Government in England, has abridged and adapted a work of 570 pages by Mr. Hertel. The latter, the Secretary of the Royal Agricultural Society of Denmark—a body to which this country has, unfortunately, no counterpart and which may be shortly characterised as an agricultural parliament with wide administrative functions—was invited by the Central Co-operative Committee to undertake, in conjunction with the leading men in the different branches of co-operation, the preparation of the work for the benefit of those, both Danes and others, who wished to follow the development of the movement in Denmark. The adaptation for English readers appears to have been admirably carried out by Mr. Faber, who has written a valuable preface and added various useful appendices (mainly of a statistical character) and an index. No clearer or more competent account of this important movement could be desired, and throughout the book is evidenced a thorough appreciation of the economic meaning of the application of the co-operative principle in the various sections of the agricultural business. The high standard of much of the recent literature on the subject of agricultural co-operation published in this country and in America may be an auspicious sign of the growing recognition of the essential importance of this form of organisation for the agricultural industry in English-speaking countries.

There is little room for the discussion of the various types of organisation. In marked contrast to Great Britain consumers’ co-operative stores have made very slight progress in the Danish towns, but they have attained a very remarkable prosperity (unexampled indeed elsewhere) in the country areas (“only a proof among
many that the rural population in Denmark is more wideawake
than the artisan classes in the towns\). The success of these rural stores is attributed by the author also to the influence of the People's High Schools and Agricultural Schools, which have provided the leaders of the various branches of the movement. It has been asserted in another publication that over 10 per cent. of the population pass through these High Schools, which are attended by people of both sexes between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five.

The extent to which the dairy industry has been co-operatized may be seen from the fact that 86 per cent. of the holdings possessing 83 per cent. of Danish cows send their milk to co-operative dairies, which handle 80 per cent. of the 3½ million tons of milk annually produced. Five-sixths of the pigs of the country are dealt with at co-operative slaughter-houses, combinations of which have central sale organisations, one of which has its headquarters in the English capital.

In one respect (up to 1915) Denmark has been remarkable among the countries with highly developed co-operative institutions in agriculture: the ordinary co-operative system for short-term credit had not been founded. Mortgage credit associations of the German Landschaft type were introduced in 1850 for landowners, and there are now about a dozen of these statutory organisations for the benefit of rural and urban landlords. The ordinary credit needs of agriculturists in Denmark have apparently been fully satisfied hitherto through the numerous small company banks (of the 150 company banks in that small country 98 showed in 1916 a share capital not exceeding 25,000l.) and through the local savings banks, of which there are 400 in rural communes, and which lend money on the usual banking principles. The first village co-operative bank was formed in 1915, and 14 more within the following eighteen months. "It looks as if another co-operative movement "... is going to sweep over the country as the co-operative "dairy system did a generation earlier" (p. 145).

Danish agriculture is thoroughly co-operatized. The farmer belongs to one or to several local co-operative organisations, each independently constituted for special business. These local institutions combine to form district or provincial associations, which may in turn form national federations. Further combinations for purposes of purchase or sale abroad have also been formed. Thus the village producer is directly linked through his own organisations with national and international markets. It is no small triumph for an agricultural economy that its hundreds of thousands of small producers, perforce carrying on the primary stages of production mainly as isolated units, should have overcome this great inevitable drawback of their vocation and have secured at the various stages, both of production and of marketing, 'most of the advantages of large-scale (even of associated large-scale) industrial producers.

J.R.C.