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Frederick Ozanam.

(1813—1853.)

By B. F. C. Costelloe, M.A.

On a gray Saturday in November, 1831, a provincial attorney's clerk of seventeen, with little money and less knowledge of the world, was crossing the bridge which led, then as now, over the Seine to the students' quarter of Paris. The outward prospect was not very different from what such a lad would see to-day. Down stream, the beautiful façade of the Louvre. Higher up, the majesty of Notre Dame. In front, the classic dome of the Pantheon, upon the hill which for so many centuries had been consecrated by the shrine of St. Geneviève, with the famous halls of the Sorbonne close at hand.

That law student, whose name was Frederick Ozanam, has become in many ways the type and model of the young Catholic layman of modern days. So Lacordaire testified when he described him in later years as "an

ancestor"—the historic seed of an uncounted following. To us, in English-speaking lands, he is less known than he deserves to be. His own story is simple, and it stands written, happily, in the frank and charming letters to his relatives and near friends which they published after his untimely death. It is a beautiful and a saintly life; yet its importance is not so much for what he was as for what he did. The cardinal fact by which Ozanam ought to be remembered is, that without any advantages beyond those which lie within the reach of thousands of the young men who may read these pages, he did a work for God and man which changed the religious life and history of his nation. Whoever would understand him, therefore, must first realize what manner of society the world of Paris was in 1831.

To call it godless would be moderate. The storm which had swept France a generation earlier had, in its way, abolished religion. Napoleon, the cynic of statecraft, had affected to reinstate the Church, only that he might the better check its real growth. The Restoration, fanatical and misdirected, had produced, beyond the narrow circle of its sincere reactionaries, little but hypocrisy on the one hand and exasperation on the other. And the tumults of 1830 had brought chaos back.

The churches were open, but they were deserted. The splendid hierarchy of France sat in the high places, as of old, but met with scant consideration: perhaps because it was itself afraid. The unbelief of our own metropolis is bad enough: but of the Paris to which Ozanam came, it may be broadly said that, outside the *clientèle* of the ecclesiastical establishments, practically no educated men and few of the uneducated even called themselves by the Christian name. As for the schools, they were more frankly unbelieving than they are to-day: and to say that is to say much.

When Ozanam entered the *École de Droit*, he found that there were only three other law students who owned to any religion at all. About the same date, in the

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great military academy, a singular young man who desired to make his Easter Communion, found that practically the only way to do so was to go into the infirmary and be visited by the official chaplain as a patient.

Ozanam was born at Milan, to which his father, an old soldier of Napoleon's Italian wars, had retired that he might earn a pittance by teaching French, rather than serve the despot who betrayed the Republic. The family was of Jewish origin* and had settled at Lyons. With a rare energy, the father found time to study medicine and took out a qualification. Then the arrival of the Austrians drove him back with his young family to Lyons, and there Frederick Ozanam spent half his life. The circumstances of his upbringing were, to put it plainly, commonplace. If we did not know that he gave evidence in later years of innate powers of thought and speech, we should have to say that he had no greater chances in life than those of all the millions who are the children of the modern middle class. His father and mother were sincerely religious and very charitable. It was by an accident which befel him in the service of the poor that his father lost his life. But they were nothing more wonderful than other well-living citizens. They were not well born, nor important. They were neither rich nor poor: and with a large family, their means were not enough to do more than give to each the ordinary education of the time.

Frederick was a healthy child. He was not a specially good boy nor a specially bad one. He showed no talent at school, and was not, by his own account, even a diligent scholar. The one thing that is told of him is, that he was so self-willed that when in schoolboy games his playmates wished to make him confess that he was beaten, he would stamp his foot and tell them he "would rather die than say it." Terrible to relate, he actually used to fight! He was, by his own account, "obstinate, passionate, and disobedient," and "lazy to the last

* The name is said to be, in fact, a variant of 'Hosanna.'

degree,"—till the passion of emulation and the pride of success persuaded him to work. His parents evidently made their home a place of sincere, though not obtrusive, religious influences: but the effect of these was not very obvious, so far.

A marked religious experience came with his First Communion, as a boy of eleven or twelve. "May my right hand wither," he wrote at sixteen, "if I ever forget that bright and blessed day." His temper and his whole conduct underwent a change for the better. He became gentle, modest, industrious, and rather scrupulous in his personal conduct though still proud and impatient: such at least was his own estimate in the sketch of his life which he sent as a lad to a boyish confidant.

