

Isak Dinesen

Rungstedlund

A Radio Address

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GYLDENDALS
e-BØGER



Also by Isak Dinesen

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Ehregard

Babette's Feast

Carnival. Entertainments and posthumous Tales

Daguerreotypes and Other Essays

Letters from Africa

Isak Dinesen
(Karen Blixen)

Rungstedlund

A Radio Address

Special edition for COP15
Copenhagen 2009

Gyldendal

Rungstedlund. A Radio Address

By Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen)

first e-book edition 2009

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From time to time, I think that Danish „democracy“ protects the people who don't need it more than those who really do; I think it protects automobiles rather than bicyclists.

*Karen Blixen (1885-1962) in „Rungstedlund: A Radio Address“
The Danish Broadcasting Corporation, 6 July 1958*

PREFACE

Toward the end of her life, Karen Blixen – better known under her English pen name *Isak Dinesen* – gave a radio address for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation on her home – her childhood home – Rungstedlund. Her lifelong fascination with nature and her concern for people’s lack of respect for its values were expressed in this talk.

Karen Blixen is most well-known for her many years as a coffee farmer in Africa. These years were given artistic expression in her book **Out of Africa** (1937) – a work that, many years later, became an Oscar-winning Hollywood movie. She debuted with **Seven Gothic Tales** (1934), which she wrote in both Danish and English, a method she employed throughout her life. The successful movie based on her short story „Babette’s Feast“ created even more interest in her lit-

erary work, which today has been translated into a multitude of languages.

In her „Rungstedlund talk“, Karen Blixen beautifully recounts the history of Rungstedlund, which stretches back four hundred years. She talks of its inhabitants through the centuries and, especially, the extended acreage that surrounds the house. She wanted to make sure that it was never developed and would always remain a place of respite for people. She decided it should be preserved and maintained as a bird sanctuary in order to ensure that the nightingale, among others, could always find a place to nest when it returned from its long migration to South Africa. However, Blixen lacked the necessary funding for this project. The talk ends, therefore, with an appeal to the listeners to send her a contribution of no more than 1 Danish krone per person. She wanted to know how many people had heard the talk. 85,000 people each sent 1 krone – and this made possible the plan to preserve and maintain the area, which today is run in accordance with her wishes. Since 1991 the house and garden areas have been open to the public as the Karen Blixen Museum.

In many areas, Karen Blixen was remarkably ahead of her time, and her message – in 1958! – that we should be riding bicycles rather than driving cars is quite in keeping with the climate summit to be held in Copenhagen on December 7-18, 2009. Therefore, Gylden-dal, the Rungstedlund Foundation, and the Karen Blixen Museum in Rungstedlund have decided jointly to share Blixen's ideas with the many delegates at the summit by having her radio talk published in a limited edition in Danish and English and having the text distributed at no charge during the period the COP15 takes place. Not without reason, the text will be distributed in the Copenhagen Metro system, which represents sustainable transportation and an open passageway.

Catherine Lefebvre

Museum Director, Karen Blixen Museum

Marianne Wirenfeldt Asmussen

Literary Executor, Rungstedlund Foundation

Please note that the text is followed by endnotes on pages 46-50.

RUNGSTEDLUND A RADIO ADDRESS

Good evening, listeners! It is a long time since you last gave me the pleasure of welcoming you to Rungstedlund.

For most of that time, I thought we should never meet again. I have been hospitalized for more than a year and have undergone more than one operation. Before the last, I convinced myself I would not survive. They told me how I would feel when I awakened after anesthesia and I thought, „Is there any point in talking about that? I know I am not going to wake up again.“ By chance I heard later that one of the physicians had said, „If she survives this operation, it will be the greatest *coup* of her life,“ so I can't imagine there was really much confidence in the undertaking from the medical point of view.

The day before the operation I was completely certain I should get the radio to send its truck out to the hospital, so I could record

on tape what I believed would be my last message to listeners in Denmark. I thought I would say to them, „It isn't bad to die; it is good. In my time I have seen many people die; many African natives have died, so to speak, in my arms, and I have never seen any of them afraid. I myself feel that death is not an interruption of life, but a rounding off.“ But I did not have enough strength to realize my plan. And then I didn't die, either, so the point of it was lost.

This evening I want to tell you something else, namely, that I think there has been a happy and agreeable relation between you and me, and that I am grateful to you for it. I feel the same gratitude towards my readers; yet there has always been something about paper and ink which is distasteful to me. When as a twenty-year-old I published some stories in the periodical *Tilskueren* [*The Spectator*], and our old critic Valdemar Vedel encouraged me to continue writing, I told him I did not wish to, for I did not want merely to become printed matter. He laughed when he next saw me. „So you don't want to become printed matter – you won't ever, either,“ he

said. Now I wish I had said to him that I wished to sit surrounded by a circle of people and tell stories as the spirit moved me. In Africa I did so, for the natives liked to hear stories and were indifferent as to how carefully they had been thought out. If I began, „Once there was a man who had an elephant with two heads,“ those who were most interested would interrupt, „Certainly, Msabu, he did indeed. What did he do; did he feed both heads at the same time, or each by itself?“ Of the four elements I have always liked air the best, and I should like to be a voice in the ether.

