

Jean Emile Charles, **Timmermans**

Born: January 8, 1882 (Brussels)

Died: August 27, 1971 (Etterbeek, near Brussels)

### **Biography**

Timmermans starts his BA in chemistry at the ULB (Université Libre de Bruxelles – Free University of Brussels) in 1900. In 1905 he graduates as a Dr.Sc. and next year is appointed in the function of assistant, enabling him to publish “Recherches Expérimentales sur les phénomènes de démixtion des mélanges liquides”. The subject is suggested by Léon Maurice Crismer, and through the book he is conferred the title of “special doctor”. Over a period of eight years he performs in succession research in Prague (Rothmund), Dublin (Young), Amsterdam (Van der Waals) and Genève (Guye). At the start of WWI he is assigned from 1914 till 1918 to the Laboratory of the Belgian army, associated with the Sorbonne in Paris.

In 1920 Timmermans cooperates with Heike Kammerlingh-Onnes (1853-1926) in Amsterdam.

The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) decides to set up a Bureau of Standards. As Timmermans already has started collecting very pure samples of organic components since 1913, the IUPAC appeals to him and in 1923 the Bureau is established at the new site of Solbosch (Medical Centre). The official designation is “Bureau International des Etalons physico-chimiques”, where Timmermans keeps his research going for the next years.

In 1923 he is appointed professor at the Faculty of Sciences of the ULB where he teaches physical chemistry, the history of chemistry and the methodology of chemistry.

During WWII he exiles to London where from January 1941 till March 1945 he is in charge of the department of Higher Education at the exiled Ministry of Education. After the war he is a founder-member of the Belgian section of the Universitas Belgica.

On June 2 1945 he becomes a corresponding member of the “Académie royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres de Bruxelles”, rises to full member on 15 December and is made president in 1955 of the class of sciences.. In 1949 Timmermans is elected president of the Centre National Belge de Chimie Physique, a function taken over in 1962 by the FCFO (Fund for Collective Research) which coordinates and subsidizes the laboratories of the Belgian universities. After being the CEO of the *Société Royale Chimique de Belgique* he becomes its honorary president. He is also honorary member of the Royal Institution of Great Britain, the Société Suisse de Chimie, the Société Chimique de Pologne, the Société de Chimie industrielle de Paris and corresponding member of the Académie des Sciences de Paris. He is the holder of the Gay-Lussac medal of the Société Chimique de Belgique and honorary doctorate of the University of Dijon.

He retires in 1952.

### **His achievements**

They may be divided into four categories:

- the exact definition of chemicals and their preparation in the purest form;
- the study of the properties of highly concentrated solutions;
- the study of the influence of high pressures on a heterogeneous equilibrium;
- In 1947 he publishes “Histoire de la Chimie”, with a chapter especially devoted to the history of the chemistry in Belgium.
- He was curator of the museum dedicated to the work of Jean Stas.