

Jean Cruveilhier

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Basic Information



Name: Jean Cruveilhier
(Feb 1791–Mar 1874)

Birth Location:	Limoges, France
Titles:	anatomist pathologist experimenter
Affiliation:	Unknown
Honor:	First professor of the Chair of Pathological Anatomy in Paris (1836)

1. His Life

J. Cruveilhier was born on 9 February 1791 in Limoges, France ^[1]. For two centuries, the members of the Cruveilhier family were born and buried in Limoges. His grandfather Joseph (1726–1762) was a master surgeon and his father Léonard (1760–1836) was an important military surgeon, an attending surgeon at *Hôpital Saint-Alexis* in Limoges, and also a revolutionary Jacobin fanatic ^[2]. His mother, Anna Reix was a devout Catholic and extremely pious woman from whom J. Cruveilhier inherited an indelible sense of the catholic mysticism that he maintained throughout his life. His uncle, Jean Reix, was a priest expelled to Spain in 1792 for refusing to take the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. After his return to France, Jean Reix was the Vicar of the *Cathédrale Saint-Étienne* in Limoges ^[3].

J. Cruveilhier studied in *l'École Centrale de Limoges* (formerly, the Chapel of the Visitation) and after that, at the *École impériale* where he received an award of excellence and various prizes of honour (Latin, Literature, Mathematics, and Chemistry).

Until 1809, J. Cruveilhier, together with G.-L. Bayle and R.-T.-H. Laënnec, used to frequent the *Congrégation de la Sainte Vierge*, founded in 1801 by the Jesuit J.-B. Bourdier. Against his religious vocation, his paternal insistence led him to begin medical studies in Paris, although he abandoned them because of the disgust and horror he felt at the dissecting rooms. These events exacerbated his religious vocation so that he took refuge at the *Séminaire Saint-Sulpice* to study Theology. There he met D.-A.-L. de Frayssinous (1765–1841), who later became Bishop of Hermopolis *in partibus* and Minister of Public Instruction ^{[4][5][6]}. Again, paternal intervention forced him to resume his medical studies in Paris. As a student, he obtained several prizes (**Table 1**). He spent his whole intern period at the hôpital *Hôtel-Dieu* along with G. Dupuytren (1777–1835), for whom he developed a great empathy and high admiration, despite their ideological differences. Dupuytren was a Freemason, a member of the *Sainte-Catherine du Grand Orient Loge* in Paris; however, he protected the career of his pupil J. Cruveilhier, despite his independent nature and Catholic devotion ^[6].

Table 1. Jean Cruveilhier's academic career, distinctions and prizes.

Year	Academic Career, Distinctions and Prizes
1811	<i>Major du concours de l'internat des hôpitaux de Paris</i>

Year	Academic Career, Distinctions and Prizes
1812	<i>Prix des hospices civils de Paris</i>
1813	<i>Prix de l'école pratique</i> <i>Prix de médecine opératoire</i>
1816	<i>Dissertation</i>
1823	<i>Major du concours d'agrégation en médecine</i>
1824	<i>Professeur agrégé de médecine opératoire à Montpellier</i> <i>Membre associé non-résidant de l'Académie royale de médecine (Académie nationale de médecine nowadays)</i>
1825	<i>Professeur titulaire del la chaire d'anatomie à Paris</i>
1826	<i>Président de la Société anatomique (until 1866)</i> <i>Chef du département de médecine à l'hôpital de la Salpêtrière</i>
1828	<i>Médecin suppléant à la Maison royale de la santé</i>
1830	<i>Médecin chef de la maternité de Paris</i> <i>Chirurgien chef du service des hôpitaux de Paris</i>
1833	<i>Medaille recompense epidemie cholera</i>
1836	<i>Premier professeur titulaire de la chaire d'anatomopathologie de Paris</i> <i>Membre élu de l'Académie royale de médecine</i>
1843	<i>Membre de la Société de chirurgie de Paris</i>
1847	<i>Chef du service de chirurgie de l'hôpital de la Charité</i>
1848	<i>Membre du comité consultatif d'hygiène</i>
1849	<i>Medaille recompense epidemie cholera</i> <i>Chef de service de chirurgie de l'hôpital de la Salpêtrière</i>
1855	<i>Medaille recompense epidemie cholera</i>
1856	<i>Docteur émérite des hôpitaux</i>
1859	<i>Président de l' Académie impériale de médecine (Académie nationale de médecine nowadays)</i>
1863	<i>Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur</i>
1866	<i>Professeur émérite</i>

