

## MEMOIR OF THE REV. JOHN FREDERIC OBERLIN.

[The following memoir is from the pen of the Rev. Thomas Sims, a Gentleman well known in the literary and religious world as the author of a History of the Waldenses, "the Spirit of Christian Missions," and other esteemed publications. In the course of one of Mr. Sims's journeys to the Valleys of Piedmont, he paid a visit to the venerable Pastor of Waldbach, and made himself personally acquainted with his plans of pious and enlightened benevolence for the poor mountaineers of his flock. We think the memoir calculated to do good in this Country, and hope it will have the effect of stimulating some of the Ministers of our widespread parishes to imitate the exemplary virtues of Oberlin.]

This Christian pastor, a pattern of simplicity, piety, and benevolence, was born in the year 1740, at Strasbourg, in which city his father was a very respectable schoolmaster. When a youth he was greatly attracted by military splendour: but his ardent mind became attached, as he grew up, to literary pursuits; partly by his father's persuasion, and partly by the example of his elder brother, who afterwards became distinguished as an author of works replete with antiquarian and philological research. At the age of twenty, he penned a truly devout prayer, which he adopted on the first of January 1760, at Strasbourg, and renewed on the first of January 1770, at Waldbach, as a solemn act of self-dedication to God. This act of self-dedication still remains among his papers to prove his piety even at that period of life, for it expresses his deep humiliation before God. In the following account of his actions, therefore, the reader is to recognize, not the enlightened philanthropist only, but the genuine Christian, the devoted minister of Christ, whose chief aim was to win souls; but whose compassion for the sufferings of our fallen humanity, and his wish to adorn his Saviour's doctrine in all things, led him to employ his leisure, and exercise his ingenuity, in plans of enlarged benevolence.

Having finished his studies at Strasbourg, young Oberlin was ordained a minister of the Lutheran church—a church which has the high honour of having furnished to our missionary societies in England—from Swartz, the apostolic missionary of India in the service of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, to Johnston not less the apostle of Western Africa—some of the most holy and useful servants of Christ, who have been called to plant the standard of the Cross in heathen lands. It was not, however, till some years after, namely, in 1767, that Oberlin entered on regular pastoral duty, by undertaking the cure of Ban de la Roche, as successor to a very worthy Lutheran minister, named Stouber, on his removal to Strasbourg.

The Ban (or district) de la Roche, the scene of the long series of his labours, comprises five villages, including three churches, at the distance of twelve leagues from Strasbourg. It is a very elevated district, forming part of an insulated range of mountains, (the highest, Champ de Feu, three thousand six hundred feet in height,) detached from that chain of mountains which is marked as the Vosges on a map of France, between Alsace and Lorraine. The village of Waldbach, in which Oberlin preferred residing on account of its being central between the other villages under his care, stands at an elevation of one thousand eight hundred feet above the level of the sea; but the other villages, namely Fouday, Belmont, Bellefosse, and Zolbach, are in lower situations. This territory, which includes eight or nine thousand acres, belonged to a noble family who were Protestants; in consequence of which it became partly inhabited by refugees for the cause of religion, particularly after the destructive thirty years' war, in which Gustavus Adolphus, as a Protestant Sovereign, acted so distinguished a part. As an asylum for those who suffered for their religion, Ban de la Roche, therefore, bears some resemblance to that celebrated spot, Herrnhut, in which the United Brethren from Bohemia and Moravia were enabled, by the mercy of God to re-establish their oppressed church. In the reign of Louis XV., about one hundred families resided at Ban de la Roche; and as their religious liberty had been stipulated for when Alsace was united to France, they remained unmolested, when the Protestants of Languedoc and other parts of France were subject to harassing treatment and very severe privations.

