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Historical Vignette

Charles Labbé (1851-1889)

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✓ The vein of Labbé is a very important structure and every neurosurgeon is acquainted with its anatomy. Because of the recent increasing interest and experience in skull base surgery, the vein of Labbé has received a great deal of attention. Intraoperative damage to this vein should be avoided and several methods to prevent this have been described. Despite these developments, nothing is written in the neurosurgical literature about the man who described this vein for the first time: Charles Labbé. The authors therefore conducted an extensive search of the literature and uncovered several public records in France to learn more about Charles Labbé.

KEY WORDS • Charles Labbé • neurosurgical history

ALTHOUGH every neurosurgeon is familiar with the vein of Labbé, nothing is known about the man whose name is inextricably bound to this structure: Charles Labbé. A search of neurosurgical literature and of standard biographical and bibliographical works did not reveal any information about Charles Labbé.^{1-7, 10, 19-22} Therefore, we conducted an extensive search in France, contacting the Medical Faculty in Paris and consulting registers of births, deaths, and marriages in Paris and Merlerault.

Personal History

Charles Labbé was born on October 8, 1851 in a small village in Normandy called Merlerault in the district of Orne. His father was Alexandre Labbé (1823-1888) and his mother was Marie Chapey (1830-?). His choice of a career in medicine is remarkable in that it broke with family tradition: Labbé's father was a notary in Merlerault, as was his grandfather, Alexandre Labbé (1790-1847), and his great-grandfather, Pierre Jacques Labbé (1763-?). Perhaps Charles Labbé was inspired by his uncle, Léon Labbé (1832-1916), a worthy surgeon who worked at the Beaujon Hospital and who was also an associate professor of surgery at the Medical Faculty in Paris.

Charles Labbé studied at the Medical Faculty of Paris from 1871 until 1882. On March 13, 1882, he successfully defended his thesis and became a Docteur en Médecine (Fig. 1). During and shortly after completing his course of study, Labbé worked as a prosector (aide d'anatomie) at the Medical Faculty in Paris; he resigned this position on October 26, 1882 (Fig. 2). In November 1885 he married

Marie Eugénie Boussaton (1863-1891). Their only child, Suzanne, was born in 1889. Three weeks after his daughter was born, Charles Labbé died on October 22, 1889 in Paris. Despite a thorough search, we were unable to discover why Labbé resigned his position as a prosector, which practical medical activities he undertook during the remainder of his life, or the cause of his death.

Medical Publications and Presentations

The number of medical publications and presentations by Charles Labbé is limited, probably because of his early death. In collaboration with Paul Bruchet at a congress in Reims, Labbé presented the case of a patient suffering from gangrene of the extremities in combination with a stomach ulcer (Fig. 3). In 1879, the article entitled "Note sur la circulation veineuse du cerveau et sur le mode de développement des corpuscules de Pacchioni" was published in the *Archives de Physiologie Normale et Pathologique* (currently known as the *Journal of Physiology* [Paris]).¹¹ In a short introduction to this publication, Labbé mentioned that Paul Jules Tillaux (1834-1904) was his supervisor. Tillaux was a famous surgeon, also working at the Beaujon Hospital, who produced publications about the surgical treatment of fractures of the vertebral column, among other subjects. In the body of the article Labbé described various kinds of intracranial connections of cerebral veins. In his paragraph on the communications between dural sinuses, he reported the presence of the vein that bears his name. First, he discussed the vein earlier reported by Trolard, also called the "grande veine

EXAMENS

NATURE des examens.	NUMÉROS ET DATES des consignations.	SOMMES payées.	DATES de l'examen.	RÉSULTAT.	SOMMES remboursées.	DATES des remboursements.	OBSERVATIONS.
1 ^{er} Fin d'année.	5003	30.	24 juillet 1882	Satisfait			Comp
2 ^e	5174	30.	29 juillet 1883	bon			Comp
3 ^e	5379	30.	26 juillet 1884	très satisfait			Comp
1 ^{er} Doctorat	8020	00	4 mai 1887	Exès satisfait			
2 ^e	3387 3389		3 juin 87 11 juin 87	Exès Exès	Ex. Antérieure orale		
3 ^e	5890		1881 30 juillet	Passable			
4 ^e	7914		1881 29 Xb.	Passable			
5 ^e	747		1882 27 janvier	Satisfait			
Thèse	1491		13 mars 1884	Exès			

Candidat.
M. LABBÉ. 98
Président
M. VERNEUIL.
EXAMINATEURS.
MM. FOURNIER.
TERRILLON.
REMY.

