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Neurological stamp

Ambrose Paré 1510-90

The influence of Paré on sixteenth century surgery was as great as Vesalius' on anatomy and like Vesalius he based his work on original observation. As a result surgical treatment became more humane. Among his many contributions, Paré showed that wounds need not be cauterised by applying boiling oil and that haemorrhage after amputation could be controlled by ligature instead of cautery. "Je le pansay, Dieu le guarit" ("I treated him, God healed him") was a favourite expression of his.

Paré introduced new instruments for opening the skull, and wrote on wounds of the head and nerves. He was surgeon to four kings of France, becoming in 1552 surgeon to King Henry II. In 1559 Henry, whilst celebrating the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth to Philip of Spain, was struck in the eye by a lance at a jousting tournament. Great physicians, including Paré, were sent for. To discover the nature of the injury an experiment was performed in which the stump of a lance was applied to the heads of four executed criminals. When Vesalius arrived soon after, he correctly forecast that the King would die. Post-mortem showed this was due to cerebral compression from a contrecoupe injury and subdural haemorrhage.

This stamp was one of a series issued in 1943 to honour famous sixteenth century Frenchmen. (Stanley Gibbons No 793, Scott No B163).

LF HAAS