2. His Work

On 24 January 1816, J. Cruveilhier defended his doctoral thesis (**Table 2**), dedicated to his father Leonard and his master G. Dupuytren. Influenced by the works of M.-F.-X. Bichat and his friend R.-T. Laënnec, J. Cruveilhier showed his special interest in the study of the anatomical lesion ^[4]. Once he obtained his doctoral degree, J. Cruveilhier returned to Limoges to succeed his father. He married Jenny Grellet des Prades de Fleurette (1801–1849), daughter of a notable banker from Limoges and the manager of *l'hôpital Saint-Alexis*. In October of that year, the prefect of the Haute-Vienne (France) asked him for a report about the major epidemic of typhoid fever, a disease that J. Cruveilhier called 'enteromesenteric fever' ^[7] while masterfully describing the anatomical lesions of the ileum. Between 1818 and 1821, he applied for the direction of the Childbirth Course of the Limoges Hospital and then for the charge of chief surgeon, without any success ^[3].

In 1823, he took the restored '*Concours d'agrégation*' (competition for professorship) (**Table 1**) again under the guidance of his father and supported by G. Dupuytren, J. Cruveilhier was the first of the five promoted *agrégés* over the twenty-six candidates presented, among them being A. Velpeau. Following G. Dupuytren's recommendation, J. Cruveilhier chose to be *agrégé de médecine opératoire* (professor of Surgical Medicine) in Montpellier, where he went in July 1824. Nevertheless, this place did not please him and J. Cruveilhier returned to his native town resolved to dedicate himself to the most unfortunate sick people. When everything was ready for this return to Limoges, P.A. Béclard (1785–1825) died. Thereafter, J. Cruveilhier received this message from G. Dupuytren: '*Beclard passed away, come to Paris, you have a chance*' ^{[3][5]}. D.-A.-L. de Frayssinous, who was already *Grand Maître de l'Université*, also encouraged him to go to Paris to seat in the Chair of Anatomy left by P.A. Béclard. However, G. Breschet (1784–1845) and J. Cloquet also applied for this position. The designation of J. Cruveilhier was considered as an act of ministerial authority. J. Cruveilhier was received with hostility by the students when he presented at the *grand amphithéâtre* of the Faculty of Paris on 10

November 1825. His personality and sincere modesty quickly conquered his audience ^[4]. Thinking of his students, J. Cruveilhier began to compose his work *Anatomie descriptive* (see below). Among his partners in *l'École pratique de dissection de Paris* were E.-P.-M. Chassaignac (1804–1879), C.-L. Bonamy (1812–1887), P. Broca (1824–1880) ^{[8][9][10]} and the artist Emile Beau (1810–1872), who also assisted in drawing anatomical atlases by authors such as A.-L. Foville (1799–1878) and his *Traité complet de l'anatomie, de la physiologie et de la pathologie du système nerveux cérébro-spinal* (1844), which is regarded as one of the best works on the subject before the invention of the microscope ^[11].

In 1826, J. Cruveilhier was appointed chief physician of the hospitals of Paris, which was followed by his success in a series of clinical appointments until 1849. (**Table 1**). On 12 October 1826, he restored the 'Société d'anatomie', founded in 1803 by G. Dupuytren and dissolved in 1808 under the chairmanship of R.-T. Laënnec. J. Cruveilhier was its president until 1866 when G. Breschet was appointed ^[12].

In 1835 G. Dupuytren died. His last volition was to endow funding for the creation of the Chair of Pathological Anatomy of Paris, and designed his disciple J. Cruveilhier as its first holder. Appointment that he accepted. In 1836, G. Breschet succeeded J. Cruveilhier to the Chair of Anatomy at Paris University.

J. Cruveilhier's professional life shared two culminations: a religious devotion to the sick and the development of a rigorously scientific career with many honours ^[4]. Along with his work at the *Charité* and *Salpêtrière* hospitals, he was involved in a very active clinical practice in Paris under the rules of a very strict ethic that he summarized in his speech *Des devoirs et de la moralité du médecin* (**Table 2**). J. Cruveilhier founded a charity to help humble people. He had significant customers, national and foreign, and from all social classes to whom he gave equal treatment. When he was invited to be the physician of Napoleon III (1807–1873), J. Cruveilhier answered '...qu'il le soignerait comme mes maladies d'hôpital'...'I would take after him as I do with my patients at the hospital'. On a separate occasion, he was advised to make a courtesy visit to the emperor, and so he said: '...s'il n'est pas malade, ma visite est inutile'...'if he is not sick, my visit is useless'. Cruveilhier's attitude upset Napoleon III, who vetoed his election to the *Institut de France* ^[6].

In 1866, at the age of 75 and at the insistence of his family, he retired. He left Paris on 18 September 1870, a day before the siege of Paris by the Prussian forces and went to Sussac (Haute-Vienne, France) where he died of pneumonia on 7 March 1874. The funeral was held in the church where he had been baptized.

