

**SWITZERLAND, THE
SOUTH OF FRANCE,
AND THE PYRENEES**

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Switzerland, the South of France, and the Pyrenees by H. D. Inglis

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H. D. INGLIS

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BY
HENRY D. INGLIS,
AUTHOR OF

"SOLITARY WALKS THROUGH MANY LANDS," "NORWAY AND SWEDEN,"
"JOURNEY THROUGH IRELAND," &c.

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE is something so curious in the spectacle of a Federative Republic, situated in the midst of the great European powers, that a few words, explanatory of its origin and constitution, seem almost a necessary introduction to the perusal of any book treating of Switzerland.

The basis of that Federative Republic, which was secured to the twenty-two cantons of Switzerland by the peace of 1815, was laid so early as the beginning of the 14th century; for it was at that epoch, that the small territories of Uri, Schwytz, and Unterwald, bound themselves in a holy league, to shake off the fetters imposed upon them by their Austrian masters; and the attempt of this petty confederacy having proved successful, it was strengthened, before the middle of the 14th century, by the accession of Lucerne, Zurich, Glarus, Zoug, and Berne. The basis of this ancient league was a love of independence; and the separate states were bound together by no other general laws, than by that simple treaty of alliance, whose foundation, strength, and object, consisted in the love of freedom. Gradually, as success in arms more and more assured the liberties of the Confederates, they sought to consolidate the league, by the enactment of wise laws among themselves, and to strengthen it, by an alliance with neighbouring states. Accordingly, St. Gall, Bienne, the Grisons, the Valais, Geneva, Neuchâtel, part of Basil, and Appenzell, became the allies of the Confederated States, though not at first forming a part of the league.

Many reverses were experienced by the Confederated States during the centuries that followed, in defence of the principle that had first united them; and there is certainly not exhibited in the history of any other people so unconquerable a love of liberty, as that which has continued to animate the Swiss during a period of four centuries—shown in success and in adversity; nor forgotten even at those epochs, when security had begotten repose, and when the spoils of war had spread the entanglements of luxury.

Although at first the ancient league showed some jealousy in admitting other states to a participation in all its privileges, this narrow policy speedily yielded to more enlarged views. Fribourg and Soleure were admitted among the Confederates soon after the important victory gained at Morat over the renowned duke of Burgundy, in the reign of Louis XI.; and, about twenty years later, Basil, Schaffhausen, and Appenzell, strengthened the league, by their accession to it.

After some ages of peace, the Swiss Confederacy became endangered, not by ambition of foreign foes, but by the designs of some of its most powerful citizens; and the league would probably have offered another example of the fate of republics, if the French Revolution, so fertile both in good and evil, had not led to its partial conservation. Napoleon, in 1803, promulgated his act of mediation; which, although failing to establish the Swiss Confederacy upon a secure basis of liberty and union, yet had the effect of preserving it from the designs of the ambitious. A feeble attempt to establish an oligarchy in some of the cantons, and an aristocracy in others, was made at the time when the last struggle between France and the rest of Europe spread a feeling of uncertainty throughout the Continent, and when Switzerland was inundated with foreign troops. But public opinion opposed the design; and the fall of Napoleon

soon after, led to the general settlement of the affairs of Europe, and to the act of confederacy, framed in 1814, and ratified by the Congress at Vienna, by which all the conquests of France were restored to Switzerland, with the exception of the valleys of Chiavenna, Bormio, and the Valtelline; and this federal act was sanctioned by the oaths of the Swiss Deputies, assembled at Zurich, on 7th August, 1815.

The following are the principal points embraced by the federal act:—The cantons, forming the Swiss confederacy, are declared to be united, for the defence of their liberties and independence, against the attempts of foreign enemies, and for the maintenance of internal concord—their respective territories and constitutions are reciprocally guaranteed, and declared inviolable—and they are bound respectively to furnish certain contingents in troops and money, according to a scale of their population and riches. The military chest, and the funds arising from the entry of foreign merchandize, are placed under the direction of certain commissioners named by the diet; and, in case of danger, any individual canton may demand assistance from the neighbouring cantons. The Cantons of Zurich, Berne, Fribourg, Basil, and Geneva only, are permitted to have a permanent military force; and that force is so small, that the liberties of Switzerland are certainly not endangered by a standing army. The whole force amounts but to 728 men. In the other cantons, there is a small militia in which the citizens serve. The great diet of Switzerland is composed of deputies from the twenty-two states, every canton possessing one voice through its principal representative, which he gives according to the instructions he has received, and upon his personal responsibility. To the diet, which assembles every year, belongs the right of declaring war and peace; and of concluding foreign alliances, of naming ambassadors, and of providing generally for the safety of the league against foreign and domestic enemies. In important matters, such as a question of peace or war, three-fourths of the cantons must sanction the proposal; but in ordinary matters, a plurality suffices. The presidency of the cantons is shared by the Cantons of Zurich, Berne, and Lucerne, who alternately enjoy the distinction. The cantons are sovereign and independent of each other, and are each governed by constitutions peculiar to themselves; but, although they have the power of individually forming treaties with neighbouring foreign states, these must be in accordance with the federal act, and not inconsistent with the privileges of other cantons. The principle of free trade between the cantons is fully provided for; and the only other article necessary to be mentioned is, that the existence of the convents, of ecclesiastical rights, and the security of church property, are guaranteed. Such are the heads of the act of confederacy, which was accompanied by another act, signed by the plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, France, Austria, Russia, Prussia, and Portugal, by which the Federative Republic of Switzerland is expressly acknowledged, and its territory guaranteed.