

LOUIS PAUFIQUE  
(1899 — 1981)

**Paul Brégeat**

Paris

„You also have a love of life, of the pleasures that are the salt of existence, and the hunt certainly occupies a privileged position among them as it did for me. And I never would have reprimanded you had I learned you had sacrificed the meeting of one or another scientific society to chase about the countryside in pursuit of the hare or the partridge. . . . Stay interested in everything. Guard well your vitality and enthusiasm. This is my sincerest wish for you.

Your old friend,

Louis Paufique<sup>1)</sup>

My dear friends,  
I have just read a passage of the letter that he wrote on the occasion of my jubilee in 1979. This letter was one of the secrets we had between us. You will readily understand, therefore, that I refused an invitation to a hunt to speak today, with as much respect as affection, about him who was, for me, like a big brother and whom I consider as one of the greatest French ophthalmologists of the preceding generation.

LYONS is a city built with a remarkable regularity at the confluence of the Saône and the Rhone. It is an historic city that has kept its Celtic name, LUGDUNUM — the hill of the crow. Often frequented by the Roman emperors for long periods, it was the seat of the CONCILIUM GALLIARIUM, the provincial assemblies of Gaul. It was a city of resistance and insurrection. A military, commercial, and university city, it possesses precious Gallo-Roman antiquities. In this city of a thousand virtues, the cuisine, too, is famous, and some of its restaurants are renowned, even if they are small, like that of the mother of LOUIS PAUFIQUE. She gave us this son like the „Mère Poulard” of Mont Saint Michel gave us the ophthalmologist of the Hôpital Lariboisière in Paris.

„A part of the prestige of Professor LOUIS PAUFIQUE,” Olivier Philip, the Prefect of the Rhône-Alpes region, said recently „has accrued to this city where he was born, where he studied, and which has seen his successes.” I would add that the ophthalmologists of Lyons ought to be happy and proud to have had LOUIS PAUFIQUE, whose personality, influence, work, and career will serve as examples for the generations to come.

LOUIS PAUFIQUE was born in Lyons on 22 June 1899. Student at the lycée Ampère, he already considered studying medicine, but, son of a businessman and a restaurateur, he could not receive medical or scientific assistance in his family. We know he did his military service in Strasbourg, and we even have a photograph of him on the Place Kléber.

In 1924, Louis Paufique was 3rd in the competition for internship at the Hôpitaux de Lyon. He had a medical vocation from the beginning, and he was permitted to join the „*Medicat des Hôpitaux*”. But very soon, however, he took up his ophthalmological studies in the service of Professor ROLLET, where later he would be „*chef de clinique*”. His surgical qualities were soon noted. He was promoted to doctor of medicine in 1928, at the end of his internship. When ROLLET retired, PAUL BONNET succeeded him, and PAUFIQUE remained as assistant. BONNET was an excellent surgeon, who carefully prepared his entry into ophthalmology. PAUFIQUE worked with him, officially as a student, in practice as an adviser, for the first years at least. In the afternoon, PAUFIQUE gave private consultations in the Place Bellecour, and he operated twice a week in Vienne. He also worked at the Hôpital de Salute before entrusting it to BONAMOUR.

In 1939 came the war. PAUFIQUE was mobilized in the military hospital at Gap. On his return, he performed a prodigious amount of medical and surgical activity. An examination as ophthalmologist of the „*Hôpitaux de Lyon*” was created especially for him. He was appointed in 1943, and he directed then the service of the ANTIQUAILLE for 16 years. Finally, LOUIS PAUFIQUE was named at the first „*concours d'agrégation*” held after the war in 1946.

PAUFIGUE had many ideas for organizing the ophthalmological service in the Antiquaille, which was on the ground floor, but few resources since this was in the middle of the occupation. On the floor above was located the service of Professor GUINET, with whom he collaborated on the medical level. A solid friendship bound the two heads of the departments. GEORGES BONAMOUR, the first of PAUFIGUE's students, was PAUL BONNET's intern in the ophthalmological clinic of the EDOUARD HERRIOT hospital. He also collaborated in the ophthalmological service of the Antiquaille, particularly as regards infectious pathology. With Paufigue, however, the orientation very soon turned to the resolution of numerous surgical problems.

