

EDWARD F. HUGON, O. P.

BRO. DAVID DONOVAN, O. P.



WE are writing of a man who walked in the ways of the Lord, who was simple and humble in all his ways; and because of this he was great. But in this world men are not accustomed to judge a man's greatness by his simplicity and humility. Their criterions of success are often based on intellectual achievement, worldly acclaim, and nobility. Such, therefore, are the reasons why the late Edward F. Hugon, O. P. was considered great not only by his Dominican brethren, but also by other eminent ecclesiastical and civil authorities.

Father Hugon was born August 25, 1867, in La Farre, France. At the age of eighteen he entered the Lyons Province of the Dominican Order, and made the profession of his vows January 13, 1887. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1892. Shortly after his ordination he was assigned to teach in the *Studium Generale* of his province. This appointment marked the beginning of a teaching career which terminated with his death in Rome, February, 7, 1929. The death of this great man was a severe loss to the Dominican Order, to the Church Universal, and especially in France and Rome where he labored for many years in the service of the Master.

In his early years as professor Father Hugon was sent to teach at Hawthorne in the state of New York, where a house of his province had been established. While in America he added to his many accomplishments a knowledge of the English language. But what is to be especially noticed is this, that while in this country he acquired a deep appreciation for America and American ideals. Later he returned to Europe and was appointed professor in Rijckolt, Holland. This was only a remote preparation for the great work God had in store for him. In 1909 Father Cormier, then Master General of the Order, called Father Hugon to Rome to act as cofounder, with Father P. Szabo and Father Garrigou-Lagrange, of the International Pontifical Institute of the Angelic Doctor, a college established in the Eternal City for the higher education of clerics. That Father Cormier did not err in his choice is seen from the prominence the "Angelico" has attained since its foundation, for it ranks today as

one of the foremost educational centers at Rome. In this institute Father Hugon acted as professor and vice-regent.

The efforts of Father Hugon did not stop with his duties as a teacher. A true disciple of the Angelic Doctor, he wished to give the fruits of his vast erudition to those students with whom he would never come in personal contact and to help in spreading the works of St. Thomas. This was accomplished by numerous writings in theology, philosophy and apologetics; by treatises on mysticism and Mariology. Such writings are: *Cursus Philosophicus*, *Tractatus Dogmatici*, *Les Mystères de la Sainte-Trinité, de l'Incarnation, de la Rédemption, La Sainte-Eucharistie, La Mère de la Divine Grace, Hors de l'Eglise pas de Salut, La Causalité Instrumentale en Théologie, Les Vœux de Religion, Le Rosaire et la Sainteté, La Lumière et la Foi, La Fraternité du Sacerdoce et Celle de l'Etat Religieux, Réponses Théologiques à Quelques Questions d'Actualité, and Les 24 Thèses Thomistes*. His philosophical and theological works both in Latin and in French have received high approbation from the last three Popes and deserved to be better known throughout Europe and America. The course in philosophy especially shows the genius of this great student of St. Thomas. His thorough knowledge of this study, clearly set forth in his work, will rank him as one of the leading philosophers of the age. This course together with his admirable "*Twenty-Four Thomistic Theses*" will remain as monuments to his name.

It is customary in the Dominican Order to honor professors who have taught for fourteen years or more in the *Studium*, with its highest academic degree—Master of Sacred Theology. This degree was conferred upon Father Hugon as a reward for his zealous labors in the classroom. That he was worthy of such an honor is shown by the results of his labors. His confrère, Father Garrigou-Lagrange, speaks of him in the following terms: "Having taught all parts of dogma and moral, speculative and practical, he had forgotten nothing of that which he had learned, and could without preparation adequately expose and defend any particular thesis, although he had not seen it for twenty years. Constantly consulted as a sort of living library, he could immediately give a wise answer on the majority of the questions concerning speculative theology, casuistry, and even canon law, which might be proposed to him." His reputation as a theologian, philosopher and canonist attracted the attention of the Roman Curia and the humble friar was made consultant of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and board examiner for the Roman clergy. It is well known that Cardinals, Bishops, Generals of

different Religious Orders, Superiors of Congregations, and numerous other persons consulted the learned man on matters pertaining to ecclesiastical affairs, religious guidance and other important business. He was an intellectual genius of modern times, a man who can be ranked among the foremost educators of Europe. While his brilliant mind was a source of pride to his Order, we would do him an injustice if we neglected to inquire into the hidden life of this genius, to seek out those sources whence he derived his spiritual strength.

