

A LEGACY OF CARE: HESSE AND THE
ALICE FRAUENVEREIN,
1867-1918

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Although scholars have considered the role of secular nursing associations in nineteenth-century Germany, they have focused on these organizations through the lens of nationalism and state-building or modernization and professionalization. As a result, the question of religiosity in secular nursing has been left largely unexplored. Focusing on the development of the Alice Women's Association for Nursing (*Alice Frauenverein für Krankenpflege*), which was founded in 1867 in the grand duchy of Hesse, this dissertation examines the ways in which this and similar nineteenth-century women's associations articulated a division between secular and religious forms of nursing, even while they drew on theological traditions associated with liberal Protestantism and on institutional models associated with the Catholic orders and Protestant diaconates. By following the model of the religious motherhouse, these secular Red Cross-affiliated women's associations were also able to provide their nurses with respectability and lifelong security, although adhering to this system meant that the nurses gave up much of their personal freedom.

This study also highlights the ways in which nursing during the *Kaiserreich* continued to combine aspects of volunteerism and professionalism, and calls into question the tendency among nursing historians to view nineteenth-century developments primarily in terms of professionalization. Lastly it considers the relationship of the *Alice Frauenverein* to the mid-nineteenth century "woman question" (*Frauenfrage*), which in large part turned on the lack of employment opportunities for middle-class women.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
HStAD	Hessian State Archives, Darmstadt
RA	Royal Archives, Windsor Castle

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INTRODUCTION

“That it had been my lot to remain single, it is the calling I should have most liked to have followed.”¹ This statement, made in 1872 by Princess Alice of Hesse to her friend Florence Nightingale, reflected the princess’s interest in a vocation that had become increasingly available to women during the nineteenth century. By founding women’s associations in Hesse and other German states that expressly served the purpose of recruiting and training nurses, Alice and other elites gave their support to a field which grew from a philanthropic movement to an avenue of employment for German women.

This dissertation examines the secular nursing activities of the *Alice Frauenverein für Krankenpflege* (Alice Women’s Association for Nursing), which was founded in 1867 in the grand duchy of Hesse. While utilizing well-established avenues of philanthropy, the efforts of this organization during the *Kaiserreich* allowed middle-class, usually single women, the agency to financially support themselves in an area of paid employment which had been previously dominated by religious orders. Though Catholic and Protestant sisterhoods maintained a strong presence in the nursing arena, secular nursing associations like the *Alice Frauenverein* served as

¹Princess Ludwig of Hesse and by Rhine (Princess Alice) to Florence Nightingale, 16 December 1872, in Gerard Noel, *Princess Alice: Queen Victoria’s Forgotten Daughter* (Norwich, UK: Michael Russell, 1992), 248-249.

an attractive alternative for some middle-class women by employing a similar method of care without the requirements of a religious house.²

The examination of nursing in Hesse as set up under the auspices of the *Alice Frauenverein* highlights some of the challenges of those in the women's movement who sought to address the problem of employment for middle class women. On the one hand, they needed a notion of employment that did not challenge the dominance of men. On the other hand, they needed to provide them with a place to live that did not compromise middle-class notions of respectability. Historically this problem had been solved by sending women to convents, where they could adopt a religious "vocation." Indeed, Catholic convents and Protestant diaconates flourished during the first half of the nineteenth century. But such options were not acceptable in the context of the liberal, middle-class milieu. By studying the development of the *Alice Frauenverein* during the *Kaiserreich*, it is possible to understand the manner in which this and similar organizations articulated a division between "secular" and "religious" forms of nursing, even while they drew on theological traditions associated with liberal Protestantism and on institutional models associated with the Catholic orders and Protestant diaconates. Likewise, this dissertation highlights the ways in which nursing throughout this era continued to combine aspects of volunteerism and professionalism, calling into question the tendency among nursing historians to view nineteenth-century developments primarily in terms of "professionalization."

²The term "Protestant orders" can be applied in Germany after 1836, when the first order of Protestant deaconesses was founded at Kaiserswerth by Pastor Theodor Fliedner and his wife, Friederike. While Catholic nuns were commonly called "*barmherzige Schwestern*" or "Sisters of Mercy," regardless of the actual name of their order, Protestant diaconates in Germany were branches of the motherhouse at Kaiserswerth, which is discussed in further detail in Chapter One.

The secular nursing movement was spurred during the 1860s by the impetus of war. In a decade that witnessed such conflicts as the Danish War (1864), the Austro-Prussian War (1866), and the Franco-German War (1870-1871), state women's associations were formed throughout Germany, including the grand duchy of Hesse. Led by royal and other elite women and men, the membership of these organizations supported the care of the sick and wounded in times of war and times of peace. Each state's *Frauenverein*, while affiliated with the German Red Cross, maintained a certain level of autonomy and localized its own activities. Nurse training and recruitment was a component for many of these associations. For the *Alice Frauenverein*, it was the main priority, and had been since the organization's establishment in 1867. Nurses, both paid and volunteer, were classified as active members of the association and, in many cases, represented families from Hesse's educated middle class that had strong backgrounds in medicine and government service.

By considering the ways in which these groups addressed the question of women's employment, as well as public health issues, we can better understand the multiple factors that contributed to bourgeois participation in the state women's associations and in the occupation of nursing itself. These developments reflected a "feminized" religious and philanthropic ideology that was inherited from patriotic and interconfessional women's associations as well as nursing sisterhoods that had developed prior to the 1860s.

In examining the *Alice Frauenverein*, I also question previous assumptions about the professionalization of German nursing. It is no coincidence that nursing was promoted as a profession for middle-class women during the late nineteenth century, and I agree with Kerstin Lutzer and Brigitte Kerchner that the evolution of Red Cross organizations during the *Kaiserreich* was an important phase in the development of nursing as a form of paid employment

for middle-class German women.³ However, this dissertation embraces the fact that German nursing did not achieve complete secularization and professionalization. Rather, as is shown in the following chapters, nursing was in a state of transition as female activists and nursing leaders, as well as representatives of government and religious groups, sought to define and defend their own nursing models.

As a historian, I am interested in gender questions, but especially in the activities of women like the members of the *Alice Frauenverein* who embraced and employed the gender roles of the nineteenth century rather than necessarily trying to defy them. My intent is not to sanctify the nurses, or the royal and elite women who supported them, but to view their lives on their own terms, much in the way that Ann Taylor Allen has suggested in her study of German feminism.⁴ Through this analysis of the *Alice Frauenverein* in Hesse, I focus on the ways in which nursing provided an avenue of employment of middle class women that allowed them a job without calling traditional gender roles into question. In this regard it came into contact with the debates over the “woman question,” which will be articulated in this study but distanced itself from the more radical demands of feminists, such as suffrage.

Previous studies of these types of organizations have focused on their relationship to the state and the promotion of a nationalist ideology. Certainly, the strong connection of patriotic associations (*vaterländische Frauenvereine*) with the state can be seen through the lens of nationalism and state-building, as Jean Quataert has shown in *Staging Philanthropy*. There is no doubt that the support of the *Landesmutter* (Mother of the Country) as well as that of the

³Kerstin Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein 1859-1918: Rotes Kreuz, Fürsorge und Frauenfrage* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2002), 452ff.; and Brigitte Kerchner, *Beruf und Geschlecht: Frauenberufsverbände in Deutschland 1848-1908* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 170.

⁴Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 240ff.

governments of both *Land* and *Reich*, was crucial to the development of individual *Frauenvereine*. Quataert, however, essentially limits her discussion of Red Cross nursing in Germany to wartime nursing and medical war preparation. Viewing these associations through Quataert's narrow scope of "official nationalism" and dynastic legitimacy does not provide an overall picture of the ongoing factors that drew Princess Alice and other members of the *Alice Frauenverein* to support the development of nursing as a field of female employment.⁵

Although Quataert is correct in stating that "dynastic groups in Germany made community welfare and its defense part of newly gendered social obligations" during the nineteenth century, she is wrong to assert that the *Frauenvereine*, while "drawing on aristocratic leadership...stood apart from the bourgeois women's movement."⁶ Quataert also neglects the connection between some of the *Frauenvereine* and the "reform feminism" of the 1860s and 1870s, as was the case for the women's associations in Baden, Saxony, and Hesse. Considering that even the *Allgemeiner deutscher Frauenverein* (General German Women's Association, or ADF), the most radical group within the organized women's movement at that time, acknowledged the need for an emphasis on the education and employment of middle-class German women, it is important to show that some state associations interacted with the organized women's movement, shared some of the movement's goals, and could be counted amongst the ranks of "reform feminists." The *Alice Frauenverein* was an active member of the *Lette-Verband*, an organization of German women's associations that sought to improve female opportunities for employment and higher education.

⁵Jean H. Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813-1916* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

⁶Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 9.

In her study of the *Badische Frauenverein*, Kerstin Lutzer has demonstrated that even though the association had backed away from its support of an organized women's movement in the mid-1890s, it continued to promote many of the same goals. The efforts of the *Badische Frauenverein* centered on the employment of middle-class German women in areas such as nursing, education, and social work. Lutzer's main argument is that the work of the *Frauenverein* was successful in Baden because it promoted women's employment. Her study puts a great deal of focus on the structure and functions of the *Frauenverein* itself. While Lutzer's work has been helpful for my own study and is certainly well-researched, it does take a relatively broad approach, and misses some of the depth that a specific examination of nursing can provide.⁷

The *Alice Frauenverein*'s own literature acknowledged that the *Badische Frauenverein* served as its model. However, it is important to consider the fact that the two organizations were not the same, although they engaged in similar activity. The Badenese association was larger, and it experienced some degree of confessional conflict that was not evident within the *Alice Frauenverein*. Unlike Hesse, where many of the nurses came from the educated middle classes, the core of the Badenese nursing staff were from rural and servant backgrounds as well as the popular classes (*Volksklasse*). These factors likely contributed to some of the differences between the two organizations. It is also important to note that after 1895 the *Alice Frauenverein* was a member of the Prussian-led association of Red Cross institutions, which the *Badische Frauenverein* refused to join until 1913. The differences in these two associations demonstrate that the goals of the national women's associations were determined by local needs, rather than by central direction from Berlin. It also suggests that women responded differently to the call to

⁷Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*.

nurse, and for different reasons. Therefore, a study of another women's association, in this case the *Alice Frauenverein*, has great merit.

While Baden's *Frauenverein* served as an umbrella organization for a variety of charitable activities, the *Alice Frauenverein* focused on the training and recruitment of nurses. When compared with other Red Cross associations, including Baden, it is apparent that a unique characteristic of the *Alice Frauenverein* was its singular devotion to healthcare and public health planning in peacetime.⁸ This was evident in the founding statutes of the organization in 1867, and nurse training and recruitment continued to be its foremost priority. This prioritization by the membership has aided my own approach to the study of the organization in Hesse, although I contextualize it within the scope of other activities of interest to women which were conducted by Princess Alice and the leadership of the *Alice Frauenverein*. Although I generally agree with Lutzer's conclusions, placing the nursing activities of the *Alice Frauenverein* as my central focus allows me to consider them more closely and to set this analysis firmly within existing nursing historiography.

This framework has also guided my study of the *Alice Frauenverein* and its approach to the German *Frauenfrage*, the "woman question" which covered a range of women's issues involving employment, higher education, and female suffrage during the second half of the nineteenth century. Even those women who did support suffrage, or at least did not oppose it, centered their focus on more immediate concerns facing middle-class women. At the same time, many bourgeois women, even those affiliated with the organized women's movement, did not

⁸Quataert briefly acknowledges this unique emphasis by the Hessians in *Staging Philanthropy*, 74. John F. Hutchinson's description of discussions by representatives of the International Red Cross societies suggests that this early activity by the Hessian Red Cross likely served as a model for other German Red Cross associations. See Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross* (Boulder: CO: Westview Press, 1996), 99-102.

support suffrage at all. For feminist scholars such as Ute Frevert, this would appear to fly in the face of an emancipatory trajectory based in civil equality. Frevert's discussion of organized middle-class women is critical of groups that did not have political emancipation as their long-term goal. This is evident through her brief acknowledgement of the Prussian Patriotic Women's Association (*Vaterländische Frauenverein*). Though Frevert's feminist analysis does have value for gender historians, this value cannot be acknowledged at the expense of those groups that did not engage in the suffrage debate.⁹

Professional organizations for German women emerged in the late 1880s, with the founding of the General German Women Teachers' Association. But teaching was a form of employment in which women were in competition with men. Even though this was not the case with nursing, the question of professionalization was still complicated. As Stacey Freeman has observed, most existing work on the subject is based on a male-defined experience.¹⁰ More recently, Barbara Mortimer commented that while medicine "has been accepted as one of the paradigm professions and its history recognized as an authoritative account of a professionalizing process," some historians have doubted whether it was even possible to situate women within a traditional professional model.¹¹ These difficulties are not unique to the study of German

⁹Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, trans. Stuart McKinnon-Evans in association with Terry Bond and Barbara Norden (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1997).

¹⁰Stacey Freeman, "Medicalizing the Nurse: Professional and Eugenic Discourse at the Kaiserin Augusta Haus in Berlin," *German Studies Review* 18, no. 3 (1995): 434n. An exception, which Freeman also notes, is Young Sun Hong, "Femininity as a Vocation: Gender and Class Conflict in the Professionalization of German Social Work," in *German Professions, 1800-1950*, ed. Geoffrey Cocks and Konrad H. Jarausch (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 232-251.

¹¹Barbara Mortimer, "Introduction: The History of Nursing Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," in *New Directions in the History of Nursing: International Perspectives*, ed. Barbara Mortimer and Susan McGann (New York: Routledge, 2005), 8-9. Mortimer provides a good discussion of this historiography.

women, or to nursing, but the fact that nursing was predominantly a female occupation has made it a subject of some interest within nursing historiography.¹²

Like Christoph Schweikardt, I agree with Eliot Freidson's definition of a profession as "autonomous or self-directing."¹³ I also adhere to Freidson's definition of the nurse as "paramedical" or "paraprofessional" because she was subordinate to the doctor's function as a professional.¹⁴ As both Schweikardt and Hans-Peter Schaper have described, German nursing during the nineteenth century did show some evidence of *Verberuflichung* – the standardization of an occupation.¹⁵ In that sense, then, I would describe nursing as an occupation, but as Schweikardt has commented, *Verberuflichung* suggests a normalization of the occupational field of activity, standardization of training, and the regulation of wages and working conditions.¹⁶

¹²See, for example, Katrin Schultheiss, *Bodies and Souls: Politics and the Professionalization of Nursing in France, 1880-1922* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); and Aya Takahashi, *The Development of the Japanese Nursing Profession: Adopting and Adapting Western Influences* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004). Most books on the subject of nineteenth- and twentieth-century nursing in Britain or the United States contain some discussion of the issues surrounding professionalization. For example, see Anne Summers, *Angels and Citizens: British Women as Military Nurses, 1854-1914* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), 182ff.; and Susan M. Reverby, *Ordered to Care: The Dilemma of American Nursing, 1850-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

On the professionalization of nursing in Germany, see, for example, Agnes Prüfer, *Vom Liebesdienst zur Profession? Krankenpflege als weiblicher Beruf, 1918-1933* (Hagen: Brigitte Kunz Verlag, 1997); and Magadelene Rübenstahl, "*Wilde Schwestern*": *Krankenpflegereform um 1900*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Mabuse-Verlag, 2003).

¹³Eliot Freidson, *Profession of Medicine: A Study of the Sociology of Applied Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), xv; and Christoph Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege zur staatlich anerkannten Tätigkeit im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert: das Zusammenwirken von Modernisierungsbestrebungen, ärztlicher Dominanz, konfessioneller Selbstbehauptung und Vorgaben preussischer Regierungspolitik* (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2008), 15-16.

¹⁴Freidson, *Profession of Medicine*, 57. Freidson supplies a thorough analysis of this idea in Chapter 3, "The Medical Division of Labor," 47-70.

¹⁵Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 13-14; and Hans-Peter Schaper, *Krankenpflege und Krankenwartung: Tendenzen der Verberuflichung in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1987).

¹⁶Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 13.

These factors were debated by German doctors, nurses, politicians, and religious leaders, to no real conclusion, with the exception of the *Staatsexamen*, a nursing examination regulated by the Prussian government in 1907 and introduced into the other German states over the next few years. The legislation also recognized nursing schools, such as those operated by the *Alice Frauenverein* in Darmstadt and Offenbach, which were authorized to administer the examinations.¹⁷

As Thomas Nipperdey and others have noted, the *Vereine* - political, professional, and cultural - were the fabric of German middle-class life.¹⁸ David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley have pointed out that although many of these bourgeois associations were “notionally open to all,” the organizations tended to be dominated by a “narrow elite.” A certain level of education was needed to participate, and many became “socially closed bodies which developed patterns of ritual, hierarchy, and narrow control which echoed those of the churches, courts, and aristocracies against which they had once tilted.”¹⁹ In their response to the idea of a German *Sonderweg*, Blackbourn and Eley have made a good argument that the middle-class Germans, male and female, conducted a “silent” cultural revolution during the nineteenth century, largely through their participation in associational life.²⁰

Certainly, the *Vereine* were an important element of the German public sphere after 1830. Women’s associations, or *Frauenvereine*, were directed by men or by a board of men and

¹⁷Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 138ff.

¹⁸Nipperdey showed that the *Vereine* formed the cultural sphere of bourgeois life. See Nipperdey, *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie: gesammelte Aufsätze zur neueren Geschichte* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 174-205.

¹⁹David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 224.

²⁰Blackbourn and Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History*, 195-205 and 221-229.

women, and were usually based in philanthropic activities. A collection of essays edited by Rita Huber-Sperl describes similar women's organizations in other Western European countries, as well as the United States.²¹ Aside from a few "patriotic" associations which continued to operate after the Wars of Liberation, most of these philanthropic organizations were confessional. During the mid-nineteenth century, Catherine Prelinger has argued, the hegemony of these "orthodox" women's groups was threatened by "radical" women whose goal was to transform philanthropy into social reform by expanding and secularizing higher education for women as well as "feminizing and de-confessionalizing" early childhood education.²²

In his study of nineteenth century bourgeois feminism, Richard J. Evans acknowledges that middle-class German feminists merged their moral and political goals, but he argues that the movement originated with a commitment that was more political in nature.²³ Barbara Greven-Aschoff anchors the origins of the bourgeois women's movement in the natural rights ideology that inspired female revolutionaries in 1848, and suggests that the attention of middle-class women's groups to varying moral and educational concerns kept them from forming a politically unified front.²⁴ While Evans and Greven-Aschoff are right to point to the influence of natural rights philosophy on the women's movement, Prelinger's point is also well-taken: bourgeois feminists inherited the legacy of a mid-nineteenth century feminist agenda that had developed

²¹Rita Huber-Sperl and Kerstin Wolff, eds., *Organisiert und Engagiert: Vereinskultur bürgerlicher Frauen im 19. Jahrhundert in Westeuropa und den USA* (Königstein im Taunus: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 2002). Huber-Sperl argues that German women's associations had fewer freedoms during the first half of the nineteenth century than those in the United States. See Huber-Sperl, "Organized Women and the Strong State: The Beginnings of Female Associational Activity in Germany, 1810-1840," *Journal of Women's History* 13, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 81-105.

²²Catherine Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge and Change: Religious Dimensions of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Women's Movement in Germany* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), ix.

²³Richard J. Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany, 1894-1933* (London: SAGE Publications, 1976).

²⁴Barbara Greven-Aschoff, *Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung in Deutschland, 1894-1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 13-21.

within a predominantly religious environment, especially those groups which formed as a part of the radical theological movements of the 1840s, such as German Catholicism (*Deutschkatholizismus*) and the Friends of Light (*Lichtfreunde*).²⁵

Although few studies have been devoted specifically to the study of nursing, general women's histories have occasionally included some information about midwives or nurses. These works are also helpful for an introduction to the study of bourgeois women regarding issues of class, family and employment.²⁶ The first real comprehensive study of women in modern Germany, however, is Ute Frevert's *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*. In studying liberal progressive actions and determining the effectiveness of the bourgeoisie for the women's movement, Frevert emphasizes the difficulties caused for working-class women by their bourgeois counterparts, who might otherwise have been their allies in a push for female emancipation.²⁷ Frevert provides some discussion of legal and political factors (the Prussian Civil Code and the revolutions of 1848/49, for example) but focuses mostly on social issues such as marriage, education, and employment.²⁸ She also gives some information about the associations involved in the women's movement, such as the ADF and the *Letzte-Verein*, but the comprehensive nature of the work does not allow for more than a

²⁵Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, 172.

²⁶See Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, eds., *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977); and Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, eds., *Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). As an indicator of how the field's scope has changed in the past two decades, the second edition of *Connecting Spheres* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) is subtitled *European Women in a Globalizing World, 1500 to the Present*. For essays specifically about German women, see John C. Fout, ed., *German Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1984); and Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres and Mary Jo Maynes, eds., *German Women in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: A Social and Literary History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

²⁷Frevert, *Women in German History*, 6.

²⁸Frevert, *Women in German History*, 61-148.

brief analysis. Her comments regarding the *Vaterländische Frauenverein*, the Prussian patriotic women's association, is much more brief and framed solely in the context of the organization's opposition to female suffrage.²⁹ Fortunately, other historians have been able to take a more in-depth approach to this and other topics and have extensively broadened our knowledge of various aspects of the German women's movement.³⁰

As has been the case with women's and gender historians in general, historians of nursing have struggled to widen the field in recent decades, although the number of publications in this area has steadily increased since the mid-1990s. Recently, Christoph Schweikardt has noted that German nursing history is "in general, still very much in its infancy."³¹ While analyzing important trends in nineteenth and twentieth century German nursing historiography, Schweikardt opined that true nursing histories, written by authors trained in historical methods, have appeared in the literature only in the past twenty years.³² Prior nursing histories were

²⁹Frevert, *Women in German History*, 137.

³⁰See, for example, Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*; Nancy R. Reagin, *A German Women's Movement: Class and Gender in Hanover, 1880-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Earlier studies by German historians include Herrad-Ulrike Bussemer, *Frauenemanzipation und Bildungsbürgertum: Sozialgeschichte der Frauenbewegung in der Reichsgründungszeit* (Weinheim: Beltz, 1985); and Margrit Twellmann, *Die deutsche Frauenbewegung: ihre Anfänge und erste Entwicklung, 1843-1889* (Kronberg/Taunus: Athenäum Verlag, 1972).

³¹Christoph Schweikardt, "The National Socialist Sisterhood: An Instrument of National Socialist Health Policy," *Nursing Inquiry* 16, no.2 (2009), 103n; and Schweikardt, "Entwicklungen und Trends in der deutschen Krankenpflegegeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts," *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 39 (2004): 197-218.

