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Neurological stamp

Aureolus Philippus Theophrastus Bombastus Von Hohenheim or Paracelsus 1493-1541

Paracelsus, one time professor of medicine in Basel, and "father of pharmacology" had a bombastic, impetuous personality but managed to rouse people against existing dogmatism. High self esteem led to his adopting the name Paracelsus, to indicate his authority was equal or superior to that of Celsus. A pioneer in chemical therapeutics he was the first to promote chemical substances in treatment. Paracelsus attacked all medical authorities except Hippocrates. He incurred displeasure by lecturing in German, rather than Latin. Academic colleagues excluded him from university halls, but he continued to give lectures based on his own experiences, many obtained from extensive travels in Europe and the Middle East. He expressed his antagonism for traditional medicine by publicly burning the books of Avicenna, Galen and others. Paracelsus was the first to write on the occupational diseases of miners and to note geographical differences of diseases. His contempt for anatomy was combined with a failure to see how knowledge could be gained from a dead body.

He established the correlation between cretinism and endemic goitre and described the congenital transmission, and mercurial treatment of syphilis. He introduced tincture of opium—labdanum or laudanum—with which he effected miraculous cures probably learnt during his travels in the East. Paracelsus warned against stress and advised avoiding strongly flavoured wines, rich food, anger and women, made observations on epilepsy, took the view that St Vitus' dance was a disease and knew of paralysis and disturbance of speech after head injuries. Ironically his



death followed a tavern brawl. Germany honoured him on a stamp issued in 1949. (Stanley Gibbons 1040, Scott 8311).