The scientific authority of J. Cruveilhier was widely recognized both in France and abroad. J. Cruveilhier's academic career, distinctions, and prizes are shown in **Table 1** (as collected from the *Académie nationale de médecine* ^[13]; Orcel and Vetter ^[3]; Androutsos and Vladimirov ^[4]; Vayre, ^[5] and Huard, ^[11]). The only lack in his brilliant career was not to become a member of the *Institut de France* due to the personal veto of Napoleon III ^[6].

Table 2. The Key publications of Jean Cruveilhier (according to Orcel and Vetter ^[3]; Androutsos and Vladimirov ^[4]; Vayre ^[5]; Huard ^[11]).

Year	Name of Publication
1816	<i>Essai sur l'anatomie pathologique en général et sur les transformations et productions organiques en particulier</i> (2 volumes.). Doctorate thesis, Paris
1821	<i>Médecine pratique éclairée par l'anatomie et la physiologie pathologiques</i> . J.B. Baillière et fils, Paris
1824	<i>An omnis pulmonum exulceratio vel etiam excavatio insanabilis ? Concours d'agrégation en médecine thesis</i> , Montpellier
1825	<i>Discours sur l'histoire de l'anatomie</i> . Opening lecture of his anatomy course as professor of descriptive anatomy in Paris
1828–1842	<i>Anatomie pathologique du corps humaine, ou descriptions, avec figures lithographiées et coloriées, des diverses alterations morbides dont le corps humain est susceptible</i> (2 volumes). Illustrated Atlas. T1: 118 plates [82 hand-coloured]; T.II: 115 plates [2 double, 85 hand-coloured]. J.B. Baillière et fils, Paris
1829–1836	In the <i>Dictionnaire de médecine et de chirurgie pratique</i> (15 volumes) the following articles: "Abdomen", "Acéphalocystes", "Adhérences", "Adhésions" "Anatomie chirurgicale médicale", "Anatomie pathologique", "Artères (maladies des)", "Articulations (maladies)", "Entozoaires", "Estomac", "Muscles" and "Phlébites". Ed: Gabon, Méquignon-Marvis, Paris.
1830	<i>Cours d'études anatomiques</i> (2 volumes) chez Béchét Jeune, Paris.
1833	<i>Traité de médecine pratique éclairé par l'anatomie et la physiologie</i> , Paris
1834–1836	<i>Anatomie descriptive</i> (4 volumes). Béchét jeune, Paris,

Year	Name of Publication
1835	<i>Deux cas d'anomalie dans la distribution de l'artère brachiale, Bulletins et memoires de la Société Anatomique de Paris, 1835: 2</i>
1836	<i>Académie royale de médecine: Trois rapports sur un mémoire de M. Jules Guérin, relatifs aux déviations simulées de la colonne vertébrale: faits à l'Académie royale de médecine, au nom d'une commission.</i>
1837	<i>Des devoirs et de la moralité du médecin, Discours prononcé dans la séance publique de la Faculté de médecine -de Paris-, le 3 Novembre 1836</i>
1838	<i>Académie royale de médecine: Mémoire sur les déviations simulées de la colonne vertébrale, et les moyens de les distinguer des déviations pathologiques, présenté à, le 31 mai 1836 / Précédé de trois rapports faits à l'Académie royale de médecine [par J.Cruveilhier] et suivi des comptes rendus des discussions soulevées à l'Académie à l'occasion de ce mémoire; 2^e mémoire sur les difformités. Auteurs: Jules Guérin; Jean Cruveilhier</i>
1838	<i>Anatomie du système nerveux de l'Homme</i>
1839	<i>Académie royale de médecine –Rapport fait à cette académie dans la séance du 22 octobre 1839 sur les pièces pathologiques modelées en relief et publiées par le docteur Félix Thibert, auteur d'un nouveau procédé</i>
1841	<i>Vie de Dupuytren. Ed. Béchet jeune et Labé, Paris</i>
1844	<i>Atlas the anatomy of the human body with Constantin L.Bonami y Emile Beau. H. Bailliere, London.</i>
1846	<i>Histoire de l'anatomie pathologique in Annales de l'anatomie et de la physiologie pathologiques (1846), 9–18, 37–46, 75–88.</i>
1849–1864	<i>Traité d'anatomie pathologique générale (5 volumes) J.B. Baillière et fils, Paris.</i>
1853	<i>Sur la paralysie progressive atrophique in Bulletin de l'Académie de médecine, 18 (8 March 1853), 490–502 (29 March 1853), 546–584.</i>
1858	<i>Communication a l'Académie impériale de médecine: De la fièvre puerpérale, de sa nature et de son traitement (30 March 1858), 127–155.</i>

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