The „Patron” saw a succession of hard-working and passionate students. He had the gift of directing each of them to an area in which he would later excel. RENÉ HUGONNIER, the first of the series, did remarkable things in the field of binocular vision. RAYMOND ETIENNE, who is prowling through bibliographies, wrote major medical and surgical works. JACQUES ROUGIER's interests turned to traumatology and orbital surgery. All three of them became ophthalmologists of the „Hôpitaux”. But one senses already the surgical dominance of JACQUES CHARLEUX, who became PAUFIGUE's spiritual son as regards ocular surgery. CLAUDE SPIRA, first alone and then with JACQUES AUDIBERT, was concerned with retinal detachment surgery. The „Patron” stimulated, at one time or another, all aspects of ophthalmology, as HUGONNIER pointed out. Authoritatively, but without being authoritarian, he advised and oriented the research and was himself the author of modern ocular surgery with lamellar corneal grafts, then with lamellar scleral resections and scleral indentations in 1950 – 51.

In 1952, he guided PIERRE GÉRARD MOREAU to the *Institut Pasteur* and to the *Institut Mérieux* of Lyons on the subject of vitreous lyophilization and on biological implants, which he preferred to synthetic implants for detachment surgery. He even recommended an orbital implant made of the head of a femur of a still-born child after enucleation. At the Antiquaille, the surgical activity was intense. If the hospitalization rooms left something to be desired, there were, nevertheless, two operating theatres, which functioned almost continuously with a remarkable nursing service. PAUFIGUE had his students do surgery, and all this first group of assistants moved on to university or hospital positions or had an international practice.

A new wave of interns arrived who would become future „agrégés”: MAURICE RAVAUT, MIREILLE BONNET, JEAN LUC DURAND. They worked ceaselessly, and showed the difficult cases to the „Patron”, who was in his office at the end of the ward. He often made the surgical plan for the operation to be performed. His person carried such certitude that many patients accepted sometimes disfiguring operation for their child or themselves, that they would have refused to accept from the assistant. The „Patron” with his serious and direct gaze, was profoundly human. He knew the arguments to convince the director to admit an indi-

genous patient or to improve his service. In the time when there were several keratoplasties a day and when the legislation on the subject was not very revelant, however, very often ocular globes had to be dealt with in his service every morning.

His students formed a team that varied as far as ability and ambition were concerned but all were brilliant. He wanted to ignore their quarrels and succeeded in imposing a profound harmony. He had the simplicity of all great men and a highly developed concept of teamwork: he said „we“ and never „I“.

