

I propose to take Switzerland as a text for what I have to say about the schools of Europe, adding such details from other countries as may confirm and extend the lessons to be learnt by us from the former country.

SWITZERLAND.

Switzerland is educationally a most interesting country. Of all those that came within the range of my inquiries, it has probably the most complete educational system. Moreover, although it is a fully settled country, it in many respects resembles New Zealand closely. The spirit of the people is strongly democratic, the wealth is widely distributed, the extremes of poverty and riches are almost unknown, and there is practically no plutocracy. The industries of the people are both manufacturing and agricultural, although in Switzerland manufactures predominate, while in New Zealand, at present, agriculture is by far our most important industry. An attempt has been made to obtain a complete education system, the aims being: (1) to open a career to all citizens; (2) to fit all citizens for a career—that is, for the work they are to do in the State. In this attempt the little republic has succeeded to a most remarkable extent, and hence can give the lessons of example in practical work to many other States that in common estimation are of greater importance. There is much that we can learn in New Zealand from what Switzerland has done and is doing.

Although the system is not in all its details precisely the same in all the cantons, that is really owing to the fact that even within the narrow limits of Switzerland conditions vary sufficiently to make some modification in the educational arrangements necessary—for instance, institutions that are required in the cantons where the watchmaking industry thrives are not needed in a purely agricultural canton.

In the official reports the system is divided into four parts, namely,—

- I. Folk Schools or Volksschulen, including Primary and Secondary (Primarschulen and Sekundarschulen);
- II. Continuation Schools and Professional or Vocational Schools (Fortbildungsschulen and Berufsschulen);
- III. Middle Schools (Mittelschulen), or Secondary Schools proper as we understand the term;
- IV. Higher Schools (Hochschulen), or institutions of University rank.

Each canton has its own Department of Public Instruction, and controls in a general way all the schools within its own area, though in the case of the folk schools (volksschulen) the communes or municipalites, which find more than half the money, exercise most of the real control. In the government of the continuation and vocational schools the communes have also a voice, but the canton has greater powers.

In the middle schools the share of control possessed by the communes is comparatively small, and in the higher institutions their share is limited to representation on the advisory or controlling bodies.

With the exception of the Federal Polytechnikum at Zürich, and a few other Federal institutions, all the institutions of every rank are subjected to cantonal regulations, and the terms of admission, courses of study, examinations, and certificates are prescribed by the cantonal Departments.

In order that the character of the several kinds of institutions and their relations to one another may be more clearly understood, it may be as well to give an outline of them in a single canton—for instance, in the Canton of Geneva. This canton has an area of about 110 square miles, three-quarters of which is productive; and a population of 150,000. Of the latter, 110,000 live in the city and suburbs of Geneva. The canton consists, in fact, of a compact rural area, grouped around the City of Geneva, an area which is, no doubt, comparatively easy to work educationally. It is safe to say that the utmost has been made of its natural advantages. Its principal manufacture is that of clocks, watches, and chronometers, which it exports to the value of £400,000 annually; but the making of automobile cycles, furniture, electrical apparatus, and illustrated books supplements its leading staple. The large amount of available water-power, now converted to a great extent into electrical force, gives it great advantages in manufacture; but, besides being, next to Basle, the richest town in Switzerland, it is pre-eminently a centre of culture in art, science, and literature. It has a Commission Scolaire, or School Commission, which gives advice on all questions concerning public instruction, and is composed of delegates from the different institutions of public instruction—primary, secondary, and higher—and of a certain number of parents. It is presided over by the Chief of the Department of Public Instruction.