

ample influenced even many of the old, the idle, and indifferent, to become more zealous and persevering.

Many country schoolmasters were not content with attending Overberg's course of lectures once or twice, but continued for ten or twelve consecutive years to visit Münster during the vacation at their own expense; and although his labours were studious, particularly at his entrance on his work, of course undisciplined and amidst uncivilized persons, yet scarcely a distance occurred in which he found it necessary to call them to order. The dignity which mingled with his simplicity and affability, inspired the greatest respect as well as love. He always commenced his lecture with prayer, and the coldest heart became interested when he removed the small black skull-cap with which his head was generally covered, and besought with all the energy that words could convey, the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit.

The following extract from his journal will show us his reasons for preserving his discourses free from all unnecessary ornament or learned display, and prove from what source they obtained that power over men well versed in the subject on which he treated, and account for the astonishment with which they hung upon his words.

"1st. Let love to God be my ruling principle. 2dly. Let the will of God be my guide and compass. 3dly. Let the honour and approbation of God be my sole aim. When my mind is thus disposed I shall walk before him and receive his blessing. Or I may sum up my duty in still more concise language. May I act and suffer all from love to God, according to his will and for his glory; earnestly desire to be faithful, examine myself if I am really so, and persevere in active devotion."

In his journal, dated November 1791, at the close of his course of lectures, he praises God for the assistance he has afforded him, and acknowledges that it is to his grace he is indebted for having been able to pursue his vocation, free from the distraction and care he had experienced on former occasions, and concludes thus: "This year I can look back with greater pleasure on my labours, for thou has been pleased to grant me a more constant conviction of my innate weakness, at other times I have trusted too much to my own powers, and have sought the applause of men, but now I hope I am able to rely more upon thee, and to seek thy favour, and thine alone."

The principles on which he founded his method for instruction and education, had all an exclusive reference to the feelings and the heart, and were so simply explained, that they were level to the capacity of the most ignorant. He illustrated his maxims by the most apt parables and examples, in relating which his felicitous talent was peculiarly displayed. His delineations and sketches of character were given with so much life, and painted with such strokes of familiar interest, that the very scenes and persons rose before the eyes of his listeners, and every one felt he had seen and experienced the same. For example: as he one day described a particular error in the management of children, an old schoolmaster was so struck with the truth, that he exclaimed aloud in his German patois, "Well, Sir, that is exactly the way they go on in" His descriptions were often full of humour, yet at the same time combined with so much serious thought, that they never occasioned any breach of decorum in his auditors, and persons who had no connection with the school attended his discourses, attracted by his eloquence and talents.

The wonders and beauties of creation, were to Overberg as a mirror in which he saw reflected all the goodness and greatness of the Godhead, and in the best sense of the term, he was an admirer of nature. Every trembling leaf on the tree, every flower in the meadow, proclaimed to him the power, wisdom, and love of God; he had early learned the lesson of "ascending from nature unto nature's God," and it at length became a natural habit to rise from finite objects to their infinite first cause. He earnestly recommended the cultivation of this temper to the candidates for the office of schoolmaster, directed them how to acquire it, and advised them constantly to call the attention of their pupils to the manifold and extraordinary operations of nature. "A country schoolmaster," he was wont to say, "should make a practice of teaching the children in the open air, that he may accustom them to notice and admire the works of creation, and lead them to consider how every thing is adapted to produce the desired end, and accomplish the designs of the Deity;" and in the hours devoted

to religious instruction, a short description of the globe was introduced, for the purpose of magnifying the power and wisdom of God.

The example of affable attention, patience, and condescension, which the attendants at the Normal School witnessed in their tutor, was as profitable and raising their dispositions as the verbal instruction they received, for if after having twice explained the most simple subject in the clearest manner, he perceived by the answers of his pupils that they did not understand his meaning, he repeated it a third time with perfect command of temper, and by this means he taught the method of reducing any proposition to the comprehension of the meanest capacity, without sacrificing any of its fundamental truths.

The school was always closed with a hymn, Overberg having had from his youth a predilection for church music.

At the end of the course of lectures, all the candidates for the office of schoolmaster underwent a special personal examination, and were further required to write upon various given subjects.—When this proved satisfactory, they were appointed to different parishes, and received a remuneration proportioned to their sphere of usefulness. They were committed, for their further instruction and for advice in the superintendence of their office, to the vicar of the parish, who from his superior attainments, and the charge with which he was invested, must consequently be able to afford them every necessary assistance; and their subordination to the opinion and advice of the pastor was strongly insisted on by Overberg. "I have met with several," he said, "who would not submit to this regulation, but I have always found upon examination, that they belonged neither to the entirely ignorant nor yet to the well instructed class; but rather to the half wise and self sufficient."

He remained through life the father, friend, adviser, and comforter of his pupils; none came to Münster without visiting their beloved teacher; they wrote to him on their difficulties or their successes, and almost all of them still treasure up some lines of encouragement or advice from his hand.

Thus Overberg became the founder and supporter of a most efficient and highly beneficial class of schoolmasters throughout his native country. But added to this, he was the means of forming and educating a great number of young females as teachers, who voluntarily engaged in the employment, not for pecuniary advantage, but induced by love to God and man. They constantly attended his lectures in the Normal School, and during his hours of instruction given to the younger children, in order to acquire the necessary qualifications for christian tuition, in which useful employment the greater number persevered through life. The fruits of their devotion to this cause were so remarkable, that many of them were appointed to superintend large schools, and the fame of their success occasioned many to be invited to other countries, whilst some, as private governesses, carried to the families into which they were received, the same blessing which had rested on the labours of their teacher.

The female teachers received also the most valuable information, from attendance on the free school, which was connected with the female choristers of the Lorrain convent, to which we have already alluded. Overberg gave at this institution, instruction in religion, biblical history, and arithmetic, three times a week, of several hours' continuance. Persons of all classes flocked to attend this school, especially on Sunday, when he taught in the church, where this faithful servant might be compared to Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me," &c. The high importance he attached to this opportunity of imparting knowledge, may be seen by the following extract from his journal.

"15th Jan. 1790. I have again attended to the duties of my school without the requisite preparation. Oh, my God, grant me grace to improve in this respect. I feel that I deceive myself when I expect to be made useful under these circumstances; when I fancy that I understand my subject, and am seduced to attend to some other business as of more immediate consequence; for it is impossible that any other occupation could be of such paramount importance. From this deficiency in preparatory study, many errors arise; the instruction becomes uninteresting, confused, prolix, and undefined; the children become perplexed; their attention is distracted, and the lesson is unpleasant both to them and myself. I feel that I am especially called upon to beware of degenerating into tedious minutiae, and of becoming too diffuse, and