

# LETTERS - AND - ART

## CHICAGO'S "KAISERIZED" SPELLER

THE KAISER CAN NOT COMPLAIN that he is not handled with gloves in Chicago. The page in the spelling-book used in the public schools which contained a eulogy on him has now been expunged, but "by a neat and diplomatic method," points out the *Springfield Republican*. The School Board, instead of removing the one page that gave offense, had thirty-nine pages removed, "and now every one is happy in Chicago." If the children should not spell so well with all those pages gone, suggests the *Springfield paper*, they must look upon themselves as victims of a war-atrocity. The *New York Sun* thinks the eulogy had no business to be in the spelling-book at all, "but was inserted in pursuance of the far-sighted and organized effort of the Germans, begun more than a score of years ago, to build up German sentiment in this country." Here is the page, omitting a list of words placed at the bottom, over which the Chicago School Board, "appointed by Chicago's well-known pro-German Mayor," wrangled for several days:

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CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL
GRADE EIGHT

SPELLING—EIGHTH GRADE

December 19, 1910

NOTE: Dictate to the pupils the following text and the list of words below. The pupils will be marked on the words in italics and the words in the list.

THE KAISER IN THE MAKING

In the *gymnasium* at Cassel the German *Kaiser* spent three years of his boyhood, a *diligent* but not a *brilliant* pupil, ranking tenth among *seventeen candidates* for the *university*.

Many tales are told of this *period* of his life, and one of them, at least, is *illuminating*.

A *professor*, it is said, wishing to curry favor with his royal pupil, informed him *overnight* of the chapter in Greek that was to be made the *subject* of the next day's lesson.

The young *prince* did what many boys would not have done. As soon as the classroom was *opened* on the following morning, he entered and wrote *conspicuously* on the blackboard the *information* that had been given him.

One may say *unhesitatingly* that a boy capable of such an action has the root of a fine *character* in him, *possesses* that *chivalrous* sense of fair play which is the nearest thing to a *religion*, that may be looked for at that age, hates *meanness* and *favoritism*, and will, *wherever possible*, expose them. There is in him a *fundamental* bent toward what is clean, manly, and aboveboard.

The *New York Evening Post*, not stopping to consider that "whether there be prophecies, they shall fail," finds a chance removed for a natural reaction in the minds of Chicago students, and puts a question based on experience:

"The question remains whether elimination of the page containing it is the most politic course. The unpopularity of Julius Caesar among school children is to be traced directly to the difficulties they encounter in transforming his idiomatic Latin into unidiomatic English. Could anything be devised more likely to result in an equally hostile feeling toward the Kaiser than the association with him of the spelling of 'favoritism,' 'chivalrous,' and 'unhesitatingly'?"

It is reported that the women members of the board voted against excision, one saying that as a little girl she was taught

never to destroy anything. "Another predicted darkly that if the board voted to authorize the children to tear out the page entitled 'The Kaiser in the Making' she could see written on history a new page entitled 'Anarchists in the Making.'"

A Chicago dispatch to the *Evening World* (New York) says that the youngsters began to "strafe" the page before the board took its decision:

"Every mail brings mutilated pages torn from the speller to the newspapers. Often they are accompanied by childish letters. One writes: 'My brother is a first-class yeoman in the Navy, so you see how I feel about the speller.'"

"The torn page was enclosed and hope express that 'all other boys and girls will do the same.'"

"Little Helen Merry wrote: 'Here's my page. I have no further use for it.'"

What the *New York Sun* wakes up to is the surprising fact that—

"This tribute to the virtuous qualities of the man responsible for the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the massacres and sack of Louvain, the slavery of Lille, and, in fact, for the whole bloody conflict now raging in every quarter of the globe, has been part of the daily lesson that children in several grades of the public schools of Chicago have had drilled into them since the war began. It now appears in 130,000 books in the hands of children and in 70,000 still undistributed. The board voted to allow the Superintendent of Schools to eliminate the page from the copies now in his possession, but defeated a resolution urging the parents of the children holding the books to tear out the offending page."

The *Chicago Herald* makes merry over the manner the School Board finally allowed itself of doing a thing one can imagine the Kaiser himself would have found the most peremptory means to accomplish:

"Superintendent Shoop asked for and was given permission by the Board of Education yesterday to boot the Kaiser out of the public-school spelling-books."

"Of course the superintendent did not make the request in language which was rough, raw, or rude. It was couched in terms aimed to avoid 'injuring the feelings' of any one."

"He made no reference to the Kaiser, did not mention the fact that the United States was at war with the German autocrat, did not recognize the great public demand that the eulogy of the Kaiser be cut from the books, and there was nothing about patriotism."

"The superintendent's recommendation is ambiguous," said Trustee Jacob M. Loeb. "Without his supplementary oral explanation I would not have understood what he was trying to get at."

"I am sure it was not intended to be ambiguous," replied Mr. Shoop.

"But here it is, just as it was presented to the board, with its three short sections, only one of which has reference to the point at issue:

"The superintendent of schools submits to the Board of Education proof for the revision of the spelling-book that is used in the schools. In the new book the subject-matter of the eighth grade has been materially changed."

"The superintendent recommends that authority be granted for the elimination from all text-books that are the property of the Board of Education of that portion which embodies the course in spelling for the eighth grade; and, further,

"Recommends that authority be granted for the issuing of the speller in separate sections, if it is possible under the contract, not to exceed three."

"It is the middle paragraph which refers to the Kaiser page. By 'all text-books' the superintendent means the 'Kaiserized' speller. The clause, 'that portion which embodies the source,

in spelling for the eighth grade,' was Mr. Shoop's way of saying to the Kaiser page, 'That for you, sir.'

