

Johannes Buys was born in Diemen near Amsterdam on the 20th June 1764. His parents were Philippus Buys and Cristina Tade. Soon afterwards, these moved to Velzen, situated between Haarlem and Beverwijk, known for its many beautiful country seats, where Philippus Buys found ample opportunity for the study of botany and the cultivation of flowers, in which he delighted.

Johannes Buys received a regular school education up to the time that his inclination to study was noticed by Nicholas Faas, burgemaster of Amsterdam, who had his country seat in that vicinity. He induced young Buys to enter the High School at Amsterdam, which institution conducted by the eminent Doctor Benjamin Bossa, besides preparing its pupils for commercial life by giving instruction in bookkeeping, geography and modern languages, also furnished a thorough education in the scientific branches, principally mathematics and natural philosophy. Many young men of the higher classes of society availed of this institution and several of these have later become prominent in commercial and professional life. After three years, Buys was appointed Lector or Assistant Director of the Institute for the branches of mathematics, natural philosophy and astronomy.

It became a question with him, whether to acquire the degree of Doctor of Philosophy or to enter upon commercial life, as his original intention had been. He concluded to adhere to the latter and withdrawing with great honors from the Institution, entered the commercial house of Snyder & Groothuir in Amsterdam.

We have now come to the period when the active life of Mr. Buys may be said to have begun. It is difficult to depict him, in the various sphere of his

NOTE A

activity, as, in the first place, he appears as founder of an extensive banking and stock brokerage establishment in this city, continued by two of his sons the younger son was my father and which became known for its participation in various private and public enterprises. It is not our aim, however, to describe Mr. Buys as such and mention this circumstance only, as it increases the man's worth, when we behold him equally zealous and active in the pursuit and promotion of whatever was good, useful and praiseworthy, which is the aim and interest of our society.

He began his active life on the Exchange in the year 1787.

He passed some years in these various occupations, until the events of 1795 and subsequently gave a new and more extensive scope of action to the genius and insight of Mr. Buys, by which his business also attained considerable prominence. He, and we with him were thankful for these Divine blessings, but we cannot but remember how some of us feared, that the great strain, under which he labored, might undermine his strength.

NOTE B

In the year 1790 considerable political agitation arose in Holland, one party aiming at the consolidation of the Stadtholders' power in a monarchical form, the other striving for liberal Republicanism. In 1795, the French Republican Army occupied Belgium and nearing the frontiers of Holland was hailed by the Republican party, called Patriots, and overran the country, in consequence of which William V, the Stadtholder, resigned and withdrew to England.

The ascendancy of liberal ideas caused a demand for a wider system of education of the lower classes and in this Mr. Buys took a leading part.

He was a leader in the reorganization of the Society for Public Utility in

Amsterdam of which he was the President for some years.

His lectures on Natural Philosophy before this Institution of learning attracted much attention.

The teachings at the Public Schools up to this time had been defective in many respects and confined to children whose parents were of the dominant Protestant church. Mr. Buys decided on active measures to improve the entire system.

He presented his plan to this Society, it was approved, submitted to and accepted by the City Council in April 1796. The result was the reformation of the Public Schools, such as to win the admiration of all enlightened persons, at home and abroad. Mr. Buys occupied during many years the position of chairman of the Committee on Public Education, which included the supervision of the private schools. He also became director of the Society Felix Meritis of Amsterdam, a scientific institution in which he interested himself, principally in the line of natural philosophy.

It is well known how toward the close of the 18th and in the beginning of the 19th centuries, superstition had a strong hold, particularly on the lower classes. The influence of the planets on the lives of individuals and a desire to ascertain the future by the drawing of horoscopes were still prevalent.

Mr. Buys had prepared, about the year 1800, a book on Natural Philosophy for the people, particularly intended for school use, by which he explained many mysteries, by the simple application of the laws of nature. This work brought him the double golden medal. This work was published in several editions until in the year 1828, he decided to revise and enlarge this work, in conformity with the many discoveries in the scientific world, which had meanwhile come to light.



NOTE C

The biography describes the many interesting subjects which this book disclosed and treated; the deep interest manifested and the much good it effected.

