

Tak For Alt—Denmark

By V. G. PETERSON

IT WAS impossible for us to feel like strangers in Denmark. The great bond between us and our hospitable hosts was our common cause, our common goal. Differences of language and custom were minor difficulties which soon were overcome.

Denmark is a country of islands. Odense, where the International Conference for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade was held this summer, and Copenhagen, which we visited afterwards, are situated on two of the larger ones. It is, for the most part, a flat country, but it is flatness without monotony. Whitewashed, thatched-roofed farmhouses dot the landscape, bright flower gardens in front of them and flaming geraniums spilling out of window boxes.

In this country the old and the new blend harmoniously. Modern apartment houses, five and six stories high, with self-service elevators, or "lifts" as they are called, occupy whole blocks in the residential sections. Nearby are the ancient churches and historic castles with their green roofs and graceful spires. It is a nation where the very rich are fewer and the very poor less numerous than in other parts of Europe and an atmosphere of contentment pervades.

Food, except for coffee and sugar, is plentiful. Many of the restaurants have sidewalk cafes where the diner may enjoy his food unhurriedly, watching the passers-by. He must be prepared to run, however, for sunny skies change quickly and rain in summertime often comes without warning.

A canal brings busy tugs and small pleasure craft into the heart of Copenhagen. Along its banks stand the ancient buildings of the stock exchange, with its twisted stone spire—four dragons' tails, wound together. Back of these, and to the right, stand the Houses of Parliament, like the rest of Copenhagen, are of red brick, built around a courtyard. The House of Representatives is equipped with a visitors' balcony and is furnished much like our own in Washington, D. C. The section occupied by the members of the Justice party is in the rear of the room, to the right of the speaker's table.

One floor above are the meeting rooms of the parties. In the Justice party's room one is not surprised to find a bronze bust of Henry George and one of the late Mr. C. N. Starcke, father of the present head of the party and one of its early founders. On the long wall is a picture of Joseph Fels whose financial aid helped the party in its infant days.

You do not see many policemen in Denmark. "Oh yes, we have some," my guide explained, "but we do not often need them." A hundred or more years ago a Danish king decreed that the penalty for stealing should be greater than that for murder. In this, and in other ways, honesty has become ingrained in the national character.

The bicycle is a popular mode of transportation. Cyclists stream through the busy thoroughfares, riding to the right of the motorists who appear in no way confused by the weaving throng. The whole family goes out on these peddling expeditions. Father helps junior along by pushing against a stick stuck in the back of the youngster's saddle and the family pooch pads contentedly at the end of a leash looped over mother's handlebars.

An easy ride by bicycle, tram or bus brings you to charming summer resorts where bathing in the cold waters of the North Sea is more attractive to the hardy Danes than to the visitors, and to the Danish Riviera where summer homes stretch their green lawns to the water's edge, flowers and vines tumbling colorfully over neat brick walls.

There is much to attract the camera enthusiast in this country of quaint charm, historic buildings and beautiful monuments. A much photographed piece of sculpture in Copenhagen is the black stone figure of Hans Andersen's mermaid—the one that longed to become a human being, and unfortunately, did—sitting gracefully on a rock, gazing out over the busy harbor. Another tourist's mecca, of course, is the castle of Elsinore, famous as the scene of Hamlet's tragedy. It stands on a rock, at the water's edge, less forbidding than Shakespeare made it seem in his play about the melancholy Dane. Not far away is the castle of Fredericksborg which many of us thought was a lovelier treasure from the past. Also in the vicinity and to be visited on the same trip, is the Dyrehaven or Deer Park. Here hundreds of deer wander at large among the trees, unmolested by the visitors who stroll about enjoying the sunshine and the antics of the playful animals.

Grundvig's church is another shrine to which our tireless guides directed us. This massive structure of cream brick is recent, and in design is a large-scale model of the traditional parish church of the country. Here one pauses to remember the man who established the folk schools and who helped to transform Denmark from an absolute monarchy to one of the most advanced democracies in the world today.

Not far from the Grundvig church is the memorial park where are buried those members of the Underground who perished in defense of Denmark during the German occupation. In the center at the head of a huge tablet on which are inscribed the names of those whose bodies were never recovered is a statue the pathos of which defies description. It is of a mother in an attitude of sorrow, her slain son's head cradled in her lap.



Danish girls welcoming delegates with the lurer.

It is hard to explain the charm of Denmark. I think, perhaps, my Danish guide expressed it in part when he referred to "the smiling red bricks of Copenhagen," and when, on a visit to Rosenborg Castle, he showed me the three life-sized silver lions which are the royal symbol. "They look as if they know a little joke," he said.

Dinner in a Danish home is a further adventure in hospitality. It may start off, as one of mine did, with hot milk flavored with black currant jam, sugar and cinnamon, or it may commence with an open sandwich of dark bread, cold fried fish and a savory sauce. Roast pork and sausage — they raise a lot of pigs in Denmark —, potatoes and pickled cucumbers come next, with beer and bread and cheese to top it off. Breakfast is a simple meal usually, of buttered rolls, cheese, coffee and pastry.

I dare say that none of us expected half the kindnesses that our fellow Georgists extended to us during and after the thrilling conference which ended on August 4. We parted from them as from old and cherished friends. "Tak fur alt" — "thanks for everything" — we called as our train moved out. "Farvel og paa gensyn" — "goodbye until we meet again" — they shouted back.
