



1986

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L. C. Laursen

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Recommended Citation

Laursen, L. C. (1986) "Table Talk," *The Bridge*: Vol. 9 : No. 1 , Article 10.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/thebridge/vol9/iss1/10>

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Table Talk

by L. C. LAURSEN

INTRODUCTION

Table Talk was prepared for the wedding of Margaret Hansen and Harvey Phillip of Enumclaw, Washington, at which L. C. Laursen was to have officiated. Laursen's sudden illness, an illness from which he did not recover, precluded him from delivering the talk. **Table Talk** comes from a **Notebook** Laursen presented to Margaret and Harvey Phillip, which was shown to Ruth and Ove Nielsen. They thought it deserved a wider readership and received permission from Betty Miller, daughter of L. C. Laursen, and Mr. and Mrs. Phillip to submit it for publication in **The Bridge**.

L. C. Laursen is better known as a writer under the pen-names of Karl Marg and Per Nabo. A few details about L. C. Laursen accompany Willard Garred's translation of Karl Marg's **The Plov, The Cow, and The Pastor** in **The Bridge**, Volume VIII, Number 2.

There is an old Anglo-Saxon — and also old Danish — word of which the original meaning has been forgotten. It is the word: *Fellowship* or *Fælleskab*, as we say in Danish. Its origin goes back to the younger stone age — or, at least, to the time between the stone age and the development of the viking; and the meaning of the word "fellowship" is really this: *Those who did fell trees together — and found water.*

And such are (or were) the cultural circumstances that came to give birth to the word. The old settlements in England, Scandinavia, Denmark, and Germany were all laid out along the sea-shores, the lakes and the rivers and the edge of the primeval forests, and they all began to be pretty crowded. Young people got married and there were hardly places for a new hut in the village. In the outskirts of every

community stood set apart *the holy grove* where the altars stood for sacrifice to Odin and Thor and the rest of the gods. And out of this consecrated grove the priest of the locality would once a year set aside enough trees to be felled for winter fuel for every family in the village.

But the settlements became crowded and the holy groves could stand no more thinning out of trees and finally the day came when the young folks put their heads together and laid up plans for the next coming early summer weddings. *The youth made revolt.*

The youth made revolt and did something that the old folks thought would make the end of the world come down upon them, although the revolt was necessary.

The young people got married with all the festal splendor of a people just gotten out of the stone age, and the next morning all the new married couples went out of their old homes, out of their old ancestral village and took their path up over the hills far away into the virgin tableland, where no foot had trod except that of the hunted outcast, and where no rivers were running. The young folks wanted to start brand new homes and a brand new society!

And now, looking down to the bare necessities of life absolutely indispensable in a raw-cold and damp climate, the very first thing that the revolting young people had to look for would be *water*, and *wood* for their house-fire.

So in *solidarity cooperation* they set out to *dig for water* by digging a well, and got fuel for their home-fires by felling trees in common, started to be called the new "same-found" (Samfund) and their cooperative life started to be called a *Fellowship*. Together they had found water; together they had felled trees in the virgin forest!

* * * *

But there is something I must not forget to tell: when the revolting youth started to leave the old village there was a young bride who took a clay vessel and went into the holy grove, where the sacrificial fire was burning from the wedding feast the evening before, and she filled her clay vessel with the burning embers from the holy fire — and she

nourished that holy fire during the journey over the hills, during the search for water and the labor for wood, and in the evening as the young new married couples sat around the well in their new community the fire was lighted by holy fire from the place of their childhood.

This is the story of how the Danish and the English language got their words: "Samfund" and "Fellowship."

Let me just remind you that before the Latin language got influx into English it felt most normal for the plain new Christians to talk of "the holy fellowship" in the third article of our faith instead of using the foreign expression "communion of the saints."

But out of this retelling an old story I like to say to the bride and groom here: There is much in the life of the older generation (and I belong to that) — there is much I hope you will never carry with you into your new home and homelife. Like you now say goodbye to the homes of your childhood I hope that you, and every new married couple hereafter, will say goodbye to many of the ideas, many of the customs and many of the viewpoints of the older generation and dare to journey together, far over the hills into a (spiritually speaking) new highland tableau where you and your young friends can form a new "same-found" — a new fellowship.

But this, I pray you, and particularly you, the bride, carry with you into your new home place burning embers from *that fire*, that for your father and mother, and generations *before you*, was the *holy fire* from which we kindled the fire on *our* hearthstone.

Regardless of the shortcoming of the older generation that fire was a clean and holy fire lighted by the Holy Spirit. Let that spirit hover over your home; let that holy fire, that generations have been carrying along on their journeys, also be carried into your home.

Let everything that is clean, lovingly and holy have a place under your roof. The God of your fathers be with you!