When M. Stouber became the minister, in 1750, the Ban de la Roche was a place in which great ignorance prevailed. For this excellent man, whose profile I recollect was hung up in the room in which I slept, M. Oberlin entertained great respect. Diligent in his attention to his duties, Stouber became a very useful pioneer in preparing the way for the higher improvements which by the blessing of God, his successor was permitted to achieve. To education, in particular, he paid such attention, that not only the children of his parish but their elder brothers and sisters, and even their parents, became anxious to learn to read, so that a system of instruction for adults was regularly established among them. His next object was to procure copies of the Scriptures for their use; and he adopted a plan, which will no doubt be found beneficial in many places, and in schools, namely, that of dividing the sacred volume into parts, by which means he formed one hundred and fifty portions out of fifty Bibles, which he had procured. So fully did he follow up the system of instruction thus zealously commenced that I was assured by his son-in-law (happy the clergyman who can say so of his own sphere!) that every individual in this extensive parish, above the age of infancy, was able to read the sacred Scriptures.

When Stouber removed from Ban de la Roche, there was great danger lest so uninhabited a spot should be neglected; but the benevolent mind of Oberlin strongly felt the importance of such a sphere of labour; and though possessed of talents which would have shone with advantage in a very different station, he readily became the successor of Stou-

ber, in this retired and desolate scene of pastoral exertion. In the year following, 1763, he married a very amiable and pious young lady of Strasbourg, an orphan, named Madeleine Salome Witter who cheerfully entered into her husband's plans of beneficence. In the prosecution of those plans, Oberlin soon had to encounter the prejudices which are usually attended on ignorance, and which lead the ill-informed to imagine that old practices are always safe, but that whatever is new must be pernicious. So determined were some of his flock, in their opposition to their new minister, that the actually formed the design of inflicting upon him some personal injury. Being informed of their intention, which was to be executed on a Sunday, he took occasion to preach on our Saviour's words, "Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." The right cheek, turn to him the other also." The discontented faction met after the sermon, at the house of one of their party; but how great was their surprise when Oberlin himself came to them, and said, "My friends, your intention was known to me. It is better that I should put myself into your hands, than that you should lie in ambush for me." Ashamed of their wicked intentions, they instantly implored and obtained his forgiveness, and from that time entered with zeal and affection into his beneficent views.

In order the better to promote the moral and spiritual improvement of his parishioners, he kept a register, in which he described, in private marks, their respective characters. Amongst other heads in this book, were "Idlers" and "Bad Managers." The Ten Commandments likewise furnished him with many distinct heads, under which the conduct of individuals was thus privately noticed, for the purpose of knowing how best to adapt himself to promote their edification. In fact, the temporal and eternal welfare of his parishioners occupied his mind, not only during the hours of his public ministrations, but at all times and in every place. The parish roads, for instance, being so bad as to forbid communication with the highway, and with the neighbouring towns, during more than six months of the year, thus depriving his parishioners of many religious as well as secular advantages, he called the peasantry together, and urged them to form a road of half a league, and to build a bridge. Surprised at such a proposal, they excused themselves from assisting, on account of their own private occupations, till their pastor pointed out to them that they would be repaid by being able to take their produce to market, and to procure articles for their own use. Upon this they agreed to their minister's proposal, worked under his direction, and thus succeeded in opening a communication with Strasbourg, at all seasons of the year. Under his superintendence they afterwards improved the roads from one village to another; raised walls to prevent the good soil from being lost during heavy rains; turned into proper channels those streams which would otherwise have laid waste the land; and built convenient houses, instead of their former wretched cabins.

