

## Notes on Some Paris Hospitals.

## LA SALPETRIERE.

Through the kindness of another friend I received an introduction to a doctor at La Salpêtrière. I had two reasons for visiting this hospital—one to see, if it were possible, Mdlle Bottard, the oldest nurse in France, who was decorated a few years ago by the President of the Republic with the Légion d'Honneur; the second to find out, if I could, how the diploma was obtained of which I had heard at the Hospital Boucicaut.

Therefore, one lovely morning we set off and in due course arrived at La Salpêtrière. Having delivered my card of introduction and explained what I wanted, I was given a form to be delivered to the Director. After waiting in the outer office for some time, an infirmière was charged with the duty of conducting us round.

I was delighted with this, realising that now I had the opportunity of questioning one who worked under the conditions I was trying to investigate. From her I heard the worker's point of view, but first of all naturally questioned her of Mdlle Bottard. "Was she still there?" "Yes." "Would it be possible to see her?" "No; she did not think we could. Mdlle Bottard was very old and just now suffering."

Can you imagine how disappointed I felt. I had so looked forward to seeing this wonderful old lady, who for over sixty years had worked for the sick and suffering, under conditions which, to us in England, are merely ancient history.

We were shown the chapel. Needless to say, in France there is no religious qualification needed. There are no longer at Salpêtrière any Religious Sisters. "What number of hours do you work?" "From 5 a.m. to 7 or 8 p.m." "When do you get off duty?" was my next question. "One afternoon a week." "What is the length of the afternoon?" "From noon to 11 p.m. But," added our little guide, with a bright smile, "in other hospitals they get off for two hours every day, but we don't here." Then I tried to find out about the diploma, but could get no satisfactory information, except that there is no probationary time; after a few days the uniform is given, and then they are infirmières. I remarked that I had heard they were sent to other hospitals when they had received their diplomas. "Yes; some are sent after they have been here a year." "When, then, do you get your black ribbon?" I asked. "After five or six years' service, unless one has influence, then one may get it at the end of a year." "And the other ribbons and bows?" I asked, still anxious to get to the method of promotion, if there was a method. "Oh, after ten, fifteen, or twenty years' service." "Then how long must you work for the black silk cap?" "Thirty years or more," she answered. So I found out it

was time chiefly, and not capability, that made the superintendent.

We were then shown a medical ward full of nervous cases, for it is chiefly such cases that are treated here. It seems to be partly hospital and partly infirmary. The old part, which was not shown us, is used, I believe, for chronic cases.

Many readers will probably remember that Dr. Charcot, the great French nerve specialist, practised here. A life-size statue of him is placed outside the hospital, and a bronze medallion is placed over the rooms where he saw patients and lectured to the students. The arrangement of the beds interested us much. Instead of being against the wall, as with us, they were arranged in rows down the ward, one row on each side with feet to the windows, a passage-way being left between wall and beds; then two more rows lengthways down the middle of the ward, about thirty-five in all. Each bed was surrounded with white cotton curtains, shutting each patient off from her neighbour, and I felt how terribly lonely and desolate they must feel.

We saw the new surgical block, which is as up-to-date as possible, and everything arranged very much as with us. We were also shown the bathing establishment, where the patients can have any kind of bath, local or otherwise, which may be ordered. Then we saw the kitchens; but here the cooking is done by fire, and things did not look particularly tempting. We were very much astonished at seeing members of the staff of all grades, as well as patients, receiving their rations of meat, cooked or uncooked, and vegetables.

One speaks of having seen La Salpêtrière; that, however, would be impossible, as it is quite a small town in itself, capable of containing between five and six thousand patients, with, as our guide told us, a staff of between four and five hundred.

Of course, we only saw quite the very best part of the old, most of which is very ancient, and the surgical block, which is modern.

The hospital is built in huge blocks or divisions, separated by courtyards planted with trees, grass, and flowers, making very quiet, cool resting-places in the summer for the patients.

During our short visit we traversed five of these courts, and through the little streets we could see many more.

Quite the best part of our visit, however, came last. I had reconciled myself to the inevitable—I could not see Mdlle Bottard. Therefore I was most agreeably surprised when our cicerone said she would go and ask if Mademoiselle could see us.

After waiting a few minutes outside her door we were asked to enter, and were greeted by a tiny old lady with a much-wrinkled face, with two kind eyes shining out a welcome to the English nurse. After the usual greetings, I ventured to congratulate her in the name of the nurses of England upon the

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