A few years later, he passed through a trial which to the end of his life he remembered with pain. The current talk of infidelity and the intellectual awakening of higher studies led him to ask himself whether he had any real ground for the placid faith, which had in his home been kept unshaken and undiscussed. He was not yet sixteen, but he was precocious for his years: and though he clung to his faith as a possession he *must* preserve, he could find no sufficient help in the books he read. He was haunted by shifting doubts which he did not reveal to those who might have helped him. Happily, he remained innocent; and he prayed the more, the harder his trial grew. One hard day he turned into a church and prayed, with what he always felt to be an act of consecration, that "if God gave him light to see the Truth, he would devote his life to defending it." The prayer was not unheard, nor the vow forgotten.

He took a course of serious philosophic studies under the Abbé Noirot, an able, sympathetic, and wide-minded man. He worked hard and thought out the problems of the world with all the vehemence of seventeen. And when he was withdrawn from these classes to serve an apprenticeship as a clerk in the attorney's office, he revenged himself, after office hours, by writing a juvenile

treatise against the fashionable heresy of the Saint Simonians.

Nothing, indeed, can be more characteristic of the man than his state of mind at this time. Fortunately his letters exist. They are perfectly simple, even boyish: but they are full of the grave purpose of one who knew that a human life was meant for something else than eating and drinking, and earning the inevitable expense. He looked out upon his country, and he saw that, if his faith were true, it was in a pitiful way. He looked round upon his fellow-Catholics, and he was forced to recognise that they were not doing, or likely to do, much that could be helpful. The folk of the old school could not understand the new demands nor the strange language of the successors of the men of '98. If the Catholic youth were to be of any help, they must first try faithfully to understand and loyally to uphold all that was true in the great upheaval, so that they might the better disentangle it from the frauds and follies of the flippant prophets of the day. Stuck on his office stool, with only the talk of a narrow provincial circle and the news of the Lyons newspaper to guide him, he felt "like a man looking through a bad eye-glass." But he set himself, as a first duty, to understand his time against the day when he should be wanted; and the event proved his success.

Another mark of his youthful Christianity was the note of a splendid hope. "I feel," he says, "that the past is falling to pieces, that the foundations of the building we have known are shaken, that an earthquake has changed the whole face of the earth." What then? "I believe in Providence," he answers; "and I do not despair of my country." Amid the wreck of social and political institutions, he is content to say: there exists, as the presupposition and the bottom fact of human life, this inevitable truth which we call religion—the revelation of God—the providence of history—the divine essence in the changing world. This religious truth, however many forms it may take or

seem to take, brings you out, if you sincerely follow it, by mere necessity to the Catholic Faith, as its one authentic expression. "This," he said, "is what society wants, and it is equally what I want." To suppose that it was come to an end because Voltaire laughed at it, or because Saint Simon called it an anachronism, would be mere cowardice and futility. "Let us rally," cries the sanguine lad to his college friends, "let us unite our efforts and create a work together. Let us point to the faith as a harbour light for those who are tossed upon the dark and stormy sea."

Of the difficulties he is well aware. He has discussed them with M. Noirot. He must learn at least twelve languages, so that he may master the original documents. All the sciences that are concerned with cosmogony must evidently be investigated; and then all history has to be studied likewise. Perhaps if he start at eighteen he may be able to write a book at thirty-five. It is very audacious: but of the result there is for him no question. "In the might of her eternal youth, Catholicism shall arise again and lead the world out to civilization and to happiness; and the day will come when all mankind will gather to that shelter."

It is a singular picture—this unformed provincial lawyer's clerk, not yet eighteen, who "for two years" has heard the voice of God calling to him to be a prophet in a godless time. They may liken him, if they choose, to the frog of La Fontaine. But in his soul there is no shadow of vanity and no thought of himself. He chides his cousin, who has been fired by his great plan, for speaking about "glory." But his soul lifts itself on wings at the mere thought of how good a thing it is to spend himself in such a cause. "I am filled with intellectual delight—for the work is magnificent, and I am young."

It was no personal ambition. It was the conviction that his duty as a Catholic and a man was to bear his part in the movement of the time. This, as it was his boyish inspiration, was the keynote of his life. As he

saw more of the world, he felt more and more keenly that the supineness of those who believed, was the '*gran rifiuto*'—the cowardly refusal of a duty of charity to their struggling or bewildered fellows. If even a few insignificant students made a stand against the ridicule, which was the most powerful enemy then as now of all good things in France, an uncounted number of the weaker brethren might be rescued from the common wreck. As a Christian citizen, his duty was not limited to personal devotion and the avoidance of the grosser sins. What light he had, must shine. What talents God had given him, great or small, he must put out to use.

