

sor in Oberlin (a native of Strasbourg, and brother of the celebrated Professor), who had been educated for the ministry, and who was ardently looking for some cure in which his pious zeal might be fully exercised. He entered upon his charge in 1767, in the twenty-seventh year of his age.

Oberlin's situation was a singular one, and to some minds it would have been sufficiently discouraging. He was of an enthusiastic nature, devoted to his profession, ardent in the attainment of knowledge, and anxiously desirous to communicate it to others. The people amongst whom he was thrown were still lamentably ignorant. They suffered Stouber to teach their children to read, because their schoolmaster was an ancient officer amongst them; but Oberlin's notions of education were much too comprehensive for their understandings. He found them speaking a rude *patois*, which as effectually separated them from communication with the rest of mankind as their utter want of roads. The people at first did not comprehend his plans or appreciate his motives. Ignorance is always suspicious. They resolved not to submit to innovation. The peasants agreed on one occasion to waylay and beat him, and on another to duck him in a cistern. He boldly confronted them, and subdued their hearts by his courageous mildness. But he did more: he gave up *exhorting* the people to pursue their real interests; he practically showed them the vast benefits which competent knowledge and well-directed industry would procure for them. These mountaineers in many respects were barbarians; and he resolved to civilize them. The Ban de la Roche had no roads. The few passes in the mountains were constantly broken up by the torrents, or obstructed by the loosened earth which fell from the overhanging rocks. The river Bruche, which flows through the canton, had no bridge but one of stepping-stones. Within a few miles of this isolated district was Strasbourg, abounding in wealth and knowledge and all the refinements of civilization. He determined to open a regular communication between the Ban de la Roche and that city; to find there a market for the produce of his own district, and to bring thence in exchange new comforts and new means of improvement. He assembled the people, explained his objects, and proposed that they should blast the rocks to make a wall, a mile and a half in length, to support a road by the side of the river, over which a bridge must also be made. The peasants one and all declared the thing was impossible; and every one excused himself from engaging in such an unreasonable scheme. Oberlin exhorted them, reasoned with them, appealed to them as husbands and fathers—but in vain. He at last threw a pickaxe upon his shoulder, and went to work himself, assisted by a trusty servant. He had soon the support of fellow-labourers. He regarded not the thorns by which his hands were torn, nor the loose stones which fell from the rocks and bruised them. His heart was in the work, and no difficulty could stop him. He devoted his own little property to the undertaking; he raised subscriptions amongst his old friends; tools were bought for all who were willing to use them. On the Sunday the good pastor laboured in his calling as a teacher of sacred truths; but on the Monday he rose with the sun to his work of practical benevolence, and, marching at the head of two hundred of his flock, went with renewed vigour to his conquest over the natural obstacles to the civilization of the district. In three years the road was finished, the bridge was built, and the communication with Strasbourg was established. The ordinary results of intercourse between a poor and wealthy, a rude and an intelligent community, were soon felt. The people of the Ban de la Roche obtained tools, and Oberlin taught their young men the necessity of learning other trades besides that of cultivating the earth. He apprenticed the boys to carpenters, masons, glaziers, blacksmiths, and cartwrights, at Strasbourg. In a few years, these arts which were wholly unknown to the district, began to flourish. The tools were kept in good order, wheel-carriages became common, the wretched cabins were converted into snug cottages; the people felt the value of these great changes, and they began to regard their pastor with unbounded reverence.

He had many prejudices to encounter in carrying forward the education of this rude population. He desired to teach them better modes of cultivating their sterile soil; but they would not listen to him. "What," said they, "could he know of crops, who had been bred in a town." It was useless to reason with them; so he instructed them by example.

The instruction which Oberlin afforded to the adults of his canton

was only just as much as was necessary to remove the most pressing evils of their outward condition, and to impress them with a deep sense of religious obligation. But his education of the young had a wider range. When he entered on his ministry, the hut which his predecessor had built was the only school-house of the five villages composing the canton. It had been constructed of unseasoned logs, and was soon in a ruinous condition. The people, however, would not hear of a new building;—the log-house had answered very well, and was good enough for their time. Oberlin was not to be so deterred from the pursuit of his benevolent wishes. He applied to his friends at Strasbourg, and took upon himself a heavy pecuniary responsibility. A new building was soon completed at Walbach, and in a few years the inhabitants in the other four parishes came voluntarily forward, to build a school-house in each of the villages. Oberlin engaged zealously in the preparation of masters for these establishments, which were to receive all the children of the district when of a proper age. But he also carried the principle of education farther than it had ever before gone in any country. He was the founder of *infant* schools. He saw that almost from the cradle children were capable of instruction; that evil habits had begun much earlier than the world had been accustomed to believe; and that the facility with which mature education might be conducted, greatly depended upon the impressions which the reason and the imagination of infants might receive. He appointed *conductrices* in each commune, paid at his own expense; and established rooms, where children from two to six years old might be instructed and amused:—and he thus gave the model of those beautiful institutions which have first shown us how the happiness of a child may be associated with its improvement, and how knowledge, and the discipline which leads to knowledge, are not, necessarily

"Harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose."

The children, in these little establishments, were not kept "from morn till noon, from noon till dewy eve" over the horn-book and primer. They learnt to knit, and sew, and spin; and when they were weary they had pictures to look at, and maps, engraved on wood, for their special use, of their own canton, of Alsace, of France, and of Europe. They sang songs and hymns; and they were never suffered to speak a word of *patois*. This last regulation shows the practical wisdom of their instructor.

When the children of the Ban de la Roche—the children of peasants, be it remembered, who, a few years before the blessing of such a pastor as Oberlin was betowed upon them, were not only steeped

"Up to the very lips in poverty,"

But were groping in that darkness of the understanding which too often accompanies extreme indigence—when these children were removed to the higher schools, which possessed the most limited funds when compared with almost the meanest of our common schools in the country, they were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, astronomy, sacred and profane history, agriculture, natural history, especially botany, natural philosophy, music, and drawing. Oberlin reserved for himself, almost exclusively, the religious instruction of this large family;—and he established a weekly meeting of all the scholars at Walbach. The inhabitants of Strasbourg and of the neighbouring towns from which the Ban de la Roche had been recently cut off, came to look upon the wonders which one man had effected. Subscriptions poured in upon the disinterested pastor;—endowments were added. Well did he use this assistance. He founded a valuable library for the use of the children; he printed a number of the best school-books for their particular instruction; he made a collection of philosophical and mathematical instruments; he established prizes for masters and scholars; he published an almanac which he gave to his people.

The children of Oberlin's schools were taught whatever could be useful to them in their pastoral and agricultural life, and whatever could enable them to extract happiness out of their ordinary pursuits. They were incited to compose short essays on the management of the farm and the orchard; they were led into the woods to search for indigenous plants, to acquire their names, and to cultivate them in their own little gardens; and they were instructed in the delightful art of copying these flowers from nature.

The wonderful improvements he had made in the Steintahl, and the religious and enlightened state of his little community, excited universal interest and admiration. The goodness of Oberlin became