THÈSE.

Procès-verbal

LOI du 10 Mars 1803 (19 Ventôse anXI) et ARRÊTÉS DE L'UNIVERSITÉ du 26 Septembre 1837 et du 7 Septembre 1846.

N° 1491

L'an 1882 le 13 Mars.
Nous, Professeurs et Agrégés, nommés par la Faculté de Médecine de Paris pour interroger M. Labbé

sur sa THÈSE intitulée :

Etude sur les granulations de Pucchioni suivie d'une note sur les moyens de communication de la circulation veineuse intra-crânienne avec l'extérieur du crâne.

Ayant été *entièrement* satisfaits de ses réponses, nous proposons à la Faculté de lui faire délivrer le Diplôme de Docteur en médecine.

J. Verneuil
Remy

FIG. 1. Left: Report of examination results in the medical study of Charles Labbé. Right: Medical degree certificate presented to Charles Labbé. (Courtesy of Centre Historique des Archives Nationales. Atelier de Photographie.)

*De résignation
à portée de
par le 18 82
M. Verneuil*

Monsieur le Docteur,
J'ai l'honneur de vous adresser ma démission d'aide d'anatomie.
Verneuil, agrégé,
Monsieur le Docteur,
l'assurance de ma
sentiments respectueux.
C. Labbé
26 oct. 82.

FIG. 2. Letter of resignation from the position of prosector, written and signed by Charles Labbé. (Courtesy of Centre Historique des Archives Nationales. Atelier de Photographie.)

anastomotique cérébrale." Charles Labbé proposed adding the modifier "antérieure" to the descriptive name of Trolard's vein. Labbé continued:

C'est qu'en effet on trouve, en arrière de la veine décrite par M. Trolard, une autre veine, presque aussi importante, jouant comme la précédente le rôle d'anastomose entre les sinus, et qui n'a pas encore signalée. Cette dernière pourrait être dénommée grande veine anastomotique cérébrale postérieure.

(One can find, behind the vein described by M. Trolard, another vein, almost equally important, like the former playing an anastomotic role between the sinuses, and that has never been reported before. The last one should be called greater anastomotic posterior cerebral vein. [translation by authors]) (Fig. 4).

While describing the vein for the first time, Charles Labbé already suspected it was an important structure. According to Labbé the vein acted as a connector between the superior sagittal sinus and the lateral sinus. The connection could be direct (Fig. 4 upper left) or, more frequently, indirect. In the latter case, the vein joined those of the sylvian fissure and discharged either directly into Trolard's vein or indirectly through an intermediate vein in the posterior portion of the sylvian fissure (Fig. 4 lower left). In cases in which the "grande veine anastomotique

Faculté de Médecine de Paris.

Notice individuelle.

NOM : Labbé.
Prénoms : Charles.
Naissance : { *Date :* 8 Octobre 1841
Lieu : St-Merrecruille, Eure?
Dates Universitaires : { *Bachelier en lettres, le*
is is sciences, le
Docteur, le
Autres grades : Interne des Hôpitaux.
Fonctions actuelles : Aide d'anatomie.
Services antérieurs : Aide d'anatomie provisoire, 1879-1880.
Travaux scientifiques : 1^o Note sur la circulation veineuse du cerveau et le développement des granulations de Pacchioni, in Archives de Physiologie normale et pathologique - année 1879
 2^o Observation de ganglions des extrémités, coïncidant avec un ulcère simple de l'estomac, présentée au Congrès de Rome [en collaboration avec M. Paul Bruchet]
Distinctions honorifiques :