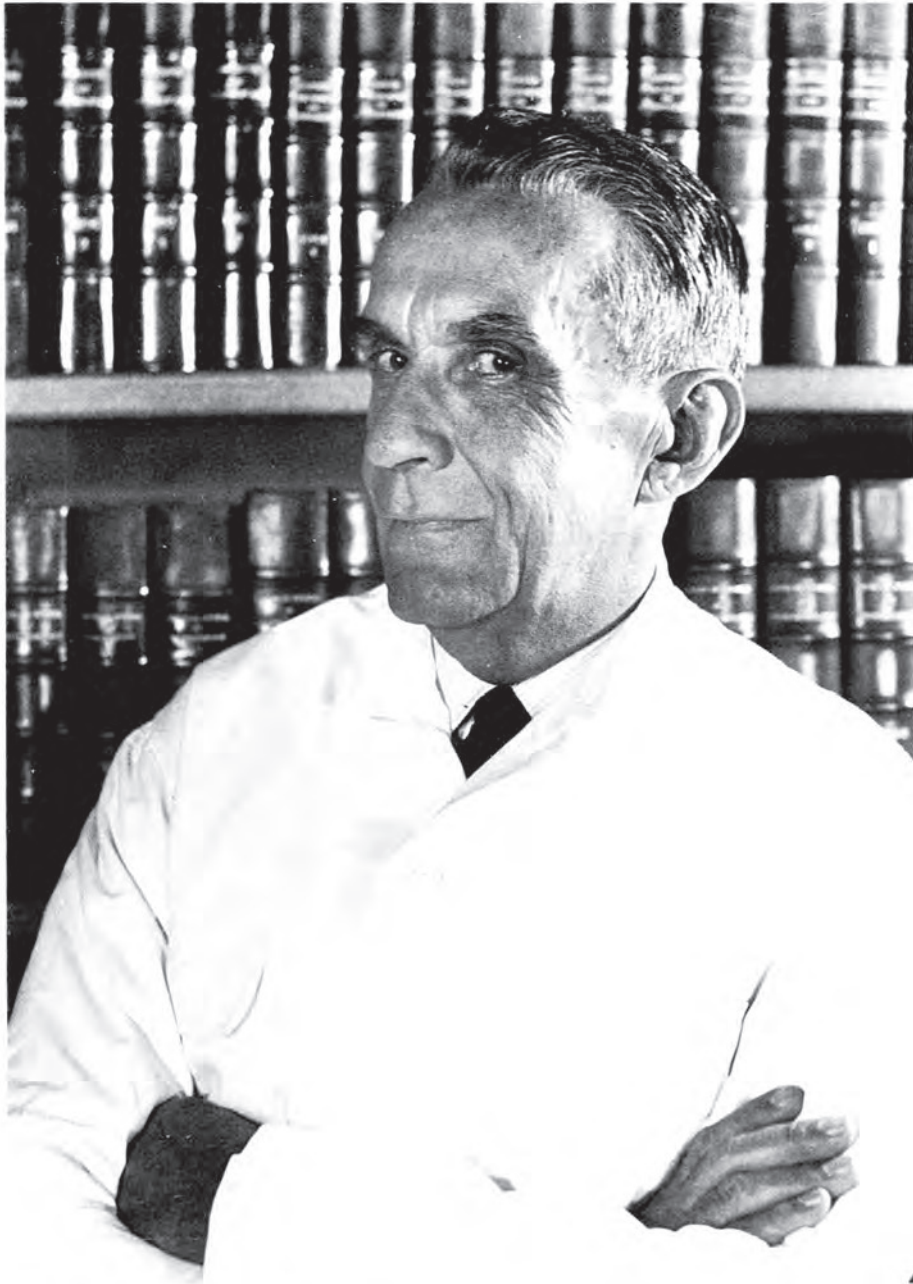
It is understandable that, in such an atmosphere, some of his interns preferred to stay at the *Antiquaille* rather than become clinical directors at the *Hôpital Edouard Herriot*.

Finally, in 1956, in taking the university chair of ophthalmolgy, „LOUIS PAUFIQUE“, and here I quote HUGONNIER, „arrived at his rightful place, the first.“ He got the public authorities to create a genuine service in the Hôpital Edouard Herriot, and he assigned his assistants autonomous departments for their intellectual and scientific development. This „*Grand Seigneur de l'Ophtalmologie*“ reigned with his customary kindness and his elegant simplicity until he retired in 1969. Before that, however, he had created a second chair of ophthalmology at the CROIX ROUSSE for his first student, GEORGES BONAMOUR, and he sent JEAN LOUIS BONNET to Grenoble, PIERRE GÉRARD MOREAU to Dijon, and JEAN ROYER to Besançon as professors. He also helped his students in the choice of their extra-ophthalmological career: thanks to him, ROBERT was assigned the medical genetics chair at Lyons. With GABRIEL PIERRE SOURDILLE, he sustained the career of PAUL TESSIER in maxillo-facial surgery in France. After his retirement from the university hospital, LOUIS PAUFIQUE withdrew to private practice assisted by CHARLEUX. He did not want to interfere with his students in their difficult task of succeeding him. HUGONNIER took over the chair.’

But it must be added that he was appointed Administrator of the „*Hospices Civils*“ of Lyons, the second French hospital organization, on 12 May 1959, and that he continued in this post after his retirement to the end. As Mr. COLLOMB, Senator and Mayor of Lyons said, „his mandates were renewed each time until 17 December 1969, when he was elected President ‚de facto‘ ... and he was always reelected, even after the modifications of the statutes in 1974.“ Mr. COLLOMB added that LOUIS PAUFIQUE always manifested courage and diplomacy in his administration and, at the same time, kindness, immense dedication, a profound sense of humanity, and incessant activity.

The scientific work of LOUIS PAUFIQUE is remarkable. It is based on solid medical concepts and deals primarily with the surgical problems that he succeeded in resolving by improving the surgical indications or techniques.

