

Kaiser Tried to Change School System of Nation to Inculcate New Ideas of Serving Country

BY WILHELM HOHENZOLLERN

As was natural, I had close and lasting relations in the regular course of events with the Minister of Public Worship and Instruction. Herr von Gossler and Herr von Trotz may surely be considered the most important and prominent occupants of this post. In this ministry a co-worker almost without equal arose in the person of Ministry Director Althoff, a man of genius.

I had been made acquainted with the dark side of the high school system of education by my own school experiences. The predominantly philosophical character of the training led, in the whole educational system as well, to a certain one-sidedness.

When I was at the Cassel high school in 1874-1877 I had observed that, although there was great enthusiasm for 1870-1871 and the new empire among the boys, there was, nevertheless, a distinct lack of the right conception of the German idea, of the feeling "clavis Germanus sum" (I am a German citizen)—which I impressed later upon my people at the laying of the foundation-stone of the Saarburg. To create such sentiments and awaken them in the rising generation and to lay the foundations for them firmly in the young hearts was a task some-what beyond the powers of the teaching staff, in view of the fossilized, antiquated philosophical curriculum.

There was great neglect in the department of German history, which is exactly the study through which young hearts may be made to glow, through which the love of one's native country, its future and greatness, may be aroused. But little was taught of more recent history, covering the years since 1815. Young philologists were produced, but no German citizens qualified for practical co-operation toward building up the flourishing young empire.

In other words, no youths who were consciously Germans were being turned out. In a small reading club composed of my classmates I often tried to inculcate the idea of the Greater German and similar conceptions which hampered the German idea. Admiral Warner's "Book of the German Fleet" was one of the few works by means of which the living feeling for the German Empire could be fanned into flame.

New Goal of German Youth

Another thing that struck me, in addition to the one-sidedness of the education in the schools, was the tendency among youths planning their careers in those days to turn their attention to becoming government officials, and always to consider the profession of lawyer or judge the most worthy goal.

This was doubtless due to the fact that the conditions obtaining in the Prussia of olden days still had their effect in the youthful German Empire. As long as the state consisted, so to speak, of government and administration, this tendency among German youths in the shaping of their lives was understandable and justified; since we were living in a country of officials, the right road for a young man to select was the service of the state. British youths of that time, self-reliant and made robust by sports, were already talking, to be sure, of colonial conquests, of expeditions to explore new regions of the earth, of extending British commerce; and they were trying, in the guise of pioneers of their country, to make Great Britain still stronger and greater, by practical, free action, not as paid hirelings of the state. But England had long been a world empire when we were still a land of officials; therefore, the youth of Britain could seek more remote and important goals than the German.

Now that Germany had entered into world economies and world politics, however, as a by no means negligible factor, the aspirations of German youth should have undergone a more prompt transformation. For this reason it was that I during the later years of my reign, used to compare, with a heavy heart, the proud young Britons, who had learned much less Latin and Greek than was required among us, with the children of Germany.

Many Children Vitamin-Starved

Vitamin B is a food element as essential to life and health as air and water. Yet many of the very foods you think most nourishing are sadly deficient in this vital substance; among them, meats, lard, butter, fine flour bread, rice, corn meal and many popular breakfast foods. Even milk is not rich enough in vitamin B. Many children suffer from vitamin starvation. Their growth is stunted, they lose color, strength and vitality, and all an easy prey to disease.

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many, pale from overstudy. To be sure, there were even then enterprising men in Germany—brilliant names can be cited among them—but the conception of serving the Fatherland, not by traveling along a definite, officially certified road, but by independent competition, had not yet become sufficiently generalized. Therefore, I held up the English as an example, for it seems to me better to take the good, than to go through the world wearing blinders.

With these considerations as a basis I won for my German youths the School Reform against desperate opposition from the philologists, inside and outside the ministry and school circles. Unfortunately, the reform did not take the shape which I had hoped, and did not lead to the results which I had expected.

The "Germanic Idea"

The Germanic idea in all its splendor was first revealed and preached to the astonished German people by Chamberlain in his "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century." But, as is proved by the collapse of the German people, this was in vain. To be sure, there was much singing of "Deutschland über alles," but Germans, obeying the commands of their enemies, allowed the Emperor to fall and the empire to be broken to pieces; and, placing themselves under the orders of Russian criminals vastly inferior to them in culture, they stabbed their own army in the back while it was fighting valiantly.

Had Germans of all classes and conditions been educated to feel joy and pride in their Fatherland, such a degradation of a great nation would have been unimaginable.

This degradation—which, it must be admitted, occurred under remarkable, extremely difficult, circumstances—is all the more difficult to understand in view of the fact that the youth of Germany, although it was impaired in health by overstudy and not so toughened by sports as the English, achieved brilliant feats in the World war, such as were nowhere equaled before.

The years 1914-1918 showed what might have been made out of the German people had it only developed its admirable qualities in the right direction. The 4th of August, 1914, the heroes of Langemark, countless splendid figures from all classes, rise up from the chaos of the long war to show what the German can do when he throws away Philistinism and devotes himself, with the enthusiasm which so seldom reveals itself completely in him, to a great cause. May the German people never forget these

incarnations of its better self; may it emulate them with its full strength by inculcating in itself the true German spirit.

In the post of Minister of Justice I found his Excellency Friedberg, the intimate, faithful friend of my father, whom I had known ever since my youth, when he was a welcome guest in the home of my parents. This simple, affable man enjoyed with me the same considerations which had been shown him by my parents.