FIG. 3. Short curriculum vitae, possibly written by Charles Labbé in 1882. In the section entitled *Scientific Works*, he mentioned his article in the *Archives de Physiologie Normale et Pathologique* and an oral presentation in which he collaborated with Paul Bruchet. (Courtesy of Centre Historique des Archives Nationales. Atelier de Photographie.)

cérébrale postérieure" had a direct connection, he also mentioned the existence of a smaller vein. This smaller vein coursed from the lateral sinus to the sylvian fissure and, according to Labbé, formed a rudimentary indirect connection between the anterior and posterior connecting vein (V.S., Fig. 4 upper left). Some French authors called this vein the small vein of Labbé ("petite veine de Labbé").^{8,9} Finally, Labbé noticed that the caliber of the posterior communicating vein was increased in the absence of Trolard's vein. Apart from the various intracranial connections of the cerebral venous system, at the end of his article Labbé discussed the dural venous lacunae and arachnoid (pacchionian) granulations.

Pacchionian granulations were the main subject of his thesis, which was entitled "Étude sur les granulations de Pacchioni suivie d'une note sur les moyens de communication de la circulation veineuse intra-crânienne avec l'extérieur du crâne."¹⁴ He also discussed possible connective pathways between the intra- and extracranial venous system. In his thesis, Labbé did not mention his earlier obser-

vation of the "grande veine anastomotique cérébrale postérieure."

In 1883 Labbé reviewed the known anatomical variations of the cranial dural venous sinuses. On the basis of these anomalies, he attempted to deduce the embryology of the dural sinuses. He mentioned some sinuses whose existence was in doubt or whose presence was variable and some that were not well known (for example, the inferior petrosal sinus and the carotid sinus).¹⁵

Labbé also published some clinical reports. In 1881 he reported the case of a patient with a huge ulcerating lipoma who was surgically treated by Léon Labbé.¹² The following year, Charles Labbé again reported on that patient.¹³ He also wrote an extensive treatise on the hypertrophic uterus.¹⁶⁻¹⁸ This is notable because one of the patients included in this treatise was also surgically treated by Léon Labbé.

An extensive search of the literature revealed no more publications or presentations by Charles Labbé. However, he made a very valuable contribution to medicine and, especially, to neurosurgery.

