

OUR GREAT INTERNATIONAL LEADERS.

SOPHIE MANNERHEIM.

Memoir by Berta Edelfelt.

Few people of her distinction have been as unassuming as Sophie Mannerheim, though it would be difficult to find any name more worthy to appear in the Finnish peerage, if the word "peer" be taken in its highest sense of a refinement which is the product of centuries of cultivation and long years of inherited culture, both of mind and body. Her whole gracious presence, her finely-shaped head, so proudly set upon her shoulders, her fine carriage, the soft clear tones of her voice, every physical characteristic was but the outer harmonious expression of her spiritual qualities, warm-heartedness, courage, generosity and a noble breadth of vision—everything, in short, that is meant by breeding. As great as was her appreciation of the beautiful and the good in human nature was her horror of all that was false, corrupt, narrow, selfish, self-satisfied or vain-glorious, with which she, no less than all of us, came into contact on her way through life. But she had a wonderful capacity for forgetting the bad and remembering only the good. Providence had blessed her with an intuitive gift for finding some seed of beauty worth cultivation and encouragement, even in the most poverty-stricken and abased lives. No darkness was so black that she could not see a glimmer of the promised dawn. It was marvellous to see how she was able to win trust and confidence. People felt that she would never betray a secret, or smile at a naive confession. Their affairs became her affairs and their joys and sorrow her own private concern. She was their pillar and support; hers were the soft hands strong to soothe and relieve all suffering either of the body or the soul. St. Martin won his sainthood by giving half his cloak to a beggar; Sophie Mannerheim would have given not only the whole cloak, but all her worldly possessions and her throbbing, loving heart, the peace of her nights and the calm of her days if anyone were in need. When she came upon some tragic incident in life, she never said, "How terrible to see so much distress," without adding immediately, "What can be done to help? What can I do?" And in the same instant a plan was ready and in the next it was carried into effect, and very often help found. Circumstances brought her into contact with literally thousands of people of all ranks, many of whom she came to know intimately.

Eva Charlotta Louisa Sofia Mannerheim, daughter of Count Carl Robert Mannerheim and his wife Helene, née von Julin, was born on December 21st, 1863, in Helsingfors, but spent her childhood on the family estate Willnäs, in the west of Finland. She loved this place; how often used she to speak of the old grey stone mansion, with its unpapered rooms hung with canvas on which were painted pictures of the King's Garden in Stockholm. There was still an atmosphere of the old Fleming times with their tales of love and tragedy, and at night unhappy spirits could still be heard wandering through the haunted room. She told stories of her brothers and sisters, how they used to play in the garden and of their favourite places in the grounds, and of their old grandmother who was known for her wit all over the country, and in whose company she passed so many pleasant hours. Then came schooldays in Stockholm, where she had relations who received her with open arms, an aunt who had married the North Pole explorer, Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, and another, the wife of Professor Christian Lovén.

When she was 22, Sophie Mannerheim came back to Finland. It was at the time when Ibsen and Kielland were at the height of their fame. The old ideas were tottering and girls belonging to the highest families in the land were going out into the world, if not like Nora

to educate themselves, at any rate to carve out an independent career. It caused a certain amount of sensation when Count Mannerheim's daughter took a post first in the Statistical Department of the Customs Office, and later as cashier in a large bank. But emancipation was in the air and even the older generation admitted that she had courage, and Sophie Mannerheim soon found a host of admiring friends among her fellow-workers, while her capability won for her the unreserved respect of her chiefs.

When she left the bank she travelled abroad with Mrs. Karamsin, wife of Colonel Karamsin, a relation and old friend of the family, visiting relatives so far distant as in Portugal and spending a season in Berlin, where she found more friends and other members of the family in diplomatic circles, who were delighted to receive her. She then came home and married Sir (Kammerherre) Hjalmar Linder, and went to live on the beautiful old estate of Laxpojo, her new home. But after a few years the marriage was dissolved and the day in the spring of 1899, when Sophie Mannerheim entered St. Thomas's Hospital, London, as a student nurse was probably the turning point in her life.

Her extraordinary capacity for work which could only partly be satisfied either in the routine of cash and figures or in an uneventful country life, now found full scope. It was a real joy to her to scrub walls and floors in the hospital at the beginning of her training, and as "Nurse Mannerheim" to take care of the sick in the hospital, and later, as a district nurse, to go out into the poorest quarters of the great metropolis to instruct and help. It was an endless source of happiness to her to see how her advice and encouragement could bring comfort to those embittered by pain and misery, how neglected homes gradually improved and how the children smiled to see her; and she always looked back upon that work—regarded by many as dangerous—with a deep sense of happiness and satisfaction. She had at last found the work she desired, not for money or for her own sake, but for others, work into which she could put her whole heart and soul. Here on every hand were people who needed her, whose lives could be brightened by her ministering hands and boundless enthusiasm. Here was a world of which she had barely dreamed, stretching out its arms to her, amply repaying the love she poured out upon it. Here was her place; now she felt she had found her mission in life.

In 1902 she came home to Finland, lived for a little while in Borga, served as a nurse in the Högsands sanatorium for scrofulous children in the summer of 1903, and in 1904, with much hesitation, became Matron at the surgical hospital in Helsingfors.

When she started her duties, she found that, compared with St. Thomas's Hospital, much of the administration and organization was unsatisfactory and out of date, and in her eager enthusiasm at once wanted to institute sweeping reforms. She encountered considerable opposition but was able on most points to overcome it. The old system of a one year's course of training for nurses was gradually extended to a three years' course with a four months' preparatory course and a carefully thought out curriculum for the practical and theoretical instruction; night duty was systematically arranged, more staff was provided in the wards, the nurses' living conditions were improved, and salaries and pensions were raised. The long-cherished hope that it might one day be possible to organize courses of instruction for patients who had to spend a long time in the hospital, technical subjects for adults and school subjects for children, was at last realized as the result of Sophie Mannerheim's energy and generosity (she defrayed the expenses of the first courses from her own pocket). A summerhouse for children was built in the hospital garden and she collected clothes for the most needy of the

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