He knew how to choose the subject that had to be investigated, and then he would encourage one of his students in whom he had confidence to help him.



*Fig. 1:* Louis Paufigue (1899–1981)

PAUFIQUE belonged to almost all the scientific societies. But it was at the *Société d'Ophthalmologie de Lyon*, which had the most doctors present at its meetings, that he almost always gave commentaries on each case and intervened even with humor. One day, for example, when everything had been said about the rules and the precautions necessary with regard to postoperative infections of cataracts, PAUFIQUE smiled and added: „But you've forgotten the prostate.”

Among the scientific books, we must mention the „*Rapport sur les kérateplasties à la Société Française d'Ophthalmologie*” in 1948, in which GABRIEL SOURDILLE treated perforating keratoplasty and LOUIS PAUFIQUE lamellar keratoplasty. The authors collaborated with GUY OFFRET for the pathological anatomy.

Finally, the treatise on ocular surgery entitled „*Traitement chirurgical des affections oculaires*” by LOUIS GUILLAUMAT, LOUIS PAUFIQUE, RAYMOND DE SAINT MARTIN, SUZANNE SCHIFF WERTHEIMER, and GABRIEL PIERRE SOURDILLE, published in 3 volumes by Doin et Cie. in 1961, is a work in which everything is perfect, from the general conception to the least detail.

The enormous prestige acquired by LOUIS PAUFIQUE in the course of the years was not, in the beginning, perceived abroad as it should have been, because he travelled little. The Anglo-Saxons were slow to recognize him, but when they did they appreciated his worth: in 1959, PAUFIQUE gave the *Bowman Lecture* on the techniques of lamellar resection. It was the first time a Frenchman was invited to give this lecture since Morax gave it in 1919.

PAUFIQUE was also awarded the *Médaille d'Or de l'Institut Barraquer*, of both Barcelona and Bogota, and was the French member of the *International Council of Ophthalmology* in 1955, a corresponding national member of the Academy of Medicine in 1954, a member of the *International Academy of Ophthalmology* in 1976, and a member of the *Conseil d'Administration* of our *Groupe Francophone d'Histoire d'Ophthalmologie*.

We have spoken of the administrator of the *Hospices civils de Lyon*, but in their eulogies at the funeral of LOUIS PAUFIQUE the Mayor of Lyons and the Prefect of the region recalled numerous other functions that I cannot list here, as they are too many.

LOUIS PAUFIQUE was *Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur*, *Grand Croix de l'Ordre National du Mérite*, *Officier de l'Instruction Publique*, and *Chevalier de la Santé Publique*.

In considering the life and work of LOUIS PAUFIQUE, one tends to believe in some kind of phenomenon of spontaneous generation in ophthalmology by which he created himself and then went on to create others. One may also say that, thanks to the school he created, Lyons became the Mecca of French ophthalmology. For my part, I prefer to speak of a „*Grand Siècle*”, since this genius was named LOUIS.

But if LOUIS PAUFIQUE was able to develop his full potential and to give to those around him, if he could manifest such a personality, it was certainly thanks to the atmosphere of goodness that he breathed in his family. Dear SIMONE, you brought him calmness, happiness, and quality to his home. He preferred simple hospitality above all, and many doctors remember the evenings spent with you who were, both of you, incomparable hosts.

He had a highly developed notion of family. Madame THEVENIN, his faithful secretary, knew him when she first worked for PAUL BONNET and followed him to Place Bellecour. She enjoyed his respect, confidence, and friendship, and said that he had only one photograph in his personal office, that of his brother, lieutenant in the light cavalry, who was killed in 1914. The other official photographs were displayed in the Antiquaille, among them being those of his personal friends, and particularly that of PAUL BAILLIART.

