

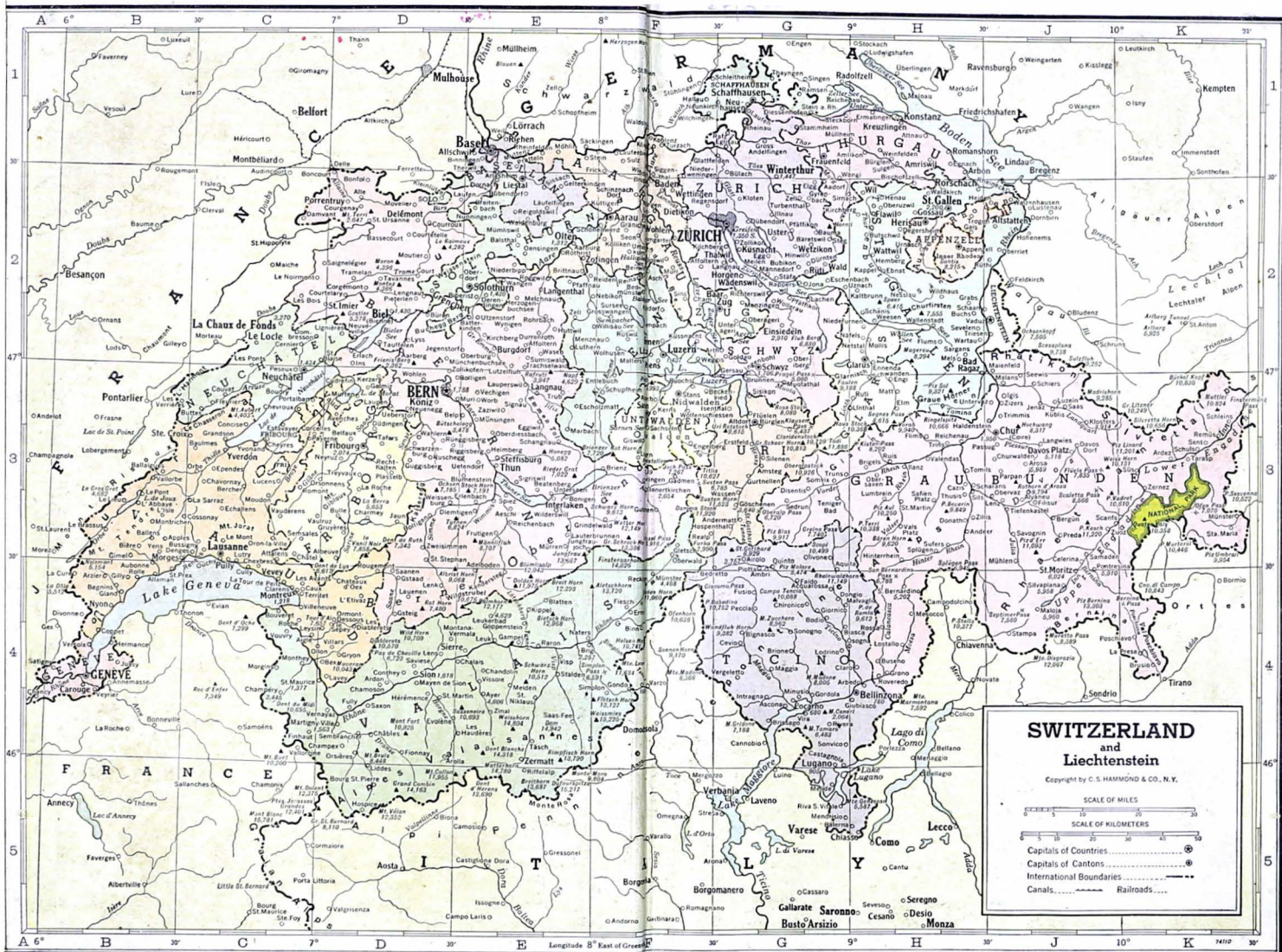
*The*  
GOVERNMENT  
*of* SWITZERLAND

WILLIAM E. RAPPARD



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THE  
GOVERNMENT OF  
SWITZERLAND