³² Schweikardt, "Entwicklungen und Trends in der deutschen Krankenpflegegeschichte," 197-198. Prior to this period, "histories of nursing," written by either doctors or nurses, were shaped by the professional background of the author and often written for political purposes. Though he makes an exception for the work of Eduard Seidler and Anna Sticker, Schweikardt places Schaper's *Krankenwartung und Krankenpflege* (1987) as the first nursing history by a "lay historian." See also Eduard Seidler, *Geschichte der Pflege des kranken Menschen: Leitlinien für den Unterricht in Krankenpflege* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1966), now in its seventh edition (2003) and published by Kohlhammer as *Geschichte der Medizin und der Krankenpflege*; and Anna Sticker, *Friederike Fliegener und die*

written by members of the medical profession and were naturally somewhat hagiographical in their approach.³³

Recent studies, however, have provided a good framework in which to study the motherhouse system and the development of confessional nursing during the nineteenth century.³⁴ Relinde Meiwes has analyzed the proliferation of Catholic women's congregations in Germany; Sioban Nelson traced the expansion of the Daughters of Charity following the French Revolution; Jutta Schmidt has examined the development of Protestant nursing; and Traudel Weber-Reich constructed a local study of confessional associations in Göttingen.³⁵ Taken together, these studies have a combined impact of providing a sense of the interrelationship between religion and nursing in this era.

Aside from Dieter Riesenberger's history of the German Red Cross, which provides a good chapter on nursing, and Kerstin Lutzer's examination of the *Badische Frauenverein*, which is the only other study of a Red Cross association, nursing literature contains very little about the

Anfänge der Frauendiakonie: ein Quellenbuch (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1961).

³³Schweikardt's point is a valid one, but these "histories" of nursing, though not written by trained historians, do give insight into the perceptions of women who were pioneers in the profession. A good example is Lavinia L. Dock and Isabel Maitland Stewart, *A Short History of Nursing, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York: Putnam, 1920).

³⁴Most general works discuss Kaiserswerth in some detail. Anna Sticker, who directed the Fliedner-Archive at Kaiserswerth, has written extensively about the Fliedners and Kaiserswerth, including *Friederike Fliedner und die Anfänge der Frauendiakonie*; and *Theodor und Friederike Fliedner* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1989). For a more recent discussion of Kaiserswerth, which utilizes a number of oral histories provided by the deaconesses, see Ute Gause and Cordula Lissner, eds., *Kosmos Diakonissenmutterhaus: Geschichte und Gedächtnis einer protestantischen Frauengemeinschaft* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005).

³⁵Relinde Meiwes, *"Arbeiterinnen des Herrn": katholische Frauenkongregationen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2000); Sioban Nelson, *Say Little, Do Much: Nursing, Nuns, and Hospitals in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Jutta Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester. Mutterhausdiakonie im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1998), especially pp. 36-60 and 114-216; and Traudel Weber-Reich, *"Wir sind die Pionierinnen der Pflege...": Krankenschwestern und ihre Pflegestätten im 19. Jahrhundert am Beispiel Göttingen* (Bern: Huber, 2003).

Frauenvereine and their nurses.³⁶ This appears to be a wide gap in the field, given that the Red Cross played such a visible role in the development of German nursing, as is evident in the role of the Red Cross in recruiting, training, and employing nurses in Germany today.³⁷

This dissertation utilizes a number of sources housed primarily in the Hessian State Archives, the Alice-Hospital, and the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek in Darmstadt, as well as the Royal Archives (Windsor) and the British Library (Nightingale Papers) in London. Most of the documents concerning the *Alice Frauenverein* have never been used for a study of this type. I have also incorporated hitherto unpublished correspondence by Princess Alice, members of the royal family, and other individuals, including nurses who were active in the *Alice Frauenverein*. An especially valuable discovery was an autobiographical sketch written in 1918 by nurse Luise Krauter as part of her employment application.³⁸

Chapter One, “Notes on *Krankenpflege*: The State of German Nursing in the Nineteenth Century,” provides a brief account of the history of nursing in Germany up to the mid-nineteenth century. Prior to the Reformation in Europe, institutional nursing was provided by religious orders. While Catholic states would continue to implement this tradition of care, Protestant areas developed a system of paid nursing attendants, who generally had little to do with the patients themselves.

³⁶Dieter Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz: eine Geschichte 1864-1990* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002); and Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*. Hutchinson’s *Champions of Charity* is also good for the background of the international Red Cross movement.

³⁷There are, however, some essays which contain some discussion of the Red Cross nurses in wartime. See, for example, Herbert Grundhewer, “Die Kriegskrankenpflege und das Bild der Krankenschwester im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert,” in *Medizin und Krieg: vom Dilemma der Heilberufe 1865 bis 1985*, ed. Johanna Bleker and Heinz-Peter Schmiedebach (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1987), 135-152.

³⁸The documents held by the *Alice-Schwesternschaft* (formerly the *Alice Frauenverein*) were uncataloged as of March 2010.

During the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon, German royal women and other elites founded patriotic women's associations, which provided nursing and other aid to soldiers and their families. A few of these associations continued to function after the war's end and provided a model for the Red Cross sisterhoods of the 1860s, which were founded and led by royal and other elite women. Along with the development of patriotic associations, the introduction and expansion of Catholic and Protestant sisterhoods in Germany played a crucial role in the development and training methods of the *Frauenvereine*. The influences of the *Mutterhaus* ("motherhouse") system of Catholic nuns, as well as the Protestant diaconate established at Kaiserswerth, are evident in Red Cross motherhouses such as the ones established by the *Alice Frauenverein*. The organization also built on the legacy of the mid-century interconfessional societies and women's clubs that were active in calling for higher education, training, and employment of women. These leaders of these "radical" groups would form the base of the "reform feminist" movement of the 1860s and 1870s.

Chapter Two, "Motivations for Care: Princess Alice and the Establishment of a "Secular" Nursing Association in Hesse," examines the factors that led to the founding of the *Alice Frauenverein* in 1867. With the onslaught of the wars of unification, several German states, as they had in 1813, formed women's associations to support soldiers and their families in wartime. For the *Alice Frauenverein*, this meant training and recruiting paid nurses, who were employed full-time, and reserve nurses, who were utilized in war or other emergencies. In peacetime, the association and its nurses concentrated on private and hospital nursing, as well as issues regarding public health and hygiene.

These issues were of personal interest to Princess Alice, which is revealed through her correspondence with her mother, Queen Victoria, and her friend Florence Nightingale. Alice's

letters are also instructive for understanding the reasons underlying the formation of a specifically “secular” nursing association, which very much reflected her own liberal Protestant religiosity. At the same time, the establishment of the *Alice Frauenverein* was linked to the more practical need for nurses in wartime.

Although the nurses and volunteers may have worn the Red Cross, the strong connection to the international organization, or even to other regional associations, was not evident in the early days of the *Alice Frauenverein*. Garnering enough monetary support for the organization’s survival was the first and foremost priority, followed by the recruitment and training of female nurses.

The fact that these women were usually from the educated middle classes helps to explain the association’s response to the “woman question,” or *Frauenfrage*, which is examined in Chapter Three, “*Frauenverein* and *Frauenfrage*: The “Alice Societies” and the Question of Female Employment.” During the 1870s, a few of the state women’s associations, including the *Alice Frauenverein*, were members of the *Letzte Verband*, a German organization of women and men which promoted wider opportunities for female employment and higher education as a solution to the woman question. The establishment of secular nursing as a female profession was strongly encouraged by members of the *Verband*, who capitalized on the positive recognition that nurses had received during the recent wars. The *Verband*’s meetings featured national and international speakers on a variety of topics, and its membership exchanged ideas on subjects such as nursing training, which was also a focus of British and American nursing groups during this period.

This chapter also highlights efforts by Princess Alice and other members of the *Frauenverein* to aid women’s employment and education in areas other than nursing. With the

help of feminist author Luise Büchner, the princess founded the *Alice-Verein für Frauenbildung und Erwerb* (Alice Association for Women's Training and Income), in 1867. Büchner's fame, and her involvement with national women's organizations, ensured the promotion of the two "Alice Societies" at the national level. Büchner's publications in a variety of journals and newspapers formed a framework for a rhetoric of spiritual motherhood that was applied to female secular nurses.

Chapter Four, "A Model of Care: The Alice-Hospital and Training School for Nurses," describes the establishment of the *Alice Frauenverein's* motherhouse during the 1870s and early 1880s. Among the international associations affiliated with the Red Cross, the motherhouse system was unique to Germany. Living arrangements for nursing students and many of the other nurses were based on this community model, which echoed the organization of Catholic and Protestant sisterhoods. The motherhouse reflected the bourgeois ideals of family and female "respectability," but it also maintained the religiosity of these organizations, meaning that the *Frauenvereine* were not fully "secularized." In essence, the nurses were cared for as they would be as daughters of the house. They were provided with room and board, in addition to a small salary. Health care was provided by the association, and the nurses earned pensions for their retirement or disability. With this security, however, came limited freedom. Why would a woman choose to be "bound" to the motherhouse?

Some women did not, and this is shown in Chapter Five, "Changing of the Guard? The Question of Modernization and Nursing Reform." By the turn of the twentieth century, the activities of the *Alice Frauenverein* had expanded to include additional nursing stations and hospitals as well as a focus in areas of social work which involved the care of women and children. At the same time, increased specialization of medical fields and innovations in medical

technology called for more nurses to be trained in areas such as pediatrics, obstetrics, and surgery, which provided additional employment opportunities for trained nurses.

The field of nursing in Germany was dominated by confessional and “secular” sisterhoods (like the *Alice Frauenverein*) which were structured on a motherhouse system. Some independent nurses, the “free sisters” or “*wilde Schwestern*,” found nursing work on their own, usually in urban areas. Most were employed as private duty nurses, although some could be found in hospitals or clinics. Unlike the motherhouse sisters, however, these “free sisters” did not have health insurance, nor were they guaranteed employment. In 1903, a former Red Cross nurse, Agnes Karll, strongly criticized the motherhouse system of nursing, and founded a professional nursing organization. In response, the *Alice Frauenverein* and the Red Cross associations emphasized the family structure and elements of lifelong care that formed the basis of the “motherhouse principle.”

The Red Cross sisterhoods formed a more cohesive bond with the revival of the *Verband Deutscher Krankenpflegeanstalten vom Roten Kreuz* (Association of German Red Cross Hospitals) in 1895. From this point, literature published by the *Alice Frauenverein* stressed its connection to the Red Cross, including its participation in national campaigns and training nurses’ aides and reserve nurses for medical war services. Though German states stipulated a minimum amount of nurse training required for nursing certification, this step toward professionalization was far less than what Agnes Karll and her supporters wanted, though it was what the *Alice Frauenverein* and similar associations already required for their nurses.

Chapter Six, “Impressions of Care: The *Alice-Schwestern*, World War I, and Images of the Red Cross Nurse,” examines various aspects of the the nursing images that were projected to the public and to the nurses themselves during World War I. Nurses were portrayed as war

heroines – the spiritual mothers, sisters, and comrades of heroic soldiers. While this propaganda was aimed toward volunteers who made up the bulk of the nursing corps, career nurses were portrayed in the publications of the *Alice Frauenverein* as both patriotic citizens and trained professionals. This point is further illustrated by the writings of the nurses themselves. The emergence of the Red Cross nurses as the image of war nursing, and the government's refusal to hire independent nurses for war service meant that the war serves as a natural end for this study.

CHAPTER 1

NOTES ON *KRANKENPFLEGE*: THE STATE OF GERMAN NURSING IN THE NINETEETH CENTURY

The development of German “secular” nursing during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries cannot be easily categorized. What was “secular nursing,” anyway? Should it even include the Red Cross sisterhoods, which acknowledged a shared history and were so closely modeled on religious orders? What about those charitable organizations that performed acts of nursing in conjunction with a number of activities which focused on the general purpose of poor relief? By the late nineteenth century, “secular” nurses, as defined by their contemporaries, were middle-class women employed as a professional and volunteer cadre for a variety of wartime and peacetime nursing needs. In the 1860s and the following decades, this type of nursing was promoted throughout the *Kaiserreich* by the state women’s associations that were affiliated with the Red Cross.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the main developments in nursing that led to the nineteenth-century focus on this field as a form of paid employment for middle-class women. It shows that the Red Cross sisterhoods, like the *Alice Frauenverein* in Hesse, had a rich and complex background of both secular/patriotic and religious orientation. This heritage included the motherhouse system established by both Catholic and Protestant nursing orders; organized philanthropy led by royal or aristocratic women during the Wars of Liberation; the charitable movement established by “radical” German women in the 1840s; and the legendary example of

Florence Nightingale, who created a system of nursing that was separate from an established, yet at the same time embraced Christian ideals.

To contextualize nursing within the confessional tensions of nineteenth-century Germany, it is necessary to understand the ways in which the occupation developed in both Protestant and Catholic states. Prior to the Reformation, most patients were nursed in their own homes by family members, but hospitals were administered by religious orders of men and women. These orders included, among others, Franciscan groups which were divided into three orders: one for friars; one for nuns; and one for lay members, who could not live a conventual lifestyle but still wanted to participate in the activities of the community.¹ One of the members of the “Third Order of St. Francis,” for example, was St. Elisabeth of Thuringia, an ancestress of the Hessian royal house who was known for her charitable works and founded a leper hospital in addition to the first orphanage in central Europe.²

Medieval groups such as the beguines and their male counterparts, the beghards, were less formally connected to the church, although their work was based in a strong religious calling. Members did not take vows, although some did live in a motherhouse or similar communal setting. Other beguines lived in individual dwellings. They were not bound to the community, kept their own property, and could leave at any time.³ Each beguinage made its own rules. Many accepted single, married and widowed women, and some women even brought their

¹Josephine A. Dolan, M. Louise Fitzpatrick, and Eleanor Krohn Hermann, *Nursing in Society: A Historical Perspective*, 15th ed. (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1983), 70-71.

²Also known as St. Elisabeth of Hungary (1207-1231, canonized in 1235), she was a patron of the Hessian royal family. See, for example, Eckhart G. Franz, *Das Haus Hessen: eine europäische Familie* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2005), 10-11.

Princess Alice of Hesse named her second daughter Elizabeth (recognized by the Russian Orthodox Church as New-Martyr Elizabeth in 1992) after St. Elisabeth. See Christopher Warwick, *Ella: Princess, Saint, and Martyr* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 19-20.

³Dolan, et al., *Nursing in Society*, 74. Many beguinages were set up in a type of plan in which the women’s cottages were centered around a communal building, usually the church.

children into the community. Though some only accepted women from the upper classes, others were not as discriminating. In fact, part of the community's attraction was the fact that the wealth of richer members could support poorer ones, and many families came to view the beguinage as a place to send their single or widowed relatives who had no other means of support.⁴

Clearly, a sisterhood such as the beguines offered its members a support system by which they could live and work without the requirements of a cloistered convent, and these groups had a widespread appeal in Germany during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵ Over time, however, papal condemnation led to the suppression of many beguinages, and the communities were absorbed into tertiary orders of an approved rule, such as the Third Order of St. Francis.⁶ Still, it is important to consider, as Andreas Wilts has noted, that the beguinage was “a retreat, especially well adapted to an urban society, where women living in common could pursue chastity without a vow...and earn a livelihood by suitable work.”⁷

Wilts' image of a German beguinage is strikingly similar to that of the nineteenth-century Red Cross motherhouses, which provided nurses with some of the elements of a spiritual community but did not obligate them to religious vows. Even more striking, perhaps, is Walter Simons' analysis of the beguines “as a religious movement of the laity; as a movement shaped

⁴Katherine A. Lynch, *Individuals, Families and Communities in Europe, 1200-1800: The Urban Foundations of Western Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 84-87. Lynch notes that groups like the beguines attracted many women because of the flexible lifestyle they offered.

⁵Lynch, *Individuals, Families and Communities*, 84-85. One estimate made by the bishop of Strasbourg suggested that there were as many as 200,000 beguines throughout Germany. As Lynch observes, however, estimates such as these are “notoriously hard to make.” In any case, these medieval sources do indicate the beguines' popularity.

⁶Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 120. Simons provides an excellent analysis of the beguines as part of a medieval debate regarding the laity and the role of women in the Church.

⁷Andreas Wilts, *Beginen im Bodenseeraum* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1994), 262, quoted in Lynch, *Individuals, Families, and Communities*, 87.

and promoted by urban conditions; and perhaps most important, as a movement characterized by the gender of its participants.”⁸ At the turn of the twentieth century, as Simons notes, German scholars studied the beguines as part of their examination of the medieval *Frauenfrage*, which was very similar to the nineteenth-century “woman question” which encouraged nursing as employment for middle-class German women.⁹

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, as nursing historian Monica Baly has noted, “attitudes to care derived mainly from different religious groups, and it is this diversity of religious belief and philosophy that provides the matrix on which the present mosaic of European health care is set.”¹⁰ In Protestant states, communities took responsibility for hospitals formerly run by monastic or lay orders, while Catholic areas maintained their established traditions. In both Protestant and Catholic systems, Baly asserts, the practice of medicine was “unscientific” and nursing “similarly so,” but Catholic women of all classes were offered an outlet for the “giving of care as a vocation.”¹¹ Protestant women did not have a similar outlet until the nineteenth century.

Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican reformers had disbanded the religious orders, which were the traditional sources for obtaining nurses. Hospitals in Protestant communities were run by local women who, as “matron,” took the place of the Catholic “mother superior.” The “nurses,” male and female, were paid attendants (*Krankenwärter* and *Krankenwärterinnen*) from the lower classes. Their duties were mainly domestic and who had little contact with the patients. These men and women had little or no training and were often ambulatory patients

⁸Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, xii.

⁹Simons, *Cities of Ladies*, x-xi. Simons notes that these scholars were “inspired by the first [recently-published] studies of urban demography and social structure in medieval Germany.”

¹⁰Monica E. Baly, *Nursing and Social Change*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1995), 38.

¹¹Baly, *Nursing and Social Change*, 44.

themselves.¹² “Some were good, some poor,” Baly notes, and “no one pretended that nursing was a calling [vocation] for that somehow would have smacked of papacy.”¹³

The Catholic Counter-Reformation produced a motherhouse system of nursing, according to Baly, that set the “standard by which, because of their failure to provide a nursing service, the Protestant countries were eventually to be compared.”¹⁴ This system emerged from the founding of the Daughters of Charity, a lay order of Frenchwomen who wanted to nurse without taking permanent religious vows. Established by St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac in 1633, this organization was an extension of the Confraternity of Charity, founded by de Paul in 1617. The group’s purpose was to visit and care for the sick and the poor, but the women of the confraternity, the “Ladies of Charity,” discovered an overwhelming need for more nurses.¹⁵ When rural Frenchwomen began expressing their own desire to aid the sick, de Paul instructed them to go to Paris and work with the Ladies of Charity. The first Daughters of Charity nursed in the homes of the poor, as well as in the Hôtel-Dieu, the large city hospital in Paris. By the 1650s, the group had established at least forty motherhouses throughout France, from which the women extended their care, as Baly has observed, to “foundlings, lunatics, home nursing and the battlefield.”¹⁶

De Paul declared that the nurses should have “neither convent nor cell.” Instead, their convent would be the “house of the sick” and their cloister “the streets of the city, or the wards of

¹²Hospitals had changed very little since the Middle Ages. See Ute Möller and Ulrike Hesselbarth, *Die geschichtliche Entwicklung der Krankenpflege: Hintergründe, Analysen, Perspektiven*, 2nd ed. (Hagen: Brigitte Kunz Verlag, 1998), 49.

¹³Baly, *Nursing and Social Change*, 44.

¹⁴Baly, *Nursing and Social Change*, 43.

¹⁵Louise de Marillac, a wealthy widow, first served as a Lady of Charity before directing the Daughters of Charity.

¹⁶Baly, *Nursing and Social Change*, 43.

the hospital.”¹⁷ While Baly has described the Vincentian motherhouse system as “secular” and “of the people,” it is important to consider that she means “secular” because the Daughters of Charity, like the beguines, did not take permanent vows.¹⁸ De Paul, too, emphasized that they were not nuns, but in 1646 their simple rule was approved and the order was called the Vincentian Sisters of Charity. The women wore nuns’ habits, earning them the name “the Grey Sisters.”¹⁹ In many respects, they looked and acted like nuns, but Baly also notes that by “bridging the gap between cloistered and active religious community,” the sisterhood formed a model for future nursing organizations.²⁰

Aside from those sisterhoods connected with the Church, midwives were the only group of women generally associated with the act of nursing or medicine, which sometimes brought them into conflict with religious authorities. They were described in the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) as people “who surpass all others in wickedness...no one does more harm to the Catholic faith than midwives.”²¹ As David Harley has noted, however, German municipal ordinances

¹⁷Mary Elizabeth O’Brien, *Spirituality in Nursing: Standing on Holy Ground*, 3rd ed. (Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2008), 38-39.

¹⁸Baly, *Nursing and Social Change*, 43. Baly emphasizes that since the beguine controversy, this was the first time that “nursing nuns” had not taken vows. Some of the sisters did request to take annual vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and service to the poor. See, for example, “Sisters of Charity,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 3 (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1908), 605-606.

¹⁹Baly, *Nursing and Social Change*, 43.

²⁰M. Ursula Stepsis and Dolores Ann Liptak, *Pioneer Healers: The History of Women Religious in American Health Care* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 17-19; also quoted in O’Brien, *Spirituality in Nursing*, 39. Stepsis and Liptak note that the Vincentian rule of an “active religious community” served as the model for religious nursing in the United States, where the Sisters of Charity, founded by St. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton according to Vincentian ideals, was predominant.

²¹Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 274-275. Wiesner notes that this attitude towards midwives was not reflected in popular sentiment, and that the numbers of midwives “are probably not overrepresented among the accused.”

regarding midwifery referenced neither magic nor witchcraft. Following the Reformation, he adds, “the main anxiety felt about German midwives focused on their traditional practices of emergency baptism and the possible contamination of the young with superstition.”²² As early as 1452, German midwives were regulated through the Regensburg Code, which regarded midwifery as a profession equal to that of a craftsman. Other German and European cities quickly followed Regensburg’s example, establishing the profession as one in which urban practitioners were carefully watched and often highly regarded, though the situation varied widely in rural areas.²³ While many women learned midwifery through apprenticeships, they had other opportunities for formal training by the eighteenth century. A school for midwives was opened in Strasbourg in 1728, and other schools were soon established in London, Dublin, Göttingen, and Berlin.²⁴

According to medical historian Eduard Seidler, the eighteenth century was a “dark epoch” which was clearly set apart from nineteenth-century “modern nursing.” The changes in nursing that occurred, Seidler has observed, were due to a common view that there were not enough suitable nurses.²⁵ The numbers of nurses connected to religious orders had reached such a low point in the late eighteenth century that paid hospital attendants were predominant even in Catholic areas.²⁶ Nursing attendants’ low status and lack of nursing training, combined with the growth of hospitals and increased government control in the medical arena, created what Seidler

²²David Harley, “Historians as Demonologists: the Myth of the Midwife-witch,” in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology*, ed. Brian P. Levack (New York: Routledge, 2001), 53.

²³Jean Towler and Joan Bramall, *Midwives in History and Society* (Dover, NH: Croom Helm, 1986), 50-51.

²⁴Horst-Peter Wolff and Jutta Wolff, *Krankenpflege: Einführung in das Studium ihrer Geschichte* (Frankfurt: Mabuse Verlag, 2008), 98-99.

²⁵Seidler, *Geschichte der Medizin*, 166ff.

