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Viggo Starcke Proves Present by the Past

VIGGO STARCKE, member of the Danish Parliament and brilliant leader of the Justice party, makes so many references to land rent (*Grundskyld*) in his public addresses, that he always closes with a play on words, "*Grunskyld — Undskyld*"—which means, land rent—your pardon please!

At a recent celebration honoring Hans Christian Andersen, Viggo Starcke gave a talk on the fairy tales. His announced subject was, "What would have happened had Thorkil Kristensen been Finance Minister when H. C. Andersen came to Copenhagen with thirteen dollars in his pocket?"

The following comments as translated by Joseph Jespersion of New York, appeared in *Vejen Frem*, the Henry George magazine of Denmark.

After dealing with the lessening of opportunity that accompanies the growing of socialistic measures, Dr. Starcke drew parallels between the fairy tales and economic conditions. The two piggy banks, he said, were alike in that neither would rattle when shaken, because one was full, the other empty. The Chinese emperor's courtiers preferred to the liberty-loving real nightingale, the mechanical nightingale, which could be regulated.

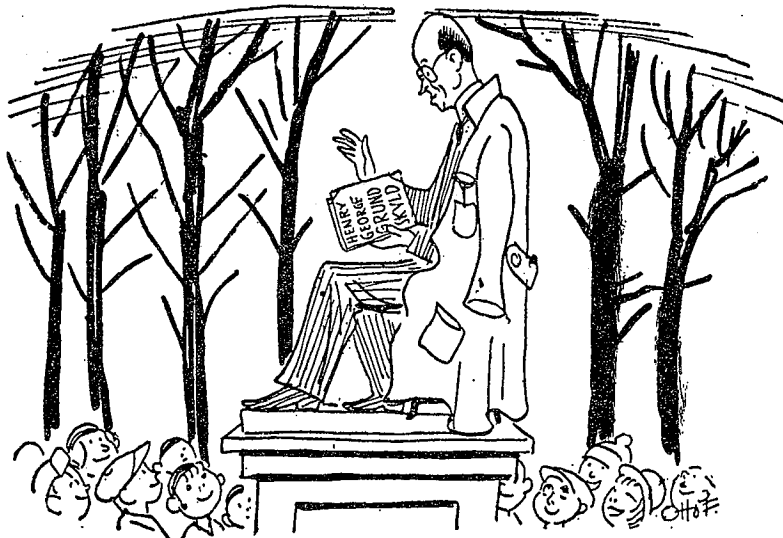
Still there are voices calling after the tin soldier, "stop him, he has not paid the toll!" Still empty looms are working in empty rooms, the measuring goes on and the scissors clip, while dignified ministers of state insist that they see something. Andersen portrayed sympathetically the poor and downtrodden.

"He who reads *The Swineherd* and the *Nightingale* once a year," said Dr. Starcke, "will not believe in a planned economy. Had the tales been written today their content could hardly have been different. We still need Andersen's wisdom, goodness and disarming irony."

The accompanying cartoon shows Viggo Starcke in the pose of H. C. Andersen on a statue in Copenhagen, but *not* reading fairy tales. It appeared in a Danish newspaper, *Nationaltidende*, followed by a poem by Mogens Dam celebrating Dr. Starcke's ability as a speaker and teller of tales. The poet concludes that if Andersen were here today he would undoubtedly be a member of the Justice party.

In an earlier issue of *Vejen Frem*, Dr. Starcke reviewed a book entitled *Greek Politicians*. The following excerpt, also translated by Joseph Jespersion, relates to an oration by Demosthenes, which the Justice leader termed "shockingly real."

Carsten Hoeg's book contains in part a translation of Demosthenes' third Philippic delivered



Viggo Starcke—by Otto Frederiksen (Reproduced from *Vejen Frem*)

in May, 341 B. C. before the citizens of Athens of Athens.

The speech gives a brief evaluation of Solon and the foundation he laid for the later greatness of Athens, without going into his remarkable actual land reforms. Following this it gives an evaluation of political oratory in ancient Athens. We are so apt to center our interest on Hellenic art and culture that we often forget the social and political background of those outstanding phenomena which developed in the very brief period during which Athens was an empire, said Dr. Starcke.

In the fourth century (B.C.) when the independent city-states of Greece were suspicious of each other's inhabitants, and could not cooperate in greater activity (a situation similar to the present small states of Europe), a growing menace arose in northeast Macedonia under the power-conscious leadership of Philip. The Macedonians were regarded by the Hellenes as barbarians outside the Greek culture circle—and it was against this advancing power that Demosthenes delivered his Philippics in an attempt to arouse the indifferent in time.

He began by saying that he did not expect his fellow citizens to become angry with him for telling them a few unpleasant truths. He laid the responsibility for the confused condition of Greece on "those politicians who would rather win your acclaim than propose sensible measures." Continuing, he said, "In the assembly you are sheltered and hear only pleasant things; in life's reality your situation is one of deadly peril."

After reciting Philip's recent measures of seizure and oppression, Demosthenes turned his discourse against the continually yielding administration. "I will begin by explaining that if our state has the possibility of avoiding war, and we have no influence in the matter, then we ought to avoid war. But it is otherwise if

the peace our opponent bespeaks so well is but a peace on paper, while his acts are the acts of war. In that case we have no other possibility but to defend ourselves . . . But if we use the word peace to describe a condition that permits him to despoil at will and thereafter attack us, it is pure nonsense; and that which we call peace may be for him a peace with us, but it is not for us a peace with him."

Regarding Philip's policies, Demosthenes said: "He does whatever he wills to do, he dismembers and plunders the Hellenic lands, one by one," and (quoting verbatim one of Philip's notes) he admits, "I do not break the peace with those who obey my commands." In this manner, the Hellenes per-

mitted one state after another to fall into Philip's hands.

"Our situation is deplorable," said the great orator, "in each little state one digs one's own shelter, and until this day we have shown no ability to unite, to make agreements of mutual support, to act as our common interests and duty require. We look calmly on while Mr. Philip grows stronger and stronger, presumably in the belief by the individual state that it is safe at the time when its neighbor's land is being seized, without any practical recognition of how Greece as a whole may be saved, although everyone knows that it is like an epidemic sickness—today you, tomorrow me."

In the states where it has ended in disaster, it is too late to profit by experience. "Those who battle for the right solution may not always speak words that are comforting to hear; their talk is to promote whatever will save their fatherland; but our opponents are acting directly in Philip's interest in saying what you wish to hear . . . As long as the ship is in danger each man, whether seaman or captain, must do his part, whether the ship be large or small, and all must take care that no one, whether intentionally or not, causes a shipwreck; when the sea has swallowed up the ship it is too late to show one's good intentions."

Despite all of Demosthenes' proposals for a pact uniting Greece, nothing was done, and the sea swallowed up the ship. The city-states of Greece could not agree to unite, and they were finally conquered, never to rise again.

The author pointed out, as emphasized by Dr. Starcke in his review, that when political life is forsaken by the poets, "tragedy dies and comedy interests itself in man as type or spirit rather than as citizen, and the philosophers lose contact with realities and bury themselves in ideas."