

BOOKS AND REVIEWS

C. M. RINGGENBERG: "DIE BEZIEHUNGEN
ZWISCHEN DEM ROTEN KREUZ UND DEM VÖLKERBUND"¹

Today, with so many international problems under scrutiny, Miss Cécile M. Ringgenberg has had the happy thought of examining the history of the relations between the Red Cross and the League of Nations, a history which is interesting for a number of reasons.

In the first part of the book, the interacting influences are unfolded, that of the Red Cross upon the actual creation of the League of Nations and how the latter influenced the peacetime development of the Red Cross. The Geneva Convention of 1864 struck the first blow against war, and the League of Nations, following similar lines, aspired to eliminate war for all time. That was the current opinion of the time, and the whole development is traced in Miss Ringgenberg's book.

There comes next the description of the early days of co-operation, in a Europe still confused during the aftermath of the war. As it becomes apparent that the difficulties were overcome thanks to Red Cross experience on the one hand, and to the material and diplomatic support forthcoming from the League of Nations, it is the stately figure of Nansen that stands out boldly. When he set out to execute, with the support of the League of Nations, a task already begun by the ICRC, he pleaded and persuaded all alone, at a moment that was perhaps decisive, and obtained the means to accomplish the great relief action with which we are all familiar. Miss Ringgenberg, who worked at the ICRC in Geneva and in Africa, quotes some interesting documents that shed further light on the relations between Nansen and the ICRC.

The results achieved in the field of hygiene and child welfare are among those standing to the credit of the first world organization, which co-operated with the ICRC in this work. On a wider plane, the author studies the meaning of Article 25 of the League

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of Nations Covenant which was in the nature of a legal link connecting the two institutions.

On the issue of war, the ways parted, however. The ICRC could not forget the victims of war and was of the opinion that a widening of the Conventions would limit the scope of action of future belligerents. The League of Nations did not share this view and, later, was to convene a Disarmament Conference which was unproductive.

The origins of the International Relief Union are also described; this was a vast undertaking that was to offer assistance in cases of disasters but which had no opportunity of doing anything in between the two wars. It is nevertheless the source of the new relations that the League of Red Cross Societies and the United Nations are at present in the process of forging in this important field.

It is good that events that are still recent, but which may have become blurred in the memory of most of our contemporaries, should be recalled and analysed. The author does so with clarity and exactitude, and always with the same desirable objectivity.

J. de P.