²⁶Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 42.

has called “a crisis in nursing.”²⁷ Although some charity hospitals had been established during the eighteenth century, these institutions were often used to handle social problems rather than patients who were seriously ill. John Howard, a Baptist and English prison reformer, described the deplorable conditions of many of these hospitals in *An Account of the Principal Lazarettos of Europe* (1789).²⁸ As Catherine Prelinger has observed, the nursing staff “came from the most marginal segment of society and were objects of public contempt.”²⁹

The spread of reformist ideas during the late eighteenth century among monarchs and their ministers led to more governmental attention to the state of hospitals and public health in general. Calls for nursing and hospital reform were closely linked. An attempt to improve the conditions of the *Krankenwärter* was made by Franz Anton Mai, an obstetrics professor in Heidelberg and personal physician of the Electress Palatine Elisabeth Auguste, who opened a school for these nursing attendants in 1782.³⁰ Mai’s students, aged 40-50, included “nursing staff from the hospitals, midwifery students, widows and children’s nurses, as well as city and army surgeons,” and were accepted without regard to gender or confession.³¹ The training lasted three months, followed by a public examination.³² Mai’s main critics, other doctors, spoke out against what they called his “bumbler” or “dabbler” school (*Pfuscherschule*). Further criticism resulted after Mai’s attempt to introduce professional nursing in conjunction with university training. In 1801, in cooperation with the University of Heidelberg, he started a *Krankenwärterschule* for female students, but was forced to give it up just five years later, under pressure from the

²⁷Seidler, *Geschichte der Medizin*, 169.

²⁸Baly, *Nursing and Social Change*, 44-45.

²⁹Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, 20.

³⁰Möller and Hesselbarth, *Die geschichtliche Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 57. Franz Anton Mai (1742-1814, sometimes spelled “May”), also published a midwives’ manual in 1782.

³¹Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 47.

³²Möller and Hesselbarth, *Die geschichtliche Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 55.

authorities as well as public opinion. Mai's plan for new medical legislation, which would recognize nursing as a healthcare profession (*Heilberuf*) also failed.³³

Mai's effort to link the occupation of nursing with professional training was well ahead of its time, and some of his colleagues perceived the move as threatening. Why such concern? The gender and social class of Mai's students were apparently not the main issue. Rather, doctors were concerned about increasing competition in a field that was already undergoing a number of changes in physician training and specialization.³⁴ Still, Mai's example set the stage for the nineteenth-century development of training in "*wirkliche*" or "real" nursing.³⁵

Whether it was provided by religious orders or paid employees, pre-nineteenth century nursing was performed by men as well as women. Yet, by 1914, the occupation was overwhelmingly populated by women. What prompted this change? In the German states, particularly in Prussia, the Wars of Liberation served to create a shift in perceptions of nursing. While in previous wars the care of sick and wounded soldiers had been performed by the wives of soldiers, officers, and aristocratic landowners, the state now invoked the assistance of the population.³⁶ As a result, according to Karen Hagemann, women were involved "more and differently" than they had been previously. Middle-class women joined their men to become "an important part of wartime society," and fulfilled their patriotic obligations by nursing sick and

³³Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 49-50.

³⁴Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 47. On changes in the medical profession in the late eighteenth centuries, see Huerkamp, "The Making of the Modern Medical Profession, 1800-1914: Prussian Doctors in the Nineteenth Century," in *German Professions, 1800-1950*, ed. Geoffrey Cocks and Konrad H. Jarausch (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 67-68.

³⁵For example, Berlin's city hospital, the *Charité*, opened a nursing school in 1832. See Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 50.

³⁶Karen Hagemann, "Female Patriots: Women, War and the Nation in the Period of the Prussian-German Anti-Napoleonic Wars," *Gender and History* 16 (August 2004): 405.

wounded soldiers as well as providing material support for the soldiers' families.³⁷ The nineteenth-century shift in nursing from men and women to almost exclusively women, then, may be partly linked to the greater military mobilization of men in wartime.

Following Prussia's declaration of war against France on 16 March 1813, women became increasingly active in this "patriotic charity." One week later, twelve Prussian princesses, led by the king's sister-in-law Princess Marianne, published an *Appeal to the Women of the Prussian State*, urging the organization of a patriotic society to collect money and supplies for the "defenders of the fatherland." Bourgeois women and aristocratic women alike met the challenge and formed the "Women's Association for the Good of the Fatherland" (*Frauenverein zum Wohle des Vaterlandes*) in Berlin just a few days later. Other women's associations were formed in more than four hundred Prussian towns during the following months.³⁸ Women in other German states also organized to help the war effort. In 1814, just after Hesse had joined the coalition against Napoleon, Grand Duchess Luise founded a *Frauenverein* to aid the victims of the massive typhus epidemic that had spread through the city of Mainz.³⁹ Although these women were active in other charitable activities, such as caring for the poor and the sick, nursing the wounded was a priority until the war ended in 1815.

³⁷Hagemann, "Female Patriots," 400-401. Hagemann attributes this appeal to the Prussian citizenry for their support to the fact that the government was experiencing financial difficulties, and it needed to finance the universal conscription that was decreed in early 1813. To obtain this public support, particularly from the upper and middle classes, the state invoked the patriotism of its citizens. For women, a large part of this patriotically-inspired duty meant nursing.

³⁸Hagemann, "Female Patriots," 404-405.

³⁹"Krankenpflege," in *Real-Encyclopädie der gesammten Heilkunde. Medicinisch-Chirurgisches Handwörterbuch für praktische Ärzte. Siebenter Band*, ed. Albert Eulenberg (Vienna: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1881), 277-278.

The involvement of the Prussian princesses and other royal women in these war efforts heightened their role as mother of the country (*Landesmutter*) The archetypical *Landesmutter* was Queen Luise of Prussia, consort of Friedrich Wilhelm III. Popular during her own lifetime and even more so after her untimely death in 1810, Luise became a symbol of German patriotism and nationalism, a unifying figure during her life and for many years after her death.⁴⁰ She appears again and again in nineteenth-century German literature as a virtually mythic figure, showing herself to be “what the common folk always knew she was: a refuge for the weak, the helpless, [and] the poor.”⁴¹ This portrayal of Luise parallels that of earlier saints, like St. Elisabeth of Hungary. This time, however, the saint was married.

After Napoleon’s defeat in 1815, female involvement in national “patriotic” activism decreased.⁴² There was no war, so there was no need for war nurses, or even for “patriotic” associations. The Patriotic Women’s Institute (*Patriotische Fraueninstitut*) in the grand duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach was one of the few women’s associations that remained active following the Wars of Liberation. Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna founded the association in 1817, served as first president, and managed its daily operation. Similar organizations were established in other parts of Germany, including the Patriotic Women’s Institute, founded in Schleiz (the capital of the principality of Reuss-Schleiz) by Prince Reuss, and the Charity Association (*Wohltätigkeits-Verein*) in Württemberg.⁴³

⁴⁰Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 9n.

⁴¹Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 169. Quataert makes this comment in the context of a performance given by orphan girls for Grand Duchess Luise of Baden (Queen Luise’s granddaughter) in 1900. In a poetry recitation, entitled “Queen Luise of Prussia and the Ugly Child,” the queen is portrayed as a mother, but as Quataert also notes, Luise “was a highly malleable figure in nationalist lore, whose life and meaning, because she died so young, could have a number of endings depending on the narrator.”

⁴²Huber-Sperl, “Organized Women and the Strong State,” 88.

⁴³Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 40.

According to Quataert, Germans connected the women's association in Weimar with a network of female activism in which there was “a ‘voluntary union of individuals’ working for the ‘common goals of the state.’”⁴⁴ Because this charitable work was free from blatantly political labels, the efforts of these patriotic philanthropists “combined to help a much larger German community.”⁴⁵ While Quataert does not explain her definition of “community” in detail, she implies a national community which was unimpeded by national or political barriers. In other words, patriotic women’s associations brought volunteers together to work in government-sponsored philanthropy. At the same time, it promoted a wider sense of what Quataert has described as a reappropriation of “Christian assumptions of charity, love thy neighbor, and patriotic notions of a voluntary space for civic activity” after 1815.⁴⁶

According to Quataert, the work of these organizations suggested a sort of political impartiality, in most cases through the person of the *Landesmutter* and other elite women. In Weimar, for example, Marie Pavlovna's name and royal aura would elicit public goodwill, which the leaders of the *Fraueninstitut* felt was critical for the success of a private organization. Not surprisingly, the leadership of these associations by royal women (and elite women in cities such as Hamburg) came to be accepted as a vital part of the life of the *Frauenverein*.⁴⁷ Marie Pavlovna’s daughter, Augusta, was also known for her charitable efforts. As queen of Prussia and German empress, she contributed to the nursing effort during the wars of the 1860s and served as patron of the German Red Cross until her death in 1890. Augusta’s daughter, Grand Duchess Luise of Baden, founded a women’s association in Baden that became a model for the

⁴⁴Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 41-42. The quote comes from Heinrich Gräfe, *Nachrichten von wohlthätigen Frauenvereinen in Deutschland* (Cassel: 1844).

⁴⁵Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 42.

⁴⁶Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 40.

⁴⁷Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 43.

Alice Frauenverein and other Red Cross organizations. Although Quataert does discuss the work of Empress Augusta Victoria (who succeeded her grandmother-in-law Augusta as patron of the German Red Cross), she virtually ignores the philanthropic activity in the realm of women's employment (including nursing) and education which was sponsored by Augusta's daughter-in-law, Crown Princess Victoria (the sister of Princess Alice of Hesse). The work of both sisters alone would suggest that royal philanthropy was not always generated for nationalistic, or to use Quataert's term, "patriotic," purposes.

By the mid-1840s, despite the expansion of female philanthropic activity, "patriotic" women's associations could be found in fewer than twenty-five German cities. Though local associations were headquartered in predictable locations such as Berlin, Stuttgart, Munich, Karlsruhe, and Kiel, there were several organizations clustered in an area which extended from the Rhineland east to Dresden, north to Cologne and Kassel, and south to Bayreuth. Conspicuously absent were cities such as Frankfurt, Mainz, and Düsseldorf. Darmstadt, the *Residenz* of the Hessian grand duke, is also missing from this list.⁴⁸

In France, communities of religious women, usually the Daughters of Charity, had grown considerably during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The anticlericalism of the French Revolution, however, had virtually halted this growth.⁴⁹ Some orders, such as the Augustinian Sisters, had experienced heavy decline prior to the revolution. After 1790, when the French National Assembly forbade new vows and outlawed novitiates, the number of nuns steadily decreased. Although the revolutionaries attempted to initiate some nursing reform, this was largely unsuccessful. On the advice of his mother, whom he had named the "General Protectress

⁴⁸Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 41. Quataert's map of these associations is compiled from information found in Gräfe, *Nachrichten*.

⁴⁹Nelson, *Say Little, Do Much*, 19.

of Imperial Establishments of Welfare and Charity,” Napoleon Bonaparte quickly restored Catholic nursing orders to their pre-revolutionary status.⁵⁰

The revival of Catholic nursing in France impacted the German states. The secularization in 1803 of numerous Catholic principalities (bishoprics and smaller *Reichsstände*) and the integration of their territory into larger dynastic states like Prussia, Bavaria, Baden, and Hesse led to the closure of monasteries and convents, sale of church lands, and eventual reorganization of the church’s administration. Individual rulers determined how Catholic charitable services would be restored, and this led many of them to turn to Strasbourg, the headquarters of the newly-revived Sisters of Charity, as a source of nurses. New sisterhoods were also founded, and this renewal within Catholicism prompted an energetic Protestant response.⁵¹

What historian Ae Leah Soine has recently described as the “Catholic monopoly on female piety” prompted a response by Protestant social reformers like Theodor Fliedner, the pastor of a small congregation in Kaiserswerth, near Düsseldorf. Though impressed by the effectiveness of the Catholic system of nursing and poor relief, Fliedner was able to use complaints that the nuns “traded nursing for souls” to raise funds for his own order of Protestant deaconesses.⁵² The

⁵⁰Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *The Care of the Sick: The Emergence of Modern Nursing* (New York: Prodist, 1978), 71-74.

⁵¹Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, 9-10. The large gap between the founding of the *Clemenschwestern* in Prussia in 1808 and other Catholic orders founded in Germany in the 1840s and 1850s is explained by the “secularization” that took place in the intervening decades. Relinde Meiwes also describes mid-century Catholic revival and the growth of women’s congregations (*Frauenkongregationen*) during this period. She explains how this affected the growth of nursing as an occupation for Catholic nuns in Meiwes, “*Arbeiterinnen des Herrn*,” 156ff.

⁵²Ae Leah Soine, “From Nursing Sisters to a Sisterhood of Nurses: German Nurses and Transnational Professionalization, 1836-1918” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2009), 33.

founding of the Kaiserswerth Deaconess Institute by Fliedner in 1836 is widely regarded as the birth of organized Protestant nursing.⁵³

Aside from the presence of Catholic nurses, other factors, such as the rise of industrialization, the neo-Pietist Awakening, and the recent cholera epidemic of the early 1830s had put more focus in Protestant circles on the need for organized charity.⁵⁴ Religious revival and problems resulting from industrialization were of course not unique to Germany, which provided an opportunity for a transnational exchange of ideas among European reformers. Fliedner's belief that young Protestant women could take part in German social reform, for example, had been inspired by the work of Elizabeth Fry, a well-known British philanthropist, social reformer, and Quaker minister. Fry herself was influenced by Kaiserswerth. After her visit to the institute in 1840, Fry returned to Britain and formed her own nursing sisterhood, the Protestant Sisters of Charity.⁵⁵ Florence Nightingale, later celebrated as a nursing leader and British heroine, visited Kaiserswerth twice, in 1850 and 1851, publishing a small book about the deaconesses on her return to England.⁵⁶

The Kaiserswerth deaconesses were supervised by Fliedner's first wife, Friederike, and later by his second wife, Catherine. Though these women took a leadership role in the training and recruitment of the deaconesses, the system implemented by the Fliedners employed a

⁵³See, for example, Soine, "From Nursing Sisters to a Sisterhood of Nurses," 13; and Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 64.

⁵⁴Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, 7-15.

⁵⁵Numerous sources document this exchange of ideas between Fry and Fliedner. When the name of Fry's sisterhood "offended Protestant ears," it was changed from "Sisters of Charity" to "Nursing Sisters." See Roy Porter, "Hospitals and Surgery," in Roy Porter, ed., *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 226.

⁵⁶Florence Nightingale, *The Institution of Kaiserswerth on the Rhine, For the Practical Training of Deaconesses, Under the Direction of the Rev. Pastor Fliedner, Embracing the Support and Care of a Hospital, Infant and Industrial Schools, and a Female Penitentiary* (London: Colonial Ragged School, 1851).

patriarchal family model, in which the deaconesses were the daughters of the motherhouse, or *Mutterhaus*. The “surrogate family imagery” portrayed at Kaiserswerth, Catherine Prelinger has observed, “was instrumental in gaining acceptability for the deaconessate.”⁵⁷

The deaconess movement allowed women to enter, for the first time, what Prelinger has called the “official mainstream of Protestant philanthropy.”⁵⁸ The Kaiserswerth Deaconess Institute was soon acknowledged as the foundation of the Protestant nursing movement, and a number of motherhouses were founded throughout Germany. Later known as the Kaiserswerth General Conference, one of these deaconessates was the *Elisabethenstift* in Darmstadt, founded in 1858 by the court chaplain, Ferdinand Bender, and Princess Alice of Hesse’s mother-in-law, the former Princess Elisabeth of Prussia.⁵⁹ By the early 1850s, Kaiserswerth employed more than two hundred deaconesses and was supported by about three thousand individuals, including several members of German royalty. The most prominent of these was King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, who gave the Kaiserswerth Institute formal rights as a corporation. The king also sought Fliedner’s advice on the order of deaconesses that he planned to establish at Bethanien Hospital in Berlin.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Catherine Prelinger, “The Nineteenth-Century Deaconessate: The Efficacy of a Family Model,” in Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres and Mary Jo Maynes, eds. *German Women in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: A Social and Literary History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 220.

⁵⁸Prelinger, “The Nineteenth-Century Deaconessate,” 215.

⁵⁹See, for example, Elisabethenstift, *Fünzig Jahre Diakonissendienst in Deutschland in Hessen (1858-1908). Jubiläumspredigt und Jubiläumsericht des Diakonissenhauses “Elisabethenstift” in Darmstadt bei seiner Jubelfeier am 18. Juni 1908* (Darmstadt: C.F. Winter, 1908); and Christian Golder, *History of the Deaconess Movement in the Christian Church* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Pye, 1903), 116 and 603.

In 2010, the *Elisabethenstift* is still active, and operates the *Evangelische Krankenhaus Elisabethenstift*, the second largest hospital in Darmstadt.

⁶⁰Prelinger, “The Nineteenth-Century Deaconessate,” 220-221.

The Inner Mission, founded in Hamburg in 1848 by Johannes Wichern, was a product of Pietism and the reaction to revolutionary upheaval. Wichern, a theologian and educator, had started his work in the 1830s with the establishment of a settlement house for poor children.⁶¹ The work of the Inner Mission was not as specific: it served to coordinate the charitable activities of existing organizations. Fearing the corruption and godlessness that he felt came with the revolution, Wichern stressed loyalty to the state and to the monarchy, and tied his association to state bureaucracy. The Inner Mission, particularly popular in Prussia, was, like Kaiserswerth, supported by Friedrich Wilhelm IV.⁶²

While Wichern approved of women as a part of his philanthropic projects, he did not accept them as leaders of the association. Strongly criticized by leaders of the fledgling women's movement that emerged during the 1840s, Wichern also came into conflict with Amalie Sieveking, a philanthropic leader in Hamburg. Sieveking, a daughter of the patriciate, founded the Female Association for the Care of the Poor and the Sick in 1832. This benevolent visiting society provided poor relief and employment for its clients, who were largely displaced craftsmen.⁶³ The association's lady "visitors" were laywomen, and it is in this sense, as well as Sieveking's insistence on her own singular administration, that the work was radical for its day. The society did adhere to paternalistic convention in other ways, however, such as the expectation that its members had their fathers' or husbands' permission to participate in the work.⁶⁴

⁶¹Called the *Rauhe Haus* and located in Horn bei Hamburg.

⁶²Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, 14-15 and 165-167; and Christoph Sachsse and Florian Tennstedt, *Geschichte der Armenfürsorge in Deutschland Band I: vom Spätmittelalter bis zum 1. Weltkrieg*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1998), 229-232.

⁶³Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, 36-43.

⁶⁴Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, 43-46.

By the 1850s, many of these associations had been eclipsed by the Inner Mission. Sieveking held on to the independence of her own organization in Hamburg, a city that during the 1840s had become what Catherine Prelinger has described as “the cradle of the mid-nineteenth-century women’s inter-confessional initiative.”⁶⁵ This movement, which was closely connected to German-Catholicism, stimulated the growth of a variety of women’s clubs that focused on social reform in the areas of religion, education, and employment, as well as political rights for women.⁶⁶ As Catherine Prelinger has argued, however, reactionary politics of the 1850s forced many of these clubs to severely limit or end their activities.⁶⁷

Florence Nightingale’s work during the Crimean War, however, served as a reminder that “respectable,” secular women could be capable and caring nurses. Even in her own lifetime, Nightingale was an almost legendary figure. Images of her as “the Lady with the Lamp” changed contemporary conceptions of nursing and nurses in general, putting the focus on “ladies” as nurses, rather than the Dickensian image of “Sairey Gamp” as a drunken, slovenly caregiver. “Nightingale nurses” were expected to have a religious devotion or “calling” to the profession, yet they were also considered to be paid, professional, trained women, rather than simple nursing attendants.

The vast amount of hagiographic material devoted to Nightingale, and the fact that modern nursing histories still seem to “begin and end” with her efforts in nursing reform, shows that her methods (and her legend) clearly resonated throughout the world.⁶⁸ While the German

⁶⁵Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, 55.

⁶⁶Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, 55ff.

⁶⁷Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, 159-164. Ann Taylor Allen also provides a good discussion of these associations, particularly those connected to the kindergarten movement, in Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*.

⁶⁸Recent nursing histories analyze the numerous ways in which this legacy has affected developments in twentieth-century nursing, and often apply themselves to debunking the “Lady

Frauenvereine employed a traditional motherhouse system which was modeled on the religious orders, they still took, and acknowledged, many of their methods from Nightingale's system, in which nurses were trained and employed by other hospitals. In the case of the *Alice Frauenverein*, its founder sought and received advice from Florence Nightingale, and its first superintendent of nurses was trained with Nightingale nurses in Britain.

Nightingale's influence was clearly present in the nursing program of the *Alice Frauenverein*. Just as clearly, the Hessian women's association could claim its roots in the patriotic women's associations of the Wars of Liberation; Protestant "religious" nursing as it was employed at Kaiserswerth; the Inner Mission; and Amalie Sieveking's society in Hamburg; and even the "radical" interconfessional organizations which were the foundation of the nascent women's movement of the 1860s and 1870s, which called for women's job training, higher education, and employment. Then, too, the largely Protestant organization had, through the *Mutterhaus*, a strong connection with the Catholic model of sisterhood. While this chapter has drawn these factors together to show a clearer picture of nursing's development to the 1860s, the remainder of this dissertation will examine the ways in which these factors were also evident during the *Kaiserreich*.

with the Lamp" image so prevalent in earlier examples. On this topic, see, for example, Monica E. Baly, *Florence Nightingale and the Nursing Legacy* (Dover, NH: Croom Helm, 1986).

Other recent studies include F.B. Smith, *Florence Nightingale: Reputation and Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982); and Hugh Small, *Florence Nightingale, Avenging Angel* (London: Constable and Robinson, 1999). Lynn McDonald, the general editor of *The Collected Works of Florence Nightingale*, a work in progress (of a planned nineteen volumes, eleven are available in 2010), is highly critical of Smith, and states that the "debunking of Victorian heroes and heroines that became fashionable in the 1970s, as well as postmodernism more specifically, probably also contributed to the new and hostile treatment of Nightingale," by Smith and others. See Lynn McDonald, *Florence Nightingale: An Introduction to Her Life and Family*, vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of Florence Nightingale* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 843 ff. Lytton Strachey's well-known critical essay about Nightingale is found in Strachey, *Eminent Victorians: Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold, General Gordon* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1918), 133-204.

CHAPTER 2

MOTIVATIONS FOR CARE: PRINCESS ALICE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A “SECULAR” NURSING ASSOCIATION IN HESSE

As the year 1866 drew to a close, Princess Alice of Hesse wrote to Queen Victoria, “I am trying to found what is no small undertaking, a ‘*Frauenverein*,’ to be spread all over the land in different committees, the Central Committee one being here under my direction...” Its purpose, she explained, was to provide nurses and support for the troops in times of war. In peacetime, the association was to have women “brought and educated for the task” of nursing in hospitals or private homes.¹ Over the next five years, membership in the *Alice Frauenverein* would nearly double (from 2,572 to 4,441) and members of the organization would be recognized in Germany and Britain for their services during the Franco-German War.²

What were Princess Alice’s motivations for founding a *Frauenverein*? Why was the idea of “secular nursing” such an attractive proposition?³ These questions can be addressed by considering Alice’s own interest in nursing, science, and public health, which was reflected in

¹Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 21 December 1866, in Alice Grand Duchess of Hesse, *Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, Princess of Great Britain and Ireland: Biographical Sketch and Letters*, with biographical sketch by Karl Sell (London: John Murray, 1884), 159.