One principal feature in the amendment introduced by this indefatigable pastor, was an improved system of agriculture, the introduction of which he found very difficult, and requiring great patience and perseverance, on account of the prejudices common amongst country people. He knew this so well, that he resolved to appeal to their eyes instead of their ears; and having two gardens, through which there were paths open to all who passed that way, he, with the help of an intelligent servant, obtained such fine crops, that the people, wondering at the contrast between the pastor's land and produce and their own, anxiously inquired the reason. Oberlin, after his accustomed manner of turning every incidental thought to the God of seasons, as the Giver of all good; and then proceeded to explain the mode of culture by which, under his all-superintending Providence, they might obtain equal success. To myself, and to every stranger who has visited Ban de la Roche, the result of his instruction on this point has been highly gratifying. The neighbouring and once-neglected heights of Waldbach, on which the hand of industry has now spread a beautiful variety of crops, present a picture as pleasing to the eye of the visitor, as it is honorable to the deceased benefactor, and valuable to the proprietors of the land. So barbarous was the state of Ban de la Roche, with respect to the most simple arts of agriculture, that, previously to the year 1709, the chief sustenance of the people consisted of wild pears and apples. The famine of that year led them to think of clearing the forest, and planting a sort of potatoes, called Quemattes. This kind of potatoe at length degenerated, so as to have become almost unproductive. The people, finding that pieces of ground which once yielded from 120 to 150 bushels, produced now only from 30 to 40, supposed the soil alone to be in fault, and knew and thought of no remedy, although it was alarmingly evident, that, through the population had been on the increase, the means of sustaining it were decreasing rapidly. M. Oberlin's knowledge of improved principles of agriculture enabled him at once to meet the evil, by obtaining different sorts of potatoes for planting, from Germany, Switzerland, and Lorraine. In consequence of this, such valuable crops were produced, as to be much sought for at Strasbourg market. It is believed, that without these and other improvements which he suggested, the people would have been reduced to dreadful extremities in those years of dearth, 1812, 1816, and 1817. He also exerted himself to obtain valuable fruit-trees, grasses, and esculents, before unknown in his neighbourhood. Flax, for instance, became an object of cultivation, for the introduction of which he procured seed from Riga; and it succeeded well, as in some spots did clover, which he also introduced. These three crops, clover, flax, and potatoes, proved particularly valuable in these barren mountains. By this persuasion, the people were also induced to accumulate with great care manure requisite for their new system of culture; and also to form water-meadows, by an artificial process; and to plough in

green crops, to improve the land. He taught them the properties of wild indigenous plants serviceable for food, health, or the useful arts; he pointed out the advantages resulting from different plans of feeding their cattle; he persuaded them to relinquish the practice of grazing them on bad land, and to convert sterile pastures into arable land; he formed nurseries, and taught the art of grafting trees. In process of time he even established a small agricultural society, in connexion with that at Strasbourg which, in the year 1805, voted 200 francs to be divided amongst those persons at Ban de la Roche who excelled in planting nurseries and grafting fruit-trees. Oberlin himself offered a prize for improving the breed of cattle; and every fortnight he dedicated two hours to give young people instructions that might be useful to them, both as agriculturists and as Christians. Thus attending to their temporal interests as a philanthropist, he gained their confidence and esteem, and more effectually secured their attention to his instructions as a minister of Christ.

So rapidly, yet so steadily did civilization advance under the superintendence of this indefatigable benefactor, that his friends at Paris and Strasbourg deemed it proper, in the year 1818, to collect documents on the subject, without his knowledge, and to submit them to the Central Agricultural Society at Paris. This society, on hearing the statement which was submitted to them, by the Count de Neuf Chateau, presented M. Oberlin with a gold medal. The Count, who had himself seen the improvements in question, having stated, in his Memoirs, of the French Royal Society of Agriculture, that there are waste lands in France sufficient to found five thousand new villages, adds, that whenever such internal colonies shall be deemed proper to be planted, Waldbach will be found one of the best models for the purpose; since, among the thirty or forty thousand villages already existing in that country, there is not one in which social economy, under its various aspects, has been carried to such high perfection.

The population of Waldbach, though at first scanty, became redundant when it reached the number of three thousand souls; for, after deducting from that number one thousand young and aged persons, there remained two thousand able to work, whilst five hundred were as many as the cultivation of the ground required. What were the remaining fifteen hundred to do? To meet this want of employment, Oberlin introduced cotton-spinning, and gave prizes to the best spinners amongst the women; and this branch of industry succeeded so well as, one year, to be deemed of the value of 32,000 francs.—In 1814, M. Le Grand, of Basle, and his sons, attracted to the neighbourhood by M. Oberlin's growing reputation, set up a lace and ribbon manufactory; and by means of this benevolent and highly respectable family, much trade has been carried on, and many hands have been employed; and, as the tasks are given to be done at home, the children remained under the eyes of their parents, instead of being exposed, as in most manufactories, to the contaminating influence of bad example.

