

A HOSPITAL LETTER WRITER IN FRANCE.*

Though the public may have become a little wearied with the innumerable books that have been written on varied experiences and aspects of the war, Lady Bradford's little volume deals with a point of view that we do not think has been so far dealt with.

She undertook the onerous task of letter writer for the sick and wounded in France during 1914-1919, and the reader must be impressed with the exacting nature of her work, its responsibilities and the self-sacrifice it entailed.

"Although writing letters for the men and carrying on correspondence with their relatives in this country and the Dominions remained to the end my main occupation, I gladly undertook any duty which lay to my hand.

"When possible I always wrote by the bedsides of the men and read my letters to them. The Sisters would take down for me any little messages left by the men who had died during the night; these last words would be given in my letters, together with particulars about the funeral.

In writing letters for the men I used to describe the ward, tell what the man had eaten during the day, and then give all his personal messages, love, and "barbed wire entanglements as they called the x x x put for kisses."

Humour as well as pathos is blended in her experiences, as, for example, the man who had both his hands blown off and his right eye blown out. All he wanted me to say when I wrote to his mother, "Tell her I have had my moustache shaved off. It might give her a bit of a shock to see me without it."

Many touching incidents are told of the men's splendid courage and resignation.

"One day a youth was brought in with both eyes shot away. After the letter had been written to his wife he put up his hand to find mine: 'Sister, is it a fine day, and are the birds singing?' I pictured it all to him. 'Well, I have much to be thankful for, and I mustn't complain.'"

For endurance in extreme she cites the case of an air mechanic who had both arms and one leg fractured by the propeller of an aeroplane. He had a curious selection of endings for his epistles, "Yours to a cinder," "Yours till hell freezes," "Yours till I kick up the daisies," or if you don't like these expressions you can put "yours faithfully," but that's not so good, for you see as hell never freezes he's my pal for ever."

Lady Bradford had often to practise considerable ingenuity and infinite patience before she could interpret the addresses given by lips and brains of those already almost over on the "other side," and we do not wonder that she earned for herself the title of "Mother," and she surely was richly repaid by the peace she brought to so many dying lads who in their clouded consciousness took her

for their own mother and who each died with her kiss on their lips. As she relates many times: "The men said to me, 'Mother, will you hold my hand when I go west?'"

Death, the great leveller, made the burly Australian call out to her, "Mother, tuck me up. You do tuck well," said he, "just like mother."

The picture given as a frontispiece shows Lady Bradford writing by the bedside of a patient and from the illustration we can imagine how she earned the title "Mother." H. H.

OUTSIDE THE GATES.

Madame Chaponière Choix, of Geneva, has been elected President of the International Council of Women, at its recent Quinquennial Meeting at Christiana.

This important organisation of women was founded by Mrs. May Wright Sewell of Indianapolis, in 1888, and for the past 23 years Lady Aberdeen has been President. To maintain an international spirit it is necessary that no nation should monopolise executive power for a longer period than one quinquennial. New blood, new ideas, are essential for new growth.

Both Houses of the Connecticut Legislature have now ratified Women's Suffrage. Thirty-seven States have now adopted the Measure.

So American women at last come into citizenship on the same terms as men. The new President will therefore be elected on a thorough democratic vote of the whole people of the United States for the first time.

The first claim for the vote for American women was put forth at Seneca Falls in 1848. Mighty fine women have lived and died for the cause during that 72 years. Well do we remember at the great meeting of representative women, held in connection with the World's Fair, at Chicago in 1893, touching hands with many pioneers, Lucy Stone, Julia Ward Home, Susan B. Anthony, stupendous personalities, as gentle as they were strong! Their successors have been equally fine in their own way, and we shall look forward to a real Republic in the West now that the mother influence is to tell in. The *B.J.N.* specially associates its felicitations with the name of Lavinia L. Dock, sweetest and most fearless of rebels.

COMING EVENTS.

September 29th.—Nurses' Missionary League Valedictory Meetings, University Hall, Gordon Square, W.C. 7.30 p.m.

October 8th.—Registered Nurses' Parliamentary Council Meeting. 431, Oxford Street, London, W. 4.30 p.m.

October 11th-15th.—National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland: Annual Meeting and Conference, Victoria Rooms, Bristol.

October 12th.—Flower Day in London in support of the Edith Cavell Homes of Rest for Nurses.

* Methuen & Co., Ltd., London.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)