Acknowledgment

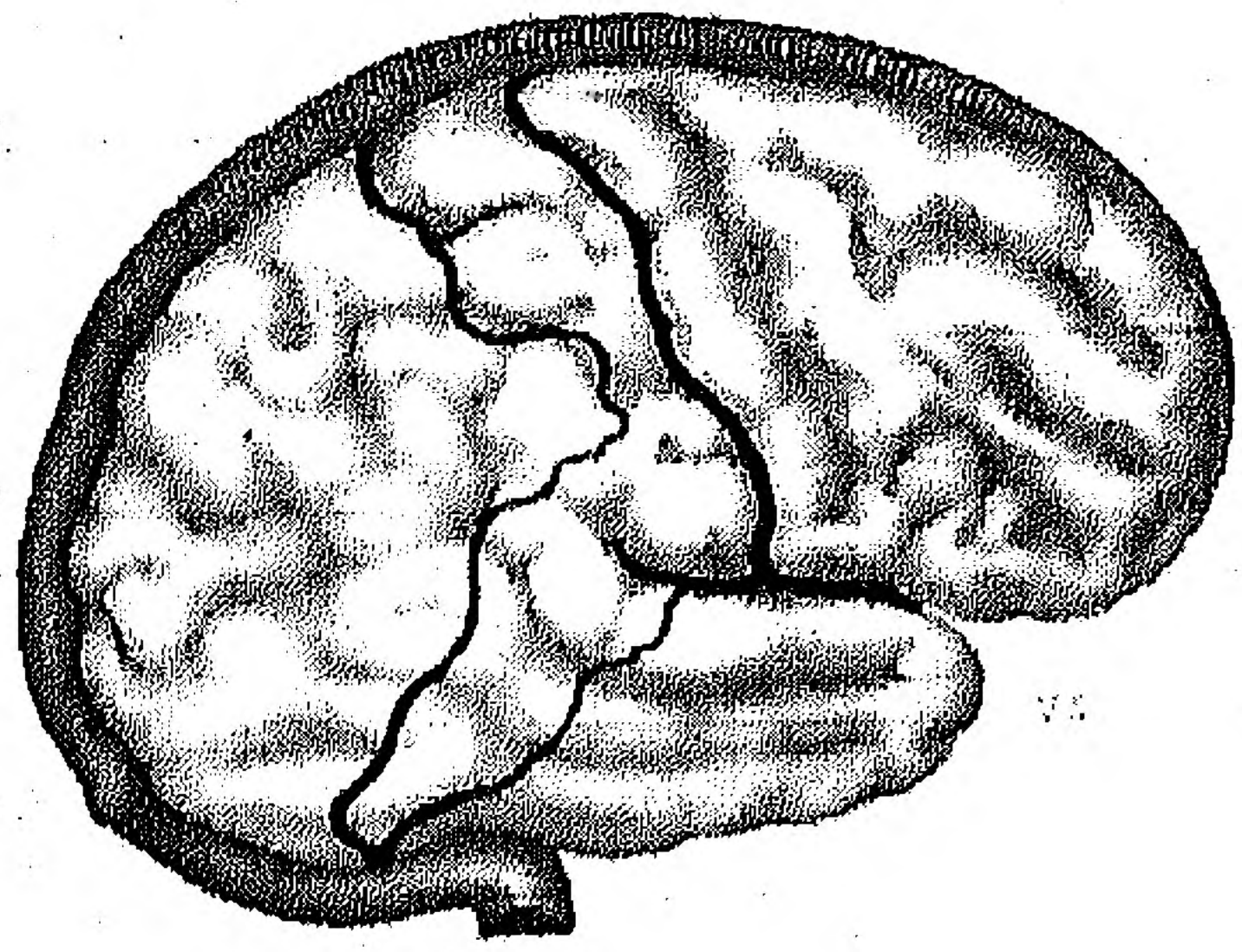
The authors express their gratitude to Mrs. Bernadette Molitor, Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire de Médecine in Paris, for her valuable bibliographic support.