PAUFIQUE loved children. The nurses of his service speak of his joy at having created the first ophthalmological service for children and of the pride with which he showed it to visitors. He did not have any children, but he had twelve godsons and two adopted sons. One of them is PHILIPPE SOURDILLE. A bond of friendship developed between GABRIEL PIERRE SOURDILLE and LOUIS PAUFIQUE and between their spouses that was manifested each day. The two couples were inseparable at congresses, on scientific trips, and at ophthalmological meetings at Lyons or Nantes, where the symbol of GABRIEL PIERRE was the perforating graft and that of LOUIS PAUFIQUE the lamellar graft. Sadly, SOURDILLE was condemned to an inexorable death, and he knew it. He knew also that he would leave two children, one still young, and a wife in distress. A few days before he died, PAUFIQUE was at his bedside and succeeded in comforting him. LOUIS and SIMONE PAUFIQUE took PHILIPPE SOURDILLE into their home like their own son. PHILIPPE studied medicine at Lyons, where he was appointed intern at the „Hôpitaux” where he learned his profession with LOUIS PAUFIQUE before returning to Nantes to exercise it brilliantly. Such acts in the life of a couple give one pause.

PAUFIQUE had many friends, and among ophthalmologists he had a profound affection for GABRIEL SOURDILLE, about whom we have just spoken, for PAUL BAILLIART, and for RAYMOND DE SAINT MARTIN. We have noted the place of honor that the photograph of PAUL BAILLIART occupied in the Antiquaille. And PAUFIQUE frequently visited PAUL BAILLIART in his service of the *Quinze Vingts* because of his admiration for him. I still remember how LOUIS PAUFIQUE tried vainly to console the distraught JEAN PIERRE at the funeral of PAUL BAILLIART.

At the beginning of his practice, LOUIS PAUFIQUE saw one of de SAINT MARTIN's surgical patients who came to have his corrective lenses checked. DE SAINT MARTIN had performed an impeccable total bilateral extraction with a re-

sulting visual acuity of 10/10. PAUFIQUE impressed by the new technique, wrote to de SAINT MARTIN to congratulate him and to give him news of his patient. The Toulouse ophthalmologist, unaccustomed to this deontological practice, thanked him and asked to meet him at the next congress. These two men of such different ages became friends for life and followed together the epic of ocular surgery. PAUFIQUE asked in a letter to AMALRIC that the „*Histoire d'Ophthalmologie*” honor de SAINT MARTIN, a warm friend and joyous musician, who passionately loved his profession.

LOUIS PAUFIQUE was kind and courteous to his colleagues, without ever pronouncing a disparaging word in their regard. Even if one of them had made a diagnostic error or a surgical mistake, he did not criticize but supported him.

He always promoted the collaboration and even the union of the French schools of ophthalmology. And he wrote in the preface of the book, on the optic disc, that we wrote with GEORGES BONAMOUR and MIREILLE BONNET in 1968: „*I am happy to stress this new proof of the friendship that unites the Schools of Lyons and of Paris*”. He was also asked to preside the *XXII International Congress of Ophthalmology* to be held in Paris in 1974. He answered that he was retired, that he did not live in Paris, and that the presidency should go to one of the two professors of ophthalmology of the capital.

PAUFIQUE respected the masters of Geneva and Lausanne, of course, but he rightfully wanted to preserve the primacy of Lyons in ophthalmology vis-à-vis the foreign centers to which the great silk industrialists often migrated.

With the *Barraquer's Institute of Barcelona*, there was perhaps some coolness on the part of Lyons in the beginning, because JOAQUIN, still young, occupied the front stage too soon. But things were settled very soon and friendship was established. JOAQUIN became an honorary member of the „*Société Lyonnaise d'Ophthalmologie*”. And inversely, LOUIS PAUFIQUE became an honorary member of the Barraquer's Institute of Barcelona and of that of Bogota. The meetings were frequent, the problems to be resolved were the same and often for the same patients. But esteem and friendship reigned. An actress seen by JOAQUIN BARRAQUER and operated on by LOUIS PAUFIQUE said of the latter: „He's a magician.”

Indeed, he was considered the greatest surgeon of our country, and more yet, if one is to judge by the witness of his family, of his students, of his friends, and of the mass of patients whose destiny he took in hand. The hospital was the prolongation of his family, and he would say to the nurses of his service: „Yes, you have to get your livelihood, but the hospital is my life.” He respected the patient as much as he loved him, but he did not tolerate impostors. AMALRIC tells of a visit to his service when he saw an African chief who was completely blind, a case of microphthalmia, who came with a servant, who looked like a slave. He said to PAUFIQUE: „Take his eyes and give them to me.” PAUFIQUE's response was very brief.



