

defatigable teachers, it ought, most assuredly, to be principally ascribed to the public ministrations of Bernhard Overberg, Teacher of the Normal School, and subsequently Director of the Theological Seminary in Münster, who every year, towards the end of summer, held a course of lectures, not only attended by candidates for the office of teachers in the public schools, but also by many others, who flocked to hear his addresses. This peculiarly gifted individual having the faculty of rendering the most barren and ordinary subject so novel and interesting, that numbers from the neighboring towns, whose interest for every thing attached to instruction had been long absorbed in the cares of the world, were induced by curiosity to attend his public discourses on the subject of the most approved system of education. But though curiosity first led persons of every class to attend the lectures of an unpretending Normal school-master, other motives were soon awakened, and the inclinations of the natural man were sanctified and confirmed by a superior spiritual power.

An ardent pursuit of any particular object is generally found to be contagious; and while Bernhard Overberg was seen prosecuting his darling object, the instruction of youth, others were made partakers, not only of the delight which he experienced, but also of that heavenly feeling which we may suppose to animate those watchful spirits over these "little ones," who do always behold the face of "our Father who is in heaven;" and when Overberg, with all the ardour of his spirit, spoke of the inward satisfaction of mind, and the foretaste of that great reward which was the portion of the faithful teacher, not one of his hearers could remain unmoved. He led them to take a glimpse of that state of indescribable happiness and peace, which is possessed by souls imbued with feelings such as his own; and numbers imbibed the desire, and many expressed it, to become a teacher like Bernhard Overberg.

Nor did it appear from first impressions, so difficult an undertaking to speak and teach like Overberg. For had we attended with the numerous body of candidates and probationers for the office of public teacher, in the spacious hall of the Normal school, which was always overflowing with hearers, and after hearing him speak there with the greatest energy and eloquence, upon the qualifications necessary for the office of a teacher, had we then followed him to the Lorraine collegiate church, where he every Sunday afternoon catechised and instructed the young children of the city; his method of imparting knowledge appeared so exceedingly simple, that we should have supposed every one must have adopted exactly the same plan, if not precisely the same words. As he stood in the front of the children, who formed a semi-circle round him, the serious dignity of his countenance assumed a mildly cheerful expression of familiarity. He saluted the children in the most friendly manner, took some of the younger ones by the hand, and placing them more immediately before him, began to talk with them upon some subject on which they were well conversant, but which appeared in no way connected with the topic of instruction appointed for that afternoon. Soon, however, he contrived with the most pertinent skill, to connect with this apparently insignificant commencement, arguments and observations of momentous value, exciting both in the children and older auditors, the highest interest, though from his lucid observations, the children were capable of following him, and answering the questions put to them with perfect ease, while at the same time their attention was powerfully fixed upon some important point of doctrine, which seemed even to the more advanced of the congregation, to assume a new light and a deeper import. Equally simple, yet equally impressive, was the instruction he imparted at the Lorraine Free School during the week. The children listened to what he related to them, and felt that he described exactly their own experience; and particularly when biblical history was his theme, their attention was riveted for two hours as earnestly as if it had only been a few minutes. Nay, even in the arithmetical lessons, generally so dry and disagreeable, the ingenuity of this amiable man, connected every sum so familiarly with the daily sports, employment, or domestic habits of the children, that it became not only a pleasant employment, but one in which their reasoning powers were called into action.

This too, all appeared to an observer so suitable, and at the same time so obvious, that there could be no doubt as to the manner in which it was proper and necessary to convey knowledge

to the infant mind; but yet should the same person attempt to pursue the same plan, and adopt the same manner, he would soon be aware that it required no trifling gift or attainment, but that to be able to impart the vivifying instruction of an Overberg there must also exist the same life of love in the soul, which can only be acquired by uninterrupted communion with the Everlasting Source of love itself. The simple and apparently natural discourses of this man would then be found, not the result of a common effort to teach, but a gift from the treasury of God's grace, sought and obtained by the unvarying and childlike dependence upon God's love and mercy. The truth of the foregoing remarks will be manifest by the perusal of a short account of the life of the children's friend.

The father of Bernhard Overberg, a pedlar residing in the village of Hockel, near Voltlage in Osnaburg, was a man of prayer; and as he travelled from one place to another, with his goods upon his shoulders, to obtain the means of supporting his family, he sweetened his toils by devout contemplation, and fervent petitions to the throne of grace. A continued lameness in one foot, prevented him, during the latter years of his life, from pursuing his customary rounds; but prayer was still his delight, and through many a sleepless night he received strength and patience, by meditating on the unparalleled sufferings of his Redeemer. Overberg's mother was a partaker of the same renewing grace, and therefore contentment, devotion, and peace, shed their benign influence in their poor, but happy dwelling.

Bernhard Overberg was born on the 1st of May, 1754. He learned in his earliest years the answer to that question, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" An extreme delicacy of constitution, held back the development of both bodily and mental powers, so that he did not learn to walk till his fifth year, and when sent to school was so dull a scholar, that he went out eight elementary books, before he had learnt to read with any degree of fluency. When he was nine years old, the clergyman at Voltlage, died, and he overheard his father and mother converse upon his death, upon his useful life, how zealously he had laboured for the salvation of his flock, and also how improbable it was, that another so worthy would be appointed to the church. Bernhard, who had listened attentively to these remarks, thought in childish simplicity, "How important must be this office, I should like to become a pastor myself." The following day he was at work in the field, and heard the bell tolling for the funeral: the sound seemed to thrill through his soul, and he poured out his childlike prayer; "Lord God! if thou wilt help me to learn diligently and quickly, I will become a pastor." From this time he made rapid progress, and at the end of six months, could not only read fluently himself, but assisted his master in teaching the younger children. His increasing religious knowledge and personal devotion were delightfully perceptible, and when he for the first time approached the table of the Lord, he again renewed his vow that, by the help of God, he would devote himself to the work of the ministry; yet the unanswerable question rose constantly to his mind; how was he to obtain the consent of his parents to his wishes, since they had already settled that he should accompany his father on his journeys, and afterwards continue to carry on his trade? Or how could he expect or desire his poor father and mother to send him to college, or support him during his studies?

Being one day alone in the fields, whither he had driven the cows, his desire to fit himself for the service of the sanctuary became more than usually ardent; "I am," he thought, "now fifteen years old, it is the latest period at which I can think of beginning to study, and yet I cannot venture to tell my parents what I wish." These thoughts inspired a prayer to his Heavenly Father, that He would influence them, not only to agree to his views, but also to make the proposal themselves to him.

On the evening of the same day his prayer was answered, for his father asked him, whether he would not prefer entering the ministry to following the trade of a hawker. Who can describe the happiness of Bernhard? On the very next day he was sent to a clergyman in Voltlage, to receive his first instruction in Latin, and with unremitting ardour and increasing pleasure, he now walked, heedless of bad roads, or the inclemency of the weather, to Voltlage (about five English miles) to obtain very indifferent instruction, which his perseverance alone could have rendered beneficial to him. His thoughts were generally so absorbed in