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NEUROLOGICAL STAMP

François Magendie (1783-1855)

François Magendie, born in Bordeaux in 1783, was appointed Professor of Medicine at the College de France in Paris in 1831. He made important discoveries in neurophysiology and nutrition and is regarded by some as the father of experimental pharmacology. He is best remembered for his work on the cerebrospinal fluid and the canal in the brain that bears his name. One of his most important contributions was proof (in a litter of puppies) that the anterior roots of the spinal nerve were motor and the posterior sensory. A bitter dispute over the priority for the discovery ensued with the distinguished physiologist Charles Bell.

Magendie was also the first to produce decerebrate rigidity, the effects of excision or section of the cerebellum and of "circus movement" resulting from a lesion of the optic thalamus.

His investigations in pharmacology introduced bromine, quinine, emetine, and morphine into medical practice and he showed the effect of strychnine on the paralysed spinal cord. His *Formulaire* was published in 1821.

In 1815, post-revolutionary France was short of food. Magendie was appointed Chairman of a Commission to investigate the nutritional value of various food extracts. He showed the need for adequate amounts of the right sort of protein in a diet, laying the foundations for the science of nutrition. In 1842 he published an influential book that helped to reform clinical medicine along physiological lines.

He died on his birthday in 1855 and was honoured in 1985 in the Heroes of Medicine series issued by the Republic of Transkei. (Stanley Gibbons 178).

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