²*Alice-Frauenverein für die Krankenpflege im Grossherzogthum Hessen. Protocoll über die am 7. September 1869 dahier abgehaltene erste Generalversammlung des Vereins nebst Rechenschaftsbericht über die gesammte Thätigkeit des Vereins seit dessen Bestehen Frühjahr 1867 bis 1. September 1869* (Darmstadt: H Brill, 1869), 6.

³The provenance of the term “secular nursing” as I utilize it in this study stems from Florence Nightingale’s use of the word to separate other groups (like her own nurses) from Catholic and Protestant orders. See, for example, Nightingale, *Notes on Hospitals*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1863), 182-184.

the stated goals and activities of the *Alice Frauenverein*. While viewing the German wars of unification and the establishment of the international Red Cross as the framework in which organizations like the *Frauenverein* operated and garnered public support, a look at Princess Alice's own ideas about nursing also provides insight into the motivations that led the middle classes to support the advancement of secular nursing by bourgeois women in Hesse and throughout Germany.

Alice's own liberal background and religiosity fueled her own "practical" philanthropic projects, but her personal motivations were not the only factors that led to the founding of the *Alice Frauenverein* in 1867. The impetus for establishing a women's association for nursing came only after Hessian involvement in the Austro-Prussian War. Like royal and elite women had done during the Wars of Liberation in 1813, Alice and other German princesses called for volunteer nurses. They also called for women to take up nursing as paid, peacetime occupation. Although the training and employment of "secular" nurses was promoted as a way to fill what the leaders of the *Alice Frauenverein* saw as a need to increase the size of an available and trained cadre of nurses, the fact that the organization was barely able to sustain itself in the first two years of its existence suggests that the activities of the *Frauenverein* were not viewed as "necessary" by the broader population, even among the middle classes, until the advent of the Franco-German War.

i. Religiosity and Royal Philanthropy

The *Alice Frauenverein*'s founder and namesake was the second daughter of Queen Victoria of Great Britain and her husband Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Naturally, the British public was aware of the princess from the moment of her birth, but Alice came into the press spotlight only after her engagement in 1860 to Prince Ludwig of Hesse and by Rhine, the

nephew and eventual heir of Grand Duke Ludwig III.⁴ The next year, following Albert's untimely death from typhoid fever, the *Times* commented on the devoted nursing that Alice had given her father during his last illness.⁵ "Without suspecting it," her grandson later wrote, "the princess had passed her first exam in nursing which was to become her destiny."⁶

For the rest of Alice's life, and following her death, the press constantly mentioned her name in conjunction with nursing activities. By nursing her own father, Alice was not especially unique. As the eldest unmarried daughter still living at home, the princess would have been expected to help her mother with such duties.⁷ When her brother, the Prince of Wales, contracted typhoid fever in 1871, Alice stayed in England to nurse him. Again, this is attributable to the action of a sister for a cherished sibling. Her father's death and her brother's near-fatal illness were, of course, national events, yet the press attention Alice received as a result of the nursing she undertook for them is an indication that she was viewed as a princess who had some personal interest in nursing, and was perceived as someone who nursed for reasons other than the obligation of royal patronage.⁸

On the advice of Queen Victoria's German advisor, Baron Stockmar, the British royal family had built upon the philanthropic efforts of previous reigns. As Frank Prochaska has observed, its charitable activities were expanded in an effort to change the public's opinion of the

⁴Prince Ludwig of Hesse (1837-1892), succeeded his uncle as Grand Duke Ludwig IV in 1877.

⁵*Times* (London), 17 December 1861.

⁶Ludwig, Prinz von Hessen, *Das Alice-Hospital und seine Gründerin* (Darmstadt: Roether, 1953), 5.

⁷See, for example, Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family, and Society in Great Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 146.

⁸Victoria, later German Empress, built hospitals during the wars of unification and later established the *Victoria-Schwesteren*, a nursing association in Berlin. Helena, Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, was one of the founders of the British Red Cross and president of the Royal British Nurses' Association.

monarchy as “immoral,” as Stockmar saw the reigns of George IV and William IV. The “practical morality” exhibited through royal philanthropy was, according to Stockmar, vital to the welfare of the monarchy as well as the people. Certainly, royalty wanted to be “seen and loved” by their subjects at a time of social upheaval, such as the rise of Chartism in the 1840s, and they could do this by placing themselves prominently as a bulwark of charitable giving.⁹

From the time of his marriage in 1840 until his death in 1861, Prince Albert was an active philanthropist, especially in the areas of science and manufacturing. The prince, an intellectual, believed that the responsibility of royalty was to serve as the “headship of philanthropy, a guidance and encouragement of the manifold efforts which our age is making toward a higher and purer life.”¹⁰ For Albert and a host of middle-class Europeans, this “higher and purer life” embraced morality and modernity; it was a prosperous, scientifically-advanced society which promoted “the gospel of Christ” as well as the “gospel of work.”¹¹ In other words, benefactors should work to relieve the working and living conditions of the poor, while at the same time encouraging them to be industrious employees. Like her husband, Queen Victoria also promoted these ideals, but focused her patronage in more “feminine” areas, such as the welfare of women, children, and the sick. She also took an active interest in the endeavors of leading female

⁹Frank Prochaska, *Royal Bounty: The Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 67ff. The fact that the British royal family encouraged more involvement in philanthropy at a time when Chartism was prominent in Britain and revolution loomed on the European horizon is no coincidence.

¹⁰Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, 80.

¹¹Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, 90. Peter Gay provides an informative discussion of the middle-class devotion to the gospel of work in *Schnitzler's Century: The Making of Middle Class Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 191-220.

philanthropists such as Mary Carpenter and Florence Nightingale.¹² These women, along with housing reformer Octavia Hill, were influential on Princess Alice's own work in Germany.¹³

Like her elder sister Victoria, the Prussian crown princess, Alice shared many of Prince Albert's political and social views, and she felt "a sacred duty" to carry out her father's principles.¹⁴ In many respects, she was well-positioned to do so in Hesse. Grand Duchess Mathilde, wife of Ludwig III, died just six weeks prior to Alice's marriage and arrival in Darmstadt, the Hessian capital. Mathilde's death left Alice as Hesse's "first lady."¹⁵ The nineteen year-old bride was at the center of the public's interest, even though her progressive worldview and political liberalism, strongly encouraged by her parents, was quite different from what Eckhart G. Franz has labeled the "old-world, conservative Darmstädter society" with which the princess came into contact.¹⁶ Alice's biographer, Gerard Noel, suggests that the grand duke's reactionary ministers, led by Freiherr Reinhard von Dalwigk zu Lichtenfels, resented her arrival in Darmstadt on some level. The bride's arrival coincided with the advent of a liberal majority in

¹²Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, 92.

¹³A portion of the Alice/Hill correspondence is held by the Hessian State Archives in Darmstadt.

¹⁴Noel, *Princess Alice*, 85, and Sell, editor's note in *Alice Letters*, 20. Ten years after her marriage, Alice wrote to her mother that she had "the very natural ambition to wish to prove that a Daughter of you & dear Papa - and above all an Englishwoman, is as capable to help & work in Germany if not more than any German Princess." RA VIC/Z 207/32, Princess Alice to Queen Victoria. 23 February 1873.

¹⁵Eckhart G. Franz, "Victorias Schwester in Darmstadt: Grossherzogin Alice von Hessen und bei Rhein," in *Victoria Kaiserin Friedrich (1840-1901) Mission und Schicksal einer englischen Prinzessin in Deutschland*, ed. Rainer von Hessen (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002), 84-85.

In court ceremonial, as the daughter of a reigning monarch, Alice could take precedence over her mother-in-law, Princess Karl. Although both women held the title "Royal Highness" rather than "Grand Ducal Highness," Franz is also referring to the assumption that Alice would step into the role played by Grand Duchess Mathilde. An interesting point to consider is that Alice broadened her scope of social involvement, rather than limiting her patronage to those associations sponsored by the grand duchess.

¹⁶Franz, "Victorias Schwester," 84-85.

the Hessian *Landtag*, and Dalwigk wanted to ensure that Alice “was and should remain a mere cypher” without political influence.¹⁷

Dalwigk’s disapproval of Alice seems to have extended only to her political opinions. Noel, her biographer, suggests that the princess was “forced to bide her time” during Dalwigk’s tenure, but there is no indication that Alice used her philanthropic work to satisfy unfulfilled political ambitions.¹⁸ Her letters to Queen Victoria indicate that she felt stifled at the Hessian court. “If one never sees any poverty,” she wrote, “and always lives in that cold circle of Court people, one’s good feelings dry up, and I feel the want of going about and doing the little good that is in my power. I am sure you will understand this.”¹⁹ Her motivation for “seeing poverty” stemmed from her own childhood in England. As Karl Sell described, the royal children were trained for “bettering the condition of the lower and working classes by improving their homes and inculcating principles of health, economy, and domestic management.”²⁰

In England, Princess Alice had demonstrated a natural inclination for nursing, but her early philanthropic initiatives were focused in other areas. In 1864 she and Prince Ludwig helped

¹⁷Noel, *Princess Alice*, 108. Dalwigk also made a pointed reference to Alice’s sister Victoria, the crown princess of Prussia. Noel cites an 1864 letter in which General Sir Francis Seymour, a British courtier who remained in Darmstadt for several months, reported Dalwigk’s feelings in this regard. The reference to Victoria’s position in Berlin indicated that Dalwigk and Bismarck saw eye-to-eye on at least this point. If they could help it, liberal English princesses would have no ability to influence German political affairs. In Alice’s case, it is unclear whether she would have directly influenced Hessian politics or foreign affairs even during a liberal ministry. It should be noted, however, that her more “liberal” efforts at reform, in the case of housing, education, and female employment, were made after Dalwigk’s resignation in 1871.

¹⁸Noel, *Princess Alice*, 108.

¹⁹Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 5 March 1864, in *Alice Letters*, 69. The fact that she undertook incognito visits to the poor and told her mother that only her husband and ladies knew of it implies that these actions were not considered suitable for royal women, at least at the Hessian court.

²⁰Sell, editor’s notes in *Alice Letters*, 12. Sell served as the Hessian court chaplain. As Alice’s sister, Princess Helena of Schleswig-Holstein, was actively involved in the book’s publication, she may have added this information about Alice’s life in England.

found the *Bauverein Darmstadt*. This association for workers' housing was modeled on a similar project, the Prince Albert House, in London.²¹ The princess maintained an interest in housing reform and worked with Octavia Hill during the 1870s in an effort to address additional housing needs in the grand duchy. Most of Alice's other philanthropic activities, however, would be focused mainly in the areas of healthcare and education. After attending several lectures on the need for special asylums, Alice showed an interest in the treatment of "poor idiots," and determined that the institution she founded in Hesse would not carry the "strictly religious stamp" found in similar institutions throughout Germany.²²

For some Hessian elites, theological liberalism probably played a role in their support of secular organizations like the "idiot asylum" as well as the *Alice Frauenverein*. Alice's own religious training and opinions clearly reflect this point. Prince Albert gave his older children, including Princess Alice, religious instruction using Carl Gottlieb Bretschneider's *Manual of Religion and History of the Christian Church*.²³ During the late 1860s and early 1870s, Alice maintained a close friendship with the controversial theologian David Friedrich Strauss, who became a frequent visitor to her palace in Darmstadt.²⁴

²¹Franz, "Victorias Schwester," 87. The company is still in existence as Darmstadt's largest *Bau- und Wohnungsunternehmen*.

²²Sell, editor's notes in *Alice Letters*, 118.

²³The book was translated from German in 1857, shortly before Alice's confirmation. On Bretschneider as a rationalist theologian, see, for example, Wilhelm Gass, *Geschichte der protestantischen Dogmatik: in ihrem Zusammenhange mit der Theologie*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1867), 451-456. In 1863, the translation of Heinrich Zschokke's *Stunden der Andacht*, a classic example of liberal religious devotional literature, was dedicated to the princess, "whose young life has already given evidence of the religious earnestness and sincerity inculcated in these meditations..." See Zschokke, *Meditations on Life and its Religious Duties*, trans. Frederica Rowan (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1863).

²⁴In 1870, at her suggestion and with her husband's permission, Strauss dedicated his lectures on Voltaire to the princess. See Sell, editor's notes in *Alice Letters*, 227-232; and Noel, *Princess Alice*, 69 and 178-185.

The princess's own theology could be classified as "left liberal" or rationalist. While she acknowledged the value of religious motives, Alice also felt that works of charity should be performed with professionalism and efficiency, not by what Noel has described as the "religious-cum-amateur" elements seen in hospitals and other institutions that were staffed by religious orders.²⁵ In other words, medical care should be handled practically, without religious interference.²⁶ This stood in stark contrast to groups like the Catholics and Pietists, whose charitable efforts were explicitly tied to their religious vocation or their desire to promote the truth of the Christian gospel.

Writing to Queen Victoria in 1865, Alice remarked, "I have read and studied a good deal about the human body; about children, their treatment, &c." Noting that the subject interested her "immensely," Alice went on to explain that she also had practical reasons for increasing her knowledge of nursing. "In any moment of illness," she wrote, "before there is time for a doctor to come, one has to be able to help oneself a little." Knowing the queen's aversion to such discussion, Alice continued, "I know you don't like these things, and where one is surrounded by such as Sir James Clark and Dr. Jenner [the queen's physicians] it is perfectly unnecessary and pleasanter not to know a great deal. Instead of finding it disgusting, it only fills me with admiration to see how wonderfully we are made."²⁷ For Alice, knowledge of the body may have equaled a sense of self-assertion and autonomy. Like her sister Victoria, Alice was also a proponent of breastfeeding, at that time still a controversial topic in some elite circles.²⁸

²⁵Noel, *Princess Alice*, 125.

²⁶Sell, editor's notes in *Alice Letters*, 118.

²⁷Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 6 March 1865, in *Alice Letters*, 89-90.

²⁸Queen Victoria and Queen Augusta of Prussia, for example, were strongly against breastfeeding in favor of wet-nursing. See Victoria's comments on the subject in Hannah Pakula, *An Uncommon Woman: The Empress Frederick, Daughter of Queen Victoria, Wife of the Crown Prince of Prussia, Mother of Kaiser Wilhelm* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 215.

While Alice's emphasis on religious beliefs informed her opinions about philanthropy, her own interest in medicine also prompted her patronage and involvement in certain associations. As a young mother herself, she was interested in the welfare of other mothers, and served as patron of the *Heidenreich Stiftung*, an institution for "lying-in women."²⁹ The members of the organization visited "poor respectable *Wöchnerinnen* [women in childbed]," as Alice explained to her mother in 1864. The princess received reports on these cases, and made incognito visits on occasion, where she and her lady-in-waiting helped to cook, clean, and do "odds and ends" for both mother and baby. That this type of visiting by a princess was fairly unusual is seen in Alice's request that her mother refrain from telling anyone about the visits, as Prince Ludwig and the princess's ladies were the only ones who knew about them.³⁰

Through the *Heidenreich Stiftung*, Princess Alice organized a system by which linen could be lent to poor women during their confinements. "I hope [it] will be of use to them," she told her mother in November 1863, "for the dirt and discomfort is very great in those classes." In the same letter, Alice reported that she would make what was apparently her first visit to the city hospital in Darmstadt, "which is said not to be good or well looked after." Members of the town council would meet her there.³¹ The following week, she wrote that the visit had been a good one. The air was "good," the building "clean and fresh," and the patients appeared to be

²⁹The Heidenreich Stiftung was more accurately the "Charlotte Heidenreich von Siebold Stiftung." Charlotte Heidenreich von Siebold (1788-1859) was the first German *Frauenärztin* and spent much of her life in Darmstadt. She received a medical degree from Giessen in 1817, and in 1819, attended the Duchess of Kent during the birth of the future Queen Victoria. Much of her practice, however, was spent assisting the poor women of Darmstadt and the surrounding areas with help during childbirth and the Stiftung was founded after her death in order to continue that work. See Gerda Vöge, "Regina Josepha von Siebold (1771-1849) und Charlotte Heidenreich von Siebold (1788-1859)," in *Sie gingen voran: vier bedeutende Darmstädter Frauen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Margarete Dierks (Darmstadt: H.L. Schlapp, 2001), 9-37.

³⁰Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 5 March 1864, in *Alice Letters*, 68-69.

³¹Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 21 November 1863, in *Alice Letters*, 61.

receiving good care, as “air and water are making their way into places to the benefit of mankind.”³²

These comments by Princess Alice clearly illustrate her surprise at the hospital’s cleanliness. As someone who was well versed in Florence Nightingale’s nursing philosophy as well as Joseph Lister’s work in antiseptics, Alice placed herself firmly in favor of sanitation and hygiene reform, which was a topic of much nineteenth-century debate. In these efforts, such as promoting the installation of baths in private homes, which would necessitate a new drainage system, the princess met with some resistance, even from some members of Hesse’s prominent families. One man, a member of one of Darmstadt’s respected (*angesehener*) families, bluntly expressed his opinion on the subject to Princess Alice. Hessians, he declared, did not need such “new-fangled English ideas.” He proudly stated, “I have never bathed in my life...yet I am clean.” Whether the “English” reference stems from Alice’s own nationality or the literal source of the ideas is unclear, but available resources show no indication that the princess was widely resented for her “Englishness.” More likely, this particular incident hinges on the hesitation of some Hessians, even from “good families,” to the “new-fangled” concepts of hygiene.³³ Still, Alice found some important powerful allies in Dr. Karl Weber, the court physician, and Dr. Karl Eigenbrodt, chair of the Organization of Hessian Doctors (*Vereins hessischer Ärzte*) and future managing director, or *Geschäftsführer*, of the *Alice Frauenverein*.³⁴

From 1862 to 1866, Eigenbrodt represented the electoral district of Nidda in the Hessian *Landtag*.³⁵ He was a member of the Hessian Progressive Party, which was founded in 1862 and

³²Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 28 November 1863, in *Alice Letters*, 61.

³³Ludwig, Prinz von Hessen, *Das Alice-Hospital*, 9; and Noel, *Princess Alice*, 143.

³⁴Karl Eigenbrodt (1826-1900) was also Alice’s family physician, and later, the court doctor.

³⁵HStAD Best. S1 Nr. NACHWEIS, “Carl Eigenbrodt.”

emerged from that year's elections with the majority of the seats in the lower house. The party, with its members often running under the banner of the National Liberals, completely dominated Hessian politics by the 1870s, although it had little influence in the legislature's upper chamber.³⁶ Dan S. White attributes the power of the progressives to the lack of a strong conservative party in Hesse, and the fact that after Dalwigk's ouster in 1871, the party "became more of a *Regierungspartei* - a party of the government - than ever before."³⁷

Did the political climate in Hesse play a role in the *Alice Frauenverein*? Alice's father, Prince Albert, was a firm believer in the British system of government, and supported parliamentary and constitutional reforms for Prussia. Prior to their marriages, Alice and her sister Victoria were tutored by their father in German politics, and "Vicky" was sent to Prussia with the acknowledged hope that she would bring a liberal influence to that country, which Albert hoped would take the lead in the unification of Germany.³⁸ The editor of Alice's letters, Karl Sell, described the princess as "her father's true child in regard to politics," and White described her husband Ludwig as a "declared friend" of the Hessian Progressives. Eigenbrodt's own membership in that party indicates his own political stance.³⁹ This, at the very least, speaks to the composition of the association's membership and the opinions of its leadership.

ii. Founding a *Frauenverein*

Although the goals of the *Alice Frauenverein* and its executive committee were rooted in the larger cause of "practical" philanthropy and social reform, the formation of the women's

³⁶Dan S. White, *The Splintered Party: National Liberalism in Hessen and the Reich, 1867-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 23-51.

³⁷White, *The Splintered Party*, 33.

³⁸Prince Albert's views on the British system of government and their reception in Germany are well-documented in Patricia Kollander, *Frederick III: Germany's Liberal Emperor* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 1-24.

³⁹White, *The Splintered Party*, 35.

association resulted from war and the founding of the Red Cross. After witnessing the aftermath of the Battle of Solferino in 1859, Swiss businessman Henry Dunant authored *A Memory of Solferino*, in which he exhorted readers to take up the cause of providing aid to wounded soldiers by forming voluntary societies which would furnish medical supplies as well as trained nurses. These actions, he believed, would remedy the deficiencies of existing military services and thus alleviate needless suffering. The book received recognition throughout Europe, and gained the attention of Grand Duchess Luise of Baden as well as her mother, Queen Augusta of Prussia. Both women became ardent supporters of Dunant's principles.⁴⁰

In 1863 and 1864, international conferences were held in Geneva, which led to the creation of the First Geneva Convention. Several European countries, including Baden, Hesse, Prussia, and Württemberg, agreed to the terms of the treaty, which called for the guaranteed neutrality in wartime of civilian aid personnel as well as hospitals and ambulances. The result of the convention was the creation of the international Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, a movement that was actively supported by Prussia and the other German member states.⁴¹ Each national association of the Red Cross enjoyed a wide level of autonomy. Even after the founding of the *Kaiserreich* in 1871, German state associations held on to this tradition.

The Hessian Red Cross society was the *Hilfsverein für die Krankenpflege und Unterstützung zur Soldaten im Felde* (Aid Society for the Nursing and Support of the Soldiers in the Field), known simply as the *Hilfsverein*. Alice's parents-in-law, Prince and Princess Karl,

⁴⁰Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity*, 159.

⁴¹On the Geneva conferences and the First Geneva Convention, see Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity*, 31-56. The other signatories were Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland, with Norway and Sweden joining in late 1864. Dieter Riesenberger provides a detailed discussion of the founding of the German Red Cross in *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 28-63.

were its patrons. The remainder of the membership was a predictable mix of civil servants and members of the educated bourgeoisie, or *Bildungsbürgertum*.⁴²

The *Hilfsverein*'s first main opportunity for action came with the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. Alice's husband, Ludwig, was fighting with the Hessian troops on the Austrian side, and the princess reported to her mother that the grand duchy was still devastated from the onslaught. "The confusion here is awful, the want of money alarming; right and left one must help," she told Queen Victoria on 27 July. "Even whilst in bed [Alice's third child, Irene, had been born two weeks earlier] I had to see gentlemen in my room...and wives and mothers begging I should enquire after their [wounded, captured, or missing] husbands and children."⁴³ Alice had already asked Queen Victoria for linen rags to make bandages for the wounded. "Collections are already being made for the hospitals in the field, and the necessary things to be got for the soldiers," the princess wrote. "Illness and wounds will be dreadful in this heat...I am working, collecting shirts, sheets, &c...every contribution of linen, or of patterns of cushions, or any good bed which in the English hospitals has been found useful, we should be delighted to have..."⁴⁴ Writing in August, Alice told her mother that she had been "to enquire after the wounded at the different hospitals and houses, which are filling fast...as soon as I am better, I will go to them myself, but the close and crowded wards turn one easily faint."⁴⁵ Two weeks later, she praised the "ventilation and cleanliness in the different hospitals."⁴⁶

⁴²August Weber, for example, a member of the *Hilfsverein*'s executive board and its representative to meetings of the *Alice Frauenverein*, was a court assessor (in 1868, promoted from *Landgerichtsassessor* to *Hofsgerichtsassessor*). See HStAD Best. S1 Nr. NACHWEIS, "August Wilhelm Weber"; and *Protocoll* (1869), 1.

