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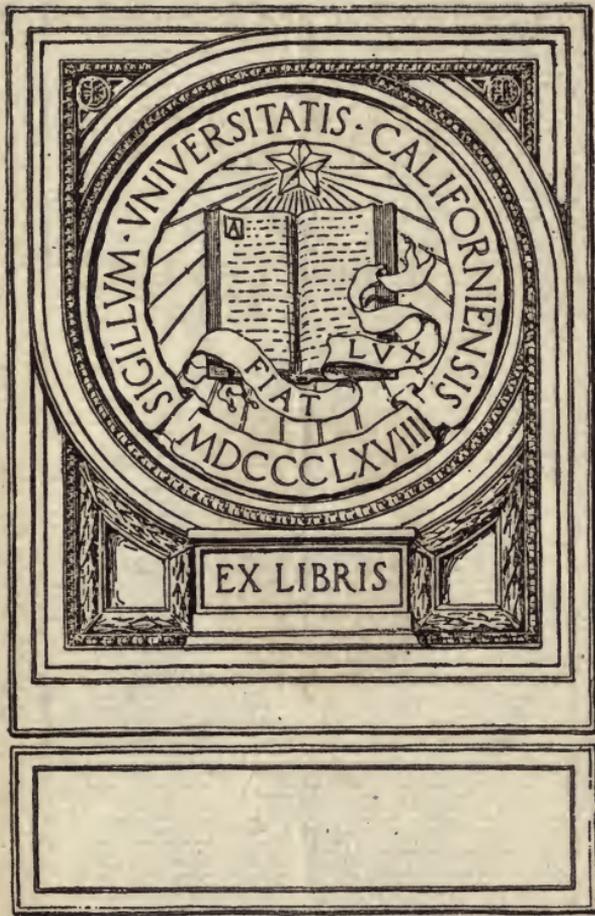
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The
Swiss Army
System

by
CAPTAIN REMY FAESCH

22nd INFANTRY REGIMENT OF THE SWISS ARMY



THE
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Since the great movement for preparedness has set in in this country and since the question has arisen as to which of the European military systems, if any at all, the United States should adopt, considerable attention has been given to the compulsory system of the Swiss Federal Army.

Swiss History.

Some facts of Swiss history may explain how the military spirit has developed and has always been kept up in that little Republic, and that the actual state of preparedness is partly the result of that military spirit of the Swiss population.

The foundation of Switzerland dates from the 1st of August 1291, when those farmers and huntsmen round the Lake of Lucerne assembled on the "Rütli" and after deliberation took a solemn oath to defend one another and to destroy those tyrants which Austria had sent to subdue the country.

ALREADY IN THOSE DAYS GENERAL CONSCRIPTION FORMED A BASIS AND WAS A PRINCIPLE OF THE SWISS MILITARY SYSTEM.

It was a matter of course to the Swiss people that every able bodied man or boy should defend his country.

For the next few hundred years we find the Swiss continuously fighting for independence against almost every power in Europe. The Swiss Regiments became quite famous and when there was nothing to fight for at home, they sold their sword abroad. We find Swiss Regiments fighting with the armies of Philipp II, Francis I, and Charles V. During the terrible struggle of the French Revolution in 1792 the famous "Red Swiss," a Regiment of body guards of Louis XVI, were entirely annihilated in the garden of the Tuilleries by the blood-thirsty mob of Paris.

Today, in the great European tragedy the Swiss army



CADET CORPS



INFANTRY IN TRENCHES

plays an important part in effectually securing the left wing of the German and the right wing of the French Army. The outflanking of their opponents by means of a short cut across Swiss territory must have appeared a tempting prospect to one or the other of the great military powers.

That is why the Swiss men are still under arms. On the slopes of the Jura hills, as well as in the concreted trenches facing Alsace-Lorraine and France and on the lofty passes of the Alps looking down on the Italian plains, the Swiss soldier is watching and waiting and will continue to do so until peace dawns.

General Information.

Switzerland is a *Confederation* of 22 Cantons (States) 69 per cent. of the inhabitants speaking German, 22 per cent. speaking French, 7 per cent. speaking Italian and 2 per cent. speaking Rhaeto-Romanish.

The Swiss Republic is governed by a *Federal Council* of seven members, elected for 3 years by the *Federal Assembly*. They are almost always re-elected, a fact which tends to make the Swiss Government a stable and permanent one.

One of the 7 members is designated by the Federal Assembly to exercise the functions of a *President of the Swiss Confederation*.