Although intellectually gifted, he was not the man to boast of his powers and capabilities. These he considered gifts from God to be used by him for his own salvation and that of his neighbor. Behind this colossal mind we find a friar, humble and innocent in his ways, with a soul as simple and guileless as that of a child. It seems that he strove to the utmost to fulfill the divine admonition, "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Like that of most great men, his day was well ordered in its duties, recreation, and rest. He united all three of these in his daily labor for the honor and glory of God. Arising early in the morning he would offer the day's work to God before beginning his numerous tasks. His Mass at five o'clock was followed by the regular observance of other religious exercises. The rest of the morning was occupied in teaching, writing, and in attending to the various activities which required his services. But even these tasks were for him different methods of prayer, thus following the advice of the Apostle, "to pray without ceasing." These occupations lasted until midday. In the afternoon, after having joined his brethren at dinner and recreation, his first duty was to visit the chapel to converse with his Master. Like the Angelic Doctor he sought from the Source of all graces the strength to perform his daily duties in a manner befitting his rare talents, and perhaps asked for the grace to be another humble instrument to draw souls to God.

His duties in the afternoon were as numerous as those of the morning. For years it was his daily custom to make the Stations of the Cross, this devotion preceding his work in the confessional. Then he would give his time to preaching or to lecturing to some student groups. These tasks were interrupted by brief walks in the streets of the city. It has been related that people who saw him on these walks were amazed at his air of detachment from the things about him. He seemed absorbed in thought, perhaps concerning some mystery of faith, a sermon to be preached, some lecture for his students. Re-

turning to the convent at the "Ave Maria" he applied himself to study. This was his unvarying routine for the twenty years he was in Rome. And there is little reason to doubt but that it was his usual course of action throughout his religious life. Even during the period set aside for vacations, it was his habit to spend this time giving retreats to priests and nuns. He seemed to have an insatiable passion for apostolic work, and even, his arduous professorial burdens did not deter him in performing his priestly functions. For fourteen years he expounded the doctrine of St. Thomas in and out of the classroom; in preaching and in teaching. His love for Aquinas was surpassed only by his love for Jesus and Mary. The more he taught and meditated upon the works of the Angelic Doctor, the more he began to take on his characteristics. Time alone will tell how much he resembled the saint in learning and sanctity.

It is remarkable that saintly priests, in whom Jesus really lives, possess a deep and appreciative understanding of the wants of others—spiritual or material. Such men have a Christlike charity for their neighbor. It is a rare gift that will in time manifest itself despite the possessor's scrupulous care in keeping it secret. Those who knew the inner life of Father Hugon have intimated that he had made a vow never to refuse a call for help. Notwithstanding his numerous occupations he was most prompt in responding to the call of any one who sought his aid, regardless of rank or position. He saw in every man the handiwork of God; he was never known to have refused a request. This is the charity of the saints—the charity of a Paul, a Dominic or a Francis. It was the charity that Christ taught and practiced in His daily life among men. "Love one another as I have loved you."

The life and work of this Dominican friar might be summed up in the words placed on the escutcheon of his Order, *Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare*, "To Praise, to Bless and to Preach." His whole life was spent in praising, blessing and preaching God and His Immaculate Mother Mary. Hence we feel certain that a saintly man has left us and already has found favor in the sight of the Lord, since his life was one of holiness, filled with that charity of Christ which marked him as one chosen by God. And though the death of Father Hugon is keenly felt in France, Italy, and America, where he was well known, nevertheless, it is a source of happiness and consolation to realize that in our midst there lived a man who "saw the Lord and walked with Him."