

VAN MONS, Jan Baptist

Born: 1765, Brussels

Died: 1842, Leuven

Through self-tuition Van Mons qualified in 1787 as a pharmacist with a preference for chemical research. He became a staff-member of the holder of the chair of chemistry at the Central School of Luxemburg. Van Mons subscribed to the ideas of the French Revolution and after the annexation of the Southern Netherlands he contributed to the reform of the studies. In 1797 he became professor at the Central School and his thorough knowledge of foreign languages and his many publications contributed to his renown. After having obtained his medical degree he became professor of chemistry, physics and agriculture at the University of Leuven. On the one hand, he was a staunch follower of Lavoisier and rejected the phlogiston-theory. In 1811 however, in the isolation of his study-room, he thought up his theory of a “new chemistry”, consisting of a mix of interpreted writings of other chemists, adapted to his own preconceived ideas. This went so far as to lead to contradict his earlier acceptance of Lavoisier about the definition of element and metal. Van Mons also published about electricity, rejecting the idea of a positive and negative electricity but accepting Volta’s theories.