At the *Collège de France*, he found that the professors were accustomed to court a cheap popularity by attacks on Revelation, or Christianity, or the Church. Ozanam therefore led the way in organizing a series of protests and set answers from the Catholic students. The results were astonishingly rapid: for the fashionable scepticism was an arrant intellectual sham. Of one of their first protests, Ozanam writes: "Our answers were publicly read, and produced the best effect: on the professor, who as good as retracted his words, and on the class, who applauded. The most useful thing in it all is, that it enables us to show the students of the day that one may be a Catholic and yet have common sense, and that one may love liberty and religion at the same time."

This was another keynote of his mission. To him it was a misery that Catholicism in France had come to be treated both by friend and by foe as if it were opposed to the idea of human freedom. Of any such antithesis the lad had an instinctive horror: and in his maturer years he was one of the best fighters in that brilliant band of men who did much to destroy the mischievous superstition.

During this time, Ozanam was boarding with a scientific man of great celebrity but scanty means, who was also a sincere Catholic, M. Ampère. He had

taken in the lad out of kindness, and took a warm interest in his progress. At this house, No. 19 Rue des Fossés St. Victor, he met many of the most learned men of the day, and he describes them pleasantly in his letters. His call on M. de Châteaubriand had an unexpected result. The poet asked him if he had been to the theatres. The lad had promised his parents not to go, for the times were notably vicious. But he was half afraid to confess it for fear the great man would laugh at him. On the contrary, he praised his resolve warmly, and added an epigram, which combined, no doubt, a literary and a moral judgment. "You would gain nothing," he said, "and you might lose a great deal."

It is not easy for us to estimate the amount of moral fortitude which it required to enable a lad like Ozanam to preserve "the white flower of a blameless life" in the midst of the dangers of that society. He had his interior enemies. After the religious experiences we have noted, he does not seem to have again lost hold of the Catholic Faith. But he has to complain sadly of that kind of pride which is discontented "because it expects so much from self and is disappointed." Modest and humble as he was in intention, his natural bent was apparently the reverse. All his life he was liable to these fits of discontent, which in a man less prayerful or less dutiful, would have embittered his existence. But his safeguard was, in the first place, his sincere devotion; and in the next place, his constant sense that, whether great or small, he had a work to do. His natural impulse was to build great projects, and to plan a life so beautiful and grand that it should contain all imaginable desires. But that, he feels, is mere folly. Our plan will assuredly be misdrawn, for we cannot lift ourselves to any point of view from which we could see the whole design. And why should we strain after it? The will of God, which is our work, is accomplished from day to day. Unless we can see some clear and paramount vocation that we needs must follow, let us think of ourselves as workmen who are

told each hour the task they have to perform in the hour ahead. If we so follow the orders of the great Architect in trust and faithfulness, we shall accomplish our building as well as if we had the whole plan before us from the first. Indeed, his train of thought at this time is singularly like that which inspired Newman when he wrote his best-known hymn. "The greatest," said Ozanam, "are they who did not plan their destinies, but let themselves be taken by the hand and led."

All this, of course, might have sunk into a feeble impotence, except that he is conscious at every moment of the call of the Master's work. He felt Christianity, to use his own expression, not merely as a sphere of thought and of worship, but as a sphere of action, of will, of conduct. He was indeed conscious of a certain strain of irresolution in himself: and he set himself to conquer it. What place God meant him to fill in the life of the time, he waited to be told. But the present duty was to prepare himself, first by the diligent pursuit of his work as a student, and then by taking advantage of such opportunities to help his neighbours as Providence might open out.

Happily at this very crisis of his life, his holidays took him to Italy. His sensitive spirit was deeply moved by the new world of beauty, which to him was instinct on every hand with the genius of the Christian Church. In the Stanze of the Vatican, he stood entranced before that wonder—the Disputa of Raphael—in which the range and majesty of the Catholic Tradition is summed up as none but a world-artist could have translated it. To Ozanam it was not only a piece of consummate beauty: it was also the key of history. And as he looked at it he was impressed by the prominence of Dante, with his poet's crown, among the Doctors and the Popes of all the centuries. He returned to Italy more than once, and made Dante, in some sense, the study of his life. But probably the greatest advantage which he gained from this college holiday was, that it enabled him to realise, as few can wholly realise except in Italy, the

inevitable force and the sane simplicity of the Catholic Tradition.

