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Neurological stamp

CLAUDIUS GALEN 131-201 AD

After studying at the best medical schools of the time, Galen returned initially to his native city, Pergamon and was physician to the gladiators. There he would have had ample opportunity to observe the effects of acute injuries to the head and spine. Galen, who did not leave any good accounts of clinical cases, only miraculous cures, had an answer for every problem. His dogmatism and infallibility persisted for 14 centuries until Vesalius (1514-64). Observations on the anatomy of animals were transferred to the human anatomy but he lamented the prejudice which prevented dissection of the human body. Neurology was the best feature of his anatomical work. Most of the gross structures of the brain were classified by him. He knew of seven pairs of cranial nerves and of the cervical, brachial and lumbar sacral plexuses. The sympathetic ganglia were described as reinforcers of the nerves. His myology was based mainly on the study of the barbary ape. He understood the difference between origin and insertion, and was aware of most muscles and their functions.

Among his brilliant experiments were the demonstrations of the function of the laryngeal nerves, the motor and sensory functions of the spinal nerve roots, and the effect of transverse incision and hemisection of the spinal cord. He knew hydrophobia followed the bite of a mad dog and sometimes maniacal attacks supervened. Galen showed that arteries contained blood and not air and was close to discovering the circulation of the blood. He was the founder of experimental physiology. This Hungarian stamp issued in 1989 is one of a "Pioneers of Medicine" series.

L F HAAS