The Federal Assembly consists of two houses:

(1) the *National Council*, (National-Rat) which is made up of one representative for every 20,000 inhabitants; and

(2) the *State Council*, (Staende-Rat), made up of two representatives for every State:

A total of about 250 representatives.

The Swiss people have the right of *referendum*,—any legislative act passed by the Assembly may be subjected to recall by popular vote on the demand of 30,000 citizens.

The total *National Expenditure* for 1913, the "bud-

get," amounted to \$20,000,000 of which \$9,000,000 was for the army.

The *Swiss Military Organization Laws* actually in force date from the year 1850 and were revised in 1874 after the experiences of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. They were perfected again in 1905-1906.

Military Duties of the Swiss Citizen and the Communities.

Their duties are far greater than those demanded by the authorities of any other nation. They comprise the following:

1st. *Every Swiss citizen* living in Switzerland or abroad has to do MILITARY SERVICE, or, if not able bodied, to pay the MILITARY TAX. (In Belgium only the eldest son does military service, his brothers being exempt.)

This military tax must not be confounded with the privilege of redemption from military service (in Spain a man may buy his freedom by paying 1500 Pesetas).

The yearly military tax amounts to:

\$1.25 a head,

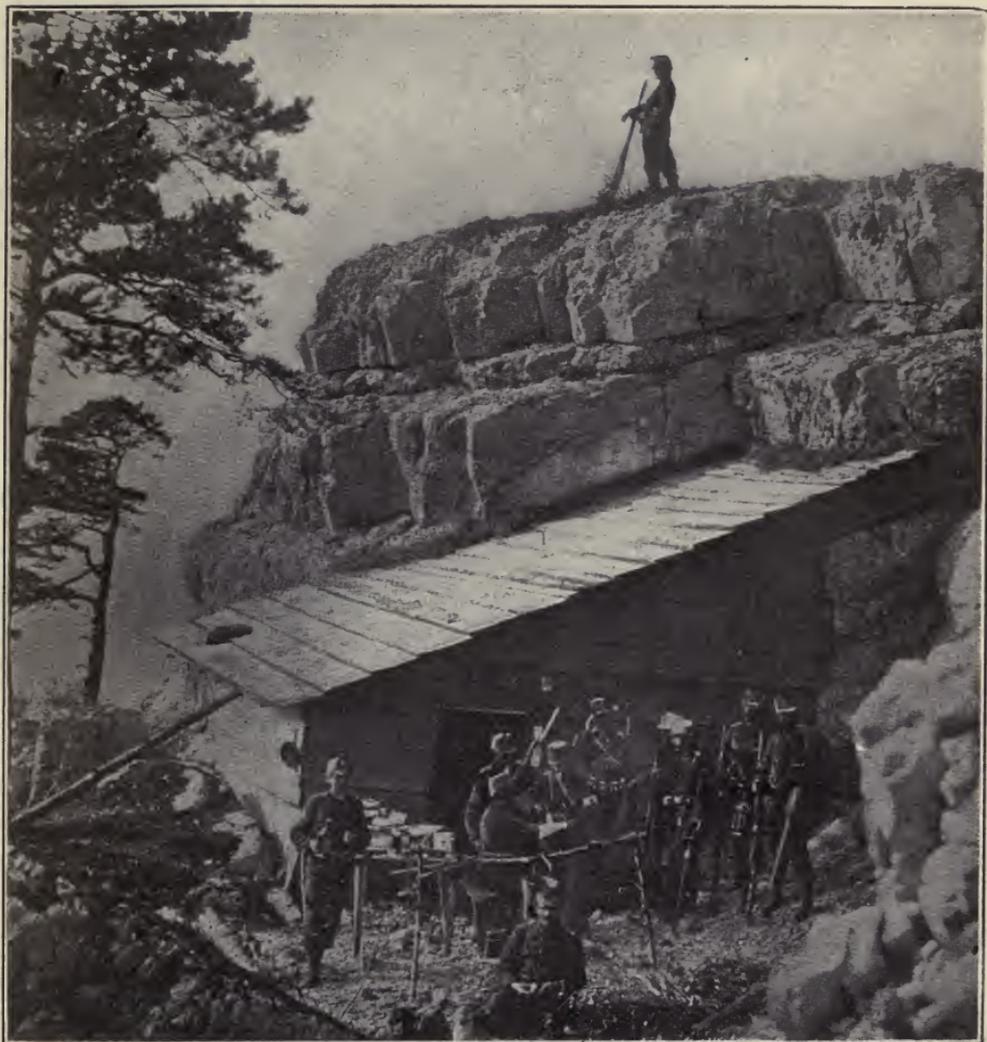
1 1/2 per cent. of own income,

1 1/2 per mille of parents' personal and real property, divided by the number of children.