⁴³Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 27 July 1866, in *Alice Letters*, 140.

⁴⁴Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 24 June 1866, in *Alice Letters*, 134.

⁴⁵Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 4 August 1866, in *Alice Letters*, 142.

⁴⁶Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 17 August 1866, in *Alice Letters*, 144.

Shortly after the war's conclusion, Princess Alice wrote to Florence Nightingale, thanking her for a contribution of money that had been sent from Britain, and telling the legendary nurse that "those who have seen war near-by know how horrible it is & what misery & suffering it brings with it."⁴⁷ Presumably, the funds were sent through Nightingale as a representative of the Ladies' Association for the Relief of the Sick and Wounded that had been formed in Britain for the relief of "all nations engaged" in the war. Like her sister Victoria, Alice also requested and received advice from Nightingale about the establishment of war hospitals.⁴⁸ For Hesse, the Austro-Prussian War had brought to light the need for trained nurses to care for sick and wounded soldiers, and a women's association was proposed to handle this task.

The women's association in Baden served as a model for the Hessian organization. The conflict that prompted the founding of the Badenese Women's Association (*Badische Frauenverein*) by Grand Duchess Luise in 1859 was the same one that had so powerfully affected Henri Dunant. Amid the "dangers of a threatening [Austro-Italian] war," as Luise explained to Florence Nightingale, ninety-six local committees quickly appeared throughout the grand duchy, with a central committee in Karlsruhe under the grand duchess's leadership. Baden escaped the fighting, however, and it seemed that the women's association might disband, as had been the case with many of the *Frauenvereine* formed during the Wars of Liberation. "Still," Luise reported to Nightingale, "in the short time of [the *Frauenverein*'s] existence, it had formed

⁴⁷Princess Alice of Hesse to Florence Nightingale, 29 September 1866, Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fols. 64-66.

⁴⁸Edward Tyas Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1913), 116-117. According to Cook, Princess Alice sent her initial request to Nightingale via Lady Ely (Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Victoria). This letter could not be located for reference.

such a useful train extending from one place in the grandduchy [sic] to the other that I wished to use it in its present form and adapt it to the relief of every want...every where.”⁴⁹

In 1860, many of the local branches in Baden were still active, and their attentions had turned from their original purpose of raising funds for the wounded, and towards sick and poor relief. “Knowing that all depends on a conscientious nurse,” Luise wrote, “we tried to give every woman the possibility of learning this difficult task.” The association published a book that contained the principles of nursing as well as a nurse’s duties “in some of the most frequent illnesses as well as in sickness in general.” Over 9,500 copies were distributed to committee members and “a great many other persons” throughout Baden.⁵⁰ Luise wrote that the book’s second edition contained details from Nightingale’s *Notes on Nursing: What It Is and What It is Not*, first published in 1859.⁵¹ The general perception in Baden, then, was that the services of the *Badische Frauenverein* were necessary, even after the war’s end.

According to Princess Alice and the leaders of the *Alice Frauenverein*, this was also the case in Hesse. Although the *Hilfsverein*’s statutes called for the “obtaining and training of sick nurses” in peacetime, no effort had been made to do so. The problems of organization during the Austro-Prussian War convinced Princess Alice and other leading Hessians that a women’s association should be formed for this purpose. In addition to the *Frauenverein* in Baden, similar

⁴⁹Grand Duchess Luise of Baden to Florence Nightingale, 9 October 1860, Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fols. 122-124.

⁵⁰Grand Duchess Luise of Baden to Nightingale, 9 October 1860, Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fols. 122-124.

⁵¹Nightingale’s influence on the *Badische Frauenverein* is evident in the correspondence between the nurse and the grand duchess, which is contained in the Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fols. 106-191.

women's associations had also been founded the previous year in Bavaria and Prussia.⁵² "In times of peace," Alice thought, "things should be organized so that, when war comes, people know where to send their things to, and that no volunteer nurses go out, who have not first learnt their business." During wartime, the organization would assist the Geneva Convention by "nursing and supporting the troops in time of war." Nurses were to be "brought and educated for the task, who can then assist in the hospitals or amongst the poor, or to nurse the rich, wherever they may be required..." During the Austro-Prussian War, Alice wrote, the organization of supplies "were done by private people, and, though quantities of things were sent, the whole plan was not organized, so that there was want and surplus at the same time."⁵³ At other times, the committees would focus on fundraising, emergency preparedness, nursing training, and lectures on the collection and distribution of medical supplies.⁵⁴ The statutes of the *Hilfsverein* were revised to show that the two groups would have a working relationship in wartime.⁵⁵

The "*Einladung zur Gründung eines Frauenvereins im Grossherzogtum Hessen*" ("Invitation to the Foundation of a Women's Association in the Grand Duchy of Hesse"), dated 1 June 1867, marked the official birth of the *Alice Frauenverein*. Seven women and four men composed the initial membership of the central committee, which was based in Darmstadt. All four of the men, including Eigenbrodt and Weber, were medical doctors. Of the seven women,

⁵²Unlike the *Badische Frauenverein* and the *Alice Frauenverein*, the Prussian and Bavarian associations were at that time focused on war relief rather than the potential for peacetime philanthropy.

⁵³Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 21 December 1866, in *Alice Letters*, 158-159.

⁵⁴*Protocoll* (1869), 3.

⁵⁵For a description of this relationship, see §1 of the *Statuten des Alice-Frauen-Vereins für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogtum Hessen* (Darmstadt, H. Brill 1872), 1.

there was a doctor's wife, a pastor's wife, two wives of civil servants, and two members of the aristocracy. Alice served as association president.⁵⁶

The central committee of the newly-organized *Alice Frauenverein* praised the success of the Badenese association. It noted that from 1860 to 1866, sixty-four nurses had been trained in the organization's own clinic in Karlsruhe. During the Austro-Prussian War, twelve of these nurses worked at hospitals in Mainz, the largest city in Hesse.⁵⁷ There, they worked with the nuns and deaconesses whom the "*Einladung*" had described as doing "good work."⁵⁸

If the religious orders were doing such "good work" in nursing, why then was there a need to employ secular nursing personnel? Certainly, the applications in wartime were understandable, when there was an overwhelming need for nursing. As Grand Duchess Luise of Baden had explained, "although we possess a great many deaconesses and sisters of Charity still good nursing is not enough known."⁵⁹ Similar sentiments were expressed in the "*Einladung*." While the nuns and deaconesses were doing good nursing, they simply could not fill wartime needs.

Then, too, the reasons for forming a "secular" nursing association were more ideological. Religious sisterhoods, both Catholic and Protestant, were often perceived as more focused on converting their patients than caring for them.⁶⁰ Another objection, too, was the rigid and disciplined hierarchy to which the Catholic nurses were subjected. As Florence Nightingale

⁵⁶*Protocoll* (1869), 26-29.

⁵⁷*Protocoll* (1869), 27.

⁵⁸*Protocoll* (1869), 26-27.

⁵⁹Grand Duchess Luise of Baden to Nightingale, 9 October 1860, Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fol. 22.

⁶⁰On Catholic proselytizing, see for example, Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol. 1, 249-250. For the conversion of patients by Protestant deaconesses, see Patricia Wittberg, *From Piety to Professionalism - and Back? Transformations of Organized Virtuous Religiosity* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 45.

commented to Princess Alice, while “a want of discipline or training is of life & death importance to the patients,” it was also clear that “we cannot, & do not wish to make use of the Roman Catholic arts for enforcing obedience, blind obedience.”⁶¹ Alice’s sister the Prussian crown princess had a similar opinion: “it [is] a mistake to make hospital nurses anything else but nurses...that they should be trained and formed into a regular Body with strict rules and a strict discipline is *most* necessary – but the true deep religious feeling which pervade a Life devoted to acts of mercy and charity does not seem to me an outward uniform...”⁶² The crown princess was clearly articulating a classic theme of liberal Protestantism: a distinction between inward or true religiosity (manifested in acts) and outward religiosity (manifested in symbols, rituals, and confessional formulae).

Religious tensions were clearly evident, particularly in a confessionally-mixed state like Baden. In 1864, Grand Duchess Luise observed, to her dismay, that of the thirty nurses trained by the *Badische Frauenverein*, “the number of Catholik [sic] nurses is prevailing so much over the [P]rotestants so much so that I do not think to have more than four or five of our religion.”⁶³ In Hesse, however, where two-thirds of the population was Protestant, the first “Alice nurses” were chosen from a circle of relations and close acquaintances of the *Frauenverein*’s central committee and were likely all Protestant.

There is no evidence of religious tensions among the members of the *Alice Frauenverein*, or of problems between the association and local nursing orders. The “*Einladung*” also described the “excellent [nursing] achievements” made by Protestant deaconesses and Catholic nuns during

⁶¹Nightingale to Princess Alice, 27 March 1872, in Noel, *Princess Alice*, 251.

⁶²Crown Princess Victoria of Prussia to Nightingale, 29 September 1866, Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fols. 18-27.

⁶³Grand Duchess Luise of Baden to Nightingale, 23 January 1864, Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fols. 119-120.

the war.⁶⁴ The *Frauenverein*'s first report, published in 1869, also stressed that it "was appropriate from the outset to emphasize the friendly relations of the association" with the deaconesses and Sisters of Mercy.⁶⁵ Writing to Florence Nightingale in 1866, Princess Alice observed that Nightingale would be "pleased to see how well nursed & cared for the poor people are – plenty of air & water & excellent nurses both the so-called 'diaconissinnen' [sic] & the Sisters of Mercy..."⁶⁶ The fact that Alice's mother-in-law, Princess Karl, gave her a great deal of help with the *Alice Frauenverein* while also serving as patron of the *Elisabethenstift*, the order of deaconesses based in Darmstadt, indicates that there may have been no real animosities between the groups.⁶⁷

That secular and religious nursing organizations could peacefully coexist was an idea that was obviously shared by leaders of other associations. The chairman of the Frankfurt Association for the Care of Wounded and Sick Warriors, for example, wrote that the members of the *Alice Frauenverein* should not fear that they were working against the religious orders. "Who will and can deny," he commented, "the care and excellence that come from these institutions [the Protestant and Catholic orders]?" Another example is demonstrated in a 1867 letter to the members of the *Alice Frauenverein*, in which Countess Anna von Stolberg, head of the deaconesses at Berlin's Bethanien Hospital, wished the members much success and "God's blessing" in their new endeavor.⁶⁸

⁶⁴*Protocoll* (1869), 26.

⁶⁵*Protocoll* (1869), 4.

⁶⁶Princess Alice of Hesse to Nightingale, 29 September 1866, Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fols. 64-66.

⁶⁷Aside from the fact that Prince and Princess Karl made several monetary contributions to the *Alice Frauenverein*, Alice told Queen Victoria that Princess Karl helped with the founding of the organization. See Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 21 December 1866, in *Alice Letters*, 159.

⁶⁸*Protocoll* (1869), 4-5.

Clearly, the nurses of the *Alice Frauenverein* were not in direct competition with the religious orders. In wartime, especially, they sometimes worked closely with them. In fact, two of the association's first nurses received a portion of their training from the deaconesses at Bethanien, which a report of the *Alice Frauenverein* described as one of Germany's most famous institutions.⁶⁹ What, then, kept the nurses from simply joining a religious sisterhood? As Countess von Stolberg explained, for many people, the act of nursing would be a "release from an occupationless, empty, and unsatisfied existence," which would provide a "fulfilling work."⁷⁰ Furthermore, as the central committee had noted in the "*Einladung*," not all men and women who had the inclination and ability for nursing would, or perhaps could, leave their families to join a nursing order.⁷¹ While the invitation stressed an "increasing understanding" of the "high task and honorable calling of religious orders," it also emphasized the "revival" among the Hessians of an interest in their poor and sick countrymen.⁷²

Who, then, responded to the central committee's call to join the *Alice Frauenverein*? While the "*Einladung*" invited all Hessian women ("*Frauen und Jungfrauen*") to participate in the work of the association, early donor lists indicate that the "inactive" members (donors) were members of the middle classes. Not surprisingly, the families of civil servants, lawyers, teachers, and physicians were prominent. A few pastors, as well as bankers and industrialists, also appeared in the lists, along with a smattering of members from the local aristocracy. The educational and professional backgrounds of the membership cannot be analyzed more thoroughly, but comparing donor lists (which were published infrequently in association reports)

⁶⁹*Protocoll* (1869), 28.

⁷⁰*Protocoll* (1869), 5n.

⁷¹*Protocoll* (1869), 26.

⁷²*Protocoll* (1869), 4.

with the list of local committee members indicates the composition of the membership at large was well-represented on these committees.

The first nurses employed by the *Alice Frauenverein* came from these circles. They were women who were relations or acquaintances of leading members of the association; in other words, middle or upper class families and likely to be of liberal Protestant sentiments. Of the “oldest nurses” (*ältesten Pflegerinnen*), for example, Elise Butz’s father was the tax commissioner in Langen, and her mother, the president of the local branch of the *Alice Frauenverein*.⁷³ The other women who formed the organization’s first cadre of professional nurses, Adelheid Becker, Bertha Grünewald, Charlotte Weber, and Helene Wirthwein from Darmstadt, Elise Hirsch from Langen, and Nathalie Eberhard from Dornheim, probably had similar backgrounds.⁷⁴

The composition of the *Alice Frauenverein*’s nursing staff, then, was quite different from what Grand Duchess Luise had encountered in Baden. While the grand duchess complained to Florence Nightingale that she had few nurses “that are really such as I wished,” this was due to the fact that they were women “from the poor country people’s class.” Adding that “at least their moral character has never given us any cause for reproach,” Luise acknowledged that “they are generally liked and much respected and I do not think the public feels as much as I do.”⁷⁵ Given that the *Alice Frauenverein* maintained a close relationship with the women’s association in

⁷³While the reports of the *Alice Frauenverein* themselves do not mention the relationship, it is confirmed in Elise’s obituary. See “Todesanzeige,” *Darmstädter Zeitung*, 4 December 1883.

⁷⁴Again, the lack of conclusive evidence makes a concrete analysis impossible, but the Becker and Weber families were closely connected with the grand ducal court. Elise Hirsch was in all likelihood the daughter or close relation of *Landsgerichts-Assessor* Hirsch, the managing director of the Langen branch.

⁷⁵Grand Duchess Luise of Baden to Nightingale, 23 January 1864, Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fols. 118-119.

Baden, its leaders may have made a point to choose for its first nurses only those who were well-known to them.

At first, it was not assumed that all of the nurses would be female. Early statutes of the *Alice Frauenverein* called for the training of male nurses (“*Krankenpflegern*”), but in reality the association focused solely on the training of women. Recruiting male nurses was only a “secondary aim” (“*Nebenszweck*”) of the organization. This decision stemmed from a practical source. If necessary, the *Frauenverein* could utilize the service of soldiers who had been trained at the local military hospital. However, there were provisions made for men who were interested in nursing, as a profession or in times of “urgent need,” to make a special arrangement with the central committee for training.⁷⁶ Only two men, Johannes Rink and Georg Blum, were discussed in this capacity. Rink, who had trained at the “idiot asylum” in Heppenheim, apparently took another job, though Blum, who already had hospital experience, was ready to serve on an as-needed basis.⁷⁷ Although the financial reports (*Rechnungen*) for 1867 and 1868 included line items for the remuneration of *Krankenpflegern*, these were dropped by 1869.⁷⁸

Though Eigenbrodt later reported that there had been initial resistance to the work of the association, the issue of *women* being employed as salaried nurses did not appear to be at issue. The themes of humanitarianism and Christian charity ran throughout the reports of the *Alice Frauenverein*, but the main objection, according to Eigenbrodt, was that “no one can be found who would feel an inclination to this calling for its own sake.” General opinion, he observed, was that “only in connection with the motives supplied by dogmatic religious belief could the

⁷⁶See §14 of the *Statuten des Alice-Frauen-Vereins* (1872), 6-7.

⁷⁷*Protocoll* (1869), 14.

⁷⁸*Protocoll* (1869), 23-24; and *Alice-Frauenverein für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogthum Hessen. Protocoll über die am 12. März 1872 dahier abgehaltene zweite Generalversammlung des Vereins nebst Rechenschaftsbericht über die gesammte Thätigkeit des Vereins seit September 1869 bis Ende 1871* (Darmstadt: H. Brill, 1872), 68.

needful enthusiasm for the work itself be found.”⁷⁹ In other words, the complaints against the *Alice Frauenverein* were that the nurses were not bound to a religious order.

In 1867 and 1868, during the *Frauenverein*’s first two years of existence, money was an issue of great concern. Part of the problem stemmed from the fact that the society’s own statutes required it to have the approval of the *Hilfsverein* regarding nurses’ salaries. Although the *Hilfsverein*’s central committee had promised a sum of 1,500 florins for the “establishment costs and initial expenses” of the women’s association (“*der Gründungskosten und der ersten Ausgaben*”), leaders of the *Alice Frauenverein* hoped that the *Hilfsverein* would help with additional funds if necessary.⁸⁰ A disagreement among the directors of the *Hilfsverein*, however, left the *Alice Frauenverein* with a limited amount of funding in 1868, which proved to be a critical year for the organization.⁸¹ In truth, of the 8,010 florins donated in 1867 and 1868, more than two-thirds of the funding was given by the *Hilfsverein*, Princess Alice, other royalties, and a few individuals, suggesting that the *Alice Frauenverein* had not yet gained widespread approval from the Hessian people.⁸²

⁷⁹Karl Eigenbrodt, *Der Alice-Frauenverein für Krankenpflege, seine Entstehung und leitenden Grundsätze, seine Leistungen und Ziele. Zweite mit Zusätzen versehene Auflage* (Darmstadt: G. Jonghaus Verlag, 1877), 3-4. A translation of its first edition, published in 1872, appeared in “The Alice Ladies’ Society of Darmstadt,” *The Contemporary Review, Volume XII (December 1872-May 1873)*, 138-58.

⁸⁰See, especially, §20 of the *Hilfsverein*’s statutes in *Rechenschaftsbericht des Vorstandes des Hilfsvereins im Grossherzogtum Hessen für die Krankenpflege und Unterstützung der Soldaten im Felde: über die Vereinstätigkeit im Jahr 1867* (Darmstadt: H. Brill, 1867), 11.

⁸¹*Statuten des Alice-Frauen-Vereins* (1872), §7, 3. The *Hilfsverein* did supply an additional 285 florins in the next two years (1869 and 1870), but there was some bitterness, at least on Eigenbrodt’s part, and probably with other members of the central committee, against the leadership of the *Hilfsverein*. See Eigenbrodt, *Der Alice-Frauenverein*, 7-8.

⁸²*Protocoll* (1869), 34-37. The largest donations were as follows: *Hilfsverein*, 1,500 florins; Alice (as a yearly subscription of 250 florins), 500 florins; Hessian royalties, including Ludwig III and Prince and Princess Karl, 330 florins; and other European royalties, including the crown princess of Prussia, the grand duchess of Baden, the king of Bavaria, the empress of

A women's association for nursing, which had seemed so necessary to Princess Alice and her supporters, was on the verge of disbanding in only the first year of its existence. Even with the strong support of the Hessian royal family, the association's future survival was uncertain. By the time war broke out between France and Prussia, the *Alice Frauenverein* had grown to more than 2,500 members throughout the grand duchy. The increase in membership and donations may well have come from the impending war, but it is also probable that some men and women chose to take part in the association from the desire to share in its peacetime goals.

Foremost among these activities was the recruitment and training of nurses, but this was interwoven with the task of promoting good public health and hygiene. Eigenbrodt's enthusiastic lobbying for a new drainage system was well-known in Darmstadt, but the *Hilfsverein* was also interested in improving conditions in public places such as barracks, hospitals, prisons, and schools. At the second international conferences of Red Cross societies, held in 1869 in Berlin, a member of the Darmstadt committee, Adolf Buchner, argued that the promotion of public hygiene was a specific mission that each organization could undertake. Using the example of a fire department, Buchner observed that while firefighters were "not always occupied in fighting fires; they are therefore engaged in other work, but always in the vicinity of their station, so that they are always ready for their special task...By keeping ourselves on the terrain of hygiene, we remain faithful to the basic purpose, strictly speaking, of our work of assistance...and we are consequently ready to pursue it with all our resources."⁸³

Likewise, the *Alice Frauenverein* worked to promote public health. Public events, aside from press coverage, were also a good way to advertise the association's activities, and so the

Russia, and the queen of the Netherlands, 1,175 florins. The largest individual gift of 1,197 florins was received from Alice's fellow Englishwoman Angela Burdett-Coutts, through Alice's mediation.

⁸³Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity*, 99.

Frauenverein offered a nursing lecture series “for ladies” (“für Damen”) in the winter of 1868. The talks, given by local doctors, covered topics which included nutrition, the observation and nursing of patients, and the functions of the human body. They served as a refresher course for the nurses and helped fulfill the *Frauenverein*’s charge to distribute information about health and hygiene throughout Hesse.⁸⁴ These lectures were so well-attended that an additional series was given the following winter, this time for men as well as women. The fact that men were included and attended the lectures indicates that more relevance was given to them aside from simply giving nursing instruction to women.⁸⁵ The funds raised from admission fees amounted to just over 193 florins, which was close to fourteen percent of payments made in 1869 for the organization’s seven nurses.⁸⁶ In September 1869, the association’s doctors offered a nursing course which was held in the rooms of local hospitals.⁸⁷ According to the association’s general report of 1872, this instruction served as a “nursery school” (“Vorschule”) of theoretical and practical training that would be used during the Franco-German War, which broke out in July 1870.

iii. The Franco-German War

At the start of the Franco-German War, according to the association’s general report of 1872, the women and men of the *Alice Frauenverein* faced the enormous task of nursing and supplying the wounded and sick soldiers. The war, the report stated, provided the members of the

⁸⁴It is not mentioned in associational documents, but apparently some nurses were in attendance from the Protestant and Catholic orders as well. See Luise Büchner, “Darmstadt, Briefe,” *Neue Bahnen* 4 no. 18 (September 1869), 141.

⁸⁵*Protocoll* (1869), 22-23. They may, of course, have simply provided the means for a winter social outing or opportunity to network with other men, rather than male interest in these topics. Still, the fact that the *Alice Frauenverein* maintained strong support from its male membership probably helped it succeed in the long term.

⁸⁶*Protocoll* (1872), 57.