During the last ten years it has been a continually surprising and pleasant experience for me that people in taxicabs, railway compartments, and shops, when I have asked a question or given an answer, have greeted me with, „Hello, Karen Blixen!“ and told me they recognized my voice from the radio. Of course, there was also an angry lady who, in the middle of the escalator at Vesterport Station, turned round to ask, „What sort of rubbish is it you are spreading on the radio?“ But that was also an ingathering for me, and rather more personal and human than a rep-

rimand in print. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Lorenzo says at night, at Belmont, „listen, Portia has come home!“ and Portia remarks, „He knows me as the blind man knows the cuckoo, by the bad voice.“ If, from the time one was a small child, one has stood still in the woods every spring and listened, and called out a sound of one’s own, one is even willing to take on the role of a cuckoo. It has been as if I had a friendship with an entire people, just as it was in Africa, where, on my safaris, the natives knew me through a sort of instinct wherever I appeared. This adds a richness to life.

Now as we are met again at Rungstedlund, and each of you who has a radio turned on is really sitting opposite me in front of the fire, I think it is time to tell you a little about the house we are in. I have had Rungstedlund on my mind for several years in a particular way. I would like to ask those of you who can, to get a pencil and a piece of paper: before you shut off the radio, I will ask you to write down something particular regarding Rungstedlund.

We are sitting in the old Rungsted Inn, one of the oldest houses – perhaps the oldest house – between Copenhagen and Elsinore.

North Zealand is related to our past during the last five hundred years in a way different from the rest of the country. Unlike Jutland or the island of Funen, the region was not an area of separate large estates and single families; North Zealand was the property of the Crown and was distinguished by the „King’s Copenhagen.“ The woods were royal hunting parks and the broad roads were called the king’s highways. Everywhere in North Zealand, when one looks out from a height over the country, one can point out places in Danish history and the history of Danish literature. Here lies Gurre, in a haze of Danish poetry, from the folk ballads to Holger Drachmann. Here, before the attack on Copenhagen, Carl X Gustav’s troops bivouacked like birds of prey before a bird’s nest, and dramatic events from that time’s underground resistance drew a line between Søllerød, Humlebæk, and Kronborg. Here Charles XII debarked at Humlebæk. Here, on the King’s Highway between Copenhagen and Elsinore, the unhappy Carolina

Mathilda traveled in her carriage as a captive to Kronborg, and from here one could see the flaming red heavens over Copenhagen during the bombardment of 1807. Here the hills from Dyrehaven, the animal park, appear with their romantic and cheerful tones from Oehlenschläger's *Midsummer Night's Play*. Here, along the entire shore road, from Copenhagen to Elsinore, Jews sought refuge in private homes and row-houses, fifteen years ago, and were helped aboard fishing boats to be carried to Sweden. Mr. Juul, here in Rungsted – and he was put in the Frøslev concentration camp for it – and the other local truckers telephoned from house to house, „Tonight we will try to use a boat from Snekkersten. Tomorrow there will be a chance at Skovshoved.“ One may find unexpected reminders from a far, far more distant time, in which one does not know the names of individuals. When the shore road next to Rungstedlund was straightened, I moved an old stone fence, and my old coachman, Alfred Petersen, who has been at Rungstedlund for sixty-five years, took me down to show me a stone which had hitherto lain with its flat side turned down, for he thought

on it there „was something.“ It seemed doubtful to me, but Alfred stuck to his guns until I telephoned Professor Brøndsted at the National Museum and said that I had found a stone „with something on it“ – an arm and a hand; a line that developed into five, then was single again, like a thumb at a right angle to the four fingers. „I’ll be right out,“ said Professor Brøndsted. He wanted the stone for the National Museum, but I thought it should stay here, where once a man sat and worked on it. The professor borrowed it, and included photographs of it in a scientific article. He told me the picture on the stone was between 2,500 and 3,000 years old; he said the symbol really was a hand, a divine hand and a symbol of protection. „It’s strange,“ I said, „to judge by the position of the thumb, it is a left hand.“ „No, it is not a left hand,“ said the professor. „It is a right hand seen from the side of the palm. The god is inside the stone.“ The stone now lies under a large tree in the garden. Archaeologists have come from Norway and Sweden to look at it.

Even „the coast“ has changed in the course of time, and has become tame and well be-

haved. From being a stretch of windblown land covered with willow trees and heather, with the shore road as a sandy, uncertain path along the beach, and with the thatched houses of the fishing hamlets with netdrying grounds, it has become an almost unbroken series of neat houses and gardens for people who have their businesses in Copenhagen.