This tax has to be paid until the men have reached the age of forty years.

2nd. Every soldier of the Swiss Army can be forced to become a *non-commissioned officer* or an *officer*, to accept any command with which he is entrusted by the military authorities and to perform the necessary military service prescribed by the law for the attainment of such command. (The French non-commissioned officer or officer may serve as a private at any time, whenever he may choose to do so.)

3rd. Every soldier is obliged to *practice target shooting* during the year when he is not called for service.



OBSERVATION POST IN THE JURA

4th. Every soldier is obliged to keep at home in *perfect condition* his uniform, equipment and arms.

5th. In times of manoeuvres the Communities are bound to hold at the disposal of the troops the *necessary shelters* (rooms, barns, etc.) for ambulances and staff purposes as well as for quartering the troops and horses.

6th. The owners of land are bound to hold *their grounds* at the disposal of the troops when wanted for



INFANTRY COMPANY READY FOR INSPECTION



CYCLISTS SHOOTING



SWISS HOWITZER



CAVALRY PATROL

manoeuvres. If any damage is done to their property, they are recompensed.

7th. In times of the mobilization of the Swiss Army the owners of *automobiles* have to cede their machines and gasoline to the military authorities if wanted; the *horses* also are requisitioned.

Training of the Youth.

Military preparation is begun long before the boys have reached the age of 20 years. Compulsory gymnasium drill and physical training without arms in accordance with the army regulations are established in all the schools of Switzerland, which everybody has to attend from 7 to 15 years of age.

The execution of exercises by whole classes simultaneously, with accuracy and snap, teaches discipline and self control.

Hand in hand with this training in the schools goes the work in the Cadet Corps, which is compulsory in some of the Cantons, where marching, map reading and target shooting are taught. *The Cadet rifle is a miniature of the regular Swiss army rifle.*

Whereas an average of from 4 to 8 hours a week is spent in gymnasium work in schools, the practice time for the Cadets amounts to about 100 to 200 hours during the summer. The average Swiss boy is anxious to join the Cadet Corps.

After the boys have left school, voluntary work is begun in the Military Preparation Companies, established in almost every village and town, the instruction being given by officers or non-commissioned officers, for boys between 15-20 years of age.

The benefit derived from these courses as Cadets, or in the Military preparation sections, is of great advantage to them when later they enter the Recruit School.

The first training—as will be shown later—which the young Swiss soldier gets, is very brief. If despite this

fact the Swiss military authorities are able to make good soldiers out of the boys it must be born in mind that it is due to the very carefully worked out system of physical development and military education for the Swiss boys between 7 and 20 years of age.

THE PHYSICAL AND MILITARY PREPARATION OF THE SWISS YOUTH IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE SWISS MILITARY SYSTEM.

Enrollment and Recruit School.

On account of the short time the Swiss soldier has to serve, the Military authorities make it a principle to use as much as possible the knowledge which the boys have acquired in civil life.

Sons of farmers, for instance, are enrolled into the Cavalry; mechanics, carpenters and men of similar profession become members of the Engineering Corps or the Artillery; students of Technology become future officers in the former Corps and medical students in the Ambulance Corps.

When 20 years old, the young man receives his arms and equipment, *which he always keeps at home in good condition*, ready for instant mobilization.

He now enters into a *Recruit School*, a training which varies from 60 to 90 days, according to the branch of service.

Hard work is done in these Recruit Schools; each day, except Sunday, means 8-9 hours of drill and instruction.

After having accomplished their work in the Recruit School the boys are trained soldiers, are enlisted in the Regiments or Batteries of their home town or village and serve their country until their 48th year. If they become officers they serve until they are 52.

The Three Classes.

It is only natural that the young soldier who is more active and mobile should do more service than the older



INFANTRY ON SKIS, SHARP SHOOTING



ARTILLERY STAFF, FIXING DISTANCES



ARTILLERY STAFF, DIRECTING GUN FIRE



SWISS ARTILLERY ARMORY

one. The Swiss military forces are therefore divided into 3 classes automatically passing from one class into the other according to their age.

1.) THE 1ST CLASS (Auszug)

is made up of men who serve 2 *weeks every year* from their 20th to their 32nd year.

