

SWITZERLAND.¹

INTRODUCTION.

Reported
excellence of
Swiss schools.

BEING aware, on reaching Switzerland, that the Swiss primary school system had the reputation of being the best extant,² or, at least, one of the best,³ and that the schools are reported to excel in modern languages⁴ and science,⁵ I endeavoured to ascertain whether there were reasons why such results should be expected, and whether they existed.

No good purpose could be served here by commenting upon the effects of climate, and of physical characteristics of the country—matters beyond control. I, therefore, confine myself to near causes of excellence, and their results. It is necessary to remember that Switzerland is a republic where there are no universal sympathies of race, language, or religion.⁶ The Swiss, apparently, have concluded—

(1.) That the existence of such a republic, unless all its citizens are sufficiently educated, is an impossibility;⁷ and

(2.) That to ensure such universal⁸ and sufficient education—

- (a) Compulsory-attendance laws and gratuitous instruction are necessary;
- (b) Religion must be admitted as the basis of education,⁹ but consideration must be shown for the religious feelings of all;¹⁰
- (c) There must be local government in all matters primarily affecting localities;
- (d) Gymnastic exercise must be taught; and
- (e) The young must be protected against injurious employment.¹¹

Principles laid
down by
Confederation.

The Confederation has laid down certain principles of vital importance to the nation, as a nation, including delegation to the cantons of local self-government; and the cantons under that delegation regulate all educational matters in the respective cantons,¹² except such as concern the Zurich Polytechnic School. And by that means such universality and thoroughness in detail, thrift, and adaptation to local circumstances, are secured as would not probably otherwise be practicable. So that although, in one at least of the twenty-five cantons—Appenzell Inner Rhoden¹³—there are probably not more children attending school than are on the register of some one of the city schools in the colony, yet the canton has as fully recognized a right as any nation in Europe—

(a) To enact its own educational laws in respect of religious teaching, taxation, expenditure, and otherwise; and

(b) To carry them out;¹⁴ subject only to the principles already mentioned, and to the ultimate control reserved to the Confederation.¹⁵

¹ See Mr. M. Arnold's (May, 1886) report on (1) free education; (2) quality of education; (3) status, training, and pensioning of teachers; and (4) compulsory attendance and release from school; also his evidence before Royal Education Commission, 1886 (hereafter termed R.E.C.). Likewise note "Switzerland" in "Report of the Commr. of Educ. for the U.S.A., 1885, for years 1883-84," pp. cccxxiv.-cccxxvii.

"Switzerland is certainly the El Dorado of the schoolmasters. In the district of Saanen, in Canton Berne, there is hardly any political or communal office which is not occupied by a schoolmaster," &c.—*P.M. Budget*, 21 Oct., 1886.

² For instance,—

(a) Lord Norton, M.C.E., p. 231.

(b) Mr. Mundella, I.E.C., vol. 13, p. 215.

(c) Mr. M. Arnold's evidence, R.E.C., espec. ans. 5105.

³ For instance,—

(a) Mr. Mundella, I.E.C., vol. 13, p. 195.

(b) R.C., vol. 1, p. 511.

⁴ See, for instance, I.E.C., vol. 13, p. 215.

⁵ See, for instance, R.C., vol. 1, pp. 187-191, and espec. 292 and 293.

⁶ 1,160,782 Roman Catholics alone out of a total popula-

tion in 1880 of 2,846,102. *Statistik über das Unterrichts wesen in der Schweiz im Jahr 1881*, &c. C. Grob, Zürich (hereafter termed "Stat.").

See also British Legation Rept., dated 15 Jan., 1868, p. 8 (hereafter called B.L. rep.), pp. 123-126.

⁷ See also Mr. M. Arnold's evidence R.E.C., espec. ans. 5433; and "Statement of Theory of Ed. in U.S." Govt. Printing Office, Washington, 1874, p. 6.

Remark note 3, p. 39, *supra*, which seems especially applicable to Switzerland, "C'est dans le gouvernement républicain qu' l'on a besoin de toute la puissance de l'éducation."—Montesquieu.

⁸ See also "R.C.," vol. 1, p. 511.

⁹ Religious instruction, however, is not obligatory for all, or everywhere—for instance, in Jura Bernois there is no such teaching. See Stat., Art. 49.

¹⁰ See, for instance, B.L. Rep., pp. 123-126.

¹¹ See Stat., espec. pp. 1-5, 22, 230, 241-257, and 277-280.

¹² Stat., p. 1. See also I.E.C., vol. 16, p. 181.

¹³ See Stat., espec. p. 8.

¹⁴ See Stat., espec. p. 1. See also, for instance, loi 11 mai, 1870, Art. 35, Berne.

¹⁵ See Stat., p. 1.