WILLIAM E. RAPPARD



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## INTRODUCTION

### WHY THE GOVERNMENT OF SWITZERLAND IS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO AMERICAN STUDENTS

There are obviously a great many reasons why the government of Switzerland should be of no particular interest to American students. The United States is a world unto itself, teeming with solved and unsolved political problems. If, for reasons of general culture or on account of their repercussions on American foreign relations, the scheme of government of other countries should attract attention in America, it is very natural that such attention be directed in the first place either to the Western hemisphere, or westward to Japan, or eastward to the great powers of Europe.

Strange as it may seem, there are however a variety of circumstances which have, for generations, led English-speaking and especially American authors to devote particular consideration to the political institutions of Switzerland. What are these circumstances?

In the first place Switzerland was, throughout the ages, a republic. When the United States was born as an independent nation, Switzerland had behind it a republican tradition of half a millenary. Throughout the nineteenth century, with very few exceptions, Switzerland enjoyed the monopoly of being a republic. That monopoly was de-

stroyed first by France in 1871, then by Portugal in 1910 and, since the war, by most of the defeated states and by all the new states created by the peace treaties. There is no doubt, however, that, especially during the century following the establishment of the United States, which might in Europe be called the heroic period of the republican tradition, Switzerland and Swiss institutions were studied by Americans mainly on account of the political relationship established by this community of government.

This relationship is, furthermore, not one of external appearances alone. As did the United States, Switzerland grew from a loose confederacy of practically sovereign states into a federal union. This evolution, which was formally accomplished in little more than five years in America, took somewhat more than five centuries in Switzerland. However, as we shall see, the adoption by Switzerland in 1848 of the bicameral form of government was not only a conscious and deliberate imitation of the American model, but also the effective solution of precisely the same political problem as that which had been solved in 1789 at Philadelphia. It is natural that the dualism thus created of state or cantonal government, on the one hand, and federal government on the other, should have led the American and the Swiss nations constantly to compare notes on their respective experiences.

The political loan Switzerland raised in the United States when it borrowed the bicameral system in 1848 has been partly repaid in kind since. The initiative, referendum and recall which have been adopted by so many American states in the course of the last generation, are democratic institutions of Swiss origin. They also account in part for the interest taken in Swiss political affairs by American observers.

A less noted but none the less noteworthy analogy between the United States and Switzerland is presented by their demographic characteristics. The United States, although preëminently an English-speaking Anglo-Saxon commonwealth, has, in the course of the last century and a half, welcomed to its shores millions of non-English-speaking immigrants. The composite nature of its population which has resulted from this historical process has given rise, notably in the field of foreign relations, to problems and traditions which find their approximate counterpart in Switzerland.

In so far as the policies of neutrality and isolation from foreign entanglements are due to demographic reasons, this analogy between the United States and Switzerland deserves to be studied with care. In Berne as in Washington, statesmen have always been very loath to take sides in conflicts between foreign nations, not only for the perfectly natural and legitimate desire to mind their own business and thereby to preserve their respective countries from avoidable complications. They have done so also on account of the divergent national sympathies springing from the composite character of the American and the Swiss people.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The information contained in this little book is drawn in part from the author's practical experience as a Swiss citizen and in part from the research he has been pursuing for years in the field of the political and economic life of his country. The debt of gratitude he owes all those who have directly and indirectly assisted him in his labors he has recognized in his previous writings and most recently in his "L'individu et l'Etat dans l'évolution constitutionnelle de la Suisse" which he has just published. He here reiterates the thanks he has expressed there.

He wishes however especially to acknowledge the great services his secretary at the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Mrs. Goldenberg-Goebel, has rendered in the preparation of these pages. The care, the intelligence, the confident interest and the unflinching devotion with which she has assisted him in the preparation of this volume deserve far more than this passing word of thanks. May it serve at least as a token of his deep gratitude.