As the pastor of Waldbach was particularly anxious to render his parish independent, in a great degree, of other places, he clothed some promising boys, and sent them as apprentices to Strasbourg, that one and another might learn the trade of a mason, a blacksmith, a joiner, a glazier, or a cart-wright. The consequence was, that money formerly spent in other places for work done remained at home;—a matter of no little consequence where poverty had once so much prevailed, that the people were under the necessity of lending articles of clothing to each other that they might appear decently attired at church. Agricultural implements being very scarce, a shop was open for the sale of them at cost price; and credit was given to the purchaser till after the harvest. A lending fund was also established, to which all who borrowed were obliged to return the money advanced at the time specified, otherwise they would not be entitled to borrow again for a limited period. As many of the people had also incurred small debts, for which payment might, to their great inconvenience, be any day demanded, their pastor persuaded them to form a society for the purpose of putting a small but regular sum into a kind of sinking fund or savings bank, that they might gradually pay off their debts. He had likewise a fountain (no unapt emblem of his own beneficent character) constructed for the general use of the parishioners; and he procured a large and a small engine to guard against the sudden calamity of fire.

To the wants of the sick he was, it needs scarcely be said, particularly attentive; being intent like his Divine Master, to heal by means since he could not by miracle, the bodies of the suffering, as well as to console their minds. I well recollect, that the chamber in which I slept had almost the appearance of a little dispensatory: for at one period of his life M. Oberlin purchased and prescribed medicines for the sick; but he afterwards sent a young man to Strasbourg to study the medical profession, with a view to settle in his parish as a practitioner.

Whilst thus anxious to supply the wants, and alleviate the sufferings of his parishioners, M. Oberlin was pre-eminently zealous and active in the discharge of those duties which more immediately devolved upon him as a Christian pastor. The religious instruction of youth, as we have already seen, engaged his attention in a most particular manner. As there was only one school-room, and that small and inconvenient, for his parish, though it contained five villages, he resolved on building another. At that time, the people not aware of the advantages which would accrue to them from education, were averse to the measure; but Oberlin not only procured pecuniary assistance, to some extent, from his friends at Strasbourg, but even engaged, moderate as his own property was, that the expenses should not fall on the inhabitants. In the course of some years the people became wiser in respect to their own interests, and concurred in establishing a school in each of the other four villages. That the children might be excited to diligence, they met once a

week in friendly emulation from all the villages, at Waldbach, that their proficiency might be ascertained. In these schools the elder children, in addition to their religious instructions, wrote out passages relative to husbandry and planting. A lending library was also established; and the books, after remaining three months for the perusal of the scholars at one school, were sent to another, by which the expense was much diminished and the children better supplied. He even went so far as to procure books on natural history, a collection of indigenous plants, and an electrical machine; to all which he contrived to make subservient the instructions of the people. He published an almanack also, divested of the falsehoods and superstitions often found in common almanacks, which so much deceive and mislead uneducated persons in various countries. But satisfied with attending to the instruction of youth and adults, the case of little children also occurred to his considerate mind as an object of great importance; and as their parents were engaged in the occupations of husbandry or trade, Oberlin, fearful lest these infants should be exposed to danger when alone, and should fall into early habits of idleness and vice, hired rooms, in which they might amuse themselves under the care of women of a mild and affectionate disposition, whose task consisted in making them speak French instead of the vulgar Patois of the village, teaching the elder ones to sew, knit, and spin; explaining geographical cards, or prints of natural or sacred history; and preventing mischief during the hours of play. To this venerable man therefore, may be ascribed the anticipation of infant schools.

(To be concluded in our next.)

### EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT OF THE POOR.

While some of our Contemporaries are filling their columns with lamentations on the distress of the lower orders, and others are renewing the old complaints against the poor laws, we have been looking around among our continental neighbours, and inquiring whether any useful lessons are to be got from that part of the opposite shore which, in former ages, supplied such instructive examples to England. We were aware that the Netherlands, like this country, felt severely the transition from war to peace, and the superabundance of labourers, arising from the discharge of soldiers and seamen, as well as from the suspension of manufactures of arms and military stores. They experienced, in fact, all the pressure on productive industry which necessarily takes place from sudden change—the decrease of the employments produced by a state of war and a high interest of capital, before the resumption of the less profitable but more steady labours belonging to a state of peace. The lessons of a state of trial are seldom lost on the prudent and reflecting Hollanders; they saw the extent of the distress, and were anxious to alleviate it. On turning their view to manufactures, they perceived that machinery, moved by the almost unlimited power of steam, was producing fabrics in quantities unparalleled, and at a price with which the cheapest manual labour could not maintain a competition. In agriculture the case was different: prices, though greatly reduced since the peace, were still higher than before the French Revolution, and a farther fall would be of no very serious effect to a settlement such as they contemplated, viz. for raising corn and other produce, not for sale, but for consumption on the spot.

The wants of a family in humble life may all be comprised under the heads of food clothing, and lodging; and of these the proportions in the family of a country labourer are nearly as follows:—

	Parts in Ten.
Food and drink, . . . . .	6
Clothing and washing, . . . . .	2
Fuel and light, . . . . .	1
Cottage rent and contingencies, . . . . .	1-10

The proposition was to locate a body of poor in a retired country district, in the hope of their being able to support themselves by their own labour. If they were able to raise their subsistence, it followed that they would defray more than half their wants, while any surplus which they might raise could be sold, and applied to meet the other heads of their expenditure. Whatever, in short, could be produced by their labour would be a saving to the community, pledged as it already was to support them; for the persons to be placed in the proposed colony were mechanics, manufacturers, and labourers, who, being out of work, had become chargeable on their respective parishes.

Under these impressions a society was formed in Holland, in the year 1818, with a small capital of £5000 sterling. Their first step was to purchase a track of poor and almost barren land, about 1300 acres in extent, in an inland district, adjoining a small river, which in that level country was easily rendered navigable. The first buildings erected were fifty-two cottages, for the same number of indigent families, a warehouse, a school-house, and spinning-houses, for the females. Each family received an allotment of seven acres, and were supplied out of the funds of the society with food and clothing for one year, that is, until they should raise produce sufficient for their support. In return, the settlers gave their labour, and were paid for it at a fixed rate, not by the day, but by the quantity of work done. On this plan operations commenced; first, the making of the bricks; next, the erection of the cottages and barns; and afterwards the field labour. Every evening the workmen received a card stating the amount of his earnings, and food in proportion was delivered to him at the public store. If, from accident, or any particular cause, his earnings fell short of his wants, the food was delivered to him notwithstanding, and the amount was deducted out of his future earnings.

The females were employed partly in household work, partly, in spinning and weaving; the children partly at school, partly at such work as suited their early years; all being paid, like the men, according to the exact quantity of work performed. The settlers

thus laboured for their own account as much as if they had lived out of the community; for if, at the end of the year, (or rather, at the end of the harvest,) their earnings exceeded the advances made to them, they received the balance, and either withdrew or remained as they thought fit.

The tillage is performed almost entirely by the spade, it being computed that the increase of the crop from trenching is more than the additional labour. That we know to be the case from a variety of trials made in the neighbourhood of Newcastle and other parts of this country; but our peasantry have yet to learn, that it is practicable by continued labour to confer fertility on a barren heath. Such is the result at the settlement in question, where the labour of a family of six or seven persons during half the year is found capable of producing by trenching, mixing, and turning the soil, above a hundred tons of a compost of a very enriching quality. Our limits do not permit us to go into the details of the mode of accomplishing this important improvement, but of the fact there is happily no doubt. Of the tract bought in 1818 for settling the Dutch poor; consisting of 1300 acres, covered with heath and turf, the purchase money was only three pounds an acre. This limited surface now supports above 2000 persons, and the example of this district having been followed in other parts, the total number of persons supported on spots similarly cultivated in the Dutch territory, now exceeds 30,000. The chief objects of cultivation are rye, barley, potatoes and clover seed. The value of a ton of the compost produced as already mentioned, chiefly by applying manual labour to the soil, is between six and seven shillings; that is a field of seven acres, which, without this dressing; would yield a crop worth only £32 or £33 is found, by the aid of the manure, to produce a crop worth £48.—We shall take an early opportunity of stating how far this method may be adopted in regard to the unemployed poor of this country and Ireland.—*London Courier.*