The „*Grand Patron*“ also had a great sense of humor, to judge by a number of anecdotes. Doctors from abroad were constantly visiting Lyons to observe him operating. One day, when a illustrious guest was next to him during a cataract operation, he had a vitreous pearl, which happens to everybody. When his visitor exclaimed, PAUFIQUE responded calmly, „You’ve never seen one of these.”

In a bus in London at the International Congress of Ophthalmology in 1950, LOUIS PAUFIQUE was sitting next to GABRIEL PIERRE SOURDILLE. They saw trucks passing with the name of a brand of tea, „Lyons”, written on them in large letters. He said to SOURDILLE, „You see how they know me here. You’ll never see a truck carrying the word „Nantes”!”

The last time I saw PAUFIQUE was in Bruges during a tour on the occasion of the meeting of the *International Academy of Ophthalmology* which was held in Ghent. We were walking in the Beguinage in front of NEWELL, MAUMENEE, STRAATSMA, and NORTON. PAUFIQUE said to me mischievously, „You see, Paul, we are ahead of the Americans. It must always be so in ophthalmology.”

The only anecdote a bit unkind dates from when he first started practice in Lyons. He refused to operate on one of his Lyonnais friends because the operation was contraindicated. The patient then had the operation done in another large city. The result was disastrous, and the unfortunate patient had to be enucleated on his return to Lyons. It is said that PAUFIQUE sent the eyeball to the first surgeon with the comment: „We know, my dear Master, that you like to have your data complete.”

PAUFIQUE took great joy in living: he dressed up as a tramp with DUKE ELDER and FRANCOIS to surprise CHARAMIS at the Hôtel de Grande Bretagne in Athens and in jacket and ruffles to represent a lover out of an operetta at LOUIS GUILLAUMAT’s in Lessac one year before he died.

Such was LOUIS PAUFIQUE. No words can describe this man of genius better than those of JACQUES CHARLEUX: He was „a marvelous bouquet of qualities that attracted admiration, respect, and love. He embodied scientific objectivity, rigor, and competence, and also creative imagination and intelligent and mischievous humor.”

On 25 June 1981, in the chapel of the *Hôpital Sainte Eugénie*, in the suburbs of Lyons, the funeral of LOUIS PAUFIQUE reflected his life: quality and simplicity. Around his wife gathered his students, his friends, and two prime ministers. JACQUES CHARLEUX wept on the threshold of the chapel. The eulogies of RENÉ HUGONNIER, of the Prefect of the region, and of the Senator-Mayor of Lyons were remarkable. Lost in the crowd, LOUIS GUILLAUMAT, PIERRE VICTOR MORAX, JEAN PIERRE BAILLIART and myself absorbed this meditative atmosphere. After the ceremony, JEAN ROYER, returning to Besançon, drove us to the Lyons airport. Arriving at Orly, we separated without saying a word. PIERRE MORAX drove me to Paris in his automobile, in the midst of a downpour.

That evening, before going to sleep, I read again a copy of the letter I had written to LOUIS PAUFIQUE for his jubilee book. Allow me to read to you a part of this letter:

„It is with emotion that I relive the hours passed with you in an operating theatre where I noted the accuracy of the diagnosis, the quality of the movements, the fineness of the new technique. Many times a telephone call from Paris to Lyons calmed my anxiety and permitted me to spend a peaceful night before commencing a perilous treatment. I have profited from your ideas, I have been able to follow your advice like one of your students, and I would be very proud if you would consider me as such among so many others. I would be even prouder if you knew of the affection I have for *King Louis of Ophthalmology*...

And then, do not consider what we write in this jubilee work as a final mark of honor: you are still there, you will always be with us, near us. Remember those most consoling words full of wisdom of an Anglo-Saxon poet:

‘There is no end  
Each instant is a beginning of eternity.’  
Affectionately, I embrace you and Simone.

*Paul Brégeat*”

I could not sleep until very late that night. And I dreamed that I was king and that I had appointed LOUIS PAUFIQUE Minister of Goodness.

Professor  
Dr. Paul Brégeat  
Clinique Ophtalmologique  
Hôpital Cochin  
rue du Faubourg St. Jaques  
F-75014 Paris  
(France)