

## LONDON IN PEACE TIME AND WAR.

Miss H. Montefiore was so kind as to send this contribution to the NEWS LETTER last February.

In 1937 London was looking quite its best, for trade had boomed, shop windows were decorated with taste, the streets were filled with smart crowds seeking pleasure and profit, the pretty old custom of window boxes had been revived and gay scarlet geraniums, yellow and brown spotted calceolarias, marguerites and lobelias gave a splash of colour to the old grey houses. The parks were full of rosy-cheeked babies in their carriages, with their nannies, and the older children ran along the paths trundling hoops and playing ball. The year 1938 brought rumours of war, and with the September crisis people grew graver and became cautious, curtailing now this trifling expenditure, now that; shops and streets are emptier, the shadow of war is over all. But in 1939 when the shadow became an ominous Frankenstein, what a changed London was with us. Scarcely a pane of glass in any house or block of flats which was not crossed and re-crossed by narrow strips of brown paper, some put on crookedly, some with elaborate patterns; these are to prevent the shattering of glass from the repercussion of anti-aircraft guns.

All buildings and shops of any importance are sand-bagged and boarded in. The well-known statue of Eros but lately restored to Piccadilly is just a pyramid of sandbags. Everywhere yellow notices with black lettering to "Air Raid Shelter", as well as innumerable white boards with red lettering to "First Aid Post", "Gas Clearing Station", "A.R.P. Wardens' Post", "Stretcher-bearers", and such like gloomy warnings. The busy happy little suburb of Notting Hill, where curious antique shops, quaint one-man shops, which have always been most alluring, are now empty, and instead of looking eagerly for some treasure, only empty shops meet your gaze. The only shops to be kept open are those for the actual necessities of life.

When on September 3rd, 1939, at 11 a.m., Mr. Chamberlain declared us to be in a state of war with Germany and the power of evil, the country was not wholly unprepared. I had been allocated to a First Aid Post by an urgent call the night before and heard the momentous words on the radio, followed a quarter of an hour later by an Air Raid warning. For those who do not know of these posts I must try and describe them and their working. We were fortunate in having a fine commandant, a striking and charming personality in her scarlet garb with white cap and apron marked with the red cross. It was entirely owing to her own work and her skill in bringing out the best from everyone that St. Charles's First Aid Post became a byword for efficiency in the borough

of Kensington. She was here there and everywhere, directing inspiring and encouraging. The school which was to serve us as post was full of all the paraphernalia necessary in teaching; and it was rather heart-breaking for me to see all the little treasures of the children as well as the stores of books and stationery put away into locked-up rooms. Still there were no children to use them, as they had all been evacuated to the country. What had been classrooms were now to be used for the sterner necessities of war. There was the office from which the commandant issued orders and came forth herself at very frequent intervals to see they were carried out. When not on official duty you could hear her pure soprano rising in strains of "Run, Rabbit, Run", as well as many operatic and classic airs. The gymnasium was turned into a reception room for casualties, one side for males and the other for females, with separate entry and exit. Off the hall were fitted First Aid rooms for males and females. These were furnished with drug cupboards, medicine cupboards, and stores of bandages, lint, splints, pillows, hot water bottles, sandbags, gauze, etc. The tables with bowls, swabs, instruments duly sterilized, various solutions for washing wounds, were kept spotless and covered with cellophane. Improvised beds made from small tables covered with army blankets and headed by pillows were put ready to receive the wounded. Two rest rooms at either end completed the downstairs accommodation; here were easy chairs, camp beds, cushions and pillows and means of procuring strong tea for those suffering from shock. Upstairs was a fine room for the neurosis patients, with chairs and beds, papers and small tables, and a general homey look, to make the poor folk feel at home. Then came rooms, for the personnel, reading-room, dining-room, canteen, games room and cloak-room.

And what of the personnel to man the post? They were drawn from all classes and ranks of society eager to do their bit, and welded into an harmonious whole by the efficiency of their leader; first the dark-haired, bright-eyed telephonist ever ready to spring to the call with "St. Charles's First Aid Post speaking"; then the Lady Superintendent who with another trained nurse is in charge of the First Aid rooms. Her half-dozen helpers look smart and alert in their red cross uniforms and spotless caps and aprons. They know by heart the contents of every cupboard and can put everything in immediate readiness for casualties. The rest rooms are in charge of two kindly responsible women who would make any patient feel reassured by their sympathy and understanding. The brisk quarter-master knows by heart the contents of every shelf in her cupboards, and woe to her who does not return the most trivial item, from pin or needle, to gum and inkwell.