However, the waters look today as they did in the oldest times. It is the Sound, „Denmark’s highway, the portal of the North.“ In my life I have seen various waters – the Straits of Gibraltar and Bab-el-Mandeb – but when I have seen the Sound again, I have always thought, „You can be distinguished from them all, for you have your own blue, open glance.“ It is a privilege to live along the Sound.

Rungsted Inn lay approximately midway between Copenhagen and Elsinore and was presumably, from the beginning, a place where wagons and private carriages could be unhitched for a rest. It was an inn with royal privileges as early as the reign of Christian II, and Christian IV gave Villum Carram a charter for „the new Runsti Inn, with all the acreage and meadows belonging to it, together

with one hundred wagon-loads of wood to be picked up from the ground and free feeding in the forest for his own swine, on the condition that he keep a hostel for Danes and foreigners, so that traveling men have nothing to complain about.“ Later, Queen Sophie Amalie gave her chambermaid Philix „Rungstedte Wirtshause“ on the condition that she pay annually two and one-half barrels of codfish in manorial dues. The stock of fish on the property itself was estimated at 4,500 carp and 18,000 crucian carp – I don’t know what they wanted with the crucian carp; the ponds in the garden are still full of them, but eating them is like trying to eat cotton with pins in it.

A learned French traveler on his way to Sweden wrote in the year 1700 that Rungsted Inn was the most attractive on the entire route. He praised the dog kennels, so we must believe dogs then enjoyed a particular position here. Behind the house, he says, there was a large, unusually beautiful garden with a knoll.

The Inn was privileged to distill brandy – during the pestilence of 1710, when all villages were closed, the innkeeper, Mattias Fri-

gast, was permitted to sell beer and brandy on the shore road next to the Inn. In the course of time he took such advantage of the privilege that the master of the guild of distillers in Hørsholm appeared one day with his functionaries and sealed up Frigast's apparatus. Later the innkeeper got his privilege back, however. There have doubtless been racy jests and songs fired off here, and many a pewter cup, of brandy – and pert barmaids – have been swung through the air; rough-and-tumble fights have taken place; and difficult, shouting guests have been thrown out. And it is pleasant to think of tired freight-horses recognizing the last bit of road before Rungstedlund, where they knew they would turn in through the gate, and be taken to the water-trough and the crib. At that time the Inn did its own farming, and the stalls for the horses and cows, the pigsties and the barn, lay in an irregular rectangle about the building which now stands there, alone; its wings and walls are the same as they were in the year 1600. Rungstedlund's farm buildings burned down one summer night in 1898; I saw them burn. As a child I rode the estate's

horses between the farm buildings down to a watering-place.

The house itself was probably never planned or designed by any architect; it simply grew by itself and was improved according to the changing taste of successive generations. It is constantly falling down on my head and I am constantly having it shored up. Professor Steen Eiler Rasmussen, who is my neighbor in Rungsted, has explained to me that this or that detail dates from the year 1800 or 1850. When an attic suddenly collapsed and revealed a peculiarly primitive construction, the professor told me that this was the way people built in the years following the state bankruptcy of 1813. It was easy for me to imagine. According to present ideas, the house is extremely impractical, with as much „no-man’s-land“ – halls and stairs and pantries – as living space.

But Rungstedlund must have preserved some of its hundred summers’ sweetness and winters’ comfort. Many times people from abroad who have visited here have written to me about my „unforgettable house.“ An American intelligence officer, who, after the Liberation in 1945, was my first guest from

the outside world, wrote, „I had been in your country for three weeks without having obtained any real impression of it. But when you showed me your house and garden, you gave me the key to Denmark.“

Rungstedlund comprises about forty acres of gardens, woods, and meadows, all of which – among the well-kept gardens of the shore road – seems something like a wilderness. Around the pond and the canal in the garden there is a whole woods of the same sort of broad-leaved dock that Hans Christian Andersen’s „happy family“ lived beneath. There is a large peaceful field, protected from the wind, where horses and cows wander about. There are many old trees, and under them a particularly rich woodland floor with anemones, primroses, and violets. In a corner to the northwest, towards which the entire property rises, lies Ewald’s Knoll.

A fire was first lighted in the common room of Rungsted Inn more than four hundred years ago, and it has since burned out and been rekindled many times. It has always cast light and shadow around the room in the same way. It has shone upon many kinds of

people who have sat here and talked of many kinds of things.

Hørsholm's local historian, Rosted, has a strange tale about some conversations which took place here. Kirstine Munk, Christian IV's morganatic wife, knew the king suspected that not he, but the Rhinegrave, was the father of the child she was carrying. She arranged to meet the Swedish resident, Johann Fegræus, here at Rungsted Inn several times, in order to tell him about her difficulties with her royal husband, indeed to suggest she was ready to tell what she knew about the king's secret plans against Sweden if she could, in this way, ingratiate herself with the Swedish court. The light from the fire played over the brocade dress of the beautiful, scheming woman, and the attentive face of the Swedish diplomat.