W. E. R.

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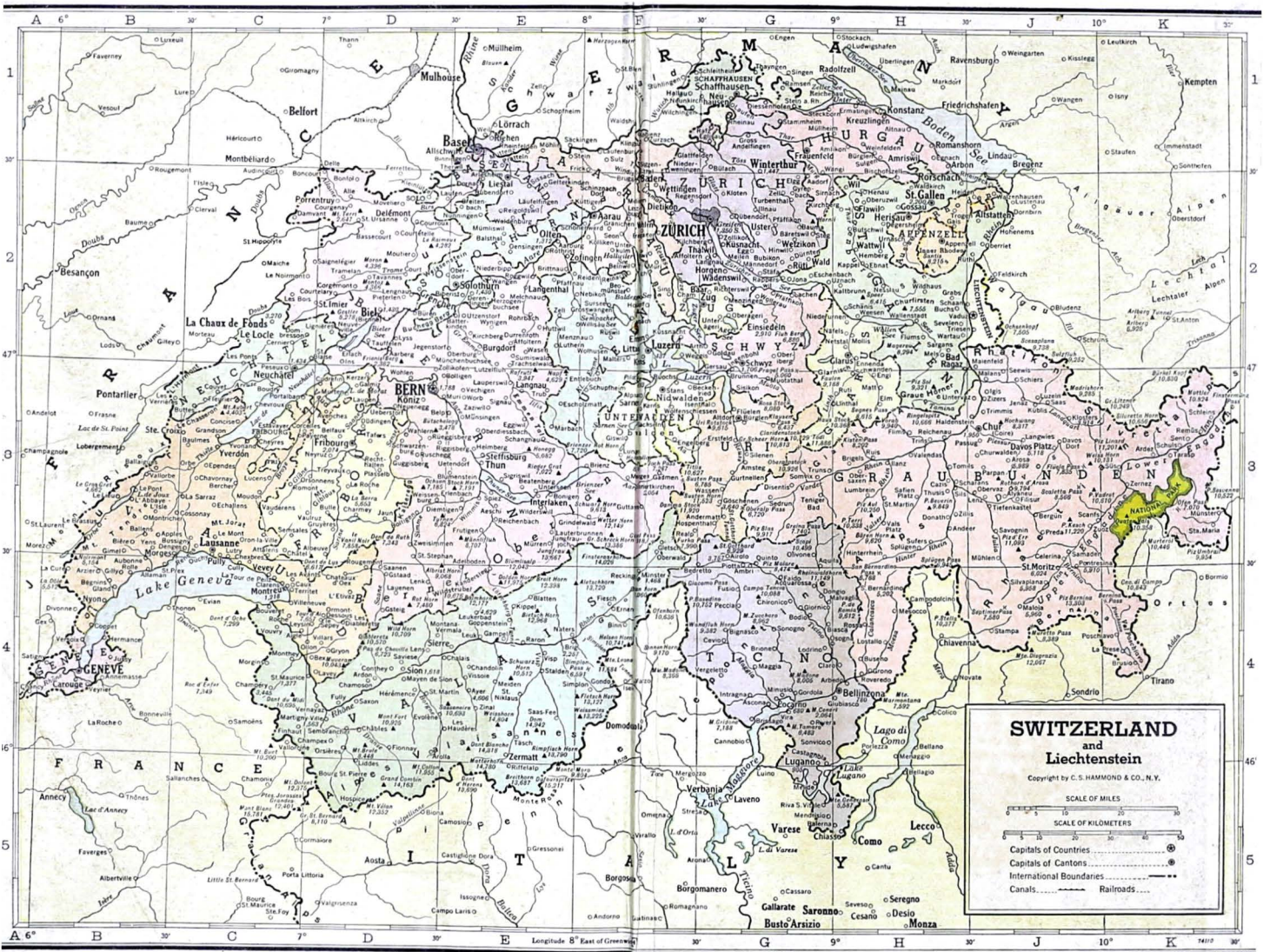
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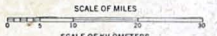
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