These men form our "Elite." They are young and energetic, their bodies are strong and their muscles flexible. They are able to march with a heavy haversack on their back (the Swiss haversack is the heaviest of all army haversacks; about 72 lbs), and to climb hills without losing breath. Camping out and sleeping on a bunch of straw does not hurt them. Long horse-back riding on a restive horse is the young Cavalryman's delight.

2.) THE 2ND CLASS (Landwehr)

is made up of men from 33 to 40 years. They are called in for 2 *weeks every 3rd year*.

They are less mobile than the men in the 1st Class but steadier, more mature and very keen in fulfilling their duties. They are not very good marchers to begin with, being accustomed in most cases to trolley cars and automobiles as means of locomotion, but after a brief training they become almost as good in this respect as the men of the 1st Class.

3.) THE 3RD CLASS (Landsturm)

is made up of men of from 41 to 48 years. They are not called into service during ordinary times.

They are no longer able to run over the fields and march long distances in deep columns, but they have lived with their rifles for twenty years, their eyes are still sharp and they know every footpath and every rock in the country. These *Landsturm Sections* are the very men wanted to protect the Swiss Railroad Stations, tunnels and bridges, the Alpine roads and great passes, baggage columns, electric central power stations and gun powder factories. They form the TERRITORIAL

ARMY, whereas the first and second classes form the FIELD ARMY.

There is still another class, the *non-armed Landstrum*. This class comprises all those physically unfit as well as those volunteers who have not reached the necessary age or who are older than the law prescribes. According to their profession or abilities they have to help wherever they are needed (as bakers, butchers, typists in staff offices, in ammunition factories, etc.)

How Does Switzerland Procure Her Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers?

CORPORALS. Men who excel in their military duties during their recruit school days are directed the following year to attend a school of non-commissioned officers. They are put through a grilling course of instruction of 30 days, calculated not only to teach, but to try out the metal of the man. After having successfully passed this test they become Corporals. Every Corporal is again obliged to go through a recruit school immediately following these 30 days, where he is made chief of his squad.

He may become a Sergeant and later on a Sergeant Major after from 2-4 periods of manoeuvres with his unit and after having received the training of one or two more recruit schools in the capacity of Sergeant or Sergeant Major.

LIEUTENANT. The Corporals are very closely watched and those who by their general education and character as well as by their military ability seem worthy to become officers, are called into an *Aspirant School* of 80 days for infantry, 105 days for cavalry and artillery. During these three months the future officer has to acquire all the knowledge, theoretical and practical, necessary for taking a position as a superior.

The future officer is taught to bear in mind that his inferiors will always be critically observing him; his per-



MACHINE GUN, READY FOR ACTION



ENGINEER TROOPS BUILDING BRIDGE



CAPTIVE BALLOON

ception of duty has therefore to be sharpened. To become an officer in the Swiss Army is not only a matter of knowledge but still more one of character.

After successfully passing the requirements of the Aspirant School, the candidate is appointed a Lieutenant in the Swiss Army. While in this grade he is obliged the following year to attend a recruit school where he is responsible for his platoon.

A Lieutenant has to serve at least 4 years before he is made *First Lieutenant*.

CAPTAINS. First Lieutenants are promoted to the rank of Captain for merit only and not in consideration of their age. They must have served as First Lieutenants for 4 years and shown capacity in instructing recruits in another recruit school.

Officers of higher rank have to serve frequently and those who become officers of the *General Staff* in particular must always be ready to take part in manoeuvres, in schools of the special arms or to work in the offices of the General Staff at Bern for several weeks.

There are only about 250 *professional officers* in the Swiss Army. They assist in the recruit schools as instructors and serve especially as professors in the so called Central Schools for higher officers. Some of them command Brigades, Divisions or Army Corps.

GENERAL. Switzerland has no Generals in times of peace. As soon, however, as the Swiss Army mobilizes, the Federal Assembly designates a General from among the commanders of Divisions and Army Corps.

He disposes of all our military forces as well as of the economical and financial resources of the country. According to Swiss law, in times of war *one man* is honored and burdened with the entire responsibility. Of course, it must be the right man!

No political influence whatsoever is possible in the Swiss Army neither for becoming an officer nor for arriving at a higher grade.

Pay.