There is a dark, stiff, thin figure which I seem to have seen in front of the fireplace from time to time. He has scarcely spoken, for he was one of the most lonesome figures in the history of the world and probably looked silently into the embers. The eighteen-year-old Charles XII of Sweden – he who, according to Frans G. Bengtsson, „was

made in the factory, now closed, where kings were made“ – had attacked Denmark in his very first eagle’s flight, and had his headquarters at Rungsted Inn. Did he see in the embers mighty pictures of that victorious march through Europe which was to „make Sweden the central point of the universe“? He probably did not see in them the dreadful White Russian winter, and imprisonment in Turkey. Did he see his lonely, wild „kingly ride“ home to an impoverished country which, for fourteen years, had been without a king, and on to his lonely, questionable death near Frederikssten?

Then there happened, a hundred and eighty-five years ago, without the house itself knowing anything about it, the most significant thing in the whole life of the Inn and something which should extend its lifetime into the coming centuries.

On an early spring day a fragile young man arrived at the Inn, no doubt with one of the freight-wagons from Copenhagen, and moved in as a lodger with the master-fisherman Ole Jacobsen and his wife. There must have been some previous arrangement with

his family, who sent him out here, and the Jacobsens understood their lodger to be something of a black sheep in the family – when scarcely more than a boy he had run away from home in order to enter a foreign army, and he reappeared in Copenhagen as a vagrant, poet, and toper. It was the Jacobsens' task to wean him from brandy – in this they were never really successful. But they were good people with open minds who came to like their guest. His name was Johannes Ewald. At Rungsted Inn, he says, he associated with „the common people, seamen and fishermen,“ the class of people which, in a certain sense, is called the lowest but which, in another sense, and no doubt a more truthful one, is called the highest. The fishermen at Rungsted and their wives and children became well acquainted with his young fragile figure when he wandered along the shore in the spring breeze, looked searchingly seaward among the ships and recognized strange flags or, whole summer days through, sat on the bench on the knoll in the Inn's garden, or followed the reapers' work and song in the fields. They saw or suspected that in him there was something they had not previously

met in human beings: immortality. And the ability to immortalize the landscape, birdsong and roses, the glittering or dark-rolling ocean, and the fisherfolk along with it. Poor, sick, lonesome, and unhappy in love, he had within him, in addition to the immortality which he imparted to everything, the ability to catch in a phrase one of the Danish language's most ecstatic words: *Lyksalighed* – bliss: *Rungsted's Lyksaligheder* – the joys of Rungsted. Most of my listeners certainly know something of this poem, which begins so gently and freely, like a bird's song in the tree, „where the songstress builds, and chirping reveals her nest,“ and which rises like a threatening storm over the landscape, and then, in its final stanza, ends with incomparable grace and fervor in its appeal to an individual. He lodged at Rungsted Inn for three years; my study to the east is called Ewald's Room. He parted with sorrow from Rungsted Inn; it seems today one might well meet him in the fields or hear his steps within the house.

Time passed over the old Inn. A hundred years later, another young man came from

foreign lands and established himself at Rungstedlund. He was Wilhelm Dinesen, my father, who as a seventeen-year-old lieutenant had been at Danevirke and Dybbøl; then as a French officer had served in the Franco-Prussian War and who, during the Paris Commune, had seen barricades built and French blood flow in French streets. He had turned away from Europe and its civilization and for three years had lived among the Indians in North America without seeing another white man. He had been a competent and fortunate hunter of pelts, but the money he earned he spent on his Indian friends. The Indians called him *Boganis*. Under that name he wrote his *Letters from the Hunt* here at Rungstedlund – a hunter's diary full of love for nature, the seasons, animals and birds, battle, solitude, and women. He married the lovely young Ingeborg Westenholtz, my mother, from the Matrup Estate near Horsens, and Mother told me that when they returned from their honeymoon and walked beneath the trees in through the fields, he said to her, „Whatever may happen in the future, please remember we came here

on the last day of May and it was beautiful and you were happy.“

I was ten years old when Father died. His death was for me a great sorrow, of a kind which probably only children feel. I think I was his favorite child, and I know he thought I resembled him. He took me with him when he walked over the fields, when he troated for a roebuck in the woods, or searched through the marsh for snipe with his two French griffon hounds, Osceola and Matchitabano, which were named for two old Indian chiefs among his friends. I remember clearly how he taught me to distinguish among the various kinds of birds and told me about migratory birds – and his quick, happy reaction at the sight of a rare bird, the kite with a notched tail, like other people’s happiness over a glass of good wine. A whole world was opened to me when I heard about the bird migrations, that mighty net which is spun around the earth as a result of some inexplicable call, for which life itself is wagered. I recall how I wondered when he told me that, among the storks, the male leaves the tropics for Denmark eight days before the female, and then she follows him to their old

nest. „If a lady,“ I thought, „were to follow her husband, she would certainly ask him to write down what train she should take, and where she should change trains. How do the two find each other on a straw roof on the island of Funen?“ Since then I have myself seen the storks in large flocks on the African plains, leading a bachelor existence during the wintry half of the year.

