

STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN SWITZERLAND

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649137466

State and federal government in Switzerland by John Martin Vincent

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JOHN MARTIN VINCENT

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IN SWITZERLAND**

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BY

JOHN MARTIN VINCENT, PH. D.

*Librarian and Instructor in the Department of History and Politics,
Johns Hopkins University*

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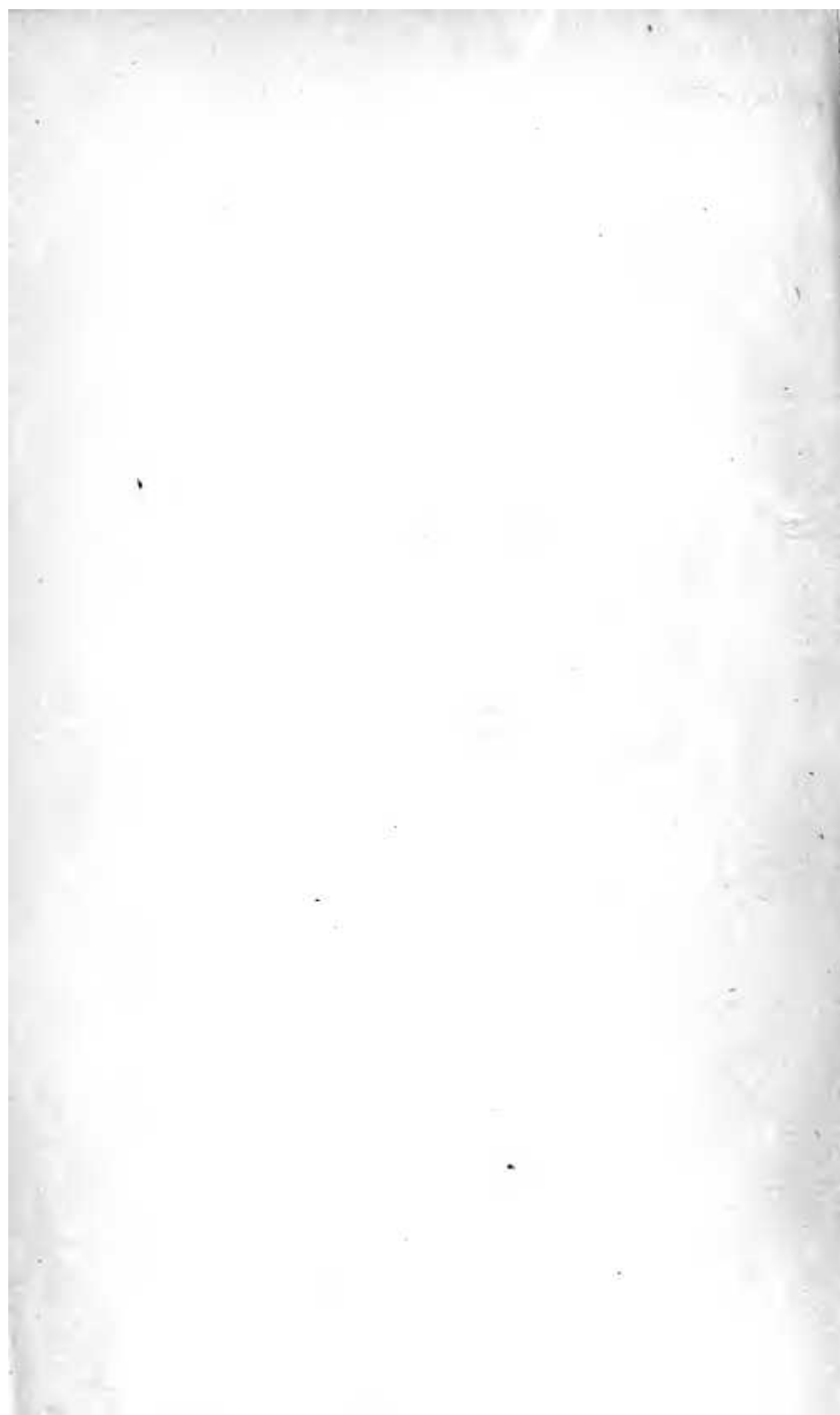
TO

PROFESSOR WILHELM ARNDT

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED AS A TOKEN OF RESPECT

BY A FORMER PUPIL



P R E F A C E .

I have attempted to give in these few pages an outline of the existing conditions of government in Switzerland, in its federal, state, and local aspects. It is not a constitutional history; yet Swiss institutions are so firmly rooted in the past that historical explanations have at times been necessary, and the temptations to enter upon still wider digressions almost irresistible. Were it possible to give in brief space the evolution of each department of political and economic life I should deem the result well worth the effort, but such an exhibit is foreign to the purpose of this book. As it is, I have approached the subject from a republican standpoint. When I began these studies there was no adequate work upon Swiss government in the English language, and such as were written by other foreigners seemed to lack sympathy with the subject, because the authors were not personally accustomed to democratic institutions. I venture to hope that American nativity has given me some measure of appreciation and of impartiality.

I have had occasion to say frequently, and the statement can scarcely be repeated too often, that government in Switzerland can only be fully understood when the confederation and the cantons are studied together. Their fields of operation are at some points distinct, at others they overlap, and the functions of state and federal government become blended, in a manner for which there are no analogies in the institutions of the United States. Yet on the whole the two governments are so similar, and so many problems in national life are being worked out simultaneously in both, that an eminent professor of American history is well justified in saying that "of all the foreign federal constitutions now in operation, the most important for comparison with the Constitution of the United States is that of Switzerland." It is,

therefore, with more than curious interest that I have inquired into the various departments of Swiss political life, for although I have only occasionally drawn a moral for American readers, I have felt that here we might see ourselves somewhat as others see us. If I have in any degree incidentally contributed to a better understanding of our own institutions, or made clearer the solidarity of our own state and national life, I shall feel repaid.

It is eminently appropriate that a study of Switzerland should appear under the auspices of the Johns Hopkins University, since within its walls are kept the books and papers of one of the most eminent historians of that country, Professor J. C. Bluntschli, who began his career in Zürich, but ended it at Heidelberg as an European authority upon international law. While yet in his native country he wrote extensively upon the history of Zürich, and upon the constitutional history of the whole confederation. At his death, in 1881, his library, manuscripts, and historical materials were purchased by German citizens of Baltimore and presented to this University. To this collection was added, in 1886, a large number of books and pamphlets relating to the history and government of Switzerland, presented by the Federal Council at Bern, through the kind mediation of the Hon. Emile Frey, then minister plenipotentiary of Switzerland at Washington, now a member of the Federal Cabinet. It was largely due to these gifts that a study of Switzerland was made possible without continuous residence in that country.

To many friends I am indebted for encouragement and direct assistance in the preparation of this book, and I here take occasion to thank them, without making them by name responsible for its errors. I cannot, however, forbear to express my obligations for counsel and advice as to what such a work *ought to be*, to Prof. H. B. Adams and Rev. W. D. Ball of Baltimore, and Prof. Woodrow Wilson of Princeton.

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