All members of the Swiss Army, officers and men are paid a salary while serving. The following are the rates of pay per day, food and board not being included in the rates for officers:

General	\$10.—	} plus 20c=fr. 1.—for food.
Commander of Division	6.—	
Commander of Brigade	5.—	
Major	2.40	
Captain	2.—	
Lieutenant	1.40	
Corporal	-.30	} in addition to quarters and meals.
Private	-.16	
	=80 centimes	

The mounted officers receive in addition \$0.75 to \$1.25 a day, equivalent to the cost of hiring their mounts.

Horses.

In times of war the horses to be used for the Artillery and Train are requisitioned. In times of peace they are hired for the period of the manoeuvres only.

As to the *Cavalry horses*, the Swiss system is unique. The Military authorities provide the necessary mounts for which the young cavalry recruit pays the Government. Every year, however, 1/10 of this price is refunded so that after the expiration of 10 years the mount becomes the man's own property.

The result of this regulation is excellent. The men, after having completed their Recruit School training take their mounts home and use them for agricultural or other purposes all the year round. They treat and feed and stable their horses well and appear at the yearly period of two weeks' manoeuvres with a mount in perfect condition.



AMBULANCE CORPS



MULES ON A GLACIER



TRANSPORTING HEAVY ARTILLERY



OPTIC SIGNALLING

The chief of the squadron exercises a certain control over the mounts during the year. Every horse is insured.

Military Duties of the Swiss Citizen When Not Serving and During Winter Time.

Every man has to fire about sixty shots a year with a fixed minimum of points. If he misses the term he is called in for three days without pay.

The *non-commissioned officers* attend lectures and make excursions combined with target shooting at distances not known to them beforehand.

The *officers* attend lectures. War games without troops, directed by an officer of the general staff, take place. Horse riding on horses provided by the military authorities is practiced, and night patrols for Lieutenants are arranged.

Confederation and Cantons (States).

The Swiss Army is a National Force.

One member of the Swiss Federal Council is the Chief of the Swiss Military Department. He directs military matters, aided by the Chief of the General Staff, the Chiefs of the Infantry, Artillery, Cavalry, Engineers and other high officers and functionaries.

The Cantons have to provide for the equipment (not the arms) of their contingents. The armories belonging to the Cantons are used for the storage of reserve material. Armories owned by the Confederation are generally used for the artillery and special arms.

The Cantons have the right to appoint the officers of their Infantry units up to the rank of Major after the Military Department or the respective Commanders have given their consent, whereas in regard to Cavalry, Artillery and Special arms, they have no power of control.

In case of strike the Cantons have the right to mobilize the Infantry units located in their district.

The "Military Director" (similar to the Adjutant General in the United States) is the member of the Cantonal authorities who carries out the orders received from the Military Department.

The Cantonal authorities collect the military tax for account of the Confederation.

Size of the Swiss Army.

In proportion to the size of her territory (about 16,000 square miles) and to the number of her inhabitants (about 4,860,000) Switzerland can actually put on foot the biggest army in the world (about 500,000 men.)

This army can be mobilized in about 24 hours

Discipline.

The discipline in the Swiss Army is very strict. The Swiss Military authorities are of the firm opinion that the discipline maintained in our Republic should be equal to that maintained in the armies of the big military powers of Europe. There is but one kind of discipline, the best. It has to be taught. Those who are not used to it in times of peace will not learn it in times of danger.

The inhabitants of the two Dutch Republics of South Africa were among the best marksmen, the best riders, the best scouts; they lacked only one thing—discipline.

Conclusion.

General Conscription in Switzerland is unanimously considered to be a blessing for the population.

Boys who never saw anything but their mountain village, who have never been away from mother, who are shy and not polite, sons of workmen living in the less healthy parts of the big towns, often underfed, nervous

and pale and not, used to cold water and soap, change very rapidly after a few weeks of recruit school training. The young soldiers are taught the habit of speaking clearly, of being tidy and polite. In business they become very much improved.

Military service does, of course, to a certain extent, interfere with business and the universities, especially when whole divisions are called in and 20 to 30 per cent. of the clerks of big business establishments or of the students are in the field.

Clerks are usually paid during their military service and use their vacation for the purpose. But the sacrifice of workmen who are not paid while serving, or of doctors and lawyers for instance, who suffer financial loss through being absent from their offices, is naturally considerable.

The Swiss, however, knows that it cannot be helped. He considers this sort of sacrifice to be his duty for the sake of his country.

Every Swiss is proud to serve and to wear his uniform.

General conscription and service for a short time adds enormously to the feeling of National Unity. It is the best education for citizenship, in fact it is the most thorough training for life.





PATROL IN THE MOUNTAINS



DANGEROUS CLIMBING



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