The nightingale arrives at Rungstedlund almost exactly on the eighth of May. How full of anticipation we children were as we awaited its arrival, and nevertheless how unexpected were its golden tones, coming from a tree in the woods, suddenly. We had a kind of law among us: each year we had to see a nightingale while it sang. Every year I have been in Denmark, I have waded through the long wet grass and nettles, and while there was still barely any light caught sight of a very thin little bird's silhouette on a branch above a bit of pond – for nightingales like underbrush and nettles and moist places and prefer gardens not too well-kept. What incredible power lies in the little vibrating throat! If a human being had such a powerful voice in proportion to its weight, the popular singers

Nina and Frederik, when they sang at the City Hall Square, could be heard in Amsterdam, Prague, and Oslo.

So throughout May and the first half of June, Rungstedlund's garden resounds with the song of the nightingale; one bird answers another; it is a long ecstatic festival of song.

Now I want to tell you a strange and true story about a nightingale.

During the third year of the First World War, I was to go back to Africa after a visit to Denmark. It had been difficult enough to get to Denmark; the ship upon which I had traveled from Mombasa to Marseilles was torpedoed on its return voyage. When in the autumn I was to go back, there was no passenger traffic at all in the Mediterranean, because of the submarines, and we had to travel south around the Cape of Good Hope and then back north along the East Coast of Africa to our harbor, Mombasa, below the equator. The tour from Southampton to the Cape took six weeks, because there were also submarines in the Atlantic, and our ship, in order to avoid them, went close to South America. The trip was worth making, for the

Cape is as lovely a spot as there is on earth. During the two days we were furthest south, I saw albatrosses with their incredible wingspan and their inexplicable, gliding flight. I sat on deck those two days; the others said to me, „Come down and eat lunch,“ and I replied, „No, I can always eat lunch, but I shall never again see albatrosses.“ My good friend the Swedish poet Harry Martinson and I once discussed the ups and downs of our lives, and both of us exclaimed, as if we had discovered an important entry on the credit side, „And we have seen albatrosses!“ When at Christmastime we came to Durban, about halfway between the Cape and Mombasa, there were orders for our ship to return to England, and we had to wait for another ship to pick us up and take us further north. I did not like Durban, which is a sort of spa for Johannesburg millionaires; when I had been there for a time I bought a car, traveled into the highlands around Pietermaritzburg and visited old inhabitants on their cattle-farms and had an enjoyable time. While I was still breaking in the car, I went out several times to a place called Amanzimtoti, an hour's drive from Durban, where there was a little

wood. One day I went there with some other passengers from the boat, stopped short, and exclaimed, „Listen, there is a nightingale!“ The others laughed at me. „Oh yes, certainly it is a nightingale,“ I said. „You don’t suppose I can mistake it? But it is true the birds sing their full stanzas only for us in the North, during the breeding season – the nightingale we hear now is only tuning his instrument.“ We made a bet on the point, as far as I can remember, a high one, but we couldn’t get it decided. Twenty years later I spoke in Denmark with a young ornithologist who, as a boy, had had the run of Rungstedlund garden in order to study bird life, and I asked him how far south the nightingale goes in its migration. „They go south to the equator,“ he said. „The very first nightingale from Rungstedlund which I ringed, was sighted south of the equator. I don’t remember the name of the place, but I have it in my notebook.“ He took his notebook out of his pocket, leafed in it, and said, „It was called Amanzimtoti.“

Now it cannot have been that ringed nightingale which I myself heard sing at Amanzimtoti, but it is possible that one par-

ticular nightingale family has its winter residence there and returns to Rungstedlund for the summer on the eighth of May.

I have come to look upon Rungstedlund as belonging particularly to the migratory birds. The seasons here are first and foremost characterized by their arrivals and departures. How many times have I not, in the nights around the spring or autumnal equinox, stood outside the house and listened to their flight high in the heavens above the roof!

The human inhabitants of the house have also been birds of migration. They traveled far abroad and then came home. Young Johannes Ewald flew to Germany and Austria on his very slight wings; he returned to Rungstedlund – a songbird who sang most beautifully at dusk, and here it was beautiful and he was happy. The young Wilhelm Dinesen, Boganis, flew out to the battlefields of Europe and the prairies of America and came home to Rungstedlund. I myself left for half a lifetime's stay in the African highlands, and then came back.