In later years I had frequent and welcome dealings with his Excellency Beseiler, who also enabled me to hear informal discussion at his home of many an interesting legal problem by prominent lawyers, and to come into touch with legal luminaries. I felt no particular inclination toward the law, but I was interested in the study of doctrine, remoteness from actualities and doctrinaire leanings—often assert themselves in the domain of the law altogether too much for my taste—but the compilation of the Citizen's Law Book interested me greatly. I was present at sessions dealing with it, and was proud that this fundamental German work should have been brought to completion in my reign.

When I met the Lord Chief Justice of England, while I was on a visit to that country, at the home of Lord Halsbury, I asked that great jurist what he thought of the administration and interpretation of the law in Germany. His answer ran thus: "You pronounce judgment too much according to the letter of the law; we according to the spirit and content of the law."

Legal Reforms Needed

I have often pointed out how unfortunate it was that we have not been able to introduce, in police cases—connected with traffic, streets, etc.—the prompt procedure of the English "police court." For, in England, punishment in such cases is meted out on the very next day, whereas in Germany months often elapse, what with gathering of evidence and examination of witnesses, until, finally, some insignificant sentence is pronounced long after the case has been forgotten. I should also have liked to introduce into Germany the heavy penalties for libels published in the press which are customary in England.

I had worked for a while, when I was still a Prince, with Minister of Finance Scholz, and had taken part in sessions wherein that famous man, His Excellency Meinecke, figured. Meinecke was Under Secretary of State in the Finance Ministry and had, therefore, much to do with other ministries, since finances were an important thing everywhere. He had achieved a certain degree of fame because he, as he thought, was always able smilingly to find his best way out of tight places.

Scholz was faithful to his duty and able, but he did not succeed in making the dry substance of taxes and the like particularly interesting and pleasant to me, nor was there any change in this state of affairs until the versatile Miquel took charge of the Finance Ministry. When Miquel reported

to me concerning the Prussian financial reform, one modest, one medium, one ambitious. To the delight of the Minister I decided, without hesitation, for the third. Both the monarch and the Minister were filled with satisfaction when the reform was carried out.

The Minister of the Interior, Herr von Puttkamer, had been forced to retire during the ninety-nine days, to the great sorrow of him who was then Crown Prince. He was an able, tried old Prussian official; one of those Pomeranians of the old school, filled with loyalty to the King—a nobleman through and through. Rumor had it that the Empress Frederick had driven him from office by a plot, but this is not true. The Empress, with her inclination to English Liberalism, doubtless did not like the old-time Prussian Conservative, yet she was not at all to blame for his going. Prince Bismarck pushed him aside, perhaps out of consideration for the Empress Frederick.

I was deeply interested in forestry and its improvement along practical lines, especially as new gold reserves could be created for the State by reforestation.

Next to Herr von Podbielski, the ablest Minister of Agriculture and Forestry was Freiherr von Schorlemer. Just as Herr von Podbielski bent his efforts toward creating great stretches of forests in the East, in order to keep off the east wind by a compact forest zone and thus improve our climate, and, at the same time, provide a natural protection against Russian attacks so Herr von Schorlemer opened up the eastern forest reservations by extensive construction of roads, and by thus facilitating the transportation of wood helped Germany greatly in making headway in competition against wood from Russia.

Both Ministers sought, in co-operation with me, to improve our splendid Prussian forestry personnel and better living conditions among them, and to help them toward promotions in their ranks—all of which these officials, zealous in their work and faithful to their King, fully deserved.

The influx of large sums into the State's pocketbook depended indeed on the honesty, industry and reliability of these men. I expected much toward restoration of the fatherland from the statesmanlike shrewdness and ability of Herr von Schorlemer.

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who was always quite conscious of the goal at which he was aiming. (His recent death, which snatched him away in the midst of beneficial labors, is a serious loss to the fatherland.)

He Studied Forestry

I learned much about forestry from Head Forester Freiherr von Hovel (Joachimsthal, Schorffheide) and Freiherr Speck von Sternburg (Sztittkohen, Rominten) on my many hunting expeditions with these excellent administrators.

Let me say a word here regarding a Russian curiosity in the domain of preserving wild game. The Czar, who had heard a great deal about the fine antlers of the stags at Rominten, wished to have some of the same sort at Spala, in Poland. Freiherr von Sternburg was sent to the Spala hunting lodge one summer in order to give advice regarding this project.

He was received very cordially by a General, who had charge of the hunting there and lived at the lodge. Sternburg noticed that all the apartments, even those not inhabited, were always kept heated. When he spoke of the enormous waste of wood occasioned by this, the General shrugged his shoulders and remarked that one never could tell, the Czar might put in an appearance some day, after all. A gamekeeper, who was a German, was assigned to Sternburg, since the

General did not know his way about on the reservation and was quite ignorant of game feeding.

In the course of his tours about the place Sternburg observed a number of places where meadows could be turned into pastures or good feeding places could be installed. He drew attention to the need of such arrangements, having noticed that the deer had already begun to shed their horns to a considerable extent, thereby causing much damage to the trees.

But the gamekeeper shook his head sadly and remarked that he had already reported all that, but in vain, since the hay for the deer had to be brought by rail from the Black Sea and the shipments sometimes either did not arrive at all or were greatly delayed and arrived spoiled. But nothing would be done to alter this, continued the gamekeeper, since too many people made a good thing out of this.

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of this transporting of the hay, which was paid for at huge prices.

He also told how—after he had called attention to the many splinters of wood found in the intestines of the deer, in order to prove that they were insufficiently fed and that feeding

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