

# GERMAN HIGHER SCHOOLS

THE

HISTORY, ORGANIZATION AND METHODS

OF

SECONDARY EDUCATION IN GERMANY

BY

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## PREFACE

No apology is necessary, I assume, in presenting to the reading public a book on the secondary schools of Germany. For many years American educators have drawn professional inspiration from German sources, and more recently it has become apparent that German ideas are taking root in British soil. The history, organization and methods of the German elementary schools are generally well understood. We have grown familiar with the German universities and have profited not a little from the relationship. But very little has been written in English on the secondary education which is the foundation of the German university training and the basis of all professional service in the Fatherland. Yet it is precisely in this sphere that German education can be studied to best advantage, and from it we have most to learn.

The Regents of the University of the State of New York, at Convocation in July, 1893, appointed me their European Commissioner, and shortly afterwards I was made Special Agent of the Bureau of Education of the United States for the study and investigation of German schools. These keys unlocked all doors. During the two years which I spent in Germany I visited more than forty towns and cities in order personally to acquaint myself with school affairs. By force of circumstances my attention was directed chiefly to the schools of central and northern Germany. It happens, therefore, that this study is concerned principally with the schools

of Prussia. But as Prussia is the larger part of the Empire both in area and population, and by far the most important state politically in the Confederation, it is doing no great injustice to consider German schools from the Prussian standpoint.

A foreign institution, however simple it appears to the casual observer, presents a wonderful complexity to the student. And the longer he studies the more complex it grows. After a six months' residence abroad I was more confident of my ability to interpret the German school system than I am now, at the end of almost five years' continuous study and investigation. No one of my readers, I am sure, can be more dissatisfied than I am myself with this attempt to portray German ideals and German methods. The subject is too important to be lightly treated and too extensive to be understood on short acquaintance. I trust, however, that my work may lighten the labours of other students in this field and prove to be of some practical worth to educators.

Sermonizing on the basis of foreign customs is always of doubtful expediency. It is, indeed, questionable whether there is anything peculiar to the German theory and practice of teaching which is directly applicable to British or American conditions. Each nation must educate itself in its own way and for its own ends. The chief value of foreign examples consists in a rational understanding of the foreign way of adapting means to ends in the realization of great ideals. In this work, therefore, I have studiously resisted the temptation to point out the moral of every tale. The intelligent reader is capable of drawing his own conclusions; he who reads merely to imitate needs no encouragement.

It has been my aim to make each chapter as complete in itself as possible, even at the risk of some repetition of important facts. References have been cited in foot-notes wherever it has seemed necessary to refer to original documents or au-

thorities of consequence. At the end of each chapter I have appended a short bibliographical list, through which students may easily acquaint themselves with the literature of the various topics. In the space at my disposal it would manifestly be impossible to cite all that has been written. Complete bibliographies will generally be found in the Hand-books and Encyclopedias mentioned in the lists of "general references." The chapters dealing with methods of instruction, the progress of school reform and the merits and defects of the German system, are obviously little dependent on books, except as they may serve to present other points of view.

The study as a whole, while demanding some familiarity with books, is much more indebted to the personal factor. Without the acquaintance and assistance of many German educationists it would have remained impossible for me to interpret the mass of material that has come to my hands. I cannot speak too highly of the many favours which were so freely extended to a very inquisitive and persistent stranger. The men whom I most wanted to consult were men fully occupied in places of great responsibility, but I could always count on a generous allotment of their time. To some of these friends I am indebted not only for personal interviews, but also for searching criticisms of parts of my manuscript. It is not their fault if I have gone astray; any errors of fact or judgment herein contained are my own.

I desire especially to acknowledge my obligations to *Oberschulrat* Dr. Waetzoldt, of Magdeburg; Professor Urtel, inspector of schools in Weimar; Drs. Muff and Quiehl, school directors in Cassel; Drs. Reinhardt and Walter, school directors in Frankfort-am-Main; Dr. G. Richter, gymnasial rector in Jena; Dr. Wernekke, director of the *Realgymnasium* in Weimar; Dr. Fries, director of the *Franckesche Stiftungen* in Halle, Drs. Richter and Wychgram, directors of secondary schools in Leipsic; Dr. Hausknecht, school director in

Berlin ; and Professor Rein of the University of Jena, Professor Volkelt of Leipsic, Professor Paulsen of Berlin and Professor Schiller of Giessen. My thanks are due also to Mr. Edgar Kesner and Mr. W. M. Shafer, former students of mine in the University of Colorado, for clerical assistance, and to my colleague, Mr. Walter H. Nichols, who has kindly prepared the index to this volume.

