

**GERMAN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION:
OR THE PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS
OF GERMANY, TO WHICH IS ADDED
A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE PUBLIC
SCHOOLS OF PRUSSIA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649136049

German university education: or The professors and students of Germany, to which is added A brief account of the public schools of Prussia by Walter C. Perry

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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WALTER C. PERRY

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PRINTED BY T. FORREST, MANCHESTER.

1721
9/4/1890
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PREFACE.

THE following brief account of the German Universities, of which a *second revised and enlarged edition* is now offered to the Public, was prepared amidst the many interruptions and anxieties inseparable from a settlement in a foreign country, at the request of a zealous and well known friend of education, James Heywood, Esq. F.R.S. of Trinity College, Cambridge. The favorable reception given to the first edition, has confirmed the author in his previous conviction that the subject of this little work is one of growing interest and importance to the English public, and has induced him to republish it with the addition of a *Chapter on the Public Schools of Prussia*, and another *on the influence of Philosophy on the studies of the German Universities*, both of which he hopes will be

acceptable to those who are interested in the progress of educational reform.

The German Governments, and especially that of Prussia, whatever may be their faults (and they are many) do certainly perform one of the greatest duties of every government — that of educating the people,—in a manner which is worthy of the highest admiration. It is true that many persons regard the state-education of Prussia only as the result of a cunning policy, which would mould the plastic minds of the young into the form which despotism loves ; but can any one who knows the state of the public mind in Prussia, who has had an opportunity of witnessing the effects of the widely spread education in that country, assert that the cause of despotism *is* served by educating the people to the greatest extent of which their worldly circumstances admit? The slave-drivers of every age, from the ancient Spartans to the modern Americans, have justly regarded utter ignorance as their best ally ; and no mere despot would feel safe on a throne which was not based on the ignorance of

the people. And it is not, we believe, because the Governors of Prussia have made a grand mistake, and have unwittingly sapped the foundation of arbitrary power by the very means by which they sought to render it eternal,—but because they have *not* been mere despots, but have really sought the good of their subjects, that they have given them the blessings of education. It is very true that they have at the same time followed other and more selfish objects, and have thus, to a certain extent, neutralized the good effects of their own wise acts—that, for example, they fill their subjects with knowledge, and then by their restrictions on the press forbid them from communicating their opinions freely. Would it then serve the cause of freedom to starve the mind as well as to bind the tongue? It is a well known fact that the steadiest and most influential friends of constitutional liberty in Prussia, are the very men whom the State has educated to fill its highest academical offices. And why endeavor, as has been done, to prove the futility of the Prussian system, by saying that the English arti-

zan, though he may scarcely be able to read or write, is generally a cleverer fellow than the man of the same class in Germany; that the former learns more from the free life which goes on around him than the Prussian from his books. This may be very true, but the question is, would not the Englishman be the better for a school education to commence life with, and would not the German be worse off without it?

But to oblige a man to send his children to a government school when he is too poor to educate them privately, is thought by some to be an intolerable interference with the rights of a free-born Englishman. Is it harder then to be obliged to educate one's children, to feed their minds, or to allow others to do so, than to be compelled to feed their bodies, or to accompany them to the workhouse? where moreover they *are* educated by the state.

But it is well known by all who have considered the subject, that the great obstacle to the introduction of a state education for the people in England, is the religious jealousies of the people

themselves. And in so far as their fears arise from a really religious spirit, and from a due sense of the infinite importance of religious culture to the young, they are to be respected, however unfounded those fears may be. Religious instruction should accompany the whole course of mental training, since the formation of the Christian character is the highest and best end of all education. It is natural too that every man should desire to rear his children in his own peculiar views of Christian doctrine. But we maintain that these ends are attainable in a well arranged system of national education. In Prussia both the children of Protestants, and the children of Roman Catholics, (and very zealous Catholics and Protestants too) are educated in the same school without any injury supposed or real to either party, and are taught respectively by their own Clergy, while Jews are exempted from all participation in the religious instruction. Surely, if the claims and wishes of two or three parties can be consulted and satisfied, it would not be very difficult to satisfy those of a greater variety of sects.

And what can be the result of the present system, or *no system*, according to which each sect is left to educate its own young members? What is likely to be the chief object of institutions formed for such exclusive purposes? The indoctrination of the young into the tenets of a particular party. Not so much the formation of the good christian, and the good citizen, as the clever controversial theologian. This will be made the all important end, and no one will be answerable that any *other* object will be wisely or zealously pursued; that the so-called secular part of education will be anything more than carelessly attended to. And thus the curse of our country, its bitter religious dissensions, will be increased and perpetuated, till we shall almost cease to be one great nation, and be split into a number of hostile tribes in a state of perpetual warfare.

Surely no system of national education which would receive the sanction of a British Parliament, could entail upon us such dreadful evils as we are actually suffering from national ignorance and division. We cannot but believe that a strong