

Henri Omont, "Obituaire de Rev. Père Charles de Smedt, S.J.", *Journal des savants* 9 (1911). pp. 178-179. Transl. W.L. North.

## **The Reverend Father Charles de Smedt, S.J.**

The reverend father Charles de Smedt, foreign correspondent of the Académie des Inscriptions since 1894, died in Brussels on the 4<sup>th</sup> of this March [1911]. He was born in Ghent on 6 April 1833 and entered into the Company of Jesus [the Jesuit Order] in 1851. Assigned the teaching of ecclesiastical history at the Collège théologique de la Compagnie in Louvain, in 1876 he published his *Introductio generalis ad historiam ecclesiasticam critice tractandam* [A general introduction to the critical treatment of ecclesiastical history]. It quickly marked him to take part in the Society of the Bollandists, to which he was called in the same year and over which he presided after 1882.

The following year (1883) he assembled into a volume his many essays of historical criticism which had appeared in 1869 and 1870, and had been well reviewed at the time in the *Revue des études religieuses* of Paris. A few years earlier, he provided the Société de l'histoire de France with an edition of the *Gestes des évêques de Cambrai* (1880), based on a manuscript discovered by Father de Backer and which our brother Monsieur le duc de la Trémoille came to offer to the Bibliothèque nationale. Soon he published, in collaboration with Father de Backer, a beautiful edition of the *Acta sanctorum Hiberniae* [Acts of the Saints of Ireland] (1887).

Thereafter, the majority of his scholarly activity and that of the learned collaborators whom he was able to assemble around himself, was going to be entirely reserved for the great publication of the *Acta sanctorum*, which was interrupted by the [French] Revolution and had been restarted in 1837 with inadequate resources. Father De Smedt was not slow to imprint upon it a new and productive direction and his name remains linked to the first three volumes of November, the third of which appeared on the eve of his death.

From 1882, he felt the need to endow the *Acta sanctorum* with an scholarly instrument for hagiographical studies, and it is to his initiative that the creation of the *Analecta Bollandiana* is owed, a journal analogous to what the *Archiv* [*Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 1820-1874] and the *Neues Archiv* [*Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 1876-1935] have been for the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. The twentieth volume of this journal is in the course of publication, and there is no longer any need to praise it.

Father De Smedt's last years were almost exclusively dedicated to extensive projects requiring much patience that were intended to provide indispensable research tools to editors present and future of the *Acta sanctorum*. It is for this reason that he brought about the publication of the two volumes of the *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum Bibliothecae regiae Bruxellensis* (1886-1889), then three other volumes of the *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum in*

*Bibliotheca nationali Parisiensi* (1889-1893), which was soon followed by two more volumes of the *Bibliotheca hagiographica Latina* (1889-1901).

Belgium has lost in him an eminent scholar, and all those who knew him well, shall retain a faithful memory of a learned and good man.