

LEAGUE OF CHILD WELFARE IN FINLAND.

Nurses who are members of the International Council of Nurses, through the affiliated National Councils, are specially interested just now in everything concerning Finland, as Baroness Mannerheim (Matron of the Surgical Hospital at Helsingfors), is President of the International Council, and its next Meeting (and Congress) is to be held in that charming country of a thousand lakes.

Consequently, an article in the January issue of the *World's Health*, on the Finnish Red Cross and General Mannerheim's League for Child Welfare, by Eric Mandelin, M.A., B.C.I. (Member of the State Board of Education of Finland), is of exceptional interest. General Mannerheim, who is the Liberator and late Regent of Finland, is the brother of Baroness Mannerheim, and President of the Finnish Red Cross.

The writer of the article states that it is so short a time since Finland regained her freedom, though she is a country old in culture (two rectors of the University of Paris in the Middle Ages came from Finland), that the Finnish Red Cross has not been able up to the present to develop the peace-time programme of the League of Red Cross Societies. Many independent societies in Finland have, however, taken up the different branches of that programme. Among various examples of the work performed in this connection are mentioned the education of nurses, which is supported by Government grants, and reaches a very high standard; the development of sick nursing in Finland, due to the efforts of Baroness Mannerheim; the fight against tuberculosis, which has been undertaken by an important organisation supported by Government grants; this Society has organised dispensaries in various parts of the country; the Martha organisations which are striving to improve the conditions of home life in rural districts; a special society which is devoting itself to public health education in the Swedish part in Finland; and, finally, General Mannerheim's League for Child Welfare, which is responsible for the care of children.

The election of General Mannerheim, as President of the Finnish Red Cross, marks the beginning of a new era in that Society's existence and work. In addition to its war-time activities, it is to develop a peace-time programme—having due regard to the different branches of hygiene and social welfare. The General hopes later to persuade the welfare organisations to co-operate, in order to make the work more effective. The first organisation to approve this plan, and to take an active part in it, is General Mannerheim's League for Child Welfare.

In February, 1919, General Mannerheim gave a donation to help Child Welfare, thus drawing the attention of the people of Finland to this hitherto neglected field of work. The following year, when General Mannerheim founded the League for

Child Welfare, which later took his name, the question of Child Welfare was understood to be one of the most important social problems that Finland had yet to solve.

TRAINING OF SCHOOL NURSES.

Among the many activities of the League is the training of School Nurses. We read:—

"The League, under the direction of a regularly paid school doctor and a specially trained school nurse, organises courses for training hospital nurses to do school nursing work. It is hoped that the school authorities will find immediate employment in schools for nurses who have completed these courses.

"Another important activity of the League is the arranging of country holidays for town children, while for those who cannot be taken to the country the League tries to organise games and useful outdoor occupation.

"Each spring the League gives short courses for training directors in this branch of work, special care being taken that they shall have sufficient knowledge of the organisation of various kinds of holiday entertainments.

"A final and important link in the educational work of the League is the Central Library, which is open to all who wish to increase their knowledge of Child Welfare work in all its aspects.

"The Central Committee of the League has endeavoured to adapt its programme of hygienic activities to the conditions which exist among the children of Finland; as shown by deductions from statistics. Among a million and a quarter children there are tens of thousands who must grow up in conditions which endanger their healthy development. Of the 90,000 children born each year about 10,000 die before they are a year old. Numbers of young children have to suffer from diseases which often entail lifelong ill-health. The death rate from tuberculosis among school children is higher than in any of the Scandinavian countries.

"Through educational work, mothers' courses, advisory work, maternal and school nursing, the League hopes to remove the causes of these unfortunate conditions.

"The duty of the visiting nurse is to register all children born in her district. She teaches and demonstrates home hygiene and mothercraft by means of courses and visits. She records the physical development of each child from birth to school age, when the school nurse becomes responsible for this task.

"The English type of child welfare and maternity institution which has reduced infant mortality in England by about one-half, as well as the school nurseries which have very greatly raised the standard of health among English school children, have been copied as far as possible by the League for Child Welfare."

Miss Snellmann, who, through the kindness of the League of Red Cross Societies, has had special training in Maternity and Child Welfare Work in London, has been chosen for the position of Lady Inspector.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)