

NOTES AND QUERIES

The Grave of Lafayette

It may be interesting to our members, in connection with the celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of Lafayette's visit to Pittsburgh, to learn that our Treasurer, Mr. Potter with Mrs. Potter and son William, visited the grave of Lafayette when in Paris the early part of last June. The grave is apparently only occasionally visited by Americans, as it is located in an unfrequented portion of the city, in a small private cemetery, known as "Cimetiere de Picpus."

Entrance is had only through the garden of the Convent of the Perpetual Adoration, No. 35 rue de Picpus. The use of the cemetery has been limited to the "Emigres," (the members of the nobles and high class families who escaped from France at the time of the Revolution), and the descendants of the victims of the Revolution, and the tombstones display many illustrious names.

General Lafayette died in 1834 and is buried with his wife in the far right hand corner of the first section of the cemetery. American soil was sent to cover his grave. An American flag surmounts it. Floral offerings are much in evidence and a metal wreath from President Wilson is especially noticeable. Here General Pershing on July 4th, 1917, uttered those immortal words which will go down to the end of time, "Lafayette we are here." Montalembert and members of the families of Chateaubriand, Montmorency, Noailles and many other noted names sleep near by; also the sixteen Carmelites of Compiègne, martyred in 1794 for refusing to take the oath to the new Republic.

The cut shown in connection with this article is made from a snapshot taken by Mr. Potter late in the afternoon with a poor light. The metal wreath given by President Wilson may be seen in the picture. In the rear in the second section of the Cemetery lies the bodies of thirteen hundred and sixty victims of the Revolution. A deep trench was dug and for forty-nine days at nightfall wagons, filled with severed heads and bodies of the noblest of France, came from the Place de Nation and after the bodies were stripped of clothing they were dumped into this last resting place. For eight years it was not known where the martyrs of the Revolution were buried until a poor working girl, who had followed the tumbril in which her father rode to the guillotine, and then after the terrible scene was over followed her father's remains to his burial place, revealed the secret. Madam de Noailles purchased the ground and many families of the victims secured permission to be buried near their relatives. General Lafayette married a daughter of the Noailles, which probably explains his burial in this cemetery.

Lovers of Victor Hugo, and especially of *Les Misérables*, will be interested in the garden in front of the cemetery when they learn that it was over this garden wall that Jean Valjean and Cosette were said to have escaped from Javert. According to *Les Misérables* Jean Valjean remained here two years as gardener. This story was rendered most vivid by the visit and it almost seemed as if Jean Valjean and Cosette were reincarnated in the persons of the present gardener and his little granddaughter who were found working in front of the very hut in the corner of the garden where Victor Hugo depicts Jean Valjean as living.

Once every day the nuns in the Convent repeat a service in memory of those lying in the Martyrs Field, and once a year in the spring time a solemn service is held over their graves, attended by the families of those who lie there.

John E. Potter.