

de Hemptinne, Auguste-Donnat
Born: August 15, 1781 - Jauche
Died: January 5, 1854 - Brussels

In spite of his father being a very influential notary and the mayor of Jauche and other municipalities, Auguste-Donnat lacks a very thorough education due to the lack of decent schools. He is very disappointed with the limited and insufficient knowledge he acquires at the Collège de Très-Sainte-Trinité in Leuven and quits the school in 1797 before having finished his secondary studies. He is admitted as a pupil of the Brussels pharmacist Pierre Jambers. During the 4 years of his apprenticeship he attends J.B. Van Mons's lectures of chemistry and physics. Next he follows in Paris the lectures of the eminent chemists of the time (A.F. Fourcroy and N.L. Vauquelin). On his return to Brussels he passes the examinations enabling him to open in 1806 a pharmacy in Brussels. Besides managing his pharmacy he is also interested in scientific and social challenges (chemistry, technology, public health, forensic toxicology).

On Van Mons's requests he contributes a number of articles to the "Annales Générales des Sciences physiques" about the prevention of contaminations by air-vents, decontamination and the consequences of icing in the ducts of lighting gas in Brussels.

In 1825 de Hemptinne is appointed member of the medical committee of Brussels on account of his scientific knowledge and outstanding moral principles.

In 1831 he is requested by the government to study the menace and suppression of cholera, which turns out to be very useful during a breakout of cholera in 1849.

He is well known in court for his analytical techniques in tracing falsifications (like copper sulphate in bread and the extraction of mercuric chloride from biological samples). He owns two factories, one of them manufacturing chemicals.

In 1827 the King of the Netherlands makes him the King's Pharmacists and after Belgium's independence, he holds different assignments in the newly founded "Académie des Sciences, Lettres et Beaux-Arts de Belgique".

When in 1841 King Leopold I of Belgium founds the "Académie Royale de Médecine", de Hemptinne is one of the first 30 members and the only representative for the pharmaceutical branch.

He contributes to the new Pharmacopée, and in a number of lectures he heavily criticizes the principles of Hahnemann's homeopathy.

As a liberal thinker de Hemptinne contributes financially to the foundation of the Free University of Belgium (later on ULB) where he is in charge of the School of Pharmacy.