In 1833, the *rapprochement* between the professed Christians among the students, which Ozanam's protests had created, began to take a definite shape in a series of meetings for historical and literary discussion at the office of M. Bailly's paper, the *Tribune Catholique*. The Saint-Simonians and other antagonists were allowed to come, and the debates grew lively. Ozanam was the real leader of the party, and his eloquence, fired with conviction, began to tell. He did not think of it as a mere debating society. It was to him a conference of friends working out together a system of knowledge under the inspiration of Catholic ideas. Discussion in the hot air of the debate, and afterwards when the little knot of friends walked home together through the shadow of the Panthéon,—all discussion was to him an education for his work, the work of making the Catholic Truth intelligible to the deaf ears of the time. But this, as he soon confessed, was not enough.

The Saint-Simonians, whose doctrine was merely a well-meaning humanitarianism, were fond of taunting the brilliant defender of Christianity with the cry, "Show us your works!" It may be conceded, they said, that Christianity is a beautiful idea. It may be that it once did much to civilize humanity. It may be that it has formed and inspired a great number of noble and saintly lives. But what has it to do with the modern world? Where is it in the Paris of to-day? There is no social work which it can show. The needs of the time are crying, and the air is full of change and striving, in which the Christian Church is but a hindrance and a wreck. Whatever it may be in history, Catholicism is dead.

In the rooms of his friend Lallier, one night, after a brilliant debate, Ozanam mooted the idea that they might organize a meeting of some of the leaders of the movement, for the purpose not only of preparing their discussions, but also of starting some good enterprise

which, in a modest way, might meet this charge that no social work was going on. The band of comrades presently saw that this was a vital idea, and eight of them, with old M. Bailly in the chair, held the first Conference of St. Vincent de Paul in the back-room of the newspaper office, in May, 1833.

The scheme was yet quite vague. All they knew was, that they meant it to be in the service of the poor. Their first task was to decide what they should do: and in this M. Bailly, seconded keenly by Ozanam, gave excellent advice. "Do not be content to dole out alms," they said; "that is a very cheap and unwise charity, even if you had wealth: and as it is, you have none. Go and make friends among the poor. Give to each family what personal help your own better training enables you to give. In one place it will be legal, in another medical. To some, you may judiciously give practical advice. For others, you may procure work. In all cases, help them to help themselves, and consider it your primary duty, whether you take them tickets or not, to render some personal service."

A few rules were soon settled, and they set out to visit a list of cases supplied by Sœur Rosalie. Their chief commandments were, that no politics were to be discussed, and that no one was to use the Society in any way for personal advancement. A weekly conference was to be held, at which the visiting brothers were to report their cases, and consult as to what help could best be given.

There was to be a secret collection to defray what little cost they had incurred, including the tickets, which they used sparingly, and regarded as merely an accessory to their real work.

Ozanam's first 'case' was a mother with five children, whose drunken husband beat them frequently, and took all her earnings, so that she and the children were starving. Ozanam's legal knowledge enabled him presently to discover that the marriage was invalid, and that the brute had no legal rights. Then he removed the family out of his reach, and violence was threatened.

A small extra collection at the Conference provided the means to send some of them back to their home in Brittany. Two of the boys were taken into the printing office as apprentices and cared for by M. Bailly—the germ, as afterwards appeared, of the whole work of the 'Patronage,' or care of working boys, which has since played so large a part in the work of Catholic charity in France.

The eight students who formed the first "Conference" had no idea of starting a world-wide society. "At first," as Ozanam said in 1853, when he was starting at Florence a new Conference of the then vast confraternity, "we would not open the doors of our little assembly to anyone else. But God had other views with respect to us. That association of a few personal friends became, in God's Providence, the nucleus of an immense family of brothers, destined to spread over a great part of Europe." The eight were, in fact, very chary of admitting even friends who might not come to their modest work in the same spirit. But a few came, and after these, more. Presently, as the impulse of a lay revival of Catholic charity spread over Paris, the "Conference" became so large as to be unmanageable, and it was divided, the unity of purpose being maintained by a central council and by general meetings of all the brothers. A body of rules, extremely simple, and in the main extremely wise, was drawn up by the founders and approved at Rome. The work was spread before long to those provincial towns of France with which the more zealous of the Parisian brotherhood were connected, and in twenty years, there were counted 2000 active brothers in Paris alone, with 5000 poor households under their charitable care, besides 500 vigorous conferences in other parts of France, and offshoots in Belgium and Spain, in England and America.

In truth, the extension of the Society has gone on without intermission, in spite of local vicissitudes, to the present time. The interference of the French Government with all forms of association threatened

the French Society at one time with official suppression, but it survived: and even in the evil days which have again fallen upon the Church in France, the number of existing Conferences there is given at 1,200, having over 21,000 active members.

