German Empire, E. by Austria (except where the principality of Liechtenstein intervenes), S. by Italy, and W. by France.

*Physical Description.—*Switzerland extends between the parallels 45° 49' 2" and 47° 48' 32'' lat. (Greenwich) and the meridians 5° 57' 26" and 10° 29' 40" long. (Greenwich). It forms an irregular quadrilateral, of which the greatest length from east to west is 2261/2 m., and the greatest breadth from north to south is nearly 137 m. (136∙8). It has, however, no proper physical unity, as it consists of a number of small districts, differing from each other widely in language, religion, ethnology, customs, &c., but bound together in a political alliance, made originally for common defence against a common foe. It is therefore an artificial land, just as its inhabitants form an artificial nation, though nowadays it is becoming more homogeneous in both respects. Its political boundaries thus do not coincide with those of nature. The entire canton of Ticino is south of the Alps, as are the valleys of Simplon (Valais), Mesocco, Bregaglia, Poschiavo and Münster (all in the Grisons); the whole canton

of Schaffhausen and part of that of Basel are north of the Rhine, while a large part of the Grisons lies to the east of the Rhine basin, and Porrentruy is far down on the western slope of the Jura. But it is to be noted that all these exceptional cases were outside the limits of the Swiss Confederation up to 1798. Putting them aside, the physical geography of Switzerland may thus be described:—

1. On the south runs the main chain of the Alps (*q.v*.), which is joined, at the Mont Dolent (12,543 ft.) in the chain of Mont Blanc, by the lower ranges that rise south of the Lake of Geneva, and which continues partly Swiss till close to the Stelvio Pass on the east.

2. To the north of this main chain there is another great range of mountains (wholly Swiss) only slightly inferior in extent and height, which starts from the hills known as the Jorat range above Lausanne, and culminates in the great snowy summits of the Bernese Oberland and of the Tödi group, before trending to the north near Coire, and, after rising once more in the Säntis group, dies away on the southern shore of the Lake of Constance.

3. The Swiss portion of the main chain of the Alps and this great northern outlier run parallel to each other from tne Mont Dolent to near Coire, while for a short distance they actually unite near the Pizzo Rotondo (west of the St Gotthard Pass), parting again near the Oberalp Γass (east of the St Gotthard). Between these two great snowclad ranges flow two of the mightiest European rivers, the Rhone towards the west and the Rhine towards the east, their headwaters being only separated by the tangled mountain mass between the Pizzo Rotondo and the Oberalp Pass, which sends the Reuss towards the north and the Ticino towards the south.

4. To the north of this great northern outlier rises the Jura range *(q.v.),* really a huge spur of the Alps (with which it is connected by the Jorat range), while between the northern outlier and the Jura extends what may be called the plains or “ plateau ” of Switzerland, consisting all but wholly of the undulating valley of the Aar (below Thun) with its numerous affluents. To that river valley we must add the valley of the Thur (a direct affluent of the Rhine), that lies between the Aar basin and the Rhine basin (the Lake of Constance).

We may thus roughly describe Switzerland (as it exists at the present time) as consisting of three great river valleys (Rhone, Rhine and Aar) with the smaller one of the Thur, which all lie to the north of the main chain of the Alps and include the region between the Alps and the Jura. If we examine matters more carefully we note that the Rhone and Rhine valleys are shut off from that of the Aar (and, of course, of the Thur) by the great northern outlier of the Alps, which consists of the Bernese Oberland and Tödi Alps. Two wide and undulat­ing valleys (Aar and Thur) and two deeply cut trenches (Rhone and Rhine) thus lie on the northern slope of the Alps, to the north and south respectively of the great northern outlier of the Alps. The main chain of the Alps rises in Swiss territory to the height of 15,217 ft. in the loftiest summit or Dufourspitze (wholly Swiss) of Monte Rosa, though the Dom (14,942 ft.), in the Mischabel range, between Zermatt and Saas, is the highest mountain mass which is entirely Swiss. The great northern outlier attains a height of 14,026 ft. in the Finsteraarhom (Bernese Oberland), while the lowest level (581 ft.) within the Confederation is on the Lago Maggiore. The highest