Christian Albert Theodor Billroth

Christian Albert Theodor Billroth (1829-1894), one of the greatest surgeons of his time, received his M D degree in 1852, became Privatdozent in 1856 and four years later went to Zurich as professor of surgery. In 1867 he went to Vienna as professor of surgery, serving in this position for 25 years. In operative surgery, Billroth is remembered particularly as a pioneer in surgery of the gastro-intestinal tract. In 1872 he carried out the first resection of the esophagus and in 1881, the first resection of the pylorus for cancer, and he devised a number of operations still known by his name. He also carried out the first excision of the larynx. He was an early champion of Lister’s antiseptic methods which made his brilliant surgical achievements possible. Billroth was a man with a charming and genial personality, had a marked artistic bent, and was devoted to music, being himself an excellent pianist. He was a life-long friend of Johannes Brahms, the composer, and when he received a call to Berlin as professor of surgery, declined, giving as his reason that he could not persuade Brahms to leave Vienna.

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