"To get around a specific recommendation that the Kaiser page be cut out, Mr. Shoop asked that thirty-nine pages of the book be eliminated. There are that many pages devoted to the spelling course for the eighth grade. The Kaiser page happens to be one of the thirty-nine. It is the thirty-ninth page of the section.

"There are 10,000 copies of the speller in the supply department. There are about 60,000 others in the hands of indigent pupils and unsold at the various schools. To rebind them all after the thirty-nine pages have been cut out will cost considerable money. Not to rebind them will leave them unsightly and unsalable. These statements are on the authority of an official of the board. The objectionable page could have been removed with less trouble, and without affecting the appearance of the book."

## WHAT THE SOLDIER THINKS OF SHAW

WHEN BERNARD SHAW went to the front he was discovered by a journalist, who sent his account of the meeting off post-haste to the London papers. It was an amusing interpretation of the Shavian point of view, and dwelt on the incongruity of Shaw in the war-zone. Our readers saw it in our issue of March 10, 1917. It was as near to what Shaw might have written as we can expect to get, and it records the sardonic question put to his interviewer: "Tell me, are all newspaper correspondents as big fools as they seem?" We get the soldier's view of Shaw in a recent letter to the *New York Tribune* by our one-time dramatic critic, Mr. Heywood Broun. He describes having come upon the signature "G. Bernard Shaw," writ small in the middle of a page of the visitors' book at a certain château, and it "fairly leapt out" to his eye from amid the names of kings, and generals, and members of Parliament. We read:

"The hand was tiny. In a sense Shaw is economical of words. He writes many, but he writes them small. This time economy was complete. There was no preface to the signature, and no handbook or foot-notes. The visitor had simply written 'G. Bernard Shaw' and allowed it to stand without explanation or comment. The officers supplied that.

"'Awful ass!' said one who had met the playwright at the front. 'He was no end of nuisance for us. Why, when he got out here we found he was a vegetarian, and we had to chase around and have omelets fixed up for him every day.'

"'I censored his stuff,' said another. 'I didn't think much of it, but I made almost no changes. Some of it was a little subtle, but I let it get by.'

"'I inquired and learned that the blue pencil which cut the copy of G. Bernard Shaw had not been preserved. It seemed a pity.

"'I heard him out here,' said a third officer, 'and he talked no end of rot. He said the Germans had made a botch of destroying towns. He said he could have done more damage to Arras with a hammer than the Germans did with their shells. Of course, he couldn't begin to do it with a hammer, and, anyway, he wouldn't be let. I suppose he never thought of that. Then he said that the Germans were doing us a great favor by their air-raids. He said they were smashing up things that were ugly and unsanitary. That's silly. We could pull them down ourselves, you know, and, anyhow, in the last raid they hit the post-office.'

"'The old boy's got nerve, though,' interrupted another officer. 'I was out at the front with him near Arras, and there was some pretty lively shelling going on around us. I told him to put on his tin hat, but he wouldn't do it. I said, "Those German shell-splinters may get you," and he laughed and said if the Germans did anything to him they'd be mighty ungrateful, after all he'd done for them. He doesn't know the *Boche*.'

"'He told me,' added a British journalist, "'when I want to know about war I talk to soldiers." I asked him: "Do you mean officers or Tommies?" He said that he meant Tommies.

"'Now you know how much reliance you can put in what a Tommy says. He'll either say what he thinks you want him to say or what he thinks you don't want him to say. I told Shaw that, but he paid no attention.'

"Here the first officer chimed in again. 'Well, I stick to

what I've said right along. I don't see where Shaw's funny. I think he's silly.'

"The officer who was showing the visitors' book turned over another page. 'There's Conan Doyle,' he said."

## ANOTHER POET FALLEN IN BATTLE

THE WAR is no respecter of poets. All countries have made their sacrifices; America, in Alan Seeger, even before she became a belligerent. Ireland had seemed so far able to keep her own, but a cable dispatch of August 8 informs us that "Lance-Corporal Francis Ledwidge,



FRANCIS LEDWIDGE.

Farm-laborer, journalist, scavenger, hypnotist, poet; he fell on the fields of France, leaving behind two books of verse called imperishable.

a peasant poet of Meath, was killed on the battle-front in Flanders, July 31. He was twenty-six years old." His annals are short and simple, but fortunately we already knew something of him from Lord Dunsany, who had been his discoverer and who hailed him as "a star" risen "where I have so long looked for one, among the Irish peasants." Where he saw the star rise his joy was immediately followed with something like sadness, for, he writes: "If one who looked from a tower for a new star, watching for years the same part of the sky, suddenly saw it (quite by chance, while thinking of other things) and knew it for the star for which he had hoped, how many millions of men would never care?" Lord Dunsany's preface to Ledwidge's "Songs of the Fields," published last year in October, make the foregoing reflection and continues in the following strain of one whom Ireland gave up to the wars almost as soon as she had found him:

"I have looked for a poet among the Irish peasants, because it seemed to me that almost only among them there was in daily use a diction worthy of poetry, as well as an imagination capable of dealing with the great and simple things that are a poet's wares. Their thoughts are in the springtime, and all their metaphors fresh; in London no one makes metaphors any more, but daily speech is strewn thickly with dead ones that their users should write upon paper and give to their gardeners to burn.

"In this same London, two years ago, where I was wasting June, I received a letter one day from Mr. Ledwidge and a very old copy-book. The letter asked whether there was any