

of feuds between town and country, of the struggle of a democracy against aristocratic pretensions, of tyranny exercised over subject and dependent lands, of social and political wrongs and inequalities, of race animosity, of religious strife, of cantonal arrogance, even threatening national existence; and ever and anon there have been times when it seemed as if they would be absorbed by other nations, as between 1793 and 1813, when France was dominant in the cantons, or as if they would fall to pieces through such divisions as ended in the war of the Sonderbund. Now, happily for the peace and security of the confederation, Switzerland has at last surmounted successfully the numerous and serious difficulties arising out of her peculiar position, and has grown in strength and power under the influence of the federal system of government, which above all other political systems, as her own history has proved, is best calculated to bring different nationalities and denominations into a strong union based on principles of self-interest and common safety. It has been sometimes urged that the federal system is weak because it means a division of powers between the central and the provincial or state authorities. In no other way would a union in certain cases be possible. Separate communities having diverse interests, may be brought together for a common purpose and show all the strength of a unified or centralized nation, provided you allow them to preserve intact all those strictly local powers and institutions necessary to local autonomy and individual independence, and not antagonistic to the vital interests and security of the whole confederation. The Roman empire was a remarkable example of centralization in its most ambitious form, but it fell to pieces because the spirit of local freedom was crushed in the outlying provinces, and there was no system of representation to bring the members into unison with the head of the body politic. The monarchy of Louis XIV was an autocratic, centralized government, which gave the provinces of France hardly a semblance of local government, and gradually exhausted the very life-blood of the nation. The British empire has extended over the habitable globe until even the Roman empire sinks into insignificance compared with its enormous wealth and true greatness, but it has so far kept together and maintained its power, because England has given free local government to every community that is competent to exercise it, and has only retained in her hands that imperial control which is necessary to the defence and security of her imperial interests and the fulfilment of her imperial obligations. Local government rests at the very basis of every system of federation—indeed of any state that is truly strong—and enables the central power to act effectually in the general interests of the whole federation. The Dutch communities at the mouth of the Rhine fought for freedom on the same basis of a federal union against all the power of the great empire of Spain. Switzerland has been able in the same way to maintain her liberty inviolate in the face of European nations. No doubt the jealousies of surrounding countries have had their influence on the destiny of this free community, but even the guarantees given by the great powers of Europe for her security would have been useless had not the Italians, the French, and the Germans of the cantons always felt that their true interests lay in a common union between each other. The principles of free government have been always maintained in Switzerland when they had been lost in other countries of the Aryan family. No system of complete centralization could have given that cohesion of interests which has been possible under a system which has left untouched the local freedom of the cantons, and at the same time given them representation in the federal government. At the present time, we are told by