Then across the courtyard is the gas clearing station, most important in case of gas raids. Here is the fully qualified gas officer with her attendants. She is outside, ready to remove infected clothing; and what a remarkable figure she is, in green oilskin protective clothing, Wellington rubber gloves, civilian-duty respirator, and oilskin hood—a glorified diver. The patient would pass on to the Air Lock, into the undressing-room, thence to the washing-down room amply provided with hot water and soap and undines for cleansing the eyes; well-rubbed down he passes to the dressing-room, where all clean clothes of excellent material are issued to him, and then he is sent to the main block for treatment.

When the signal "yellow light" is given, meaning that the raiders have passed our coast, as they have frequently done, and we might be in danger but for the excellence of our R.A.F., commandant says calmly and firmly "Stations". We all fly to our appointed posts. Mine is that of "reception clerk", and I am to see every casualty brought in and to inscribe name, address, age and nature of injury on a printed card for the Ministry of Pensions. This is to be attached securely to the person, and a card with corresponding number to a small bag which is to contain any valuables or money given up, though even the "mock" casualties are very averse to surrendering an iota of their precious possessions. They are then treated in the First Aid rooms, go to the rest rooms, and finally home with instructions to return for treatment if necessary.

Now let me tell you something of a practice air raid, for it is quite an exciting time of preparation for what may happen. We are warned that casualties will appear at such and such an hour, and we wait at our posts for the moment. There are brought in numbers of bandaged and splintered cases, each bearing a card with the special nature of his wound or injury; such things as lacerated wounds are to be stitched; severe hæmorrhage to be dealt with immediately; extensive burns on face or chest, fractured femur or humerus are sent into the First Aid room; and it is really wonderful to see how the helpers immediately recognize the treatment and bring out material to deal with the patients.

We hope to deal as efficiently with real patients when we have them; we certainly should be able to do so, with the continuous daily practice of bandaging, splinting, the giving of artificial respiration, and listening to most detailed lectures from the doctors on the human body and every imaginable wound we could meet with from bombs or gases. England's women, old and young, rich and poor, have responded to the call for work, and will be found ready and waiting when the time comes.

Somerville Hall (later Somerville College) was founded in 1879. It is, with the other women's colleges, a newcomer in the University which was founded in the Middle Ages by wandering scholars. The first colleges to be established were Balliol and Merton, which were founded in 1261 and 1283 respectively. The history of the University is, however, even older than that of the colleges.

The mediæval tradition still influences the life of the University, not only in the Gothic buildings still in use as residential colleges, but also in the organization of studies and discipline. The Statutes of the University, excerpts from which are issued to every student on matriculation, are for the most part in Latin. One learns, for example, that: "*Statutum est, quod nullus Academicus, aut alius, intra Universitatis ambitum, sive offensiva, sive defensiva arma vel tela de die vel de nocte gestet, exceptis qui honestæ recreationis causa arcus cum sagittis portaverint*"; in other words, that it is forbidden to carry arms, offensive or defensive, by day or by night, within the precincts of the University, except in the case of a bow and arrow for recreation.

The Statute relating to the "Societies of Women Students" in women's colleges was drawn up in 1926, in English. It is the "statute made by the Commissioners wholly for the University under the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge Act, 1923. Approved by the King in Council, 30th April, 1926." It provides for women's colleges within the University, on condition that the total number of women students is not permitted to exceed one-quarter of the number of men students. At any time, therefore, there can be only one woman student to five undergraduates. Many of the more conservative members of the University still object to the presence of women students, and some tutors will not teach women. Women were not admitted to degrees until the year 1921, though they had been doing University work since 1879.

Originally the Chancellor of the University had complete jurisdiction over all cases in which any member of the University was involved. In theory he still retains this mediæval right, though Chancellors now exercise restraint in putting their power to the test. Legally speaking, if a motorist passing through Oxford were to collide with an undergraduate's car, the case could be settled by the Chancellor or his representative, and there would be no right of appeal to any other court. This is only one of the mediæval anomalies which persist in Oxford. Another is the rule about drinking in bars. Owing to the annoyance caused to the town by rowdy undergraduates in the Middle Ages, who were apt to become involved in disputes, a regulation was passed stating that no undergraduate, and no Bachelor of Arts who has not proceeded to his Master's degree, may drink in a bar. This rule has not been rescinded and the University still has the right to fine any B.A., of whatever age, who drinks in