In the years after my return from Africa, as I have seen Greater Copenhagen enclose

Rungstedlund more and more, I have wondered how I could preserve it and keep the old Inn and the Inn's garden and their little bit of Danish nature and Danish history. It has been as if a great sorrow, a great loss, and a blank space lay before me when I thought that everything would be changed completely, indeed disappear and be gone. In the course of time there could be an asphalted, suburban road called Boganis Street just as there is now, in the suburb called Rungsted, an Ewald Street, and by these names future generations could be considered adequately to have shown their piety towards the past. But where would be the green vales which gave pleasure to Ewald and Boganis? Every summer when I have heard the cuckoo in the woods, I have thought, „How can I preserve a large tree in the garden for it to sit and coo in?“

I had been told it was undemocratic to let an area big enough for three hundred row-houses lie – as it was said – useless.

From time to time, I think that Danish „democracy“ protects the people who don't need it more than those who really do; I think it protects automobiles rather than bi-

cyclists. I know very well there could be much enterprise and family happiness in those three hundred row-houses: But what about the landless multitude at that time, those who only on holidays see something besides paved streets? The owners of row-houses are zealous defenders of proprietary rights and on their property no trespassers may come, nor is there much there for anyone to come to see. If all of North Zealand is finally laid out in row-houses, the owners will invest in some lilac and laburnum bushes, in roses and radish beds, but there will be no more large trees. And the mass of people who do not themselves own land will move along the flagstones without ever sensing turf under their feet or foliage above their heads, and without anywhere meeting that stillness which once permitted people to „hear birds’ songs which could move the heart.“

The great landless masses have a trait which is pleasant to touch upon, for they are alert people, who are willing to join in a collaborative venture – they have agreed with my attitude about the mission of Rungstedlund. The garden at Rungstedlund has not been

closed for a generation; people have been able to go in and out freely. Today, there must be many established *patres familias* who can remember how as boys during the winter they skated on the pond and in the summer hid as Indians in caves and under bushes in the woods, and there must be at least one couple celebrating their golden wedding anniversary who remember walking hand in hand along the green paths in the woods. I have no fence along the shore road, but my lovely roses and hyacinths, which grow along the sidewalk, have not been picked; people have understood they were there for the common pleasure. One Sunday afternoon I came in through the fields and saw a card-table set up under an old oak tree with four happy card-players in shirtsleeves slapping the cards down on the table.

There has been a single frightful incident of abuse, which I shall tell you about. In the garden we have large, edible grapevine snails, which are said to have been introduced by Count Stolberg a hundred and fifty years ago. One day I came to Ewald's Knoll with some English guests to whom I wanted to show the garden. And there had been – I choose

the word carefully and say „some boys,“ for generally only boys can go amok in such a way – who had collected several hundred snails, and had put them on the benches on the Knoll, and had stamped upon them until everything was a mass of shells, slime, and rotten snails. It had apparently happened the day before, because the stench was dreadful around the Knoll. It was an ugly and crude deed, not only because here – even though snails presumably don't feel much – something living had been trampled to death, but because the massacre apparently had been undertaken on the benches with the idea that a loving pair at twilight, or a couple of old, nearsighted ladies, would sit down in the middle of the mess. Indeed, I became so angry, so ashamed before my English guests, and so despairing at the mentality I confronted, that I said to myself, „Now I am going to close the garden and there will be no access for anyone from the outside.“ This should probably be called the exception which proves the rule.

I would like to think that Rungstedlund in the future could be a breathing space in the middle of a big city.

And because the migratory birds at Rungstedlund have meant so much to me, I have envisaged it as a bird sanctuary, a true paradise for birds which have come here over the oceans of the world.

But hitherto I have not been able to realize my dream. It is costly to preserve property as a monument. First of all, one has to give up the potential income that one could gain by dividing it and selling it, and I have not known whether my finances would be able to permit me that. And an institution like the Ornithological Society cannot accept Rungstedlund simply as a gift from me and from those of my brothers and sisters who are partial owners of the property. Some capital would have to accompany the gift to cover the taxes and upkeep, the fencing, planting, feeding, the construction of birdhouses, and many other things which the task connotes.

I know that I have been particularly successful as an author, but authors do not earn as much as people generally assume. At the time I wrote my first three books, what Danish authors made in America was taxed twice.

This year finally, despite all obstacles, I have succeeded in having my latest book pub-

lished, and since I hope to have another book out in the fall, I have had the great satisfaction of realizing my plan. *The Rungstedlund Fund* has been established and recognized as a private foundation. The purpose of the Fund is to preserve Rungstedlund as a bird sanctuary under the direction of the Ornithological Society. Rungstedlund will, from now on, be a protected area and lie unchanged, and there will be no interference here except what the bird-life requires.

I have succeeded in doing this in the following way. I have given by deed to the Rungstedlund Fund all the income which presumably will come from the sale of my books from the day of the establishment of the Fund until fifty years after my death, when the copyright lapses. The arrangement also includes film rights and dramatic rights and, in general, everything I have been able to earn by writing and whatever I may earn by writing from now on. I have given everything that I can count on and hope for, and have no more to give.

Until my death I shall be able to live at Rungstedlund and be able to use some of the

monies of the Fund for my own living expenses.