⁸⁷*Protocoll* (1872), 45.

association, and especially the newly-trained professional nurses, with a “baptism by fire.”⁸⁸ The experience gained in the “bloody school of the war,” it claimed, would give “more to the distribution of knowledge of efficient nursing than would ten years of peace.”⁸⁹

Princess Alice’s British connections provided a massive amount of aid to the *Frauenverein*. On 22 July 1870, Colonel Robert Loyd-Lindsay, a Crimean war veteran and conservative member of Parliament, published a letter in the *Times* which called for Britain to follow the example of other signatories of the Geneva Convention and form a national aid society for sick and wounded soldiers. In response, the British National Aid Society for the Sick and Wounded in War (National Aid Society) was established with Alice’s brother, the Prince of Wales, as president of the national committee, and her sister, Helena, as chair of the ladies’ committee.⁹⁰ The ladies took charge of the “receiving, preparing, and packing up” of hospital supplies and other “necessaries,” which were divided between the warring countries.⁹¹ The society, chaired by Colonel Loyd-Lindsay, also elected to divide the contributions raised between the two countries, and extensive reports on the use of these funds were published in *The Times*.⁹²

⁸⁸*Protocoll* (1872), 3.

⁸⁹*Protocoll* (1872), 46.

⁹⁰This society was renamed the British Red Cross in 1905. Queen Alexandra, Alice’s sister-in-law, served as its president. See British Red Cross, “The Beginning of the Red Cross Movement,” British Red Cross, <http://www.redcross.org.uk/standard.asp?id=87373> (accessed May 24, 2009).

⁹¹*Times* (London), 25 August 1870. Loyd-Lindsay noted that the National Aid Society had “spent nothing on linen, lint, bandages, shirts, and such like hospital necessaries, our requirements in this respect being provided by the liberal contributions which pass through the Ladies’ Committee.” More than fifty cases had already been sent out, “...fairly divided, and when opportunities have been more favourable for sending to one side during the week, the next week has adjusted the balance.”

⁹²From July 1870 to March 1871, the *Times* published more than seventy articles under the heading “Aid to the Sick and Wounded.”

The paper also published requests for aid from England. One of these requests, sent to the *Times* by the bishop of London, came from Darmstadt's Anglican chaplain. The Rev. Dr. Francis P. Fleming described the need for "old and new linen, calico, flannel, lint, shirts and blankets...but above all, money" to supply his home, which he planned to use as a hospital. "The Princess Alice," he wrote, "has supplied us with bandages and other immediate surgery requirements..."⁹³ Other private homes were used as hospitals, and some were staffed by members of the *Alice Frauenverein*.⁹⁴

Darmstadt was not the only town in need of money and medical supplies. By 23 August, Captain Henry Brackenbury, a member of the National Society's central committee, had reported that "applications for help pour in upon us...from Dieppe to Homburg."⁹⁵ British medical personnel and aid had already arrived to assist French and German troops. As Dr. J.L.W. Thudichum added to Brackenbury's report, field hospitals on both sides "want money, much money, and more money" to purchase needed supplies, including food and drink, beds, and surgical equipment.⁹⁶ Medical personnel faced other challenges in the field as well, where the

⁹³"A Military Hospital at Darmstadt," *Times* (London), 6 August 1870; and "The Darmstadt Hospital," *Times* (London), 29 August 1870.

⁹⁴An example is that of Fr. Elise Dournay, a member of the *Frauenverein* who supervised a hospital during the summer and fall of 1870 in the home of Dr. Parens, a bank director. She died shortly after. See HStAD Best. G 28 Darmstadt Nr. F1499/43; *Protocoll* (1872), 21; and "The Alice Ladies' Society," 141.

⁹⁵*Times* (London), 23 August 1870.

⁹⁶Johannes Ludwig Wilhelm Thudichum (1829-1901), a native of Büdingen (Hesse) and a student of Justus von Liebig at Giessen, emigrated to London in 1853. At this time, he was employed by the pathology laboratory at St. Thomas's Hospital and worked for the medical department of the Privy Council. Although his work was fairly controversial during his own lifetime, he is now considered to be the "father of neurochemistry." See, for example, Caoimhghín S. Breathnach, "Johann Ludwig Wilhelm Thudichum 1829-1901: Bane of the Protagonisers," *History of Psychiatry* 12, no. 2 (2001): 283-284.

Thudichum, who was stationed near the fighting around Metz, estimated that there were about 20,000 wounded men in the area, with 20,000 more expected the next week. These men could "neither be removed nor be fully attended to in a surgical sense." The doctors at the front

“probability of pestilence and cholera breaking out from the wounded from the overcrowded state of the hospitals, especially along the German frontier” was a concern. While Thudichum’s information stemmed largely from his own observations, it is likely that he received some information from his two sisters: Marie Thudichum, a wartime *Frauenverein* volunteer, and Otilie Weber-Thudichum, a member of the local committee in Offenbach.⁹⁷

Of the ten surgeons sent to Germany by the National Aid Society,⁹⁸ the “chief representative” of the National Aid Society was Dr. Charles Mayo (no known relation to the Mayo Clinic in the United States), who would spend most of the war in Darmstadt.⁹⁹ Upon his arrival, Mayo also observed that Princess Alice was heavily involved in the war effort. Her palace had been largely “given up to the to work of collecting and packing charpie,¹⁰⁰ bandages, linen, and all kinds of necessaries for the army...” while the princess “...goes out to meet nearly every train that arrives with the wounded, and visits the hospitals two or three times a day.” The princess “knew nearly all the patients who were there by sight, and in many cases remembered what their injuries were.”¹⁰¹ Alice herself had written that “so much rests on me, and there so

were particularly in need of pincettes, which could help stop bleeding. *Times* (London), 23 August 1870.

⁹⁷*Times* (London), 25 August 1870.

⁹⁸By the following month, Colonel Loyd-Lindsay reported: “There are at the present time 110 persons engaged in the services of the society. Of this number 62 are surgeons, 16 are ladies who are acting as nurses to the sick and wounded, and the remainder may be classed under the head of agents who are giving their services, some being paid and some unpaid.” Four of the surgeons, including Dr. Mayo, were stationed in Darmstadt. “Aid to the Sick and Wounded,” *Times* (London), 19 September 1870.

⁹⁹Charles Mayo (1837-1877), from 1865-1869 the coroner of Oxford University and dean of its New College, had served as a staff surgeon and medical inspector with the 13th U.S. Army Corps during the American civil war.

¹⁰⁰“Charpie” was linen that was separated into short threads to make surgical dressings. Used on the continent, the process of making charpie went one step further than that of lint, which was preferred by British surgeons.

¹⁰¹*Times* (London), 25 August 1870. Mayo may appear to be exaggerating a bit here due to Alice’s royal status, but his observations coincide with numerous reports from British and

many to help... I have seen that all is ready to receive the wounded, and to send out help. I send out fourteen nurses for the Feld-Lazarethe...¹⁰² At the time of Mayo's arrival, she wrote that "besides the large *Hilfsverein* for the 'wounded and sick,' which is in our palace, I have daily to visit the four hospitals. There is very much to do; we are so near the seat of war." That morning, she continued, "we got two large wagons ready and sent of for Pont-à-Mousson, where they telegraph from the battlefield...that they are in great want." Alice had sent "my best nurses" there, explaining to Queen Victoria that "the others are in three hospitals; two of them – military ones – were not ready or organized a week ago."¹⁰³

The methods of patient transport that were used by the Germans during the Franco-German War had been copied from the one developed and used during the American civil war. The stretcher-bearers, or *Krankenträger*, brought the soldiers to field hospitals, where their most urgent wounds were treated. As quickly as possible, they were usually moved to the closest reserve hospital. Those with lighter wounds or illnesses would be sent, if possible, to a facility closer to their own homes. As one British observer had noted, however, after a major battle the surrounding areas were so crowded with the wounded and dying that the situation was "almost as bad as if no provision whatsoever had been made beforehand."¹⁰⁴

Because the surgeons and other military medical personnel were required to follow the troops to their next battle, the volunteer associations, such as the *Hilfsverein*, provided a vital

German observers. His concern for her when he states that "one cannot but regard her state of health with some apprehension, lest her kindness and self-sacrifice should lead her beyond the bounds of prudence," is not overblown. At the time of Dr. Mayo's arrival, Alice was heavily pregnant. She gave birth to her fifth child, Friedrich, on 7 October.

¹⁰²Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 26 July 1870, in *Alice Letters*, 243.

¹⁰³Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 19 August 1870, in *Alice Letters*, 245. At that time, she noted, 500 wounded had arrived.

¹⁰⁴*Times* (London), 7 October 1870.

service in patient care and transport.¹⁰⁵ Several of the field-hospitals in the Metz region were operated by the *Alice-Frauenverein*.¹⁰⁶ As Princess Alice had promised many of the “proven nurses,” (“*erprobten Krankenpflegerinnen*”) to the field hospitals of the Hessian division, thirteen nurses were sent to France. Most of the association’s first nurses were included in this number.¹⁰⁷

A report published in the association’s *Protocoll* of 1872 describes what these women experienced near the battlefield, shortly after the battle of Gravelotte, where the Hessian division had lost about nine hundred men.¹⁰⁸ After collecting the nurses who were “dispersed throughout the Rheinhessen,” the group left Darmstadt on 15 August, arriving at Pont-à-Mousson on 17 August.¹⁰⁹ The report describes the many train changes, delays and difficulty of obtaining anything more than “a little bread and light red wine” in town.¹¹⁰

While delayed in Pont-à-Mousson, the *Alice-Frauenverein* nurses were able to help with the wounded “in the streets and the neighboring houses where the doctors were often called.” When instructions arrived from Prince Ludwig, the group continued toward the field-hospitals at Anoux-la-Grange, passing hills and plateaus which were still “strewn with corpses.” The two

¹⁰⁵*Times* (London), 7 October 1870. In addition to the various branches of the *Hilfsverein*, members of the *Johanniterorden*, or the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, were vital in patient transport from the field of battle. Their leader, the *Ordenskanzler*, was named Royal Commissioner and Military Inspector of Voluntary Nursing of the Army in the Field (*Königliche Kommissar und Militär-Inspecteur der freiwillige Krankenpflege bei der Armee im Felde*) in May 1866. See Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 42-43.

¹⁰⁶*Protocoll* (1872), 14. These field-hospitals were located at Anoux-la-Grange, Saint-Ail, Jouaville, Montigny-la-Grange, Corny, Doncourt, Rémyilly, and Chalons.

¹⁰⁷*Protocoll* (1872), 11-12.

¹⁰⁸“Die Krankenpflegerinnen des Alice-Frauenvereins im Felde,” in *Protocoll* (1872), 65-68. The report is unsigned, but was probably written by *Hofgerichtsrat* Dr. Heinrich Stüber, secretary of the central committee, who was part of the group.

¹⁰⁹For example, Helene Wirthwein, along with three others, had been working in Speyer, where at the request of the Bavarian government they had helped organize and operate a Baracks-Lazareth. *Protocoll* (1872), 15.

¹¹⁰“Die Krankenpflegerinnen,” in *Protocoll* (1872), 66.

hospitals had just been organized, and each held five hundred wounded, most “of the hardest type.” The nurses were “joyfully greeted by the doctors,” who were handling “various operations and amputations, some three at a time.” Unfortunately, the author of this report does not provide much detail about the arrangements of the field hospitals at Anoux-la-Grange, other than to say that meat, coffee and bread were available at that time (ice was not and was listed as “urgently required”), so it is hard to say what type of accommodations the nurses were provided.¹¹¹

Associational documents and memoranda do not mention anything else about the nurses who worked in the field hospitals, other than that they each worked in those hospitals for a period of about one and a half months.¹¹²

Members of the expedition to the Anoux-la-Grange field hospital returned with a convoy of wounded, who were on their way to various locations in Hesse and Prussia. At Remilly, the soldiers were “refreshed” with supplies from the Mainz “depot” before continuing their journey. Mainz and Darmstadt, the two largest cities in Hesse, were in close proximity to the battlefields on the French-German border, but also at the intersection of major railways and rivers. When an ambulance train arrived at the station, women from the *Alice-Frauenverein* as well as members of the *Hilfsverein* and other volunteers entered “carriage after carriage...the sick borne out, and their wants supplied.” If necessary, they were given a fresh change of clothes, given a “good meal, cigars, [and] tobacco.” Those who could write were able to mail letters. After wounds had been checked and dressings changed, the train was reloaded and continued on its way. In the

¹¹¹Given the size and capacity of the hospitals, the nurses were likely able to have a “room” which would afford them some privacy away from the men.

¹¹²*Protocoll* (1872), 14.

first three months of the war, for example, it was estimated that over 40,000 men had passed through the Mainz station in this manner.¹¹³

Including those who served in the field hospitals and ambulance trains, 164 nurses from the *Alice-Frauenverein* were employed in a number of different hospitals in Hesse. The larger hospitals were in Darmstadt, Worms, and Giessen, though others were located in thirteen additional towns throughout the grand duchy. Some, of course, like the *Landkrankenhaus* or the hospital in the *Mauerstrasse* (known as the “*Mauerspitalchen*”), both in Darmstadt, were established hospitals, but most of the others had been built for the purpose.¹¹⁴ The *Frauenverein* contracted with the government to handle nursing and economic administration of three reserve hospitals in Darmstadt.¹¹⁵ Of these, the one that received the most attention, particularly in the British press, was the one funded by the National Aid Society. The “Reserve Alice-Hospital,” built barracks-style on the *Pionnier-Exercierplatz*, just a few blocks south of Darmstadt’s main train station, was the only hospital built in Germany by the British organization.

Directed by Charles Mayo, the Alice-Hospital’s main purpose was to treat patients with “internal ailments.” On 19 October 1870, the first fifteen typhus patients arrived for treatment.¹¹⁶ The 120-bed facility, which was enlarged to 240 beds in early 1871, was staffed by

¹¹³*Times* (London), 7 October 1870. Berkeley Hill, a British doctor, commented that in the week preceding his visit, more than 13,000 sick and wounded soldiers had traveled through the Mainz station.

¹¹⁴*Protocoll* (1872), 14. The *Hilfsverein* constructed hospitals at the Eisenbahnhof, Turnhalle, Landkrankenhaus, Mauerstrasse-Hospital, and the Orangerie-Garten in Darmstadt; the Eisenbahnhof and the Cornelius Heyl’sche Baracken (funded by prominent industrialist and member of the *Alice-Frauenverein*, Cornelius Heyl) in Worms; and the Turnhalle and the Baracken in Giessen. The others were established by the government as *Lazareths* and *Reserve-Lazarethen*, making a total of 36 stations throughout Hesse.

¹¹⁵Located in the Riedeselstrasse, the Orangerie-Garten, and the Pionnier-Exercierplatz am Akaziengarten.

¹¹⁶“Das Alice-Hospital in Darmstadt,” *Protocoll* (1872), 69-75. Although there is a line of continuity, this Alice-Hospital should not be confused with the Alice-Hospital that was built

nineteen nurses from the *Alice Frauenverein*. Eight of these women were *Berufspflegerinnen*, or professional nursing staff. These included some of the association's "oldest" nurses: Adelheid Becker, Elise Butz, Helene Wirthwein, and Natalie Eberhardt.¹¹⁷ The other women were *Kriegsdauer* nurses, those who volunteered only for the duration of the war.¹¹⁸ In the first twenty weeks of the hospital's operation, the women nursed 700 patients, some of them the "hopeless cases sent to us from other Hospitals."¹¹⁹

Supporting the medical personnel in the Alice-Hospital, as well as other hospitals throughout the grand duchy, was a large contingent of ladies, most of them members of the *Frauenverein*, who were actively engaged in management and distribution of supplies for close to 10,000 hospital patients.¹²⁰ Depending on the hospital's requirements, several of the *Alice-Frauenverein*'s members worked in the kitchens. In addition, members of the *Frauenverein* met the daily influx of ambulance trains, passing out needed refreshments and supplies. The volunteers were divided into groups of eight to fifteen and were normally headed by a member of the Central-Committee or another (usually married) woman who likely had performed similar tasks during the Austro-Prussian War. A list of volunteers and their groups supplies some idea of each group's composition. There was usually a fairly even mix of married and unmarried

in 1883. That institution was funded by money from the Alice Memorial Fund, established in 1879, and is discussed in Chapter Four.

¹¹⁷The Alice-Frauenverein had a total of 16 *Berufspflegerinnen*. The other eight were dispersed in other hospitals in the grand duchy.

¹¹⁸None of the *Frauenverein*'s documentation indicates that anyone other than the *Berufspflegerinnen* were paid for their services. In addition, the *Rechnungen* for 1870 and 1871 account only for the professional nurses. *Protocoll* (1872), 60-64.

¹¹⁹Mayo, "The Alice-Hospital," 271.

¹²⁰Reports from the branches of the *Alice Frauenverein* are found in *Protocoll* (1872), 29-42. Aside from Mainz (which reported "refreshing" more than 72,000 patients in its train station) and Darmstadt, the number of patients treated was 6,032.

women. In most cases, it is impossible to determine the age ranges in the groups, or to determine whether they were friends, relatives, or had other connections.

Some were filled with family members, such as in the section headed by Frau Philippine von Jungenfeld. Out of sixteen women, five were from the “von Willich gen. von Pöllnitz” family.¹²¹ In almost every group, there were at least two members who were likely in-laws, mother/daughter(s), sisters/cousins, and occasionally, grandmother/grandchild. For example, Wilhelmine (Mimi) Maurer, a member of the central committee and wife of Geheimrat Wilhelm Maurer, supervised a division that included her granddaughter Mimi Becker, along with Mimi’s first cousin, Ferdinande Helmsdörfer, niece of Maurer’s son-in-law Theodor Becker.¹²² At the same time, some members who likely shared a family connection were also placed in separate groups, so the inference can be made that the groups were formed based on personal choice and sociability as well as experience.

Similar connections can also be traced with the *Alice-Frauenverein* nurses. For example, Langen was the hometown of Elise Butz. Her mother, Frau *Steuercommisair* Butz was a

¹²¹Frau Emilie, and the Fräulein Marie, Caroline, Sophie, and Toni von Willich gen. von Pöllnitz. A little is known about Caroline due to the fact that she married (morganatically) Prince Heinrich of Hesse, Alice’s brother-in-law, in 1878. Emilie was her mother and the other three women in all probability her sisters. See biographical entries for Caroline Willich gen. von Pöllnitz and her father, Generalmajor Ludwig Willich von Pöllnitz in HStAD Best. S1 Nr. NACHWEIS.

¹²²HStAD Best. S1 Nr. NACHWEIS, “Wilhelm Maurer (1798-1876)”; and HStAD ST 45 Landsberg. Since 1861, Wilhelm Maurer had served as the president of the central statistics office in Hesse, the *Zentralstelle für Landesstatistik*. The Maurer-Becker-Helmsdörfer connection can be traced through the letters belonging to Theodor Becker and his wife Marie, neé Maurer. Charlotte Helmsdörfer, Ferdinande’s sister and first superintendent (*Vorsteherin*) of the *Alice-Frauenverein*’s training school for nurses, is noticeably absent in the *Protocoll* (1872) lists of women who worked for the *Frauenverein* during the war, but an obituary places her in the linen room of the hospital in the Orangerie-Garten. This is a credible statement due to that the fact that her uncle, Theodor Becker, was an active member of the *Hülfsverein*, which operated the hospital in the Orangerie.

founding member and president of the Langen *Zweigverein*.¹²³ Helene Wirthwein, also one of the first *Berufspflegerinnen*, was quite probably the sister of Sophie Wirthwein, a *Kriegsdauer* nurse.¹²⁴ Freifräulein Friederike von Schenck zu Schweinsberg and her sister Sylvia were also *Kriegsdauer* nurses. Their other sister, Caroline, was a *Berufspflegerin*, who was employed during wartime or other periods of necessity.¹²⁵ With the nurses, however, this was an exception rather than the rule: of the 164 nurses who volunteered only for the length of the war, only twelve were likely related to other nurses within the *Frauenverein*.¹²⁶ These networks of war volunteers suggest that the activities of the *Frauenverein* were often a family affair, which would sometimes continue in succeeding generations.¹²⁷

The war created other networks of membership as well. New local branches, or *Zweigvereine*, were founded just before or during the Franco-German War. The most important (and the largest) of these branches was the one established in Mainz. Outside of the central

¹²³ Aside from the members of the central committee, she is also one of only three people mentioned by name as in attendance at the first *Generalversammlung* in 1869. *Protocoll* (1869), 1.

¹²⁴ HStAD Best. G 28 Darmstadt F 2993/29. Their father was Christoph Wirthwein, a *Spenglermeister*. When she died in 1911, Helene Wirthwein was recognized by the association's general secretary as the "oldest" and the only *Frauenverein* nurse yet living who had worked during the war. See *Alice Frauenverein für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogtum Hessen. Verhandlungen der zwanzigsten ordentlichen Mitgliederversammlung zu Darmstadt am 30. Oktober 1911* (Darmstadt: L.C. Wittich'schen Hofbuchdruckerei, 1912), 11-12.

¹²⁵ HStAD Best. G 28 Darmstadt Nr. F 2808/1.

¹²⁶ *Protocoll* (1872), 11-13 and 16ff. The *Frauenverein* listed its nurses not in alphabetical order, but in the order in which they joined the organization, making these connections much more probable. It is also likely that there were others who were related by marriage, but these can not be proven definitively.

¹²⁷ For example, Karl Eigenbrodt's daughter Mathilde married Friedrich Best, who eventually served as the organization's secretary. Another daughter, Emilie (Emmy) married Louis Merck, son of Eigenbrodt's colleague on the Central Committee, Marie Merck. A Merck daughter, Marie Rothe, succeeded Minna Strecker as the association's vice president. See, for example, HStAD Best. S1 Nr. NACHWEIS, "Emilie Merck (1862-1948)," and "Marie Rothe." Looking through the membership lists of the local committees, it is evident that wives and husbands often served together, along with their unmarried daughters.

branch in Darmstadt, Mainz was the only *Zweigverein* to recruit and train its own nurses. Of the existing branches, two showed marked growth: the university town of Giessen, which expanded from 197 members in 1869 to 305 in 1874; and the industrial city of Offenbach, which grew from 110 to 341 during the same period. Others gained only a few new members, and some associations showed fewer members than they had before the war.¹²⁸

In her letters to Queen Victoria and Florence Nightingale, Princess Alice described the motivations for establishing the *Alice Frauenverein*: the recruitment and training of nurses and the expansion of public education regarding issues of health and hygiene. Princess Alice's own views on the subject place her philanthropic projects within the broader framework of the health reform movement.

Karl Eigenbrodt's efforts toward a better drainage system in Darmstadt and the active participation by a number of local doctors on the association's central committee indicates their commitment to this reform. This is supported by the *Hilfsverein*'s encouragement of the promotion of public hygiene as a peacetime activity for both associations. But what about the *Frauenverein*'s general membership? What motivated individuals to join? Pre- and post-war membership levels of the *Zweigvereine* indicate that patriotic fervor in itself was not the only reason that a person joined the *Alice Frauenverein*.

¹²⁸For example, Bensheim's membership dropped from 96 to 69. This data was gathered from branch reports in the *Protocoll* (1869), which covered the period from mid-1867 to September 1869, and *Alice-Frauenverein für die Krankenpflege in Grossherzogthum Hessen. Protocoll über die am 12. Mai dahier abgehaltene dritte Generalversammlung des Vereins nebst Rechenschaftsbericht über die gesammte Thätigkeit des Vereins seit Anfang des Jahres 1872 bis Ende 1873* (Darmstadt: H. Brill, 1874), which reported the association's activity during 1872 and 1873.

