

## **Albert Jacques Joseph, VAN DE VELDE**

Born: July 28, 1871 (Ghent)

Died: April 17, 1956 (Ghent)

### **Biography**

Having finished his secondary studies at the Koninklijk Atheneum of Ghent, he enrolls at the chemistry department of the university, and becomes an assistant of Professor Théodore Swarts, graduating with the title of Dr.Sc. in 1893. Seven years later we come across Van de Velde at the Institut Pasteur and around the same time he is appointed head of the chemical laboratory of the city of Ghent, a position he holds for the next 32 years. Under his management it grows into a chemical-bacteriological lab specialized in food analysis and tracing of falsifications.

He also teaches at the technical schools of Ghent and creates the Higher Institute of Fermentation where in 1949 he receives the honorary title of engineer in fermentation techniques.

In 1919 he takes over from Professor Julius McLeod at the Royal Academy of Flemish Language and Literature of which he is an honorary member from 1939 till his death. In 1920 he is appointed professor of general chemistry at the State Agricultural School followed by becoming professor of microbiology and chemistry of foodstuffs at the Faculty of Medicine. In 1938 he is the Dean of the Medical Faculty. In 1941 he becomes emeritus professor but in 1944 he takes up this function again and retires in 1945.

During the war Van de Velde is an active member of the Belgian Red Cross and is successively advisor, president of the East Flanders branch and finally president in 1948.

After he retires he establishes the “Museum Historiae Scientiarum”, which opens its doors in 1948 and blooms into the actual “Museum voor de Geschiedenis van de Wetenschappen”, located on the Campus “De Sterre”, Block S30, Krijgslaan 281, Ghent.

He is a founder of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for sciences and arts where he is the instigator and later chairman of the Permanent Committee for the History of Sciences. He is an active member of the Kruidkundig Genootschap Dodonea, founded in 1871 by Professor Julius McLeod in the honor of the 16<sup>th</sup> century botanist Rembert Dodoens; this society is aimed essentially at biological research. In 1897 Van de Velde is the co-founder of the Flemish conference of Physics and Medicine.

He was a member of a number of international chemical societies: Germany, the Netherlands, France and the United States.

### **His Work**

His wide range of interests brings him to publishing in the fields of general, analytical and organic chemistry, biochemistry, microbiology, enzymology, physiology of the flora, agriculture, legislation of food sciences and the history of the sciences.

His main research focuses on enzymology.

He puts up a vigorous fight against the falsifications of food and draws attention to the legislation in this field.

His connections with the Dodonea result in the publication of a 2-volumes study of the germination of Spermatophytes (“De Ontkieming der Spermatofyten”)

### **Popularization of the Sciences**

After WWII, A.J.J. Van de Velde develops an interest aimed at the history of chemistry and biology.

After his retirement he strives to spread the scientific ideas to all layers of society. “Lichtzuilen uit het Verleden” (“Beacons of the Past” - 1945) is a collection of biographies of a.o. Yperman, Vesalius, Dodoens, Simon Stevin, Van Helmont and Palfijn

In 1948 he is an active contributor to the commemoration of Simon Stevin, born in Bruges in 1548. The book contains the bibliography of every contribution by and about Simon Stevin.

Other writings by A.J.J. Van de Velde are:

- in 1928: the history of the botanical society “Dodonea” from 1887 till 1927;
- between 1937 and 1941: the bibliography of physics and medicine in the Southern and Northern Netherlands (12 volumes);
- in 1942 he publishes the collected writings of Julius McLeod;
- in 1944: “Het Vlaamsch Natuur- en Geneeskundig Congres van 1897 tot 1944” (the history of the Flemish conferences on physics and medicine from 1897 till 1944)