



f. Hyacinth M. Cormier
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LAUGHTER shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy" (Prov. xiv, 13). These words of Holy Writ may aptly be quoted in commenting on the death of the Very Rev. Hyacinth M. Cormier, O. P., Ex-Master General of the Order of Friar Preachers. Whilst his brethren in various parts of the world were celebrating with great pomp and splendor the Seventh Centenary of the approval of the Rule of the Order by Pope Honorius III, Father Cormier breathed his last.

Father Cormier was born at Orleans, France, on December 8, 1832. In baptism he received the name Henry. His family, though comfortably circumstanced, was nevertheless unassuming. His father died while Henry was still very young. Accordingly the care of the young boy, and that of an only brother, devolved upon the mother, who watched over the welfare of her children with the greatest solicitude.

Shortly after the opening of the Preparatory Seminary at Orleans, in 1846, we find the young man enter as one of its first students. His exceptional ability and his faithful application to study very soon attracted the attention of the teaching body. He very early manifested an aptitude for literary work as well as a talent for music, vocal as well as instrumental. Besides, his unaffected piety and exemplary conduct were known to all.

Upon completing his preparatory studies, he entered the Grand Seminary

at Orleans. During this time, the young seminarian found a staunch friend in the celebrated Monsignor Felix Dupanloup, later Bishop of Orleans. The same sterling qualities that had marked his career at the Preparatory Seminary were evinced in the Grand Seminary. He devoted himself to his philosophical and theological studies with singular assiduity. His success in the latter was exceptionally brilliant. On all occasions Henry Cormier was the recipient of the honors of the theological "concursum." An instance of this is referred to in the "Life of Monsignor Dupanloup": "Another celebrated disputation was that between the Abbé Cormier, afterwards a Dominican, and Father de Ravignan; the coolness of the candidate, his penetration, the promptness with which he could take hold of an objection and reply to it, the mutual courtesy of the adversaries, carried away the audience."

It was during his days at the Seminary that the Dominicans returned to France under the leadership of Père Lacordaire. The satisfaction manifested over their return was great. Henry Cormier was also seized by the Dominican spirit. On the advice of Monsignor Dupanloup, however, he did not enter the Order until after his ordination.

The year 1856 found him prepared to receive Holy Orders though he was not twenty-four years of age. Accordingly a dispensation had to be obtained and

he was raised to the priestly dignity on May 17, 1856, by the Bishop of Orleans.

Shortly after his ordination, Father Cormier took steps toward carrying out his long cherished wish of entering a religious Order. Upon presenting himself for admission to the Dominicans, he was sent to the Convent at Flavigny. On the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, he was invested with the habit of the Order. He received the religious name Hyacinth on this occasion.

Immediately upon this he set about with the greatest energy and steadfastness of purpose to acquire the true spirit of the Institute. He was in every respect an exemplary novice. One thing, however, was lacking—he did not possess the requisite health and strength to endure the rigors of the religious life. For this reason, the Fathers of the Council deemed it advisable for him to return to his former state of life. Just at this juncture the Master General, Father Jandel, who was passing by, heard of the case, and realizing the excellent qualifications of the novice in all other respects, decided that Father Cormier should accompany him to the healthful climate of Italy. But even this change failed to produce the desired result. He still suffered much from hemorrhages. Having well nigh lost all hope of retaining him any longer, the General was considering the necessity of his dismissal. Before proceeding to such a course, however, he decided to lay the case before His Holiness Pope Pius IX. The Sovereign Pontiff advised Father Jandel to profess the novice if, for the space of a month, he should not suffer an attack of hemorrhages. The longest interval that elapsed between the attacks, however, was twenty-nine days. Pius IX who was again consulted authorized the General to profess Father Cormier as a preparation for death. Father Jandel received his profession on the

23rd of May, 1859, in the Convent of Santa Sabina. A few days previous he had been anointed and it was expected that the end was not far off. But Divine Providence decreed otherwise.