As far as the old building that we are sitting in is concerned, its future is not fixed. It is possible or reasonable that the part the ornithologists do not need may be used for a museum about the history of Rungstedlund, and for a public library. In this way it would, true to tradition, unite nature and literature.

The specialists in Denmark with whom I have spoken about my intentions have shown the friendliest interest and understanding. The best of them are my allies.

From the start, I was afraid the area I could offer was too small for my purpose, and I asked Dr. Salomonsen of the Ornithological Society to come out and look at it. Dr. Salomonsen declared Rungstedlund was large enough to maintain a population of all the common Danish songbirds. And when he walked through the park and woods together with me, and saw how peaceful it is here, he said he thought that, by preservation and care, one might also attract less common species. I know by experience how the peculiarly sensitive animals react towards any protected area. When I was a child, swans

were shot from the shore here, and it was rare to see a swan in the Sound. About thirty years ago the swans became a protected species, and now one sees here every spring hundreds of swans right down to the shore. In Africa I saw how the game knew the borders of the Masai Reserve almost to the very yard – one seldom saw buffalo or antelope beyond its dividing line.

Dr. C. Syrach-Larsen, who is known throughout the world as an authority on trees and plants, has been very kind to the Rungstedlund Fund, and has promised to assist me by acquiring those plants and kinds of grass which birds like and which will attract them here.

This spring we have started to dig and plant and to put up birdhouses. The Rungstedlund Fund bears the expenses but the Ornithological Society and Dr. Syrach-Larsen are planning and directing the work. To my great satisfaction, Dr. Syrach-Larsen advised me, particularly, where we should plant wild roses. There will be a direct line of succession leading up into today's activities from two hundred years ago. „In cooling shadows, in darkness which the roses spread.“

I hope the work can be done so nicely and so well for the birds that Rungstedlund Bird Sanctuary will be comparable to others, and that ornithologists from foreign lands will sometimes come here to study Danish bird-life.

Rungstedlund will be open to the public as much as possible, while keeping the welfare of the birds in mind.

But fifty years are not eternity. I would not compare myself with the blessed Christian V, who established Dyrehaven – the animal park – but I should like in all modesty to have Rungstedlund, like the animal park, enter the life and consciousness of the people, at least in the surrounding area, for more than a hundred years, and to have the place remain for a long time in the future a haven for migratory birds.

Therefore I turn to you, my listeners, and ask you to join me in this undertaking. I ask every listener who is interested in protecting by law and preserving with care particular values in Denmark, and also every listener who, throughout the years, has derived pleasure from our meetings on the radio, to assist me today.

I should like to have it come about in the following way: that each of you who is now listening to my voice would give one Krone to the Rungstedlund Fund. For myself, it would be particularly pleasant to know how many understanding and kindly-disposed listeners I have had, how many of you remember me with some satisfaction and wish to give me satisfaction in return. I ask each of you listening to me now to send one Krone to the Rungstedlund Fund, at an address which will be announced after I have spoken.

There is one point in the matter which I regret. In order to contribute one Krone to the Rungstedlund Fund it will be necessary to pay thirty Øre in postage, and two Øre for a money-order blank: in sum, one Krone and thirty-two Øre. I have thought about the possibilities of trying to avoid this deplorable condition, but I haven't been able to get around it. I quite understand that it is more difficult to pay one Krone and thirty-two Øre than simply one Krone. But I beg you; do not let it be *too* difficult! I ask you to go tomorrow or the day after tomorrow to your post office, to fill out a money-order with

the number that will be announced; and to put down the difficult sum of one Krone and thirty-two Øre on the counter.

I ask you, my listeners in Denmark who have their radios turned on now, to bear this expense and to go to this trouble for three reasons.

The first is this: so that the migratory birds, some spring, will not come from Amanzimtoti and find asphalt and flagstone where before was woodland floor. Instead, each summer far into the future Rungstedlund will be filled with new birdsong, „where the songstress builds and chirping reveals her nest.“

Another reason is this: so that, for a hundred years, the children and grandchildren of my present listeners may walk in the woods that Ewald walked in. So that in the „listeners' park“ at Rungstedlund, children will, for a hundred years, be able to play tag in the grass, young couples may kiss, and old people rest in the shadows. May they all think it is beautiful here and be happy.

The third reason is this: because I personally will feel that every Krone that comes in is a handclasp from an individual listener – from those to whom I am now speaking.

The radio people have asked me to return four weeks from today and tell you a story. At that time, I can also account for what the listeners have contributed to the Rungstedlund Fund and I shall have an opportunity to thank those who have contributed.

And you who now, as I hope, have pencil and paper in hand, I ask to guess what the sum contributed by listeners will be for my bird sanctuary and to write down the figure. Then four weeks from today, you can see how near you have come to the actual result. I shall do the same at random, for I really have no idea what the sum will be.

Of course, I hope that I shall hear some Kroner and thirty-two Øre sounding on the counter, but I should prefer to shut off the radio tonight with the echo of birdsong in our ears.

