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MODERN SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION AND THEIR FOUNDERS.

EMANUEL, COUNT DE FELLEBERG.—BORN 1874. DIED 1846,
ÆTAS 72 YEARS.

No. IV.

The great educational establishment of M. de Fellenberg at Hofwyl, in the canton of Berne, has attracted more attention, and exerted a wider influence, than any one institution in Europe or America, during the present century. It originated in motives of patriotism and benevolence, about the year 1805, and was sustained for forty years by personal efforts and pecuniary sacrifices on the part of its founder, which have never been equalled among men of his wealth, and social position. Born to every advantage of education which wealth and rank could secure, advanced early to positions of trust and influence in public life, enjoying extensive opportunities of observation by travel in the most refined nations, thrown by the political convulsions of his country and of Europe, from 1790 to 1805, much among the people and their rulers, De Fellenberg became convinced that improvement in *early education* was the only resource for the permanent strength and elevation of the state of his own and other countries. To this object, at the age of thirty-one, he consecrated himself and his fortune. Being possessed of ample means, he resolved to form on his own estate, and on an independent basis, a model institution, in which it should be proved what education could accomplish for the benefit of humanity. Out of this determination arose the Institution at Hofwyl.

He commenced with two or three boys from abroad, with his own children, in his own house; and from time to time received others, but never more than two or three new pupils at once, that they might fall insensibly into the habits of the school, without producing any effect upon its general state. In 1807, the first building was erected for the "Literary Institution," and the number of pupils increased to eighty, mostly from patrician families. During this year he projected an institution for indigent children, and employed Vehrli, the son of a schoolmaster of Thurgovia, in the execution of the plan, after training him in his own family. The farm-house of the establishment was assigned for this school, and here Vehrli received the pupils taken from among the poorest families in the neighbourhood. He left the table of M. de Fellenberg, and shared their straw beds and vegetable diet, because their fellow-labourer on the farm, and companion in hours of relaxation, as well as their teacher, and thus laid the foundation of the "Agricultural Institution," or

"Poor School," in 1808. The principles on which this school was established, were to employ agriculture as the means of moral education for the poor, and to make their labours the means of defraying the expense of their education. In this institution, Vehrli attained that practical knowledge of teaching, which fitted him for his higher work in the Normal School at Krutzlingen.

About the same time, a school of "Theoretical and Practical Agriculture" for all classes, was formed and provided with professors. To this school several hundred students resorted annually. In the same year, Fellenberg commenced the formation of a Normal School, or seminary for teachers, at his own expense, inviting one of the most distinguished educators of the day to conduct it. Forty-two teachers, of the canton of Berne, came together the first year and received a course of instruction in the art of teaching. So great was the zeal inspired by the liberality of Fellenberg, and the course of instruction, that the teachers were content to prolong their stay beyond their first intention, and to lodge in tents, in lack of other accommodations on the premises. Owing to some jealousy and low party intrigue, the government of Berne interfered with his plan of bringing the teachers of the canton annually together for a similar course, and henceforth the benefits were open only to teachers from other cantons, and to such as belonged to the School of Agriculture. The teachers, after one of these annual courses, presented an address to de Fellenberg, from which the following is an extract. It is addressed to "the worthy Father and Friend of the People."

"When we reflect that without education no true happiness is to be attained, and that this can only be secured by means of well-taught and virtuous teachers; and when we recollect that you have devoted yourself to the object without regard to the sacrifice it may require,—we must rejoice that this age is favoured with such a friend of his country; and when we remember the kindness and friendship with which we have been treated at Hofwyl, we are compelled to give you our affection as well as our admiration, and which will not diminish as long as our hearts beat, and our children shall learn to say, 'So lived and laboured Father de Fellenberg.*' We will not enter here into any particular statement of our views concerning the course of instruction we have received, which we shall in due time make known to the public: we will only say, for your own satisfaction, that this course has far exceeded our expectations, by its complete adaptation to practical life, by the skill and efforts of your assistants, and by the moral and religious spirit with which the whole has been animated. We have been led to enter with a fervent devotion into a sacred engagement, that we will live and labour in our calling in the spirit which you have exhibited, and thus prove to you that your noble sacrifices have not been vain. We are more deeply penetrated than ever before with a sense of the sacredness of our calling. We are resolved to conduct ourselves with prudence and caution, in affection and union, with unyielding and conscientious faithfulness, in the discharge of our duty, and thus to prove ourselves worthy of your Institution."

In continuation of our brief sketch of de Fellenberg's establishment at Hofwyl, we will add that, from 1810 to 1817, it attracted the attention of educators and statesmen in Switzerland and all parts of Europe. Pupils were sent from Russia, Germany, France, and England. Deputations from foreign governments visited it, to

* This title was habitually given to De Fellenberg by the Swiss teachers and youth who appreciated his character, or who had experienced his kindness.