This book was translated into the Japanese language and presented at the educational institutions of Yedo.

NOTED

Japan, whilst secluding itself from all communication with the outside world, had granted a special privilege to the Dutch nation towards the end of the 17th century. They were allowed to establish a trading post, on the island of Deshima near Nagasaki. The official and educated classes of Japan had thus become acquainted with the Dutch language, which was used by Commodore Perry, through a Dutch interpreter, in his interview with the Japanese Commissioners in 1854.

Mr. Buys was made honorary member of six scientific institutions in different parts of the country and towards the latter years of his remarkable career, he reached the highest honor by being elected to the Presidency of the Royal Netherland Institute of Sciences and Arts.

The King of Holland, in recognition of the merits of the indefatigably active and useful man conferred upon him the Knighthood of the Netherland Lion.

With all this, Mr. Buys did not possess any academical degrees. As already indicated, his original decision to pursue a business career restrained him from aiming at this, but his ardent love of sciences and his intimate relations with such learned men, as Doctors Van Swinden, Mayenhoff, Aeric, Van Barneveldt, Hoeyn, Van Dyk, Van Marum, and Moll, and other prominent men, lifted him to the highest rank in that line and he was recognized as such by the different societies, who offered him membership.

The principal traits of Mr. Buys' character were beautified by his religious ideas. Those who have read his works will have noticed these upon nearly every page. He took every opportunity to develop religious sentiment, through a knowledge of nature and its works and to lead the heart to veneration and gratitude for and faith in the Lord of Nature. The religious beliefs of Mr. Buys were founded on reasonable conviction and positive faith.

We might mention many special traits of the excellent character of our friend but leave some of these to appear in a view of his domestic life, to which we will confine our attention.

Johannes Buys was married in 1786 to Miss Sophia Margareta the daughter of one of his guardians. He found in her a wife, suited in every way to his heart, character and tastes. At her side he enjoyed all the blessings resulting from a well advised and judicious marriage, during which the cares and trials of which no family is free, were borne, with mutual courage and strength. She took upon herself the establishment and supervision of the Sewing Schools connected with the public schools of Amsterdam.

They had eleven children of which three died and of the remaining eight, he had the happiness to see five married and prominent in good society.

As the venerable head of the family, Mr. Buys enjoyed the prosperity with which he was blessed. During more than 25 years he owned a beautiful country seat at Maarssen, not far from Amsterdam, thus in touch with his interests there. With his wife and three unmarried daughters, he passed the summers there. He devoted much care and expense to the beautifying of this place and enjoyed his well equipped laboratory in the midst of his beloved books and instruments.

Besides the many visits of his children and grandchildren, he found also much pleasure in extending his liberal hospitality to his many friends.

Thus passed several happy years, until in the Summer of 1834, symptoms noted for some time developed into nervous disease. Hope was entertained that the trouble might pass over; he could still interest himself moderately in his favorite pursuits. On the 1st of October 1836, he attended the elaborate celebration of his golden wedding day, although in a much broken down condition. Soon afterwards he was confined to his bed and the death of his wife followed. He lingered in a helpless condition, faithfully attended by the loving hands of his daughters and ended his useful life on the 29th of August 1838.

His children received a letter from the King saying that the nation had lost a benefactor.

In the year 1839 the Society for Public Utility (Tot Nut vanpet Alcemecu) published a biography of my grandfather, Johannes Buys, who was one of the re-organizers and for years president of this important institution which operated not only in the realm of Sciences, but in all matters concerning educational progress and improvement.

The pamphlet contains 36 printed pages and enlarges on many of my grandfather's books, which applied to the needs of that time and might not be clearly understood at present. In translating this biography, I have therefore omitted many details and added some notes of my own, partly in explanation of certain historical events and also relating to matters which came to my knowledge aside from this biography.



My translation of the biography is in condensed form but in many respects a literal one. My object is to leave to my children some account or history of my family, going back more than 150 years. As a member of the one branch brought to this country by adverse circumstances and considering that in the many years all knowledge of what relatives may still exist in my native land has ceased, I believe that this translation will be of much interest to my descendents.

CORNELIUS BUYS