The vigour and the practical efficiency of the work sometimes waxes and sometimes wanes, according as its members here and there may lose or may regain the spirit of the founder. But the work which he so simply started has grown, because it has provided everywhere a simple and easily adapted means of making lay work efficient for practical social helpfulness in a truly Catholic spirit, and with the fullest sanction of the Church. It would be out of place to describe here the astonishing progress of the Society as an international organization. Its success in Italy was largely promoted, in spite of much opposition from the petty courts and some inertia among the clergy, by the efforts of Ozanam himself. For whether he travelled as a tourist, a student, or an invalid, he never forgot to be a missionary. At present, there are about 300 Italian Conferences. But it is apparently in Belgium and in Catholic Germany that the greatest activity has arisen. The present active membership in Belgium is returned at 11,000, and the German membership, including Austria, is about 12,000. The Society extended, at a comparatively early date, to South America and to the Levant. More recently, it has been extending widely throughout the English-speaking lands. In England, where it was founded in 1844, it has waxed and waned, as elsewhere; but the number of conferences now at work is 133, and it is increasing. In Ireland there are 150, in Scotland 55, in British India 38, in Canada 101, and in the United States 398: while there are offshoots at the Cape, and in Egypt, and at Shanghai, and a vigorous recent development in Australia.*

* The addresses of Conferences in England and elsewhere are to be found in the Annual Report of the S.V.P. Society in England, copies of which may be had from the writer at 33 Chancery Lane, E.C.

In all, it is computed that at the present moment there are throughout the world about 4,800 Conferences, with 85,000 active members, and as many more affiliated as honorary members or otherwise. That many of these do but little, is likely enough; for the spirit of Ozanam, natural as it should be to any young Catholic, is sadly rare. But even a little is better than nothing, and the aggregate good is enormous. He himself hoped that some day it might be possible to see all young men of heart and intelligence united in a scheme of charity, so that a vast and generous association might be formed all over the country for the help of the poor. Here, as always throughout his speeches to the Brotherhood, the key-note to Ozanam is, that it is the *young* Catholics who can, if they are intelligent and self-sacrificing, save the modern world. It is as true still as it was then.

Before the Society of Charity was many weeks old, they resolved to make a public profession of faith on the Feast of Corpus Christi. As the processions were all stopped in Paris, they sallied out to Nanterre, the birth-place of St. Geneviève, to the number of thirty, and joined fervently with the astonished peasants—winding up the day, be it said, with a rattling dinner (at 1/8 a head) at one of the beautiful inns of St. Germain-en-Laye.

But Ozanam desired that the work of presenting the Catholic Truth in a speech intelligible to his generation should be started on a larger scale. He felt that the sermons then to be heard in the churches of Paris were ill-suited to the time. He had heard the young Abbé Lacordaire, still an unconsidered lecturer in the chapel of a private college; and his intuition told him that he had found the man who could realize his early dream, and state the claims of the Catholic Truth in the ears of modern Paris, so that all who would, might hear and understand.

At once the impetuous lad conferred with his friends, and they agreed to go next day and petition the Archbishop to send for Lacordaire and ask him to preach

a series of "conferences" at Notre Dame. The Abbé was known of course to have been one of the brilliant band of Catholic Liberals who had gathered about M. de Lamennais in the days of the *Avenir*. The leader, grown wild and lawless, had been more or less discountenanced and was in revolt. Some of his pupils, like George Sand, fell away. But the others, including Montalembert and the Abbé Gerbet, remained faithful children of the Church, though they were all, as Lacordaire proclaimed upon his death-bed, Liberals to the last.

It was hardly wonderful that the Archbishop did not at once accept the startling suggestion of the unknown law student from Lyons, though he received him with all kindness. Lacordaire knew nothing, either of Ozanam or of his scheme. Undaunted by the refusal, Ozanam rallied his students, got up a big petition, and went back to the Archbishop. They found that he had determined to do something—namely, to have a course of sermons by the best preachers of the day: and he proceeded to introduce the students to the eloquent divines, who chanced to be at that moment assembled in the next room. The audacious young man, thus cornered, endeavoured to set forth what he and his friends understood to be the needs of the time. The old gentlemen were very gracious, but they did not understand. The sermons were duly preached, and they were a failure.

Meanwhile, Lacordaire was again preaching in the little college chapel, and Ozanam and all his cohort thronged to hear him. It was what they longed that all the world should hear—the old truths in the language of the new time. The church dignitaries were alarmed. They tried to persuade the Archbishop to silence the preacher: not in the least for any fault of orthodoxy, but because, in their timid conservatism, they feared all novelty. But the young men agitated more and more boldly, and the Archbishop at last sent Lacordaire to Notre Dame. What the result was, all the world knows.

