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CLOQUET (Martial)

Cloquet, Martial (Braine l'Alleud, 28 January 1814 – Braine l'Alleud, 30 July 1867), diplomat.

Martial Cloquet, the son of Jean-Joseph Cloquet and Marie-Joseph Derbaix, studies first at the *Klein Seminarie* in Malines and afterwards at the University of Liège. He earns a PhD in law in 1835 and becomes a trainee with M. Allard in Brussels.

In July 1835 he asks the government to subsidize him for a voyage to the Levant, so that he can learn oriental languages. His request for subsidies is denied, but he receives a letter of introduction from the Foreign Affairs Department to the British and French ambassadors in Constantinople (Istanbul). With this recommendation in hand, he sails for the Ottoman capital via Algiers, where he falls seriously ill with meningitis. The governor of Algiers, the French Marshal Clauzel, orders that Cloquet be transferred to the military hospital in Toulon. After his convalescence, he returns to Brussels and, in December 1837, takes up a post as *commis-rédacteur* in the Home Office's Department of Industry and Commerce, which is, at that point, temporarily unified with the Foreign Office. He again requests, this time to the Secretary-General, Baron de T'Serclaes, funding for a journey to the Levant in order to study Arabic. In return for that funding, he proposes to collect commercial information. The Foreign Office – at this point, once again an independent entity – agrees on 2 February 1839 to subsidize Cloquet's commercial mission and studies of Arabic and Turkish. On 12 April 1839, Cloquet is attached as an apprentice dragoman (*élève-drogman*) to the Constantinople legation. His superior there, resident minister Baron de Behr, appreciates his skills, sees his potential as a possible consul and begins to investigate a consular posting. In April 1841 minister Lebeau appoints Cloquet to a commercial exploration mission in the Danube principalities of Moldavia and Walachia. Cloquet is also promised a consular posting in Bucharest or Jassy, but nothing ever comes of it. On 1 February 1842 he is nominated as an honorary attaché to the Foreign Office Department of Commerce.

Shortly thereafter, his consular career is further enhanced by a nomination, on 8 February 1843, as consul in Santo Tomas, Guatemala. Cloquet's Guatemala posting is not very successful: one of the Belgian colonists actually commits suicide in the consul's offices with Cloquet's own pistol. Nevertheless, on 18 August 1850, he is promoted to consul-general with jurisdiction over the whole of Central America. His period in Santo Tomas comes to an unfortunate end when he is arrested and sent to debtors' prison. His former superior in Constantinople, Baron de Behr, is dispatched on 26 August 1853 as extraordinary envoy and plenipotentiary minister to the Guatemalan government to get Cloquet out of prison and out of Guatemala on the Belgian warship *Duc de Brabant*. Eventually, the affair is settled at the diplomatic level by Foreign Office minister de Brouckère and his British colleague, Lord Clarendon, who became involved because the majority of Cloquet's creditors were British.

On 25 November 1856, Cloquet is sent to Sydney as consul-general in Australia, where he makes a number of prospective voyages to the Australian heartland (1857-1858) and Tasmania (1859). He retires from the consular service for health reasons in the summer of 1861 to briefly become municipal councillor of his native Braine l'Alleud.

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Langue
Undefined

Tomaison:
Biographical Dictionary of Overseas Belgians

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