### POST OFFICE NOTICE.

THE following are the days on which Mails are received at, and depart from this Office, viz. at 1 o'clock on Wednesday for Halifax, taking Mails for Miramichi, Cumberland, Sussex Vale, Richibucto, Dorchester and Pictou, all of which are expected to return on Saturday at 4 o'clock. A Mail from St. John via the Nerepis Road is received on Tuesday at 11 and departs at the same hour on Wednesday, also, during the travelling on the ice a Mail will be received on Saturday from St. John, and will depart on Monday at 11 o'clock, taking a Mail for St. Andrews, St. Stephens, and the United States. Mails for the Canadas are dispatched on Sunday mornings at 9 o'clock, and are due in return at this Office on Tuesdays at 5.

In all cases Letters intended to be forwarded on the above days, must be posted one hour previous to that named for the departure of the Mail, or they will remain in Office until the next Post day.

Inland Postage on Letters to be sent beyond Halifax, or to the United States, must be paid if they cannot be forwarded.

WM. B. PHAIR, Post Master.

Post Office, Fredericton, 26th Jan. 1830.

### ON CONSIGNMENT.

A FEW Barrels Country PORK, for Sale at 85s. per barrel. JOSEPH GAYNOR. January 20, 1830.

### FURS.

The Subscriber has just received a new Consignment of Superior Furs, CONSISTING OF—

SABLE, Lynx, Siberian Squirrel, Genuine Ermine, Chinchilla, Russian Lamb, Fitch, and Perwika Muffs and TIPPERIS; Sealiskin CAPS; Black Lambskins, Genet, and Lynx Do.; Patent Leather PEAKS for Caps, &c. &c. P. DUFF.

Prince William Street, St. John, }  
15th December, 1829. }

### IN THE PRESS

THE PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS OF KINGS COLLEGE, NEW-BRUNSWICK. A SERMON

Preached before the University, assembled for the first time in Fredericton Church, on Advent Sunday, 1829.

By EDWIN JACOB, D. D. Vice President late Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and Rector of St. Pancras, Chichester.

Published by desire of His Honor the Chancellor, and the other Members of the College Council.

Printed by John Simpson, Fredericton Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty. January 6.

### NOTICE.

THOSE Persons who are indebted to the late Proprietor of the Royal Gazette, are requested to call forthwith, and settle their accounts, as no time will be lost in bringing about this object, and all persons having demands against him will please send in their accounts 28th September, 1829.

### FOR SALE.

THE House in which the undersigned now resides; it is an excellent stand for mercantile business, or from the number of apartments it contains, is well adapted for a boarding House. For further particulars apply to GEORGE K. LUGRIN, &c. August 11, 1829.

Eligible Situation to Let, for one or more Years.

TWO Offices and a commodious Cottage in the Brick Building formerly occupied by the Hon. Thomas Baillie. The apartments are adapted for a convenient Store. For further particulars, application to be made to E. W. MILLER, Fredericton, December 5, 1829.

### THE ROYAL GAZETTE

TERMS—16s. per Annum, exclusive of Postage. Advertisements not exceeding Twelve Lines will be inserted for Four Shillings and Sixpence the first, and one Shilling and Sixpence for each succeeding Insertion. Advertisements must be accompanied with Cash, and the insertion will be regulated according to the amount received. Blanks, Handbills, &c. can be struck off at the shortest notice.