It was like the preaching of the Apostles after Pentecost. The young men of St. Vincent de Paul gathered like a bodyguard round the pulpit. But the flippant sceptics, the careless *boulevardiers*, and the frivolous fine ladies came in thousands; and, for the first time since 1798, a real revival of religion arose in Paris. The Archbishop, as the last conference closed, publicly thanked the preacher, and named him Canon of the Cathedral.

Thenceforward, Lacordaire and Ozanam were allies, though they were never in very intimate personal relation. Probably the preacher never knew what efforts the student had made in his behalf: but he appreciated his value. He sent all his young men to the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul: and in days long after, he bore testimony to the fact that Ozanam was one of the makers of the new France.

In 1837, the student became a barrister, and resolved, as his practice was but poor, to prepare himself for proceeding to the degree of Doctor of Letters, being busy all the while on his beloved Dante. There were two or three chances opening, which led him to think of a Professorship as a possible and congenial career. He half thought that he might feel called to take up a religious life. His thesis for the Doctorate, an oration on Dante created a furore: and he was appointed in 1839 to a Professorship of Law in his native city. Thither he carried, at a sacrifice of better prospects and for the sake of a sick mother, his enthusiasm and his zeal for the development of charitable societies. They got up, without prejudice to their visiting work, a library and a school among the soldiers, and did what they could to carry a little Christian instruction into the unpromising corners of the barrack-room. But they had their trials. The pious party in a French provincial town was not, in those days, remarkable either for courage or wisdom. A section of the good people of Lyons, to whom, as he said, "their personal opinion on politics was an extra article of the creed," attacked the new notions, and the clergy were not always friendly.

He was harassed by constant anxiety for his mother's health, and was in great doubt as to his own future; for Lacordaire, who was now refounding in France the Order of St Dominic, was anxious that Ozanam should become a 'Friar Preacher' too.

After his mother's death, in 1840, he spent a short holiday in Paris, where he found his work spreading fast in every direction. Attending a general meeting of the Society of Charity, he found 600 assembled, including many notable writers of the new Catholic school. Among the students, whom he most rejoiced to see, he counted one-fifth of the whole strength of the *École Normale*—a change almost incredible from the state of things in which his own student days had begun. In thirty provincial towns the work was advancing. Its total brotherhood had reached two thousand.

On the same visit, M. Cousin, who was much impressed by his studies on Dante (now published), asked him to compete for the Paris Professorship of Literature. He went in with much misgiving, but making, as he said, "such an act of faith in God as I never made before." His name came out first. He regarded this success as deciding his vocation, and resolved to devote himself to that career. Almost at the same time he became engaged to be married to the sister of a student friend. A precarious position in Paris at £150 a year was now open to him, and he welcomed it as giving him back the opportunity, which he had lost in retiring to Lyons, to guide and help with his mature powers that revival of Catholic thought and effort in the capital, which he himself had started as an eager boy. As it chanced, however, the Minister of Public Instruction presently offered him a second Professorship at Lyons, which would have meant comparative affluence and security, though it would have been fatal to his influence on the vital movements of French life. The prudent parents of his provincial fiancée thought him mad to sacrifice the certainty of a comfortable and excellent position for the quixotic hope of helping Paris. But

his fiancée believed in his mission, and cheerfully elected for poverty. His marriage followed soon, and after it, a holiday in Italy, to pay for which they sacrificed a large part of the funds destined for furnishing their modest home.

He was very happy. "Since that day when the benediction of God descended upon me, I live in an enchanted calm." The journey was a continual inspiration, and his letters glow with the beauty and wonder of his beloved Italy. As for his personal life, he has all the frankness and innocence of a boy. To him a Christian marriage was "a double sacrifice." Each of the contracting parties gave, he held, not only their best, but their all.

From the moment when he began his new labours in Paris, two things became clear: that he would succeed beyond his hope in the work he had set before himself, and that the effort would before long cost him his life. His position was one of extreme difficulty. Called upon to lecture at the age of twenty-seven, amid the great traditions of the Sorbonne, and side by side with the ablest and most learned men of the day, on subjects demanding the widest erudition, he had to work incessantly in preparation and teaching. But in addition, he had to solve the problem of preaching a Catholic view of the world in the very home of the adverse philosophy and under the control of officials whose sympathies were as anti-Catholic as their power was absolute. He did not hesitate for a moment to avow his beliefs: his pupils even announced that his teaching had converted them. Yet his tact and liberality of thought were so conspicuous, and his personal character so high, that his bitterest opponents respected him. But his zeal was not content with even these absorbing duties. He formed a literary conference of Catholic young men, and presided over it for years. He never refused an invitation to go and speak at meetings of working men, among whom he was always popular. He took a leading part in the development of the new *Cercle Catholique.*

He wrote constantly for the Catholic papers, and always had a large book of his own on hand. Above all, he never failed to spend an ample portion of his time and thought in visiting and caring for his poor.