J. E. R.

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# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
BEGINNINGS OF GERMAN SCHOOLS, . . . . .	1

## CHAPTER II.

THE RISE OF PROTESTANT SCHOOLS, . . . . .	17
---	----

## CHAPTER III.

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION, . . . . .	46
-------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER IV.

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE HIGHER SCHOOLS, . . . . .	76
---	----

## CHAPTER V.

THE PRUSSIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM, . . . . .	108
---------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VI.

THE HIGHER SCHOOLS OF PRUSSIA, . . . . .	121
--	-----

## CHAPTER VII.

FOUNDATION AND MAINTENANCE OF HIGHER SCHOOLS, . . . . .	138
---	-----

## CHAPTER VIII.

RULES, REGULATIONS AND CUSTOMS, . . . . .	PAGE 156
---	-------------

## CHAPTER IX.

EXAMINATIONS AND PRIVILEGES, . . . . .	175
--	-----

## CHAPTER X.

STUDENT LIFE IN THE HIGHER SCHOOLS, . . . . .	194
---	-----

## CHAPTER XI.

INSTRUCTION IN RELIGION, . . . . .	213
------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XII.

INSTRUCTION IN GERMAN, . . . . .	227
----------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XIII.

INSTRUCTION IN GREEK AND LATIN, . . . . .	245
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIV.

INSTRUCTION IN THE MODERN LANGUAGES, . . . . .	266
--	-----

## CHAPTER XV.

INSTRUCTION IN HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY, . . . . .	291
---	-----

## CHAPTER XVI.

INSTRUCTION IN MATHEMATICS, . . . . .	312
---------------------------------------	-----

## CONTENTS

xi

### CHAPTER XVII.

	PAGE
INSTRUCTION IN THE NATURAL SCIENCES, . . . .	329

### CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF TEACHERS, . . . .	352
--	-----

### CHAPTER XIX.

APPOINTMENT, PROMOTION AND EMOLUMENTS OF TEACHERS, . . . . .	370
--	-----

### CHAPTER XX.

TENDENCIES OF SCHOOL REFORM, . . . . .	388
--	-----

### CHAPTER XXI.

MERITS AND DEFECTS OF GERMAN SECONDARY EDUCATION, . . . . .	406
---	-----

### APPENDIX A.

THE PRIVILEGED HIGHER SCHOOLS OF GERMANY IN 1897, . . . .	425
---	-----

### APPENDIX B.

ATTENDANCE IN HIGHER SCHOOLS OF PRUSSIA, . . . .	426
--	-----

### APPENDIX C.

SYSTEM OF PRIVILEGES, . . . . .	427
---------------------------------	-----

### APPENDIX D.

SALARY SCHEDULES, . . . . .	429
-----------------------------	-----



## APPENDIX E.

PENSIONS OF TEACHERS IN THE HIGHER SCHOOLS OF	PAGE
GERMANY, . . . . .	438

## APPENDIX F.

EXTRACTS FROM THE GENERAL PENSION LAWS OF PRUSSIA,	439
--	-----

## APPENDIX G.

LEADING EDUCATIONAL JOURNALS OF GERMANY, . . .	442
INDEX, . . . . .	445

# GERMAN HIGHER SCHOOLS

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## CHAPTER I

### BEGINNINGS OF GERMAN SCHOOLS

718-1490

THE schools of Germany have ever been a means to the realization of the highest spiritual ideals of the German people. They were called into existence to support the tenets of the Christian faith, and upon the union of Church and State they were taken over bodily into the service of the broader national life. Hence the clew to the systematic development of the German school system, at least until the present century, must be sought in the religious ideals of the successive periods as tempered by the prevailing social, economic and political influences.

Educational  
Ideals.

As long as the only classes in society were the nobility and the peasantry a practical training in the arts of gaining a livelihood, of making war and of diplomacy sufficed. Custom, modified only by new exigencies, afforded all the discipline needed for their mode of life. But a new era dawned with the introduction of Christianity in the eighth century. Columban and Boniface began their missionary work from the west and sought to convert the pagan Germans.<sup>1</sup> Monasteries and churches

Influence of the  
Church.

