

NERVAL'S DIARY

Le voyageur enthousiaste observe ...

*Vienna, 7 September 1995 at the Josephinum,
the Institute for the History of Medicine*

A Library for the History of Dermatology

Under the auspices of the Federal Minister of Science, Research and the Arts a collection of old and rare medical books was incorporated into the Institute's files, a magnanimous gift by (Dr.) Max (deceased) and Margareta Wolf, originally from Vienna, later in New York City. The estimated worth of the collection was set at more than \$ 220,000, comprising mostly books on dermatology but also on the history of medicine in general and on varicous venes. The Wolf couple had accumulated these treasures in a long life full of enthusiasm and love for medicine, dermatology in particular.

Max Wolf (1892–1990) [1] as much as his father Dr. Wilhelm Wolf were graduates of Vienna University. Both served with distinction in WWI in the Imperial Army and were decorated for gallantry. Max received the Order of Merit in the Arts and Sciences 1st Class by the Republic of Austria in 1989. On the occasion of the centenary of the Austrian Society of Dermatology and Venereology, Max being its oldest living member, I dedicated the Festschrift to him [2].

Margarete Wolf, née Langer of Vienna was Max's companion in a happy 63-year-long marriage. Driven from their native place by a dictatorial and racist regime, they came to the USA in 1939, settled in NYC and became American citizens to remain there ever after.

Max Wolf's parents escaped the extermination, Margareta's were killed. Almost unbelievably, both forgot the anxieties and hardships of becoming fugitives, jumped over the grief and tears caused by the murder of their kin and upheld the ties of friendship and cordiality to Vienna and to Austria, to the people and their progeny who planned and executed the holocaust.

How highly must we appreciate the magnanimity, how deeply appreciate their donation on account of all that!

With the help of the American Austrian Foundation the books were brought over and arrived on the premises in spring of this year. Originally it

was envisaged to inaugurate this special library on 1 June, Max's birthday, a timetable we could not keep. Eventually, 7 September was selected and Margareta Wolf did not shun the adversities of intercontinental travel and came over to be personally present.

In a festive atmosphere, initiated and closed with a movement each of Mozart's string quartet in G major, Köchel No. 156, addresses were delivered: by the author (in English), replied by Mrs. Wolf (in German), followed by congratulations by Signora Brambilla of the Union of Brambilla from Milan (in Italian), by Countess zu Eltz for the American Austrian Foundation (in English) and by the Federal Minister Dr. Scholten. (Giovanni Alessandro Brambilla, 1728–1800, was the first director of the Josephinum, then a Military Medical School, 1785–1795. A tradition of more than two centuries keeps us in touch with the Brambilla of Lombardy and beyond [3].

We have a priceless library of old medical books thanks to Joseph II, who built the Academia Caesareo-Regia, opened in 1785. Thanks to the munificence of former alumni of the Vienna Alma Mater such as Max Wolf (and his consort) we have become enriched further. May these invaluable volumes be help and incentive for students and researchers alike in the centuries to come. May the atlases and journals, handbooks and monographies be a delight for the eye and the mind of dermatologists, one more decorum of these historical premises. Alibert, Rayer, Cazenave, Devergie, Willan, Bateman, Hebra, Kaposi, Neumann, Struwe, Crocker, Hutchinson, Duhring, and so many more – you will meet them all!

The Max and Margareta Wolf Library for the History of Dermatology has been inaugurated.

- 1 Max Wolf (1892–1990), an obituary. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 1991;25: 863–864.
- 2 Holubar K: Festschrift on occasion of the centenary of the Austrian Society of Dermatology and Venereology. Vienna, 1989.
- 3 Wyklicky H: *Das Josephinum: Biographie eines Hauses*. Wien, Brandstätter, 1985.