His work often robbed him of his necessary summer holidays. By August, 1846, his strength was so far undermined that he caught fever, and, having barely escaped with his life, was ordered to take a long holiday. He lived for some years, but in fact he never recovered.

He overworked himself incessantly; but to him it seemed that he could not help it. He too was a missionary. In one of his addresses to the young men who followed him, he asked them if they imagined that God called some to sacrifice their lives in Africa or China, while the rest were to walk about with hands in their pockets and lie down on beds of roses? "Let us be ready," he said, "to show that we too have our battle-field, and that if need be we can die on it." Be it remembered that he never neglected his family life and its relationships, which remained most beautiful to the end. Was he wise or unwise, right or wrong, that he spared himself so little? The effect of his unsparing energy was enormous, even in the few years of his career. That he would have done better if he had lived longer, who can say? He felt that this life was his vocation, and all he asked was to be spent in doing the work of his Master, manfully.

After the dangerous illness in 1846, the doctors insisted on a year's complete rest, and he returned to Italy, where in spite of weakness he busied himself in collecting materials for the great work he was always preparing—that statement of the Christian Civilization in its development or of "the education of the modern world by the Church," through which he hoped to explain Catholicism even to the froward. Amongst other such studies, this holiday produced Ozanam's most characteristic book. It was a charming essay on the early Franciscan Poets, which remains to this day one of the

indispensable authorities for the history of literature, of Catholicism, and of Italy. But when he reached Rome, another interest stirred him to the soul. It was the moment when Pius IX., in the beautiful enthusiasm of his belief in the Italian people, startled the European dynasties by abolishing the traditions of paternal government, and founding a constitutional freedom in Rome. Ozanam's letters are full of the hope and wonder of the time, and as full of devotion to the personal character and charm of the Pope. It was to him the beginning of that which he had always dreamed of, the alliance of the two master forces of Catholicism and liberty. The troubles in which that premature hope was apparently to fail had already begun before he returned to France: but he was not deterred from his conviction. "There is a storm about to break over the Pope," he said; "but let us not fear, as did the men of little faith: for Christ is in the boat and He is not asleep."

As for the policy of the Catholics of France, which was then on the verge of the Revolution of 1848, he boldly called upon the Catholic Club to range itself against the dynastic politicians, and to side frankly with the people. His final cry, "*Passons aux barbares,*" evoked a historic controversy. He was bitterly assailed, but he had no idea of retracting. The phrase summed up to him the whole secret of the civilizing mission of the Church. The masses of the people, however untaught and dangerous, were his hope and the Church's opportunity. Their errors, such as they were, were not a reason for despising or for crushing them, but an additional argument for brotherly help. A Catholic politician should be not their enemy, but their friend. "Put yourself, as Pius IX. is trying to do, at the head of all their reasonable movements, and convert them as the Pagan masses were converted long ago, by faith and sympathy and example." He refused to sit in the Assembly, knowing his health would never stand the strain: but in alliance with Lacordaire—who, without his own

knowledge, had been elected—he started the "*Ère Nouvelle*," as a Catholic organ of strong democratic sympathies. "I have always believed," he wrote, when things were at the worst, "in the possibility of Christian democracy: indeed, as far as politics go, I believe in nothing else."

Above all, with a sure instinct, the personal friend of the poor saw that it was the social question to which all men should direct their energies: and on this ground he strove to unite all lovers of the people upon the common basis of a really Christian charity. What he understood by government, he had formulated to a friend long before. Its ideal was "the self-sacrifice of each for the benefit of all." This, he added, "was the Christian Republic of the primitive Church of Jerusalem: and perhaps it may be also that of the end of time." He was always insisting that it was the social question, not the political, which was essential. But he saw that great political changes were inevitable, and he was not afraid of them. In this, as in everything, he believed in God. That the party of Labour should have no excuse to mistake the Church for the hireling or the satellite of the the party of wealth, was his constant anxiety. But he was none the less steadfast, as a moral citizen, for the repression of disorder. He took his share as a National Guard in the unfortunate street fights of the time. When he went on duty he always prepared for death; but he was always calm and always hoping for reconciliation. It was he who persuaded Mgr. Affre to go to the barricades on the mission of peace in which he laid down his life.

