

THE ORIGIN OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL,

FROM THE RECOLLECTIONS OF ITS EARLY MEMBERS.

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The Origin of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a simple and natural one.*

During the first years following the Revolution of 1830 in France, Christian families hesitated to send their children to Paris. Of the fifty pupils who in July, 1830, were finishing their Rhetoric course in the College of St. Stanislaus, only ten returned, in October, for the Philosophy class. The school of Law had only a few Christian students. In such a condition were matters that one of them, M. de Goy, thinking himself alone in the practice of his faith, and being determined to preserve it pure, remained six months without becoming intimate with any one. One Sunday in 1832, he saw M. Ozanam and one or two of his friends, at the High Mass at St. Etienne-du-Mont, and remembered having seen them at the Law lectures. It was with a sentiment of profound joy that, on leaving the church, he accosted them on the Place St. Etienne, asking permission to press their hand, and become a friend of theirs; a request which was accepted, and the friendship heartily continued. At the school of Medicine, Christian students were still fewer.

The institutions created for Christian youth in Paris before 1830, had disappeared. The *Society of Wholesome Studies*, whose name sufficiently indicates its object, was of this number. The premises occupied by them on the Place de l'Estrapade, No. 11, a few steps from the School of Law, had, however, continued in the possession of one of its former

* This account of the early times of our Society is given at the request of the Council-General, by one of the seven founders of the Conference of Charity. It was sent to the three other survivors, who state its perfect correctness, and have added some details to it. One of the survivors, M. Devaux, has since died.