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<sup>1</sup> See the interesting and naïve *Life of St. Columban*, by the Monk Jonas (University of Pennsylvania, *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, Vol. II., No. 7). Columban "feared lest, ensnared by the lusts of the world, he should in vain have spent so much

were founded everywhere in order to make sure of the conversion of the whole country. About these institutions arose a third important class, the clergy. The source of inspiration for this class lay outside the semi-barbarous customs of the people among whom they lived. The nobles and peasants alike were ignorant of letters, and this made easy the introduction of the Latin language to which the ecclesiastics, as priests and missionaries of the Roman Church, were naturally partial. The progress of Christianity was conditioned very largely by the acceptance of the Latin language. For purposes of international communication, too, the ability to use the Latin tongue was indispensable. Here, then, were conditions demanding an innovation in existent educational methods; schools were founded to satisfy these demands.

The Church alone recognized the need of schools, and throughout the Middle Ages all instruction proceeded from the clergy. The imparting of a new religion and a new culture was the chief motive that actuated the German missionaries. Monasteries and schools grew up together. The earliest schools were under the direction of monastic orders or bishops of the Church. Their aim was preparation for the priesthood.

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labour on grammar, rhetoric, geometry and the Holy Scriptures. . . . Having collected a band of brethren, St. Columban asked the prayers of all that he might be assisted in his coming journey and that he might have their pious aid. So he started out in the twentieth (or thirtieth) year of his life, and under the guidance of Christ went to the seashore with twelve companions. Here they waited to see if the mercy of the Almighty would allow their purpose to succeed, and learned that the spirit of the all-merciful Judge was with them. So they embarked, and began the dangerous journey across the channel, and sailed quickly with a smooth sea and favourable wind to the coast of Brittany. Here they rested for awhile to recover their strength and discussed their plans anxiously, until finally they decided to enter the land of Gaul. They wanted zealously and shrewdly to inquire into the disposition of the inhabitants, in order to remain longer if they found they could sow the seeds of salvation; or, in case they found the hearts of the people in darkness, go on to the nearest nations."

Of the early orders the Benedictines were most devoted to the cause of education. From the famous monastery of Monte Casino, for the administration of which St. Benedict prescribed his more famous rules in <sup>The</sup> <sup>Benedictines.</sup> 529,<sup>1</sup> there proceeded a ray of light down through all the dark ages. The Benedictine monks, though secluded from the world, found eventually within claustral walls a little world of their own.<sup>2</sup> The duties of every hour were carefully enjoined, and to a strict religious life under vows of poverty, chastity and obedience were added the demands of manual labour and the duty of instructing the young. The example of Cassiodorus, the prime minister of Theodoric the Great, who retired about 540 to a monastery, and there devoted his life to literary pursuits, had a wholesome influence on the ecclesiastics of his day. The rapid growth of religious orders and the accumulation of property required no little administrative ability. This led eventually to many monks becoming learned men; in every monastery some scholars were a necessity. And with the development of the idea that the Church was the Kingdom of God on Earth, the Benedictines became the tools of the Bishops of Rome in conquering the world.

It is a significant fact that the great apostle to the Germans, the Anglo-Saxon Winfried, better known as St. Boniface, introduced the monastic rules of St. Benedict throughout Germany. The labours of the Irish missionaries early in the seventh century had been restricted to southern Germany and Switzerland. But they founded there monastic schools, notably Reichenau and St. Gall, which became the models of all northern Europe. Boniface, a century later, received a commission from the Pope (718), to Christianize and Roman-

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<sup>1</sup> Henderson, *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages*, London, 1892, gives an English translation of "The Rule of St. Benedict." See pp. 274-314.

<sup>2</sup> Putnam, *Books and Their Makers During the Middle Ages*, New York, 1896, Vol. I., pp. 106-145, gives an account of the literary activities of the Benedictines.

ize all Germany. The results of his labours were truly marvellous ; in five years he had succeeded in planting the standard of Rome in all parts of Thuringia and Hesse, and as strongholds of the faith cloisters grew up under his fostering care. In 732 he was made archbishop, the head of an ecclesiastical system including many bishoprics and important clerical institutions. At the time of his death in 755 the Roman Catholic conquest of Germany was nearly complete ; the Bishop of Rome was supreme.<sup>1</sup> And with Roman Catholicism came the elements of Latin learning and the culture of the Church.