Other factors, primarily the need for more nursing and health reform, should also be considered. Alice's level of involvement in the association, which Eckhart Franz has described as much more "hands on" type of patronage than that of her predecessors, clearly influenced the *Frauenverein's* mission and goals. Eigenbrodt, too, during than more than thirty years on the organization's central committee, played a major role in formulating its policy.¹²⁹

British support of the *Alice Frauenverein* through its establishment of the Reserve Alice-Hospital was helpful, though not necessary for the association's financial survival. By 1869, more than 2,500 Hessians, including members of the royal family and other European royals, made donations to the *Frauenverein*. Still, remaining funds and materials used in the Reserve Alice-Hospital were donated by the National Aid Society to the *Alice Frauenverein*, and made it possible for the association to quickly establish a home and training school for the *Berufspflegerinnen* after the war's end. As Karl Eigenbrodt observed, however, the idea that "secular" women could be "called" to nursing was still a matter for debate. As the next chapter will show, that debate would take place while members of the revived women's movement sought to use nursing as a suitable solution for the middle-class "woman question," or *Frauenfrage*.

¹²⁹*Alice-Frauen-Verein für die Krankenpflege im Grossherzogthum Hessen. Protokoll über die am 12. Oktober 1901 abgehaltene fünfzehnte Generalversammlung des Vereins nebst Rechenschaftsbericht über die gesammte Thätigkeit des Vereins in den Jahren 1899 und 1900* (Darmstadt: 1902), 6.

CHAPTER 3

FRAUENVEREIN AND FRAUENFRAGE: THE “ALICE SOCIETIES” AND THE QUESTION OF FEMALE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

In the fourth edition of her best-selling book, *Die Frauen und ihr Beruf* (*Women and their Vocation*), Luise Büchner devoted a chapter to the subject of female nursing, or *weibliche Krankenpflege*. Since the publication of the book's third edition in 1860, nursing had emerged as a new field of employment for women. The author, a native of Darmstadt and close friend of Princess Alice, credited this development to the “benefactor of humankind,” Florence Nightingale.¹ Although Büchner also emphasized other occupations for women, she paid a great deal of attention to nursing. Her involvement with the nascent organized women's movement, and her experiences with the *Alice Frauenverein*, allowed Büchner to comment quite authoritatively on the development of nursing as a female profession.

The chapter on nursing was only added in 1872, but each of the first three editions of *Die Frauen* was centered on the *Frauenfrage*, or “woman question.” Discussions about this question, as Patricia M. Mazón has observed, “gave the German middle-class women's movement a way to articulate its concerns” about the lack of female higher education and employment.² The bourgeois feminism of the 1860s and 1870s was led by many of the women who had been active

¹Luise Büchner, *Die Frauen und ihr Beruf*, 4th ed. (Leipzig: Theodor Thomas, 1872).

²Patricia M. Mazón, *Gender and the Modern Research University: The Admission of Women to German Higher Education, 1865-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 3.

in the reform movements of the late 1840s and early 1850s.³ Though much of this “radical” activity by women had been crushed during the reaction of the post-revolutionary period, the 1860s witnessed the revival of female activism, albeit in a movement that was centered not on “emancipation” through suffrage, but emancipation through education and employment.

While secular women’s associations were generally recognized as a source for war nursing, these groups still needed to form a solid base of acceptance for their peacetime activities. As shown in this chapter, the *Alice Frauenverein* was actively involved in the organized women’s movement, which was instrumental in promoting secular nursing as a choice of profession for single middle-class women. By examining Luise Büchner’s discussions about this topic and speeches made by delegates to the *Letzte Verband*, along with the work of the *Alice Verein für Frauenbildung und Erwerb* (Alice Association for Women’s Education and Income, co-founded by Princess Alice and Luise Büchner in 1867), it is possible to situate the position of the *Alice Frauenverein* in the German women’s movement of the 1860s and 1870s.

This chapter will show that the *Alice Frauenverein* and other women’s associations actively promoted “secular” nursing as a solution to the *Frauenfrage*. Rather than encouraging an active competition with Protestant and Catholic nursing orders, leaders of these associations, like “Mother” Simon and Karl Eigenbrodt, saw the addition of interconfessional nursing associations as addressing an existing need for more “good” nurses, who could be won to nursing by the promise of lifelong security and respectability, much like that offered by the religious organizations. Instead of simply building onto existing religious sisterhoods, the *Alice*

³The term “bourgeois feminism” is a term that is widely used by historians. Like Jean Quataert, I like the term “reform feminism” as well. I part company with Quataert, however, when she separates “patriotic women” (e.g., members of the *Vaterländische Frauenverein*) from “reform feminists.” As is shown in the case of the *Alice Frauenverein* and the *Alice Verein*, women could be (and were) both. See Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 82n.

Frauenverein and other women's associations offered middle-class women the means to be employed as nurses without taking religious vows.

The women's movement was overseen by two organizations – the *Allgemeiner deutscher Frauenverein* (ADF) and the *Letzte Verein*. The ADF was the more “radical” of the two, as its leaders were strongly in favor of female suffrage. Certainly, one of the ADF's co-founders, Louise Otto-Peters, was probably the most well-known women's rights activist in Germany. A democratic revolutionary, Otto-Peters had edited Germany's first feminist journal, the *Frauen-Zeitung*, from 1848 to 1852. During the 1840s, female activists like Otto-Peters were part of a women's movement that embraced charitable work as well as projects that promoted women's social and political emancipation. Otto-Peters herself was a member of a German-Catholic, or *Deutschkatholiken*, congregation, and as Michael Gross has commented, “the politicization of German society that came with the revolution only furthered the radicalization of women in these congregations.”⁴

Like the *Frauen-Zeitung*, other feminist activities were suppressed by reactionary governments during the 1850s. As Catherine Prelinger has noted, there was a definite link between the radical, usually interconfessional female activism of the revolutionary period and the women's movement that emerged in the 1860s.⁵ Many of the same women who had participated in the earlier women's organizations led the revived movement that was established with the founding of the ADF.

In 1848, Otto-Peters had insisted on political as well as social and economic rights for women. Her ADF co-founders, Auguste Schmidt and Henriette Goldschmidt, were more

⁴Michael B. Gross, *The War Against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 189.

⁵Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change*, xii.

moderate in their goals for the association, although both had sympathized with the revolution. Each of these women were actively involved in education – Schmidt as a teacher at a girls’ institute in Leipzig, and Goldschmidt, a rabbi’s wife, was forming a foundation for later work as an activist in the kindergarten movement. Together, as Nancy Reagin has commented, Schmidt and Goldschmidt were the “real leadership” in the ADF and focused the association’s goals on a more conservative mission of broadening female education and employment.⁶ This shift in focus brought the ADF and the *Letzte Verein* more in line with each other. Given the fact that German women were barred from joining political parties or attending political meetings until 1908, many leaders of the bourgeois women’s movement felt that suffrage simply was not a reasonable goal.⁷

Instead of focusing its attention to the cause of suffrage, the women’s movement centered its efforts on the expansion of educational and employment opportunities for single middle-class women. Years of education and professional training were required for bourgeois men to have a suitable income and afford a household. As a result, ran the perception of contemporary writers, a rising number of middle-class men chose not to marry at all.⁸ The general belief that the number of single middle-class women was increasing was not supported

⁶Reagin, *A German Women’s Movement*, 25.

⁷As Catherine L. Dollard has recently stated, this “political crucible in which the German women’s movement was formed dictated a reformist path emphasizing paths beyond the vote, including education and vocation.” See Dollard, *The Surplus Woman: Unmarried in Imperial Germany, 1871-1918* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 6-7.

⁸Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education for Girls in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 100.

by demographics, yet it profoundly influenced developments in the expansion of female vocations.⁹

In addition, single bourgeois women were faced with another situation – possible redundancy. As Barbara Greven-Aschoff has stated, “in the course of industrialization and urbanization, numerous functions otherwise necessary for housekeeping had become unnecessary, leaving for the maturing female generation only a type of ‘parasitic’ existence.”¹⁰ Greven-Aschoff has argued that preindustrial society afforded women the possibility of living outside the family home only through joining a religious community, but the “modern, secularized society” of the nineteenth century provided them with employment.¹¹

In 1865, Crown Princess Victoria of Prussia asked Dr. Wilhelm Adolf Lette, president of the Berlin-based Central Association for the Welfare of the Working Class, to investigate the woman question.¹² After research in Germany and England, Lette concluded that single middle-class women were most in need of more education and opportunities for employment.¹³ In 1866, under the patronage of the crown princess, he founded the Association for the Advancement of the Employability of the Female Sex (*Verein zur Förderung der Erwerbsfähigkeit des weiblichen Geschlechts*), known as the *Lette Verein*.

⁹Ute Frevert provides a good discussion of these perceptions in *Women in German History*, 118-120. For a discussion of the “surplus woman” question during the *Kaiserreich*, see Dollard, *The Surplus Woman*.

¹⁰Greven-Aschoff, *Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung*, 47. As Dollard has recently commented, “in a wide range of historical writing on the experiences of German women, the basic importance and middle-class orientation of the *Frauenüberschuss* (woman surplus) is recognized.” See Dollard, *The Surplus Woman*, 11.

¹¹Greven-Aschoff, *Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung*, 47.

¹²Wilhelm Adolf Lette (1799-1868) was a national liberal, former representative to the Frankfurt National Assembly, and a deputy in the Prussian parliament.

¹³Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 101.

Ann Taylor Allen has described the ADF leaders as “committed feminists” who claimed the right to employment as part of women’s rights to social and political participation.¹⁴ As Ute Frevert has observed, though the leaders of the ADF “made no secret of the fact that political emancipation was their fundamental long-term aim,” they agreed that women’s employment must be expanded before suffrage or other civil rights could be reasonably achieved. According to Frevert, the *Lette Verein* “closed its ears to the voices calling for wider emancipation.” This statement is not completely accurate, a fact which Frevert herself later acknowledges.¹⁵ Lette himself was certainly not in favor of female suffrage. In 1876, however, Jenny Hirsch, a member of the association’s executive board and editor of its periodical, *Der Frauen-Anwalt* (*The Women’s Advocate*) clearly stated that the *Lette Verein* was not opposed to suffrage, which they saw as the long-term goal of the women’s movement. Instead, it merely advocated a more gradual approach through the expansion of women’s rights to education and employment.¹⁶

After Lette’s death in 1868, the leadership of the *Lette Verein* essentially passed to his daughter, Anna Schepeler-Lette.¹⁷ After Lette’s death, the aims of the two associations had grown so closely linked that in 1869 the board of the *Lette Verein* invited other associations, including the ADF, to its conference in Berlin. The purpose was to coordinate the efforts of these various groups. As Cordelia Scharpf has observed, one of the invitations was addressed to the

¹⁴Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, 96-97.

¹⁵Frevert, *Women in German History*, 117-118. Frevert’s discussion, however, is set clearly in a framework which puts the *Lette Verein* in a negative context when compared to the ADF.

¹⁶Frevert, *Women in German History*, 118.

¹⁷Franz von Holtzendorff served as president until 1872, and was succeeded in that position by Schepeler-Lette, who remained in that role until her own death in 1897.

National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), based in New York City.¹⁸ The result of the conference was the formation of the Union of German Women's Educational and Employment Associations (*Verband deutscher Frauenbildungs-und Erwerbsvereine*), widely known as the *Lette Verband*, a loosely-organized network of women's associations.

After much deliberation, the ADF refrained from joining the *Lette Verband* for reasons that were not about mission, but membership.¹⁹ In 1867, internal debates among the members of the ADF had been centered on the inclusion of men as full members of the organization. Even the association's leadership had its differences of opinion on this subject. Two years earlier, as Ann Taylor Allen has noted, Henriette Goldschmidt had to be persuaded by her husband that the "broadening of women's social role required them to develop independence."²⁰ These discussions ended in the firm stance that the ADF was an organization led by women for the benefit of women, although men would keep an honorary role within the association.

Luise Büchner, who had a place on the ADF's committee and was a contributor to its journal *Neue Bahnen (New Paths)*, was strongly in favor of full male participation. She had also reported that the women's associations in Darmstadt, each founded in 1867, were committed to both male and female participation in their general membership and executive committees, and in all likelihood would not join the ADF. After sending her as one of their delegates to the Berlin conference, the *Alice Frauenverein* and the *Alice Verein* affirmed Büchner's comments by joining the *Lette Verband*.

¹⁸Cordelia Scharpf, *Luise Büchner: A Nineteenth-Century Evolutionary Feminist* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), 222. Invitations were also sent to associations throughout Germany, Austria, England, and the United States.

¹⁹Frevert, *Women in German History*, 118.

²⁰Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, 100.

Although her reports from Darmstadt were still published in *Neue Bahnen*, Büchner refrained from attending the large meetings of the ADF, called the *Frauentag* (Women's Day), after 1869.²¹ Then again, she may not have been invited.²² Her belief that women and men could work together equally formed a large part of her ideological stance on education and employment, although her break with the ADF may have also stemmed from her close friendship with Princess Alice. While writing to a friend in 1872, Büchner was vehement in her assertion that "these ladies [Otto-Peters and Schmidt] have truly hated me since the Berlin conference for which I have not given them the slightest cause...I have not received an invitation to join their meetings or anything else." Büchner went on to say that the ADF leaders were "suspicious" of her association with Princess Alice. "Really," she noted, "if I had not long befriended this notable woman who harbors the best intentions, such antagonism would entice me to seek her out."²³

Although it is not clear just how the author of *Die Frauen und ihr Beruf* first met Princess Alice, the Büchners were certainly well-known in Darmstadt. Like many other families in the *Alice Frauenverein*, the Büchners were part of the grand duchy's *Bildungsbürgertum*. Their father, Ernst Karl Büchner, was a medical officer (*Medizinalrat*) and a member of the local health advisory board. His wife, the former Caroline Reuss, was descended from a long line of court officials.²⁴ Luise's older brother Georg, the famed playwright, was employed as a lecturer

²¹The translation of *Frauentag* should be taken to mean "meeting" or "assembly," rather than "day" in its temporal sense.

²²Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 222-223.

²³Luise Büchner to Karl Gutzkow, 1 April 1872, quoted in Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 219.

²⁴Eckhart G. Franz, "Gesundheit für Fürsten und Bürger: zum Beispiel Darmstadt," *Schriftenreihe der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Nervenheilkunde* 13 (2007): 15.

in anatomy at the University of Zurich following his arrest for treason and eventual flight from Darmstadt in the mid-1830s.²⁵

Four of the Büchner siblings were involved with the *Alice Frauenverein*. Ludwig, a physician, well-known materialist philosopher, and speaker of the local *Turnverein*, gave public medical lectures for the *Frauenverein* and provided nursing training.²⁶ Another brother, Wilhelm, a manufacturer of artificial ultramarine, and his wife Elisabeth, were leaders of the local *Zweigverein* in Pfungstadt. Mathilde, who kept house for her sister, was listed on the association's membership rolls in 1888.²⁷

During the Austro-Prussian War, Luise Büchner volunteered with the *Hilfsverein*, and with the *Alice Frauenverein* during the Franco-German War in 1870. Whether or not she performed any nursing duties is unknown, but she did work in the supply room and the kitchen of the hospital in the *Turnhalle*, which was directed by her brother Ludwig.²⁸ Büchner's more valuable contributions to the association came through her writing, which served to promote the activities of the *Frauenverein* for the advancement of women. These articles were printed in local newspapers as well as the feminist press (*Neue Bahnen* and *Der Frauen-Anwalt*).

²⁵Georg Büchner (1813-1837), co-authored the revolutionary pamphlet *Der Hessische Landbote (The Hessian Messenger)* He was charged with treason and left the grand duchy in 1834, dying three years later in Zurich.

²⁶Ludwig Büchner (1824-1899) was the author of *Kraft und Stoff (Force and Matter)*, an important book for the materialist movement. Büchner was also a representative (*Deutsche Freisinnige Partei*) in the Hessian parliament from 1884-1890 and co-founder of the social democratic movement in Hesse. In 1881 he founded the *Deutsche Freidenkerbund* (German Freethinkers' League), the first organization of its kind in Germany. See Franz, "Gesundheit," 15; and Edward Royle, *Radicals, Secularists, and Republicans: Popular Freethought in Britain, 1866-1915* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1980), 78.

²⁷*Alice-Frauen-Verein für Krankenpflege in Grossherzogthum Hessen. Protocoll über die am 7. Juni 1888 abgehaltene neunte Generalversammlung des Vereins nebst Rechenschaftsbericht über die gesammte Thätigkeit des Vereins in den Jahren 1886 und 1887* (Darmstadt: 1888), 34.

²⁸Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 231.

Like most of her contemporaries in the women's movement, Büchner did not rule out more "radical" rights for women, such as suffrage; rather, she advocated a gradual movement toward obtaining these rights, and argued that the more immediate concerns for women were centered in the need for expanded education and employability. This theme is prevalent in Büchner's novellas as well as her non-fiction writing.²⁹ Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres has described Büchner as a "reasonably conservative feminist," though Cordelia Scharpf's observation that the author was an "evolutionary feminist" is probably a more appropriate term. Scharpf argues that the four editions of *Die Frauen und ihr Beruf*, printed from 1856 to 1872, "are not only documents of a book of advice to women, but also documents of a changing ideology affecting middle-class women's lives."³⁰

As an example of this evolution, Scharpf points to Büchner's utilization of the term *Beruf*. She used the word in two ways: one, to mean "vocation/profession" and two, as "calling." This is already evident in the first two editions (1856), but even more noticeable in the third (1860) and fourth (1872) editions, as Büchner became more forceful about demanding professional training for a widening range of occupations that were opening to women. By 1872, this included nursing – hence the need for a chapter devoted to that topic.³¹

Undoubtedly, Büchner was most well-known for *Die Frauen und ihr Beruf*.³² Its first edition was published in 1856, and as Joeres aptly described, the book was "an eloquent

²⁹Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, "'Ein Dichter': An Introduction to the World of Luise Büchner," *The German Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (Jan. 1979): 32-49; and Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 123-145.

³⁰Joeres, "Ein Dichter," 32; and Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 16-17 and 63.

³¹Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 65. While the bodies of the first and second editions were identical, Büchner included three additional chapters in the third chapter, and added three more in the 1872 edition. A fifth edition was published in 1884.

³²In addition to Cordelia Scharpf's recent literary biography of Luise Büchner, several publications have focused on her activities with the *Alice Verein*, which, along with her opinions

description of what is conceived to be the ideal role for middle class German women” that contained “the blend of an almost utopian tone with a sober and very practical materialism.”³³ Although the book was “suffused with idealism,” according to Joeres, it was “paradoxically pragmatic in its message.”³⁴ Certainly, its four editions are proof that the book was widely read, and *Die Frauen* clearly centered on themes that became the rallying cries of the reemerging women’s movement. Its central focus was the education of young women and girls.

Some readers, however, criticized the fact that the subject of religious education for girls was not addressed. In the second edition, printed only a few weeks later, Büchner responded that “by persistently referring to the development of devotion to duty, a wise self-restraint, education of aesthetics, inner truth, and love of human beings, [I have] sufficiently preached the embodiment of all religiosity and the fear of God.” Büchner continued that it did not “seem fitting” to add anything further, “. . . at a time when the belligerent element concerning religious questions has come to the front. . .” *Die Frauen*, she concluded, “should belong to all disregarding one’s creed or faith.”³⁵ Scharpf suggests that the “belligerent element” could be the

on female education and employment, were the subject of many of Büchner’s essays. See Joeres, “Ein Dichter”; Margarete Dierks, ed., “*Gebildet, ohne gelehrt zu sein*”: *Essays-Berichte-Briefe von Luise Büchner zur Geschichte ihrer Zeit* (Darmstadt, Justus von Liebig Verlag, 1991); Margarete Dierks, “Luise Büchner, 1821-1877,” in *Sie gingen voran: vier bedeutende Darmstädter Frauen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Margarete Dierks (Darmstadt: Verlag H.L. Schlapp, 1990), 82-133; Elke Hausberg, ed. “*Feder und Wort sind Euch gegeben, so gut wie dem Manne!*” *Studien und Briefe zu Luise Büchners Leben und Werk* (Darmstadt, Justus von Liebig Verlag, 2004); and Agnes Schmidt and Ina Bahnschulte-Friebe, eds., *Luise Büchner und die frühe Frauenbewegung in Darmstadt: Jubiläumsausstellung zur 125. Todestag von Luise Büchner und zur 1. Internationalen Frauenversammlung in Darmstadt vor 130 Jahren: Dokumentation vom 10. Oktober bis 28. November 2002 im Haus der Geschichte Darmstadt* (Darmstadt: Luise-Büchner-Bibliothek, 2002).

³³Joeres, “Ein Dichter,” 33.

³⁴Joeres, “Ein Dichter,” 33.

³⁵Luise Büchner, *Die Frauen und ihr Beruf*, 2nd ed. (1856), quoted in Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 103-104; and Dierks, “Luise Büchner, 1821-1877,” 116.

author's criticism of Catholic ultramontaniam. Büchner was sympathetic to the German-Catholics and may have attended some of their meetings.³⁶

Büchner's comments may have also stemmed from the Mainz-Darmstadt Convention, negotiated in 1854 between the Hessian minister, Dalwigk, and the archbishop of Mainz, Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler. This agreement gave special privileges to the Catholic Church in Hesse. According to Dan S. White, the terms of the convention were "broad enough to include the residence of Jesuits in the Grand Duchy." In return, the archbishop promised the Church's support for the Dalwigk government. Dalwigk suspended the agreement in 1866, but Catholics "continued to enjoy a favored status" until Dalwigk's ouster in 1871. The convention, as White has observed, "incensed Hessian Protestants," which gives some indication of the religious and political tensions present in Hesse during the 1850s.³⁷

In the first three editions of *Die Frauen*, Büchner equated joining a religious order with one of the "wrong directions" that young women could take. As Scharpf has observed, Büchner thought that the increasing numbers of Protestant and Catholic women who had joined religious orders since 1848 could be credited to "a religious zeal that could best be overcome by enlightened education."³⁸ Statistics from Hesse indicate that the numbers of deaconesses at the *Elisabethenstift*, founded by Princess Karl, had risen from five in 1858 (the year it was founded) to fifty-two in 1873. The numbers of nuns in the grand duchy had increased from 91 in 1855 to 314 by 1874, although most of these orders were located in Mainz.³⁹

³⁶Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 41-42 and 104.

³⁷White, *The Splintered Party*, 24ff.

³⁸Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 88.