Here at Rungstedlund there is a boy who was very young when he came here with his mother, who is my housekeeper. He is now twelve years old and plays the recorder. I am going to ask him to come to the fireplace and to play for you the old folk-song melody about *The Bird's Song*. Someone else in the house will accompany him by singing.

Endnotes

12 *Valdemar Vedel* (1865-1942); professor of history of literature at the University of Copenhagen, was for many years the editor of the Danish periodical *Tilskueren* (*The Spectator*).

13 *Vesterport Station* One stop from the main Copenhagen railroad station on the underground/elevated line („S-train“).

15 *Gurre* Originally the name of a lake and castle in northeast Zealand. There are both folk ballads and more recent poetry that have some association with Gurre – the best known of which are by Jens Peter Jacobsen (1847-85) and Holger Drachmann (1846-1908). Drachmann was a prolific and popular Danish poet.

15 *Carl X Gustav* (1622-60), King of Sweden after 1654, when he succeeded his cousin Queen Christina upon her abdication. He occupied Jutland in 1657 and, because of the severity of the following winter, was able to cross the ice and attack Zealand in January 1658. The Peace of Roskilde resulted, but he attacked Denmark again later the same year.

15 *Charles XII* (1682-1718). Politically the most active of the Swedish kings, especially during the „Great Northern War“ (1700-21). Charles was in Turkey between 1709 and 1714. He was subsequently killed in battle in Norway.

15 *Carolina Mathilda* Wife of King Christian VII.

16 *Dyrehaven* Previously a royal hunting preserve north of Copenhagen, adjacent to Klampenborg. It has been a popular outing place for two centuries. The name literally means „The Animal Garden.“

16 *Oehlenschläger's Midsummer Night's Play [Sanct Hansaften-Spil]* (1803) by Adam Oehlenschläger (1779-1850) is still performed at the Royal Theater in Copenhagen. It depicts an outing to Dyrehaven and the events of a day there.

16 *Snekkersten ... Skovshoved* Villages with small harbors along the Sound between Copenhagen and Elsinore.

17 *Professor Brøndsted* Johannes Brøndsted (1890-1965), first Danish national antiquarian.

18 *Christian II* (1481-1559), King of Denmark between 1513 and 1532.

18 *Christian IV* (1577-1648), ascended the throne in 1596 to become the best known of Danish kings. During his reign many of the monumental older buildings of Copenhagen were constructed.

19 *Queen Sophie Amalie* (1628-85), born princess

of Braunschweig-Lüneberg, wife of King Frederik III of Denmark (1597-1659), who ascended the throne in 1648.

21 *Steen Eiler Rasmussen* (1898-1990), architect and prolific writer on architectural and related subjects.

21 *The state bankruptcy of 1813* The result of Denmark's alliance with Napoleon during the Napoleonic Wars.

23 *Kirstin(e) Munk* (1598-1658) was the second (and morganatic) wife of King Christian IV.

23 *The Rhinegrave* i.e., Otto Ludwig von Salm, with whom Kirstin Munk had a scandalous affair. The paternity of her daughter born in September, 1629, is unknown.

23 *Johann Feggræus* (dates unknown; knighted 1632), Swedish diplomat who assumed the name Strömfelt in 1632.

23 *Frans G. Bengtsson* (1894-1955), Swedish poet, essayist, and historian. Author of a two-volume work on the life of King Charles XII, published 1935-36.

25 *Johannes Ewald* (1743-81), Denmark's greatest eighteenth-century lyric poet and, like Adam Oehlenschläger, author of one of the two Danish national anthems. He lived at Rungsted Inn between March 1773 and the autumn of 1775. Some of his verse was written here.

26 *Rungstedts Lyksaligheder* One of Ewald's best-known poems and read by every Danish schoolchild.

27 *Wilhelm Dinesen* (1845-95), Karen Blixen's father, mentioned here as the author of *Jagtbreve* – „Letters from the Hunt“ – written under the pseudonym Boganis.

27 *Danevirke and Dybbøl* The former is the name given to the Danish fortifications in southern Jutland from the Middle Ages until 1864. The latter is a strategically important site of a major battle between Prussia and Denmark in April 1864.

27 *Horsens* Provincial town on the eastern coast of Jutland.

31 *Pietermaritzburg* Capital of Natal in South Africa, about twenty miles northeast of Durban.

31 *Amanzimtoti* Town on the African coast about ten miles southwest of Durban.

36 *Count Stolberg* Christian Günther Stolberg (1714-65), father of two Danish-German poets, spent his summers at Hørsholm, near Rungstedlund, after 1756.

40 *Dr. Salomonsen* Finn Salomonsen (1909-83), zoologist and an authority on Danish bird life.

41 *Dr. C. Syrach-Larsen* (1898-1979), internationally known Danish forester.

42 *Christian V* (1649-99), King of Denmark-Norway 1670-99.

