

Poor youths! They had, no doubt, sincere and compassionate souls, but alas, deeply imbued in error. They knew not, beloved brethren, that one spark of faith and charity, does more than all the fires of the Earth, because it is a supernatural fire. You are but eight, they said. But they had yet to learn, that the sacred fire of Christian charity, communicates itself from one to another, more rapidly still than that flame which, too often, alas, devastates our great cities. In vain do the founders of this society, jealous of their treasure, strive to hide it, like the miser : for it is God who acts : *Deus est enim qui operatur*. (1) They were eight, at first ; two months afterwards, they were fifteen ; two years afterwards, they were one hundred ; twenty years afterwards, they were two thousand, in Paris alone ; visiting five thousand families, or about twenty thousand individuals, that is to say, one fourth of the poor enclosed within the walls of that immense city. (2).

How gladly, if it were possible, beloved brethren, would I proclaim, in unison with their successors, with the poor, with the true friends of humanity, the names of these first young men, who have become unwittingly, the patriarchs of a vast and powerful association, which, in the thirtieth year of its existence, is already bending under the precious burden of its works.

I cannot do so.—I know that the real creator of a work, is the person who originates the idea of it ; but I know no other here than God himself. How often, beloved brethren, have you not followed, through the country, enriched and beautified by its waters, the course of some great river, without discovering the source whence it springs ; God frequently does with the work of his servants, what he does with the works of physical nature : he disposes all things in such wise, that none but himself can, here below, I mean, be called its author. Thus it was with the new creation of Providence.

Nevertheless, I may well say with Lacordaire, that “ I shall not wrong the memory of any of these eight young men, by asserting that Ozanam, though their fellow-student, was the St. Peter of that humble cœnaculum. He never

(1) Phillipp. I. 13.

(2) Ozanam. Discourse at conference of Florence.