Upon his restoration to health, he was almost immediately placed in positions of trust. He was made Novice Master at Santa Sabina where he trained in the true Dominican spirit many novices who later on proved a credit to their Order and to the Church. He was elected six times to the priorate of various convents.

Upon the restoration of the suppressed Province of Toulouse by Father Jandel, Father Cormier was selected as its first provincial. He held this position for thirteen years, and during this time was forced on several occasions to lead his sons to Spain and Germany, owing to revolutionary conditions at home.

Father Cormier also took a lively interest in the progress of the Sisters of Saint Dominic. It was through his instrumentality that the nuns of the second Order were established at Prouille, "the Bethlehem of the Order." Many other communities experienced his kind offices and encouragement.

On his election to the Generalship in 1892, the present Cardinal Frühwirth selected Father Cormier as one of his "Socii." On the feast of Saint Thomas, in the year 1896, he was named Procurator General of the Order. He retained this office until the Chapter of Viterbo in 1904, when he himself was elected Master General. When presenting the Capitular Fathers of Viterbo to Pope Pius X, he said: "Holy Father, as it is your purpose to restore all things in Christ, so it is ours to restore all things in Saint Dominic." We shall see with what fidelity he accomplished his purposes. During his term as General he effected an untold amount

of good for the whole Order of Saint Dominic. Many of the provinces that had been suppressed, were made to thrive again, while several congregations were raised to the provincial dignity.

During his leisure hours he wrote a great number of books, chief amongst which are several Retreats, the Life of Blessed Raymond of Capua, the Instruction of Novices, and the Life of Father Jandel. His Panegyrics on Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Louis of France and Saint Mary Magdalen are veritable masterpieces of their kind. In a work on the liturgy of the Order he has given us the fruit of his superior knowledge of this little known subject. Furthermore, he ordered a new edition of the Order's liturgical books. He revived the venerable custom, in use during the first centuries of the Order, of frequently issuing encyclical letters to the brethren. These letters are replete with excellent instruction on the ideals of the religious life especially as they can be realized amongst the Friars Preachers. But the most notable work of his generalate, was the erection of the stately Collegio Angelico, the international Dominican college at Rome, which will stand forever as a lasting memorial to his zeal and devotion.

Father Cormier's influence was brought into play even beyond the confines of the Order. He enjoyed the friendship of Leo XIII, and Pius X, and the present gloriously reigning Pontiff held him in high esteem. Pius X appointed him Consultor of the Holy Office, and of the Congregation of the Propaganda. When this same Pope decided to conduct a visitation of the Monastic Institutes of Rome, the Master General of the Dominicans was selected as the representative of the Apostolic See to carry on the work.

The month of August, 1916, marked the expiration of his term as General.

Since that time he had been living in retirement at San Clemente, Rome, awaiting in prayer and contemplation the final summons.

In the early part of December he was suddenly stricken with a grave illness. His condition gradually grew worse, and on the evening of December 15th, he felt the end approaching. After having been anointed by his successor, the Very Rev. Louis Theissling, he requested the brethren to sing the *Salve Regina* in accordance with the beautiful custom of singing that anthem whilst a member of the Order is dying. After this the saintly priest renewed his profession of faith and rendered thanks to God that he had succeeded in being faithful to his holy vocation. Thereupon he blessed those present and imparted to each the kiss of peace. He lingered a few days longer, finally falling asleep in the Lord on December 17th. At his funeral, the Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated by the Procurator General of the Franciscans, in the presence of their Eminences Cardinals Bourne, Gasquet, O. S. B., Billot, S. J., Frühwirth, O. P., and Boggianni, O. P.

Father Cormier lived during eighty-four years, sixty of which were spent in the holy priesthood, and fifty-seven in the Order of Preachers. His life was one of great spirituality, of self-sacrifice for the good of others, and of indefatigable zeal for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. One of the Princes of the Church in the United States publicly said that, "he never fully realized what the principles and the practice of real sanctity were until he saw them rendered concrete in the person of Father Cormier." Well might it be said of him that he was "beloved of God, and men; whose memory is in benediction" (Ecclus. xlv, I).

—Boniface Stratemeier, O. P.