

Le voyageur enthousiaste observe ...

*Musée de l'Hôpital Saint-Louis,
Paris, Tuesday, November 27, 2001*

Alibert Bicentennial 1801–2001

For Paris and French dermatology, this day is special in history. Revolutionary France decided at the beginning of the 19th century to reorganize the system of Paris hospitals and allot to the individual establishments special obligations. Some, e.g. the Hôtel-Dieu or the Charité, were to serve as general hospitals for the whole of Paris, whereas others, e.g. the Necker, Cochin and St-Antoine, were to serve only for two districts of the city each, and still other 'établissements' were to cater to special needs, e.g. the Maternité for pregnant women, the Hospice des Vénériens for venereal disease patients and the Saint-Louis (called l'Hospice du Nord) for chronic (skin) cases. The proposal is dated November 27, 1801, and the regulation was put in force on December 4, 1801, reading in article XIII: '... l'hospice du Nord, pour les maladies chroniques, soit contagieuses, telles que la gale, la teigne, les dartres, soit rebelles et cachectiques, comme le scorbut, les vieux ulcères, les écrouelles.' At the same time, the obligation was conveyed to incite medical teaching and the diffusion of knowledge in these places. Jean-Louis Alibert (1768–1837) was 'médecin-adjoint' at the Saint-Louis and was nominated 'médecin titulaire' on July 9, 1802. Thereby the right man was put in charge of the right place, physical basis and medical talent were combined, the first skin hospital came into being and a great career began to unfold [1, 2]. No other place or act in the world of dermatology can be compared to this unique setting in Paris of 200 years ago.

The famous Musée in the Hôpital Saint-Louis was the stage of a ceremonial session headed by the director of the hospital, Monsieur Patrick Lambert, one of the two professors and chefs de service, Prof. Patrice Morel, Dr. Daniel Wallach, president of the French Society for the History of Dermatology, and Dr. Gérard Tilles, its secretary. Mme Françoise Salaun, historienne of the Assistance Publique Hôpitaux de Paris, Dr. Michel Janier from the Saint-Louis and myself for the European Society for the History of Dermatology were speakers, and several dozen other distinguished visitors were invited guests. Relevant topics of the history of Paris dermatology, of the career and heritage of the 'grand maître' Alibert and of French dermatology in general were discussed [2, 3]. The incomparable atmosphere of the Musée with its innumerable moulages on the walls served as a stylish venue to properly accentuate this historic moment. A small brochure was edited for this event with the texts of the presentations and distributed to the visitors (frontispiece reproduced in fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Frontispiece of a brochure published on the occasion of the above bicentennial (see reference 1).

References

- 1 Wallach D, Tilles G (eds): Assistance Publique Hôpitaux de Paris and Société Française d'Histoire de la Dermatologie. Paris, 2001, 52.
- 2 Alibert-Festschrift 1987: Jean-Louis Alibert, fondateur de la dermatologie française. Société des Amis de Villefranche et du Bas-Rouergue, 125 pages.
- 3 Tilles G: La naissance de la dermatologie (1776–1880). Paris, Dacosta, 1989.

à bientôt,

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