Boniface seems to have been not less interested in Romanizing Germany than in giving the youth of Germany a Christian education. The German abbey was every one of them mission schools. The enthusiasm of the great apostle inspired his disciples, men and women alike, to heroic efforts. The monasteries of Fittlar, Büraburg, Heidesheim, Eichstätt, Erfurt and Fulda, and the nunneries of Bischofsheim, Kitzingen and Ochsenfurt, were centres of educational influence, training-schools for native missionaries.

Monastic  
Schools.

The aim of these schools was naturally enough to promote the work of the Church. Boys of five to seven years of age were dedicated to the holy office and reared within convent walls. The church language and singing stood first in a curriculum theoretically composed of the Trivium—grammar, rhetoric and dialectic ; and of the Quadrivium—arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. Upon these seven liberal arts, as on seven impregnable pillars, the superstructure, theology, was built.<sup>2</sup>

Under the influence of Charles the Great and Alcuin, educational ideals ceased to be exclusively ecclesiastical. The purpose of the schools became something more than that of preparation for the priesthood. A dawning national self-

<sup>1</sup> The Councilium Germanicum recognized the Roman Pontiff as head of the Church in 748.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Schiller, *Geschichte der Pädagogik : Die Klosterschulen*, Leipzig, 1894, p. 35 f.

consciousness led to a dream of Empire, but an Empire in harmony with the Church. Those who aspired to the rule of the Roman Empire must needs be somewhat acquainted with Roman learning. Hence the rise of the "Palace School" at the court of Charles the Great, the pioneer school for the nobles of the realm.<sup>1</sup>

Charles the  
Great.

The task of Alcuin was nothing less than the introduction and diffusion of learning among the Franks, a task of no little difficulty when we consider the deplorable condition of education consequent on the barbaric rule of the Merovingian kings. The church schools were no longer the seats of learning ; some of them had fallen a prey to selfish royal favourites ; others had abandoned themselves to the lusts of the flesh. For the upbuilding of that "more excellent Athens," which Alcuin hoped to establish in Frankland, it was necessary that the monastic and cathedral schools be reformed and enthused with new life.<sup>2</sup> More than that, the common people would have to be rescued from barbarism and raised by Christian education to an appreciation of Christian citizenship. The famous proclamation of Charles, issued in 787 to the abbots of the different monasteries, sometimes called the first general charter of education for the Middle Ages, shows clearly the intent of Alcuin in regard to the schools. The copy addressed to Bangulf, abbot of Fulda, runs as follows :

Alcuin.

"Be it known to your devotion, pleasing to God, that in conjunction with our faithful we have judged it to be of utility that, in the bishoprics and monasteries committed by Christ's favour to our charge, care should be taken that there shall be not only a regular manner of life and one conformable to holy religion,

First general  
Charter of  
Education.

<sup>1</sup> Cramer, *Geschichte der Erziehung und des Unterrichts in den Niederlanden während des Mittelalters*, Stralsund, 1843, gives an interesting account of educational progress under Charles the Great.

<sup>2</sup> See G. B. Adams' *Civilization During the Middle Ages*, p. 163 ff. ; Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire*, ch. v. ; and Oman's *The Dark Ages*, p. 379 ff.

but also the study of letters, each to teach and learn them according to his ability and the divine assistance. For even as due observance of the rule of the house tends to good morals, so zeal on the part of the teacher and the taught imparts order and grace to sentences; and those who seek to please God by living aright should also not neglect to please him by right speaking. It is written 'by thine own words shalt thou be justified or condemned;' and although right doing be preferable to right speaking, yet must the knowledge of what is right precede right action. Every one, therefore, should strive to understand what it is that he would fain accomplish; and this right understanding will be the sooner gained according as the utterances of the tongue are free from error. And if false speaking is to be shunned by all men, especially should it be shunned by those who have elected to be the servants of the truth. During past years we have often received letters from different monasteries informing us that at their sacred services the brethren offered up prayers in our behalf; and we have observed that the thoughts contained in these letters, though in themselves most just, were expressed in uncouth language, and while pious devotion dictated the sentiments, the unlettered tongue was unable to express them aright. Hence there has arisen in our minds the fear lest, if the skill to write rightly were thus lacking, so too would the power of rightly comprehending the Sacred Scriptures be far less than was fitting, and we all know that, though verbal errors be dangerous, errors of the understanding are yet more so. We exhort you, therefore, not only not to neglect the study of letters, but to apply yourself thereto with perseverance and with that humility which is well pleasing to God; so that you may be able to penetrate with greater ease and certainty the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures. For as these contain images, tropes and similar figures, it is impossible to doubt that the reader will arrive far more readily at the spiritual sense according as he is the better instructed in learning. Let there, therefore, be chosen for this work men who are able and