Not less terrible than the bloodshed was the widespread distress which followed, when 267,000 individuals in Paris alone were returned as being out of work. Ozanam laboured night and day at the work of St. Vincent de Paul, at his paper, and at his professorship. Probably no man knew the most wretched streets in Paris so well as he. The articles in which he describes as an eye-witness the misery of the slums tingle with a

passionate charity. How he found time to visit and to write as he did, five articles in his examination week, is quite inexplicable. And all the while, in spite of the apparent failure of his policy,—for, in spite of the approbation of the Pope and the Archbishop, the paper was wrecked at last, amid the sterile dissensions and jealousies of the reactionary Catholics,—he continued to belong, as he said, "to the party of hope." *

These efforts, working on his previous ill-health, steadily killed him. He recovered for a while, and paid a holiday visit to the Exhibition of 1851; but the hand of death was on him. In London, the two things which struck him most were the docks, with their vast import of industrial wealth, and the squalid misery of the London poor, whom he constantly visited in company with the English Brothers of his own Society. Southwark and the district around Warwick Street were his chief haunts, and his letters describe his wonder at a wretchedness far worse than anything he had known in Paris or in Rome. To Westminster Abbey he was naturally drawn, though he said of it, with some bitterness, that Protestantism "having banished God out of His house, and being unable to fill it with a living people, has imagined the expedient of cumbering it with the dead." It is related of him that when he first found himself before the tomb of St. Edward, in all simplicity he knelt down to pray, to the great scandal of the other tourists, and the amazed indignation of the verger, who promptly turned him out for improper behaviour in the church.

He returned to Paris, tried once more to teach, broke

* It is worth recording that in the extracts from the '*Ère Nouvelle*,' among his published works, there are to be found not only his vivid discriptions of the social misery and his appeals to all men of good will, but also his testimony to the virtues of the outcasts of society. "In these foul cellars and garrets," he wrote, "we have often come upon the loveliest domestic virtues, and found a refinement and good sense that is not always to be met with under gilded ceilings."

down, and took to his bed. Certain critics said he was too often absent, and a rumour of dissatisfaction reached him. He rose from his sick bed, in spite of all protests, and went to deliver his last lecture. "Our life belongs to you," he said to his students, "to our last breath—and you shall have it." Never did he speak more brilliantly; and his medical brother, who saw him next morning, thought he would be dead in ten days. They carried him to the Pyrenees, and again to Italy. But except that he still broke all restraints for the sake of founding new conferences wherever he went, his work was done. He worked at his book to the very last, when he could not write more than a few lines at a time. He was proposed as a candidate for the *Institut*—the ruling ambition of every Frenchman: but he could not return to Paris for the purpose.

He did not even yet give up hope, but he prepared for death. From his childhood he had loved the Bible above all other books, and had read a portion of the Gospels as his "daily bread." Now his mornings were spent in such reading and in meditation upon it. Being too weak to take notes, he began to dictate some of his thoughts to his wife, whose tender affection was with him always: and the fragments edited after his death form a singularly beautiful '*Livre des Malades*.' Steadily he sought to order his mind to the hard words: "Thy will be done." His young men at the Sorbonne—his long-projected epoch-making book—the needs of Catholic France—the future of his growing Society of Charity—the dear joys of his family life, which he ranked next to his devotion to God—all these pulled at his heart-strings and made it hard for the eager soul to say good-bye. He suffered greatly; and the best anodyne was to have his favourite Psalms recited to him. His whole time indeed was spent with a Bible beside him, and mostly upon a couch wheeled into the open air. To the end, his marriage was a beautiful and a sacred relation: and his simple joy in his only child reveals itself in all his intimate letters. His last walk

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was to receive Communion with his wife on the twelfth anniversary of their marriage. In his last will he wrote frankly that he would await her in heaven, "where alone he could repay her the love that she deserved."

In the beginning of September, 1853, he begged to be brought back to France to die, and just lived to reach the port. Having received the last Sacraments, and being reminded by one who stood by of the Divine Judgments, he said simply: "Why should I fear Him? I love Him so much."

He often thought and said that his life had been a failure: but it is by such failures that the salvation of the world is wrought. Its needs are as great now as when the Lyons attorney's clerk first trod the reckless and ribald streets of the *Quartier Latin*. What he did, thousands of young men, each in their measure, could do also. Who will try?