

lusion to three respectable females of his congregation, Sophie Bernhard, Marie Schoppler, and Catherine Schideuker, who were in the constant habit of assisting him in his evangelical labours, by reading the Bible to their neighbours, and lending it to those who were not possessed of the treasure.

*Oberlin as Father, Temporal Benefactor, and Instructor of his Parish.*

Oberlin's attachment to his parishioners might be compared to the tender affection of a parent for his offspring; and God had supplied him with those necessary qualifications of understanding, in addition to a feeling heart, which were so necessary to the distressed and degraded condition of the poor Steinthalers. As the affection of parents for their children, renders their exertions unceasing for their happiness, and more especially in danger and distress, allows them no peace till they have afforded them, if possible, relief; thus Oberlin never ceased to labour, till he had raised his parishioners from that state of absolute poverty and wretchedness, into which their own conduct had in great measure degraded them, to those circumstances of prosperity and comfort, in which they are now found. To Oberlin we may point as an example in love and good works, to all who profess an earnest desire for the happiness of their fellow creatures; but they must at the same time remember, in all their undertakings, to copy also his spirit of submission to the will of God, which is beautifully displayed in the following extract from one of his papers:

"Millions of times have I cried to God for the grace which is the portion of his children, to submit cheerfully to his will, whether in life or death, to project, to wish, to speak, to undertake, to perform, nothing but that which the All Wise and All Good would own and bless."

In no place perhaps of the same extent, was Agriculture in such a low state as Steinthal, even the principal and almost only produce of the land, which was potatoes, had become perfectly degenerated, and fields which had formerly yielded from 120 to 150 bushels, afforded now only from 30 to 40. The peasants believed that the ground had lost its fruitfulness, and had no idea that the fault lay in their own mismanagement. The cultivation of trees, of pasture land, or of produce for the winter, was, as we have already mentioned, quite unknown. Their poverty was therefore so extreme, that a widow was quite transported on receiving a sou, because with it she could purchase salt with her potatoes for some days. Different families and neighbours could only attend divine worship alternately, as they possessed but one Sunday dress which was the property of the whole.

Oberlin finding that the people would not attend to his statements and advice, determined to preach to them through facts; and as several plots of his own land, lay by the side of a very public path, he here made some successful experiments, in planting different kinds of stone fruit-trees, walnut-trees, &c., and in the cultivation of grain. The people were struck with astonishment at the contrast afforded between their own barren fields, and their pastor's flourishing trees and rich harvests; and came one after the other, to enquire how it was possible for such ground to bring forth such produce. Oberlin then assured them that although every good and perfect gift came from above, from the Father of lights, still much depended upon our own industry and thoughtfulness. His plans from this time met with greater attention.—The better cultivation of potatoes, of which Oberlin had obtained seed from Switzerland, Germany, and Lorraine, was now followed with diligence. For the purpose of multiplying the seed, he advised them to cut the potatoes, which being done, and the earth properly prepared, this excellent vegetable became so abundant and so excellent, that considerable quantities were sent to Strasburg, where the Steinthal potatoes are still held in the highest estimation; pursuing his schemes of benevolence, Oberlin next introduced among other things of which he made trial, the production of flax, the seed of which he procured from Riga. It answered admirably, and also in numerous parts of the valley, the cultivation of corn, clover, and vegetables. His great success may be chiefly attributed to the attention which he paid to manuring the land; and the directions he gave for its preparation, uniting animal manure, with other substances. He also persuaded them to feed their cattle in the stalls, which facilitated their operations in the fields.

The pasture lands on Oberlin's first arrival, produced little more than the coarsest grass which the cattle could scarcely eat. The mountain streams, swelled by heavy rains, or the melting of the snow, broke with irregular course down into the valley, and collecting into standing marshes or bogs, yielded only a sour and unwholesome fodder. Oberlin soon exerted his influence to persuade the men to form beds for these streams, and to drain the marshy land, so that they were fit to receive proper grass seeds.—He next taught them the art of grafting and improving the nature of the trees, so that in a short time, where the crab and wild apple had formerly been the only trees, rich orchards and blooming gardens beautified the scene. His care also extended to the increase and improvement of the cattle, and he gave a prize from his own funds every year, to the farmer who should breed the finest ox, which occasioned great competition. He was also supported by the Agricultural Society in Strasburg, in the distribution of prizes, to encourage the farmers in various undertakings, and formed himself a small society in Waldbach and the neighbourhood, with that of Strasburg, which allowed Oberlin in the year 1805, 200 francs to be distributed in prizes, to the farmer who had made the greatest progress in the cultivation and improvement of fruit-trees. The increase of the inhabitants from year to year, at length rendered the land insufficient for their support, and Oberlin with his usual excellent judgment introduced the spinning of wool, by which the Steinthal received the yearly benefit of 32,000 francs. At a later period, drawn by admiration for the character and usefulness of this excellent man, a most excellent gentleman from Basle came to reside in Steinthal, with his family consisting of several sons, and established a ribbon manufactory. Throughout the valley these admirable men dispersed their looms, and they not only contributed in every possible way to the temporal good of the people, but sought earnestly their spiritual improvement. The greatest disadvantage the Steinthalers had now to contend with, was the want of a regular communication with Strasburg, and a road from one village to the other; and it was not to be expected that the government would undertake this expense, for a place so remote and of so little importance; Oberlin therefore in his usual manner, when he had any thing to propose to them, assembled the peasantry and addressing them by the appellation he was accustomed to us, "my children," he said, "it is absolutely necessary that we form a road through Steinthal, to join with the high road to Strasburg, which you know is not very far distant, and also that we throw a bridge over the Breusch."

The people stared with open mouth at their pastor, and then at each other upon this proposition, declaring it was quite impracticable, and that they had other business to attend to, without making roads and building bridges. "But," rejoined their persevering friend, "you are now for the greatest part of the year shut out from all communication with the rest of the world, and even in the middle of summer, a loaded waggon could not possibly be driven hither; were you, however, to form a road, you would have the opportunity of disposing of the produce of your lands, and enjoy the whole year intercourse with the surrounding neighbourhood." The only answer he received was, "It is impossible." "Well then," answered Oberlin; "if any are inclined to comply with my wishes, let them follow me, and I will show them how the road can be made to the greatest advantage." Oberlin dressed in his old coat, then laid a pick-axe over his shoulder, and proceeded to the spot at which he had determined to commence; and the peasants, some from shame, and others animated by his example, went home for their tools, and then one with a spade, a second with an adze, and others with axes, followed their pastor to the work. He had already surveyed the ground, and formed the plan, and now allotted to each person his station; and selecting for himself and his servant, those places which were the most dangerous and laborious; he set them an example of active diligence.—They worked altogether till noon, and then again till the evening; and the road thus begun was in the course of a few months entirely finished. Their next undertaking was the building of a bridge over the foaming Breusch, which being also accomplished by the indefatigable Pastor, with the help of the people, it was called *Le pont de Charité*; and a direct communication with the high road completed. It was now a pleasing undertaking to connect the different hamlets by the means of a paved road. From one part of the valley in wet weather, the church could only be attended by