

AMERICAN FARM SCHOOL

SALONICA

GREECE

In May, 1928, Mr. Lucius H. Beers, one of the directors of the School, visited the Farm for the first time and spent a considerable time with Mr. Charles L. House, the Principal, at the Farm and later at Athens.

At the close of the visit Mr. Beers wrote to Mr. Frank C. Myers, secretary of the Board of Directors, stating the chief impressions caused by the visit. It is thought that these will interest friends of industrial education and friends of peace. A copy of the letter follows.

Athens,
3 June 1928.

Dear Mr. Myers:

To anyone who has known all about the American Farm School from its beginnings, as I have, it is an unforgettable experience actually—for the first time—to visit the Farm and see Macedonia. Some things stand out which I know will interest you.

It cannot be said of our work that we are trying to bring to a foreign people either opinions or methods which they do not want and may not need. We might well leave all argument for the work of the Farm School to the Greek people here who see the work and know the need for it. And by this I do not mean people here who have graduated from the school or who have had any such connection with it. I mean the men who represent the responsible power in Greece. In company with Charley House I have talked over the work of the School and the needs of Macedonia with a considerable proportion of the men in power in this part of Greece.

At the close of our visit at the Farm, Anne and Charley House invited out to tea a number of Greek friends with their wives—people whom we had met in Salonica. In a storm they came five miles out from the City over

one of the worst of roads, and it will give you a mental picture of the influence of the School if I introduce some of them; Dr. Soteriades, head of the Greek University at Salonica; the Governor General of Macedonia; the Chief of Police; Mr. Caramanos, executive head in charge of the colonization of the refugees; the Director General of the railroads of Macedonia, and Thrace; the former Mayor of Salonica; the Orthodox Greek Bishop of Salonica. And besides these a number of prominent Greek lawyers and business men. It was a group which represented Macedonia in the administrative sense. I was under no illusions about this gathering. It was not social except in a secondary sense. It was a testimony of the administrators of Macedonia to what the School is doing.

Here in Athens I have heard the same testimony. In company with Charley House I have talked the matter over with the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, later with Mr. Venezelos and twice with Mr. Skinner the U. S. Minister. They all evidently understood all about our work at the School and evidently had unlimited confidence in Charley House—a notable thing in this suspicious land.

Macedonia interested me greatly, and in a short time I learned much about it from the Greeks I have mentioned and from going about

in many villages. The people of Macedonia have been free from the yoke of Turkey for only sixteen years and ten of those years have been years of war. It is a land of opportunity and the people are ambitious. It reminds me very much of some of the less developed parts of the United States.

In the future I shall be slow to criticize the people of the Balkans. If the land in our forty-eight states were inhabited by six different racial groups each living by itself and carrying over various old grudges; if farming and industry were undeveloped or ill-developed, and if the American people were, therefore, poor and under-educated, and if there were the great European powers hanging over us, one power wanting the Great Lakes and another the Mississippi and another the Pacific Coast—under those circumstances our country would be written down contemptuously as the “world’s storm center” and the great powers would be playing off the various old racial grudges as suited their interests, and we, without training and without resources, should not be able to hold our ground and maintain peace. I don’t wonder that the people of the Balkans are suspicious about the motives of foreigners. The policies of the great European powers have not taught them morals.

Here comes in one strong factor in the op-

portunity we have. The United States has not been implicated in these past performances of the Powers with their devastating results. When once the American attitude of our work is known, the people here give their confidence.

Sturdy little Switzerland with its developed industries and educated people is never a menace to world-peace. No power makes a football of them, in spite of the fact that three races inhabit the small country. Their industry is developed, or rather their people are developed, to a point which makes foreign interference impossible and which makes it easy for them to live together in peace. We are trying to lay the foundations for this here, and in this time when the right sort of people are trying to build the foundations of permanent peace we are working at a critical point and in a thorough way.

I don't know whether the Republican Convention at Kansas City will nominate an engineer or not, but however that may be, this is an age of engineers and we have an extraordinary one at the head of the Farm School. I have been with Charley House continuously and for some time at the Farm and here. I have watched carefully his work with the boys, with all sorts of practical problems about the farm and the class rooms and the machinery, and then I have sat with him in conference

with a number of men who are the real administrators in Macedonia. He is adapted for this adequately—more than adequately—with all that this calls for. Having been born and partly reared here he speaks all the languages called for on this polyglot peninsula—speaks them in more than the literal sense. He is a civil engineer, also an educational engineer, also a farming engineer and various other kinds, a man who is forever helping other people out of trouble, but never making any trouble. If Princeton gave such a degree as Human Engineer it would be well bestowed on him.

The older boys at the School speak English well and I have seen much of them. Judging from their keenness of interest and the questions they ask they seem to me very much like boys at home who are working their way through college. And the boys at home who spend their time over books would have no cause to look down on these boys who spend half of their day in overalls. When our boys graduate they don't need to begin humbly and ask practical people to show them what to do. In an article which Dr. Soteriades wrote about the Farm School for a Greek paper, speaking of the practical side of our teaching, he said: "It reaches to the very last details, foreseen and unforeseen, which a farmer encounters in his work."

May is a good time to visit the Farm. Salonica, which was almost wiped out by the big fire, is being rebuilt in a wonderful way but it is still a dusty and disagreeable big city. Driving out of it you come finally to a hill-top beyond which is only the open farm land on the left and the Gulf of Salonica and the distant Mt. Olympus on the right. And about half a mile away appears the Farm, a really large group of white buildings with red tile roofs all partly hidden by the trees, with the grain fields of the farm stretching far off to the south.

We who know the workers know the spirit which pervades the Farm. Among other things it is the spirit of youth in this land which, in spite of the excavations and the monuments, impresses me as a young land.

The growth of the School cannot, in my judgment, be stopped. What worries me is our part of the work in America.

Faithfully yours,

LUCIUS H. BEERS.

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AMERICAN FARM SCHOOL

[THESSALONICA AGRICULTURAL
AND INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTE
a New York Corporation]

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