

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

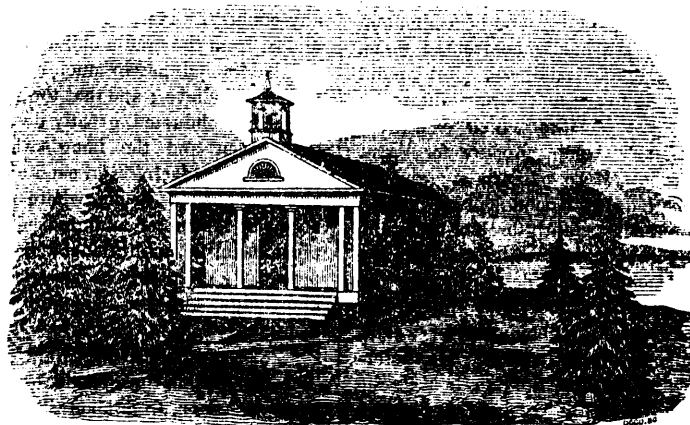
FOR

Upper  Canada.

VOL. IV.

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No. 4.



PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE SECTION SCHOOL HOUSE ERECTED AT BARRINGTON, RHODE ISLAND.

(For plans of interior arrangements, &c., with explanation, see page 52.)

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MODERN SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION AND THEIR FOUNDERS.

JOHN FREDERIC OBERLIN.—BORN 1740, DIED 1826, *ÆTAS* 86.

No. I.

We have prepared a series of biographical sketches of the principal promoters, or founders of modern systems of popular education, which we hope will prove interesting and valuable. Our series, arranged chronologically, will include sketches of the life and labours of Oberlin, Pestalozzi, DeFellenberg, Lancaster, Bell, Jacatot, and other distinguished educators.

John Frederic Oberlin was the Pastor of Walbach, an obscure village in the north-eastern part of France, situated in the Ban de la Roche, or Steintahl, which signifies the Valley of Stones. From

his childhood to the day of his death, he was remarkable for his disinterestedness. He lived only to do good. He refused more eligible situations, for the sake of leading an humble and laborious life in the Ban de la Roche, simply because the people were very poor and very ignorant, and he could nowhere else be so useful.

The Ban de la Roche has been singularly fortunate in having had the work of general education carried forward with zeal and discretion by the religious instructors of its population, from the year 1750 to the death of Oberlin in 1827. The predecessor of Oberlin was M. Stouber, a man of a less ardent temperament, but who, like himself, had the remarkable merit of perceiving the necessity of instructing the great body of the people, undeterred by those vain fears, and uninfluenced by those obstinate prejudices, which, in nations calling themselves enlightened, have so long opposed the progress of knowledge, upon the principle that popular ignorance and state security are inseparable. M. Stouber began his pastoral office by reforming the village schools. The principal establishment for the elementary instruction of the district was a miserable cottage, where a number of children were crowded together, wild and noisy, and without occupation.

He set about procuring new schoolmasters; but the trade was considered so disreputable, that none of the more respectable inhabitants of the canton would undertake the office. Stouber, like a wise man, changed the title of the vocation; and though he could not obtain schoolmasters, he had no difficulty in finding superintendents for his schools under the dignified name of 'Messieurs les Régents.' These worthy men were soon in full activity. Stouber printed spelling-books and reading-lessons for the use of his pupils, and built a log-hut for a school-house. The progress made by the children induced their parents to wish to read, and a system of adult instruction, during part of the Sunday, and in the long winter evenings, was established throughout the canton. Stouber persevered in his admirable labours for fourteen years, when, his wife dying, his situation lost a principal charm, and he accepted the station of pastor to St. Thomas's Church, at Strasbourg. He found a succes-