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NEUROLOGICAL STAMP

Joseph Hyrtl (1811-94)

Joseph Hyrtl's father was a musician in the famous orchestra of Count Esterhazy and Hyrtl himself was a chorister in his boyhood. He preferred medicine to music, and entered the University of Vienna to graduate in 1835 and was one of the founders of the new Vienna School. His interests centred on anatomy. At the age of 26 he became professor of anatomy in Prague and then in 1844 when aged 33, professor of anatomy in Vienna where he occupied the chair for 30 years. He became famous as a teacher and historian and was one of the exceptional medical leaders in Vienna. Hyrtl was one of the world's leaders in descriptive anatomy and his *Lehrbuch* (1846) was the German equivalent of Gray's Anatomy. There were 22 editions and it was translated into most languages. He did not add illustrations until the 20th edition. The textbook held its appeal because of its lucid style and clear descriptions. As a teacher and instructor he was widely admired. Hyrtl was especially devoted to osteology and possessed a wonderful collection of skeletons, both animal and human. He also developed the technique for making "corrosive preparations", in which the blood vessels of an organ were injected and the other tissues dissolved away by acid leaving the vasculature clearly seen. He studied the anatomy of the inner ear of humans and animals, described an anastomotic loop between the right and left hypoglossal nerves in the geniohyoid and an incomplete band of circular muscle fibres in the rectum. He was honoured philatelically by Austria in the famous series published in 1937 portraying Austrian doctors (Stanley Gibbons 821, Scott B162).

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