

it did not meet with an immediate hearty response from them, it was not unwelcome. It is, then, with a more than passing interest that we are present, with Ozanam's talented biographer, Kathleen O'Meara, at their preliminary meetings, in the Hotel Corneille, and hear their plans discussed. It was decided that their work should be the service of God in the service of the poor, whom members were to visit in their own homes and assist by every means in their power. The service of the poor appeared to the mind of Ozanam and his friends to be a sure and easy way of showing the sanctity of the Catholic religion and of helping their fellow-men, as well as of reaping profit for their own souls. "He that hath mercy to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and He will repay him" (Prov. xix.).

The deeply religious spirit with which they were animated displayed a vaster horizon to the eight young almoners; and we are not surprised to hear one of them saying at the very first meeting:

"If we intend our work to be really efficacious, if we are in earnest about helping the poor as well as ourselves, we must not let it be a mere doling out of alms, bringing each our pittance of money or food. We must make it a medium of moral assistance; we must give the alms of good advice."

On this double foundation of corporal and spiritual help the great edifice was begun; there and then the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul were founded. Ozanam drew up a few simple rules to guide the efforts of the members; and the future became pregnant with results for the hungry and naked and homeless in this cold, selfish world.

It was at first determined to restrict the Society to its eight primitive members. Ozanam feared lest the simplicity of its design might suffer, and that it would grow into a bustling, official organization. But this in the eyes of the others was an unwarrantable curb to its usefulness. The Society was destined to grow, and it was decided to admit others to help in the work.