

factures, the produce of which finds a ready market at Strasburg, animates the scene.

Who would believe that this is the same valley, that these are the descendants of that people, who inhabited this spot in the last century? A few generations past, and about eighty families alone dwelt in this valley, in abject poverty, feeding, with their swine, principally on wild apples. In the year 1709 potatoes were first planted, but with so little care and attention, that in the middle of the last century, they yielded scarcely a return for the trouble and expense of the seed. And what were the inhabitants? A poor, wild, uncivilized, half-clothed people, whose rude patois was unintelligible, even to the neighbouring peasantry, and who for six or seven months in every year, were debarr'd from intercourse with the rest of the world, from the natural situation of the valley in which they lived. At that time, no bridge had been thrown over the wild, impetuous Breusch, no trace was to be seen of that high road, or of those excellent paths, which now afford an uninterrupted communication from hamlet to hamlet, and from village to village. The streams which now dispense peace and plenty through the vale, then dashed precipitously from rock to rock, now here, now there, carrying away in their uncertain course, the invaluable earth, the slight covering of the barren mountain; and of often collecting in the lower lands, formed slimy bogs. The verdant meadows were then unwholesome marshes, the fields of flax, of clover, or of corn, which now dispute possession with the very summits of the mountains, were then mere plots of stony ground, rooted up every day by the swine in search of food; and the neat neat houses, and comfortable cottages, which now animate the scene, were then nothing but poor, miserable hovels.

#### *Oberlin's Predecessor in Steinthal.*

The inhabitants of the wretched huts, of which we spoke in the foregoing chapter, called themselves Christians—Christians, who subscribed to the Augsburg confession; yet but few of their number had ever seen a Bible or had any knowledge of the leading, and most important truths of Christianity; and discontent and misery reigned among them. Steinthal affords the most striking proof of any place we have ever known, of the injury which may accrue, in the lapse of two or three generations, from careless indifferent pastors; and of what may be accomplished, by those who are faithful to their trust. The clergy who during the first thirty years of the last century, should have instructed the ignorant natives of this valley in the way of life were, it is also too manifest from the consequences, the destroyers instead of the deliverers of souls; from whom their miserable flock, learnt nothing but the taste for spirituous liquors, and the idle amusement of the chase. It is related of one of the last of the pastors, before the time of Oberlin, who was a great sportsman, that being on his way to a sick person to whom he had been called, a hare crossed his path, and that he returned to fetch his gun, saying, "The hare may escape me, but the sick person can wait."

It is certainly an error in our ecclesiastical polity, that the most talented young men, correct in conduct, and gifted with eminent and shining abilities for preaching the gospel, are appointed to rich and flourishing churches, while those who are ill qualified, and whose characters are not so unblemished, as as it were, punished by being sent to some indigent and uncivilized congregation, whose only blessing in their lost unhappy condition, would be the glad tidings of another and a better world to come. Ah, my young friends, will you follow also in this path? will you look only to the praise of men, and forget that which is so important—the praise of God? will you lightly estimate that reward which is promised to those who relieve the destitute and forsaken? But happily there are some who feel the claims of those who are perishing for lack of knowledge; and one of these, John Stuber, a minister of the word of God, impelled by an Apostolic spirit, and ardent love to the Church of Christ, chose Steinthal, in the year 1750, as the scene of his labours. He found the swine-herd in this valley a complete Gadarene, neither acquainted with his wants, nor feeling the degradation of his circumstances, and would as readily have desired the messenger of peace to depart from him, as the Gadarenes brought our Saviour.

The day after Stuber's arrival at Waldbach, the village which was to be his future residence, he desired to be conducted to the

school, and was shown into a very dirty room in a very miserable hut, where the children of the village were assembled, talking and playing in the wildest confusion. "Where is your school-master?" asked the pastor; the children pointed to a little, old, decrepit man, who lay on a bed in the corner. "Are you the schoolmaster?" said Stuber.

"Yes, sir," said the old man.

"What do you teach the children, my good friend?"

"Nothing, sir."

"What nothing! how is that?"

"Because I know nothing myself."

"Why, then, were you chosen schoolmaster?"

"I was formerly swine-herd, but when I became too infirm, the parish appointed me to take care of the children."

The schools in all the villages which came under Stuber's superintendence, were in the same condition; for though the masters had not all of them been swine-herds, yet they were most of them shepherds, who during the summer months, followed their employment of tending the sheep upon the mountains, and in the winter imparted to the children the very little information they possessed themselves.

Stuber's first serious endeavour was to educate and prepare for this office, some young men whom he thought better qualified than the rest; but the parents opposed his intention, saying, "schoolmasters! no; our children are fit for something better than schoolmasters." Stuber remained silent, and finding that the office in the village had completely sunk to a level with the swine-herd, he determined to humour them in their prejudice. "I do not mean" said he, "that your children should become common schoolmasters, that of course would be unadvisable, but that they should be superintendents; (messieurs les régents,) and under this name he found several who were willing to accede to his proposition.

It was, however, absolutely necessary to build a school-room, and Stuber was anxious to obtain wood for the undertaking from the forests, where the Steinthalers had formerly enjoyed the privilege of felling timber for their cottages. But from the dilapidated state of this part of the church property, the Prefect, Abbé de Regemorte, of Strasburg, thought proper to give a decided denial to the petition. Stuber went himself to the Prefect, and after pressing his request in the most urgent manner, and receiving repeated denials, he rose to depart, saying, "since it is impossible for you to concede to my wishes, I will take my leave; but your excellency will not object to my making a collection amongst charitable persons for this purpose." "Certainly not," replied the Prefect. "Well, then," rejoined Stuber, holding his hat in a begging attitude, "as the benevolence of your character is well known, I will make the beginning with your Excellency." The Prefect immediately embraced Stuber, promising him all the wood which he should want, and not only invited him to dinner that day, but also insisted upon his dining with him every time he visited Strasburg.

The young men in the mean time, who were preparing for superintendents, began to teach the children under Stuber's direction, to read and to give them other necessary instruction; but here he encountered a great difficulty, for not one of them could read fluently, and still less understand the meaning or connection of what they read. If, at the end of the lesson, the children had read down a page, and a word happened to be divided on that and on the next, as children; neither the master nor pupil had sense enough to finish the word, much less the sentence; but ended with chil, and the next day commenced with dren. The children read Jésus for je suis, canaille, for canal, &c. without their teachers being aware of the error; and if they were shown the beginning of a chapter in the Bible, they were not able to say which was the end of the last. Stuber therefore felt; that the first important step, was to introduce a better mode of elementary instruction; and procured a number of the simplest spelling books, through the benevolence of a person in Strasburg. The people could not conceive what these small books, full of unconnected words could mean, and many of them thought that their pastor must practice sorcery; but as, after the introduction of these books, the young scholars made much more rapid improvement; the parents and older children begged permission to attend the schools, and receive the same instruction, to which Stuber re-