

## L'Assistance Publique of Paris and Its Internes En Pharmacie.\*

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### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF WORK.

Among the philanthropic undertakings instituted by the city of Paris, with a view to the assuagement of human misery, the work of L'Assistance Publique occupies the front rank. Every one in the immense city of Paris who is suffering, hungry, deserted, sick, or indigent comes and applies to it in his trouble, and it—in the semblance of a mighty Sister of Mercy—smooths away the misery, and, as far as it is possible, heals his wounds.

The Assistance Publique directs the operations of the hospitals, almshouses, and asylums; it administers outdoor relief in the people's own homes by means of the Bureaux de Bienfaisance and L'Assistance Médicale, and it cares for the orphans, and waifs, and strays. Its influence is exerted annually over more than half a million souls, and the yearly expenditure necessitates the disbursement of about thirty-eight million francs. This sum of money is partly provided by the liberality of generous donors, the balance being made up by subventions from the city authorities.

### GENERAL ORGANIZATION.

The Assistance Publique is worked by a director, assisted by a Board of Management composed of thirty-five members chosen from among the important personages of the civic and medical circles of Paris.

The greater part of the food stuffs and other stores necessary to the operations of the Assistance Publique are prepared or housed in the general stores, which consist of provision, bakery, wine and spirit, butchers, and central stores, and the Central Pharmacy of the hospitals.

### PHARMACEUTICAL ORGANIZATION.

As a pharmacist, it is this latter portion of the service which shall now occupy my attention.

The Central Pharmacy of the Hospitals has its buildings and warehouses situated in Paris itself at the Quai de la Tournelle. From there it is that the medicines, either simple or compound, all ready prepared, as well as chemicals, syrups, tinctures, extracts, and powders are despatched to

the hospitals or almshouses in the city or those situated further in the suburbs. In each hospital (there are about twelve or fifteen, almost all within the city boundary) there is a pharmacy, the head of which is a chief pharmacist, having at his command several "Internes en Pharmacie," five to nine in number according to the importance of the hospital.

### THE "INTERNES EN PHARMACIE."

These "Internes en Pharmacie" are entrusted with the final preparation or dispensing of the various medicines in the form of potions, pills, mixtures, etc., ordered for the use of the sick inmates by the chief physicians. The title "Interne en Pharmacie," much sought after by the majority of students, in consequence of the advantages it carries with it (advantages at the same time pecuniary and honorific), is only bestowed after having passed several very stiff examinations, into the details of which it will be worth our while to enter.

### EXAMINATIONS FOR ADMISSION.

The examinations are four in number, and require about two months' time, more or less, according to the number of students presenting themselves. There are forty or fifty places to be filled yearly, for which some 150 or 200 candidates offer themselves in competition, so that it is truly a case of "many called but few chosen."

### FIRST EXAMINATION.

The candidates, who must be at least twenty-years of age, and not more than twenty seven, are called upon in the first examination to recognize various *materia medica*, specimens of botanical origin, medicinal plants, leaves, roots, rhizomes, barks, seeds, flowers, resins, etc. Twenty specimens are arranged on twenty plates on a table in the public examination hall, and six or seven examiners, nearly all of whom are professors in the School of Pharmacy, or chief pharmacists to the hospitals, conduct the examination. The candidates, divided into parties of ten in each, are shut up in adjacent rooms, and are admitted into the examination hall one by one, being made to defile past the twenty plates and name, if they can, the specimens, giving the French name, Latin name, and botanical order of each. Ten minutes exactly are allowed each candidate for the recognition of these twenty substances. A name wrongly given counts as two bad marks, and each plant not recognized as one bad mark. If the candidate has not recognized at least fifteen specimens, or if he has wrongly named

more than two or three, he is eliminated, and cannot present himself for the subsequent examinations. Often a third or fourth part of the aspirants are thus weeded out as the result of this first examination.

### SECOND EXAMINATION.

The second examination is to some extent a repetition of the first, but with the difference that the twenty specimens for recognition are compound galenicals, such as pill masses, tinctures, simple and compound, syrups, powders, and extracts, as well as some chemical substances. Ten minutes are also allowed for this portion of the trial, at least fifteen specimens having to be correctly named or the candidate is plucked, and the field of battle again strewn with the corpses of the slain, which may not be resuscitated until the next year's trial.

### THIRD EXAMINATION.

The third examination is oral. The candidates, still in groups of ten in separate rooms, are led forth one at a time and shut up in a small room without books or notes of any kind and with only a chair, table, and a small sheet of paper to distract their attention. On the paper are written two questions, one on pharmacy, the other on chemistry. The questions are really the titles of two substances or subjects about which the candidate has to lecture the examiners. After being shut up and left to his meditations in this room for ten minutes by the clock, during which time he is supposed to mentally develop his discourse, the candidate is ushered by an attendant into the public hall, where he mounts a rostrum, and for ten minutes must expatiate upon his subjects as eloquently and as learnedly as he can. For instance, the subjects may be castor oil and chloroform, about which he has to tell all he knows, and so much the worse for him if at the end of ten minutes he has not managed to bring out the chief points of interest and the more important facts chemically and pharmaceutically relating to these bodies. Marks are given by the examiners to the candidate according to the amount of erudition shown, and also to the eloquence brought into requisition.

This third examination is not eliminatory.

### FOURTH EXAMINATION.

The fourth examination is written. All the candidates (by this time generally reduced to one-half the original number) assemble in the amphitheatre, and, seated