willing to learn, and also desirous of instructing others ; and let them apply themselves to the work with a zeal equalling the earnestness with which we recommend it to them.

"It is our wish that you may be what it behooves the soldiers of the Church to be,—religious in heart, learned in discourse, pure in act, eloquent in speech ; so that all who approach your house in order to invoke the Divine Master or to behold the excellence of the religious life, may be edified in beholding you and instructed in hearing you discourse or chant, and may return home rendering thanks to God most High.

"Fail not, as thou regardest our favour, to send a copy of this letter to all thy suffragans and to all the monasteries ; and let no monk go beyond his monastery to administer justice or to enter the assemblies and the voting-places. Adieu."<sup>1</sup>

The ideal ecclesiastic should be "religious in heart, learned in discourse, pure in act, eloquent in speech," a man both "able and willing to learn, and also desirous of instructing others." As a faithful soldier of the Church it is incumbent on him to see to it that, for the sake of a right comprehension of the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures, the study of letters be not neglected. Again Charles writes :

"As it is our desire to improve the condition of the Church, we make it our task to restore, with most watchful zeal, the study of letters, a task almost forgotten through the neglect of our ancestors. We therefore enjoin on our subjects, so far as they may be able, to study the liberal arts, and we set them the example."<sup>2</sup>

The immediate effect of these injunctions was a quickened activity in the old church schools and the foundation of new ones. Generally speaking the sole function of the monastic and cathedral schools had been hitherto the training of churchmen ; the doors were now opened to laymen—but cau-

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<sup>1</sup> I. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, xcvi., 895. Mullinger, *Schools of Charles the Great*, 97-99.

<sup>2</sup> Pertz, *Leges*, I., 44. Quoted by West, *Alcuin*, New York, 1892, p. 54.



tiously.<sup>1</sup> Boys who were dedicated to the monastic life, *oblati*, were trained in the *interior* school; the *exterior* school, outside the convent walls, was reserved for the secular clergy and laymen.<sup>2</sup> The cathedral schools were in many respects similar to the exterior schools of the monasteries. But under Charles the Great a separation was commonly made between the ecclesiastical and the lay students. The prevailing ignorance, superstition and immorality of the lower priesthood, which Charles sought to correct, was due in part to lack of education and in part to the custom of taking candidates from the lowest social class, very often from among the serfs. The remedy for this evil was instruction in letters and a life under monastic rule. Hence as the custom arose of collect-

ing all the clergy of a diocese about the bishop's church, a special school was needed for the canons. Herein the cathedral schools found their chief work, but as a rule both the monastic and the cathedral schools were also open to those who had no intention of leading a strictly religious life. The discipline of the *interni* was naturally more rigorous than that of the *externi*, and, too, the novices were taught more of the Scriptures, more of church music and ritual. But the course of study for beginners was practically the same for all. Pupils were admitted when about seven years of age. Their first task was to commit the Latin Psalter to memory. Along with this went reading, writing and a little arithmetic. The enforced use of the Latin language at all times, in school and out, eventually gave them a second mother-tongue. To make their pupils adepts in the *use* of this tongue was, next to a knowledge of Holy Writ, the chief aim of the mediæval schools. As a means to this end Roman authors, especially

<sup>1</sup> Basilus, bishop of Casarea in Cappadocia (370-379), is said to have been the first to divide the cloistral schools into *schola claustris s. interior* and *schola canonica s. exterior*.

<sup>2</sup> See *Encyc. Britan.*, Vol. I., under "Abbey" for the arrangement at St. Gall.