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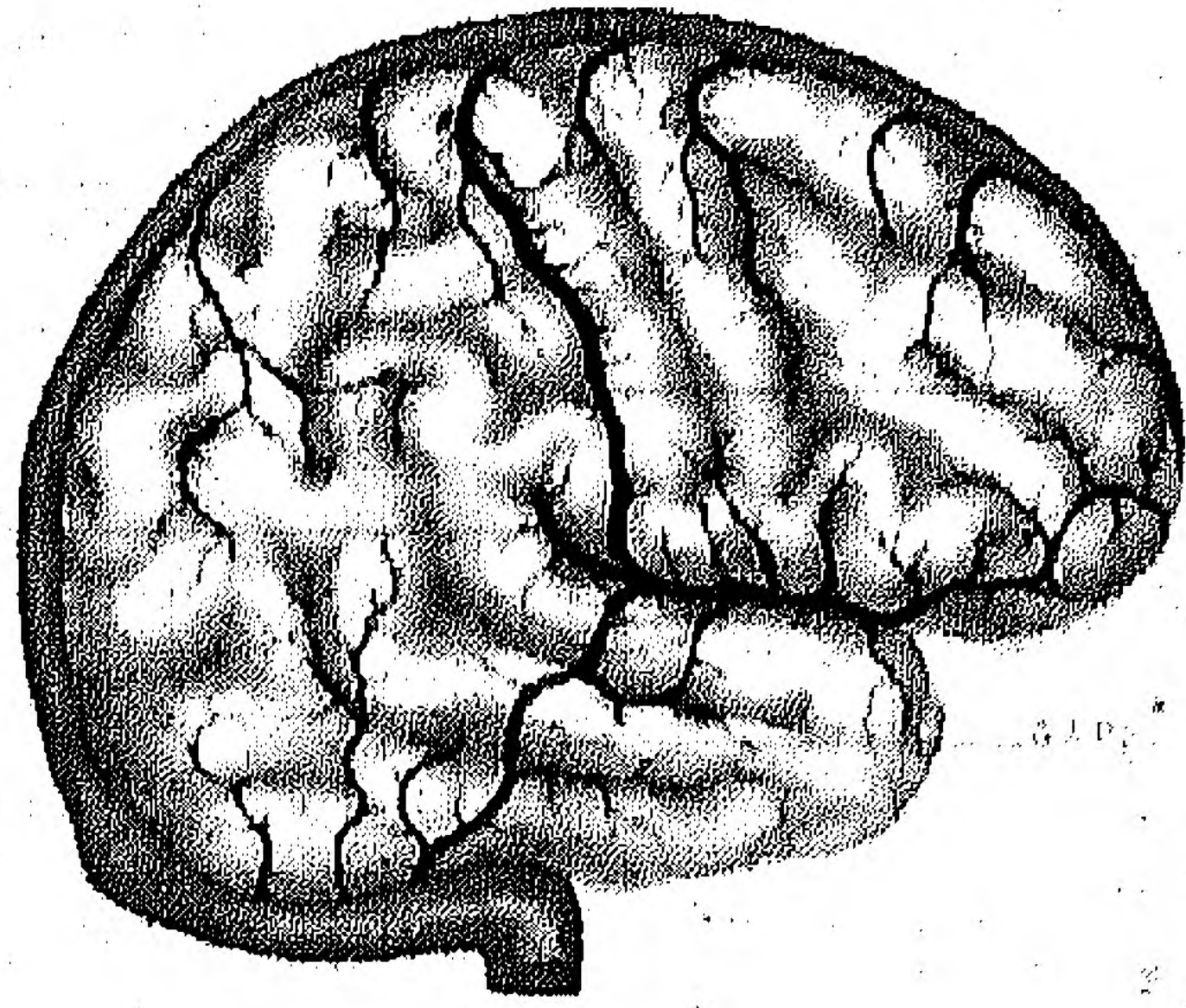
EXPLICATION DES FIGURES DE LA PLANCHE XIII.

FIGURE 1.



- Grandes veines anastomotiques cérébrales indépendantes l'une de l'autre.
 G.A.A. Grande veine anastomotique antérieure.
 G.A.P. Grande veine anastomotique postérieure.
 V.S. Veine anastomotique postérieure supplémentaire (rudiment de l'anastomotique postérieure se jetant dans l'antérieure).
 S.L.S. Sinus longitudinal supérieur.
 S.L. Sinus latéral.
 P.H. Pressoir d'Hérophile.
 S.R. Scissure de Rolando.

FIGURE 2.



- Grande veine anastomotique postérieure se jetant dans l'anastomotique antérieure.
 G.A.P. Grande anastomotique postérieure.
 G.A.A. Grande anastomotique antérieure.
 S.L.S. Sinus longitudinal supérieur.
 S.L. Sinus latéral.
 P.H. Pressoir d'Hérophile.
 S.R. Scissure de Rolando.
 P.S. Gros tronc veineux qui se jette dans l'anastomotique antérieure et qui semble la prolongation de cette veine dans la scissure de Sylvius.

FIG. 4. Figure (Planche XIII) (upper and lower left) and accompanying legend (right) reproduced from Labbé C: *Archives de Physiologie Normale et Pathologique* 6:135-154, 1879 (currently *Journal de Physiologie* [Paris]). Labbé distinguished two forms of connection between the lateral sinus and the superior sagittal sinus (see text for explanation). (Courtesy of Elsevier Publishing Company, Paris.)

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