

High school and university education in Switzerland

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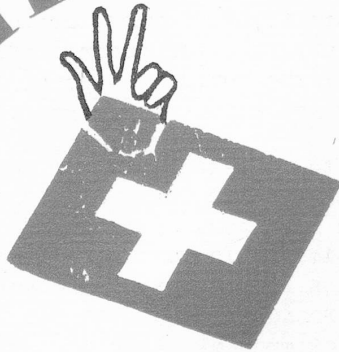
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HIGH SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN SWITZERLAND.

Two factors fundamental to high school and college education in Switzerland: the inculcation of real knowledge and the development of the student in every sense of the word. The maintenance of these necessary elements of universal culture has ever been the aim of true academic education. Switzerland, the fatherland of Henry Pestalozzi, founder of modern pedagogy, possesses three Germany-speaking and four French-speaking universities and a Technical Institute; for centuries a long and characteristic tradition in the domain of education has been maintained. Approximately 600,000 persons among a population of 4 million inhabitants have received an academic education.

This remarkably high standard of national culture and the material sacrifices it has entailed are due principally to the political and cultural structure of the country itself, and to its high spiritual and idealistic achievements. On the other hand, the number of technical and academic colleges and institutes and the cantonal educational organizations are dependent in great measure on the historical development and federal character of the Swiss State.

At the close of the Middle Ages, when the light of the Renaissance was beginning to illuminate Europe, the first Swiss university was founded in Basle in 1460. In the early years of the XIXth century the rise of Liberalism gave an immense impetus to education in general and to the desire for culture in particular. Acting on the conviction that the nation could participate fully in the political and economic life of a democratic state only if it were able to receive a profound culture, the governing authorities of the time enthusiastically founded in quick succession the Universities of Zurich (1833), Berne (1834), Geneva (1873), Fribourg (1889), Lusanne (1890) and Neuchatel (1909). Several of these had previously already been in existence as academies and were now raised to the rank of universities. With the exception of Fribourg and Neuchatel - where there are no Faculties of Medicine - all faculties are represented in each of these universities. A School of Engineering is also incorporated in the University of Lausanne, while the Commercial College of St. Gall is recognized as having university status.

In 1845 the Swiss Federal Institute for Technology opened its doors and its reputation was soon to spread far across the frontiers. Today this Institute comprises twelve schools which train and instruct engineers in every branch of the profession, while a general school gives them a wide culture. The number of students attending this Institute is yearly about 1700 of which about one quarter are foreigners. The staff consists of 290 professors and masters. The economic life of Switzerland, poor in raw materials, and the maintenance of her industries, require extremely high standard work and scientific knowledge from her technicians which alone can ensure the continuance and

further development of her export trade. There are over 17,000 former students of the Swiss Federal Institute for Technology at work today not only in Switzerland but in every part of the world, and among them are to be found the most brilliant research workers and engineers of modern science.

A few facts suffice to illustrate the international reputation enjoyed by Swiss universities and colleges. About 3,000 foreign students are immatriculated yearly. Many Swiss professors have been called to foreign universities to occupy chairs in various faculties. The most prized awards of the scientific world have been accorded to Swiss scientists and men of letters. The Nobel Science prize has been granted to four Swiss: to the chemists Werner, Karrer and Ruzicka and to Dr. Kockler for medical research. Many international scientific congresses have been held in Switzerland. Neither is it incidental that the Institute for Higher International Studies and the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute - the only academy for pedagogy enjoying university status in the world - should have been located in Switzerland.

Among the people themselves Swiss universities are steadily gaining ground. The number of native students has tripled since the beginning of the century: one in 600 of the population has a college education - which means that there are about 6,500 native students each year. This intensified university life affects every class of the population and sons of peasants, tradesmen, civil servants and professional men mingle and fraternize in the lecture halls. The beneficial influence of such a penetration of academic life in all ranks of the nation is growing ever deeper, both in public and private life. Banks, insurance companies, chemical and machine works, municipal, cantonal and federal public service organizations, all have cultured university men on their pay-rolls. The international reputation of Swiss doctors is now as firmly established as is that of Swiss health resorts, sanatoriums and watering-places.

However, the universities would lack their essential foundation if their students had not previously received a thorough secondary school grounding. Every canton has one or more official high schools. Besides these public secondary schools are many private schools situated mostly in healthy mountain resorts where children can enjoy both an excellent tuition and health giving air; the certificates and diplomas given by these private institutions have often the same status as those delivered by cantonal high schools. Knowledge and sports are taught side by side.

High school and university education in Switzerland is founded on the principle of the freedom of learning and teaching. It is indeed a condition of Swiss college life. The budding personality of the student is allowed to develop freely and to follow the career for which it is best fitted. Student life is characterized by societies and clubs officially recognized by the academic authorities which have of late years done much to foster a healthy patriotic spirit among the people.

It is clear that the future of Switzerland will owe much to her universities. Not only do they follow and encourage the progress of our civilization, but they also guard the spiritual and cultural independence of the country which, in view of the catastrophe which has overwhelmed Europe today, is after all the most important task of the present hour. The living tradition of Swiss Democracy and the toil of nationally conscious personalities are the best defense of the freedom of the spirit and the independence of the nation.

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OPENING OF SWISS PARLIAMENT.

The 32nd legislature opened its first session on Monday, December 6th. As usual, the meeting of the National Council was presided over by the oldest member of the house, Mr. Jules-Ed. Ferd. Gottret, 1865, (Catholic-Conservative, Geneva). In his speech for the occasion he stressed in particular the many tasks which await the Swiss Parliament during the next four years. Everyone hopes that