³⁹Statistics for the deaconesses can be found in Grossherzogliche Hessischen Zentralstelle für die Landesstatistik, *Statistisches Handbuch für das Grossherzogtum Hessen* (Darmstadt: G. Jonghaus'sche Hofbuchhandlung, 1909), 243. Information for the membership of the Catholic

Büchner thought that women were not trained well enough for their future roles as wives and mothers, but as James Albisetti has explained, this “fear of [girls’] miseducation” had evolved since the end of the eighteenth century. Contemporary literature portrayed two types of “miseducated” women, the “bluestocking” and the *Salondame*, as undesirable for marriage and motherhood because they were more likely to neglect their families for intellectual pursuits.⁴⁰ Consequently, during the first half of the nineteenth century, reformers gave a great deal of attention to the question of female education.⁴¹ During the period from 1800 to 1870, there was a large increase in the number and scope of schools for girls that extended beyond the elementary level. Albisetti states that the increased role of municipalities in female education was unique to Germany prior to 1870.⁴² Darmstadt, for example, introduced higher girls’ schools in 1829, but tuition costs ensured that only girls from the upper classes would be able to attend.⁴³ As Albisetti has argued, higher girls’ schools, in conjunction with the “influence of family, church, and community,” helped to “socialize middle-class girls” for marriage and motherhood while at the same time contributing to the “isolation of this class from the lower orders.”⁴⁴ This was true not only of the schools run by the various towns, but also of the private and corporatively-owned (usually religious) schools as well.

Of the private schools available for girls, a growing number were owned and operated by women. One of the most famous was the school run by Betty Gleim, an educator and writer in

nursing orders is located in *Zeitschrift des Königl. Preussischen Statistischen Bureaus* (Berlin: Verlag des Königl. Statistischen Bureaus, 1875), 57-58.

⁴⁰Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 11.

⁴¹Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 10ff. “One of the most striking features in the flowering of girls’ education” around 1800, he comments on p.27, “is the role played by some of the ruling families of the various states.” Though they were commonly only for the daughters of courtiers, the schools raised the level of support for girls’ secondary education.

⁴²Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 39.

⁴³Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 26.

⁴⁴Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 13.

Bremen.⁴⁵ Büchner's opinions were similar to those of Gleim, who argued that girls should be sent to a female equivalent of the male *Gymnasium*. While Büchner was in full agreement that women could and did benefit from more classical education, she also concluded that housekeeping skills were much more practical for middle-class girls than learning to play an instrument or speak a foreign language. She fervently hoped, however, that they would be able to do both.⁴⁶ One of the continual themes in Büchner's writing was separate but equal spheres for men and women. Women should have the opportunity to have the best training for marriage and motherhood, or, if they remained unmarried, the professions.

For some, it was the matter of staying occupied until they married, but for other middle-class women, it was a matter of need. As Albisetti has observed, a *Versorgungsprinzip*, or supply principle, was applied to "certain young women" from the middle classes. "Teaching," Albisetti has stated, "amounted almost to a form of welfare for the unmarried daughters of pastors, teachers, and other civil servants" by the 1840s. The *Versorgungsprinzip*, combined with the prevailing opinion that women were needed to teach girls, led to the mid-century expansion of teachers' seminars as well as job opportunities as teachers or governesses.⁴⁷ Parents were reassured that their unmarried daughters would have a secure future, and schools obtained instructors for the primary grades who could be paid less than experienced teachers.⁴⁸

By the late 1860s, teachers, governesses, and even those young women who had no desire for occupational training had the opportunity for higher education through various "lectures for ladies" which opened in Berlin, Darmstadt, Breslau, Cologne, and Leipzig. The most well-known of these institutions was the Victoria Lyceum in Berlin, founded in 1869 by the

⁴⁵ Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 30-32.

⁴⁶ Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 72-76.

⁴⁷ Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 58.

⁴⁸ Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 67-68.

crown princess of Prussia and Georgina Archer, a Scottish educator. The *Alice Lyceum für Damen* was founded the following year by Luise Büchner and Princess Alice under the auspices of the *Alice Verein*. As in Berlin, the Alice Lyceum offered several lecture cycles during the 1870s, with topics on art history, German history, literature, and natural history. While the lyceum garnered a total of 200 students, it closed after Büchner's death in 1877 as a result of "numerous external difficulties," according to Karl Sell.⁴⁹

Several members of the *Alice Frauenverein* participated in the activities of the *Alice Lyceum*, including Karl Eigenbrodt, who gave medical lectures on hygiene, and Luise Büchner, who taught German history. Dr. Gustav Heumann, who had volunteered his medical services to the *Frauenverein*'s branch in Pfungstadt during the Franco-German War, lectured to the studies on the "Chemistry of Daily Life." Marie Hombergk zu Vach, the *Alice Verein*'s secretary, served as point of contact for the lyceum. She was also actively involved in the *Alice Frauenverein*.⁵⁰ These examples of overlapping membership between the two "Alice Societies" are not surprising, but they do demonstrate an active network of support for the goals of both associations.

The activities of the *Alice Verein* were not intended only for elite women. The organization was also concerned with improving the educational and employment opportunities for girls from the lower classes. These young women typically finished their compulsory education at the age of thirteen or fourteen, and sought a job that would supplement the family income. They were usually employed as domestic servants or factory workers; because there was

⁴⁹ Sell, editor's notes in *Alice Letters*, 235. Sell does not clarify the nature of these "external difficulties," but he does comment that the failure of the *Alice Lyceum* was "not because the original idea for which it had been founded had proved otherwise than sound."

⁵⁰ Heumann's course is listed in "Fünfter Prospectus 1874/5," *Darmstädter Tagblatt*, 3 November 1874. The doctor's wife, Julie, worked as a nurse for the *Frauenverein* during the war. See *Protocoll* (1872), 13 and 42.

a fee for an apprenticeship, very few of them were able to learn a trade.⁵¹ Büchner's own interest in the *Frauenfrage* can be dated from November 1849, when a ladies' committee in Darmstadt appealed for the public's support of a vocational school, which would prepare girls for employment in domestic service and for their future lives as wives and mothers.⁵²

Twenty years later, Büchner was still writing about the need to improve female education and job training. The first project of the *Alice Verein*, which Büchner had founded with Princess Alice in October 1867, was geared toward providing a marketplace for female handiwork. It was modeled after the Victoria Bazaar in Berlin, which was founded by the *Lette Verein* in May 1866. In consultation with Karl Weiss, manager of the Victoria Bazaar, the Alice Bazaar opened in November 1867.⁵³

This permanent shop allowed women to sell their needlework without a middleman. The store, located in a lending library in Darmstadt, was well-accepted by Darmstädters. Büchner, the vice president and director of the *Alice Verein* until her death in 1877, was part of a small committee of ladies who handled quality control and took client orders for specific products. No “knickknacks” were allowed, only “practical” items such as clothing or linens were accepted.⁵⁴ Although the Alice Bazaar was open to women from all social classes, it was obvious that many of the lower-class women did not have the skills or training needed to produce the quality of

⁵¹Frevert, *Women in German History*, 84.

⁵²Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 52. The *Fortbildungsschule für Töchter armen Eltern* (Vocational School for Daughters of Poor Parents) offered instruction in housekeeping, needlework, arithmetic, and childcare. Büchner herself did not join the committee, but praised its founding in her writing. The school itself foundered, apparently from lack of municipal funding.

⁵³Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 102-103. Similar bazaars were established in other German cities. Albisetti states that the “rapidity with which similar organizations were founded in many other German cities indicates how widespread was the perception that something had to be done to improve the earning condition of single middle-class women,” but the Alice Bazaar did not have restrictions on marital status of its needleworkers or their social status.

⁵⁴Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 210-211; Noel, *Princess Alice*, 139-140; and Sell, editor's notes in *Alice Letters*, 163.

goods demanded by their clients. Büchner wrote about the necessity of improving needlework instruction, and pressed for vocational programs that would train its teachers. The *Alice Verein* successfully petitioned the Darmstadt school board to include it as a required subject.⁵⁵ In 1875, the association opened its own industrial school for girls, the *Alice-Schule* (now the *Alice-Eleonoren-Schule*), which offered a training program for needlework teachers.⁵⁶ These programs fit very much into the idea of cooperatives, which were a popular response to the ongoing social question and favored not only by the middle and upper classes but also by a number of working class leaders.

Although some of its activities were aimed at the lower classes, most of the efforts made by the “Alice Societies” in the area of employment remained focused on women from the “better classes.” This is in keeping with the activities of the *Letzte Verband*, the loosely-knit federation of women’s associations to which both the *Alice Verein* and the *Alice Frauenverein* belonged. It also makes sense, given that the membership of these associations was largely composed of members of the educated middle classes.

By the 1860s, teaching, in essence the only field of paid employment open to unmarried women from these “respectable” families, was seen by many Germans as an overcrowded field of employment.⁵⁷ Yet the *Frauenfrage* and how it affected the status of single middle-class

⁵⁵Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 210-211. Needlework was already taught in the rural schools of the grand duchy. Büchner stressed the need for girls to make practical items rather than wasting their time on useless sewing, and she encouraged middle-class women to employ needleworkers from the lower classes to make their household items, because they needed the income.

⁵⁶*Alice-Eleonoren Schule, 100 Jahre Alice-Eleonoren Schule: Festschrift 4. März 1967* (Darmstadt: Alice-Eleonoren Schule, 1967), 16ff. The *Alice-Eleonoren Schule*, still in operation in Darmstadt, claims its foundation in the *Alice Verein* and Princess Alice and Luise Büchner as its co-founders. By 1878 the school had 72 students, and a new building was opened in 1881.

⁵⁷Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 100.

women was still a source of debate. A letter from Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, written in 1873, reflected these concerns:

House & family are the woman's foremost & principle [sic] but I know from my own experience how much one has to know & learn to fulfill the that which the Husband has a right to require of one...Most of the household & housekeeping rests on the wife – where the Husband's duties are out of the house...The education of the children – the most difficult and responsible task either man or woman can ever have – being the whole foundation for the creating of future men & women – rests almost entirely and invariably in the woman's hands - & it demands no small amount of work & thought if one is conscientious to fulfill this only modestly well – and the responsibility is great –

*...The numbers of unmarried women who only through the equivalent education can be helped to make the stand alone with less difficulties and disadvantages. Those who have been blessed with the rights & advantages of Husband & family should surely think of, & lend a helping hand to their less fortunate Sisters!*⁵⁸

This letter clearly articulated the opinions already expressed by Büchner in *Die Frauen*, and those held by many moderate and conservative bourgeois feminists. Ideally, a woman would marry and take responsibility for running a household and raising children. As Büchner emphasized, women's education should train them for that role. If she did not marry (or rather, *could not*) then they should also have appropriate education so that they could “make the stand alone” with dignity. The *Alice Verein* and the *Alice Frauenverein* each provided Hessian women with this type of job training.

From the late 1860s, members of the women's movement paid attention to expanding job opportunities for women and training them for these “professions.” By then, a few female students were auditing university courses, mainly at the universities in Munich, Heidelberg, Berlin, and Leipzig. A number of other women were interested in medicine, but despite the fact that Charlotte Heidenreich von Siebold and her mother were allowed to pursue university study in Hesse more than six decades earlier, the prevailing opinion in the German medical community

⁵⁸ RA VIC/Z 207/32, Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 23 February 1873. Words in italics were originally underlined by Alice.

was that the field was becoming overcrowded. Adding women to the mix would only make things worse.⁵⁹ By the 1860s, too, the medical programs of Germany's universities were already undergoing major reforms, which were not overwhelmingly popular with medical faculties.⁶⁰ In any case, in order to be certified by the state, German doctors needed to pass the national examinations, the entry to which required the completion of a medical program as a matriculated student. German women who wished to study medicine, then, usually pursued a program at the University of Zurich or at colleges in the United States.⁶¹

Those women who did return to practice in Germany were given a measure of acceptance as physicians who specialized in the care of women and children. This was a subject that Luise Büchner had tackled in 1859, when she published a biographical essay of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell. As Büchner's portrait of Blackwell, her sister Emily, and their colleague Maria Zakrzewska demonstrates, she was not opposed to the idea of female physicians, and this was the first of several articles that discussed medicine and nursing. She recognized, however, that many additional steps were necessary, particularly in the area of education, before German women could have similar opportunities to study medicine or other professions. Practically speaking, it was more realistic for them to become trained nurses.⁶²

At the Berlin conference, the *Frauenkongress* hosted by the *Lette Verein* in 1869, the subject of secular nursing was on the agenda. Büchner spoke about the activities of the *Alice Frauenverein* and Arwed Emminghaus, delegate from the *Badische Frauenverein*, commented that nursing training had been well-received in Karlsruhe since the founding of the association.

⁵⁹Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 123-135.

⁶⁰Huerkamp, "The Making of the Modern Medical Profession," 69.

⁶¹Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 123-135.

⁶²Luise Büchner, "Doctor Elisabeth: Zur Würdigung höhern Frauenberufs (1859)," in *"Gebildet, ohne gelehrt zu sein": Essays-Berichte-Briefe von Luise Büchner zur Geschichte ihrer Zeit*, ed. Margarete Dierks (Darmstadt: Justus von Liebig, 1991), 30-48.

Rudolf Virchow, the famous pathologist and liberal politician, gave a speech proposing that men and women should be trained as nurses along the lines of Florence Nightingale's program in England.⁶³ Though he was not yet articulating his position against the Catholic Church as he would during the *Kulturkampf*, Virchow had campaigned for secular nursing since 1866.⁶⁴ This definitely fit into a wider left-liberal agenda.

Delegate speeches at the *Lette Verband's* first general meeting, held in Darmstadt in October 1872, described the efforts made by various women's organizations to capitalize on the public's recognition of their wartime service. As Alice told Queen Victoria, the event was to be an international one.⁶⁵ The conference was held in order to discuss "the bettering of women's education and social position (of the middle class especially with regard to trade)." Alice had arranged the program with her "two committees here and the gentlemen of Berlin [leaders of the *Lette Verein*]." The conference leaders wanted her to preside, but she refused, telling her mother that she had "positively refused...I do that in my own Associations, but not where there are so many strangers, who all want to talk, and at cross purposes. It is difficult enough to keep one's own people in order when they disagree." Giving some insight into her own thoughts, Alice added, "I hope and trust that I have prevented *all* exaggerated and unfeminine views [probably

⁶³Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 224. The transcript of this conference was unavailable to me, but from Virchow's writings of the mid-1860s, he was already advocating secular nursing as a way to downplay the dominance of the Catholic orders, which is clearly evident in his writing during the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s.

⁶⁴Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 79-80.

⁶⁵Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 27 September 1872, in *Alice Letters*, 282. The invited guests and speakers in attendance included four Englishwomen: Mary Carpenter; Florence Davenport Hill; and sisters Catherine and Susanna Winkworth. See *Stenographischer Bericht über die erste ordentliche Generalversammlung des 1869 gegründeten Verbandes deutscher Frauen- und Erwerbverein gehalten am 10. & 11 October 1872 in Darmstadt* (Darmstadt: Verlag von Arnold Bergsträsser, 1873).

suffrage] being brought up, which to me are dreadful. These Associations, if not reasonably led, tend too easily to the ridiculous.”⁶⁶

One of the conference’s English guests, Catherine Winkworth, described the nearly 100 delegates as mostly “quiet, middle-aged women, plainly dressed, who looked like good, anxious mothers of families belonging to the educated, but not the fashionable classes.” Only three of them, she noted, were unmarried: Marie Calm, Jenny Hirsch, and Luise Büchner.⁶⁷ Morning meetings were public, Winkworth reported, with a capacity for 400 people. Approximately two-thirds of the audience as well as the speakers, she estimated, were women.

Other than the *Alice Frauenverein* and the *Badische Frauenverein*, the other organizations were mainly associated in some way with education or teaching.⁶⁸ Education was a main topic of discussion, but employment issues were also high on the list. Luise Büchner described the activities of the Alice Bazaar, and Herr Welcker, who was a director in Hesse’s central statistics office and a delegate from the *Alice Verein*, reported on the recent census work conducted by female employees. Other speakers discussed a recent initiative to employ women in the rail, post, and telegraph offices.⁶⁹

On the second day of the conference, president August Lammers read a resolution passed by the delegates, which recognized the University of Zurich for its “impartiality and fairness” towards female medical students, although the assembly itself had not decided whether women

⁶⁶Princess Alice to Queen Victoria, 27 September 1872, in *Alice Letters*, 282-283.

⁶⁷Catherine Winkworth, “A Ladies’ Congress in Germany,” in *Good Words for 1873*, ed. Donald MacLeod (London: W. Isbister & Co., 1873), 555. In her comment regarding the unmarried delegates, she should have specified that she was referring only the German delegates. She and her English colleagues were all unmarried.

⁶⁸*Stenographischer Bericht*, 128-129. Aside from the *Alice Verein* and the *Lette Verein*, members included, for example, the Association of German Women Teachers and Educators (*Verein deutscher Lehrerinnen und Erzieherinnen*) and the Fröbel Association in Hamburg (*Fröbelverein*).

⁶⁹*Stenographischer Bericht*, 1-10, 45-61, 67-69.

should study medicine.⁷⁰ They were of the opinion, however, that nursing was a desirable form of employment. In Winkworth's opinion, "the nursing of the sick was the topic that excited the most vivid interest" at the conference.⁷¹ The conference's transcript supports this assertion.⁷² More broadly, it is an indication that members of the *Lette Verband* were most concerned at that time with establishing nursing as a field of employment for middle-class women than they might have been with other occupations.

One of the speakers at the conference was a well-known nurse from Dresden, Marie "Mother" Simon. Winkworth described the linen-draper's wife as an "elderly woman, of ample motherly figure...who before 1866 was known only in her immediate neighborhood as one of those capable and large-hearted women to whom all their neighbors instinctively fly for help in any emergency."⁷³ Following her nursing work during the Austro-Prussian War, Simon helped found the *Albert-Verein* in Saxony in 1867. She also supervised the nurses' training.⁷⁴ Mother Simon was well-known to members of the *Alice Frauenverein*, as she had just attended its second general meeting in March 1872.⁷⁵ Simon's report from the *Albert-Verein* was read by Herr Stüber, a member of the central committee and delegate of the *Alice Frauenverein*.⁷⁶ It is of

⁷⁰*Stenographischer Bericht*, 7-9.

⁷¹Winkworth, "A Ladies' Congress in Germany," 557. The *Albert-Verein* of Saxony, which Simon represented, was not a listed member of the *Verband*, nor is Simon listed as a guest, but she was a speaker at the conference. See *Stenographischer Bericht*, 77-93.

⁷²*Stenographischer Bericht*, 69-107. The speeches and discussion on the subject of nursing accounted for nearly one-third of the conference transcript.

⁷³Winkworth, "A Ladies' Congress in Germany," 557.

⁷⁴Horst-Peter Wolff, *Biographisches Lexicon zur Pflegegeschichte: Who's Who in Nursing History* (Berlin: Ullstein Mosby, 1997), 189-190.

⁷⁵While Alice attended each day of the conference, her husband Ludwig came especially to see Simon's speech.

⁷⁶Apparently from Simon's own wish, as the speech opened with "*Ich besitze kein Rednertalent...*" ("I have no talent for oratory..."). See *Stenographischer Bericht*, 77.

great value because opinions about nursing expressed by a German nurse, prior to the 1890s, are extremely rare.

The celebrated Mother Simon informed the delegates about the activities of the *Albert-Verein*, as well as her own observations while nursing. What is most interesting about Simon's comments is the emphasis and occasional vehemence she places on the question of nursing and nurse training. Simon emphasized the need for obligatory instruction for girls in the area of healthcare, hygiene, and general housekeeping, and made several references to the "ignorance" of the general population about good nursing, such as following the doctor's instructions concerning medications and providing patients with fresh air.⁷⁷

"Clearly, there is a woman question!" she stated early in her report, and continued by emphasizing the point that nursing (and apparently the women's movement in general) had several "enemies." The largest, Simon commented, was "custom" (*Herkommen*). The next "bad enemy" was what she described as the "pathological phenomenon of our time...the wretched nonsense that is driven by the word emancipation."⁷⁸ Men, she wrote, distrusted women's efficiency and feared that women would encroach on their rights. Clearly showing her separate spheres ideology, Simon stated that men and women both could "too easily become a caricature" if "they are pushed to a field that is not theirs."⁷⁹

From that basis, Simon argued that women were better equipped than men to be nurses, although she did not want them to work as doctors. While "individual liberal doctors" understood that women should be nurses, Simon commented, the belief must be more generalized, noting that it was such a simple idea that she could not understand why anyone

⁷⁷*Stenographischer Bericht*, 77-93.

⁷⁸*Stenographischer Bericht*, 77-78.

⁷⁹*Stenographischer Bericht*, 78.

would be opposed to it.⁸⁰ Simon also observed that better-trained nurses could help in the area of *Armenkrankenpflege*, or the nursing of the sick poor, and it would also allow members of the patient's family to continue working.⁸¹ Essentially, she argued, having more nurses would actually help the state.

Simon also sought to clarify “two errors” about the relationship of secular nursing to religious orders. The first error was the view that religious nursing made the work of secular nurses unnecessary. Simon argued that there were actually far fewer religious nurses active in Germany than others had recently claimed.⁸² In other words, for that reason alone, there was a need for secular nurses. The second mistake, according to Simon, was thinking that voluntary nursing would make religious nursing itself unnecessary. While a little competition between the two groups was not such a bad thing, Simon stated, she also cautioned against intolerance of the religious orders and noted that during the Franco-German War, deaconesses and nuns worked under the supervision of the *Albert-Verein*.⁸³

In encouraging cooperation between secular and religious nurses, Simon observed that in her experience, about two-thirds of the women who entered the *Albert-Verein* had very little knowledge of “good housekeeping” – cooking, cleaning, and washing. These were all skills that they needed to master before being sent out to nurse. In this area, Simon commented, secular

⁸⁰*Stenographischer Bericht*, 78-79.

⁸¹*Stenographischer Bericht*, 84.

⁸²*Stenographischer Bericht*, 84. Citing statistics provided by a Dr. Niese from Altona, she noted that while there were approximately 61,000 Catholic nuns and more than 1,000 deaconesses, only a small portion of these women were working in Germany. The exact identity of Dr. Niese is unclear, but is probably the same general practitioner who is listed as the director of the association for sick and wounded soldiers in Altona in the first volume of Hermann von Rotenbau, *Geschichte des Frauenvereins in Bayern, seine Entstehung und Entwicklung 1580-1894, I. Theil* (Munich: G. Hafner, 1894), 140. Apparently, he was well-known to Simon's audience.

⁸³*Stenographischer Bericht*, 84.

nurses could find a good example in the Protestant and Catholic sisterhoods. Another model from the religious orders that could be useful was the motherhouse, or as Simon called it, an *Asyl* (asylum) for the nurses.⁸⁴

The multiple instances of “unbroken applause” during the report, as well as the responses from other delegates indicate that Mother Simon’s speech was well-received. Not surprisingly, many of her points overlapped with those of the delegate from the *Badische Frauenverein* as well as those expressed by Karl Eigenbrodt, who represented the *Alice Frauenverein*. Eigenbrodt’s comments began with the question: “Is it possible and desirable that, as it expands, nursing becomes a field of female employment?” Noting that “in general, it is recognized that the female gender, if not exclusively, is mainly appointed to the exercise of nursing,” Eigenbrodt suggested that some controversy still existed over the question of whether nurses should be paid to nurse, rather than perform their duties as a work of charity. Prevailing opinion, according to Eigenbrodt, was that nursing should be handled only under the auspices of the religious orders.⁸⁵

In Eigenbrodt’s opinion, this view was easily explained. “Until recently,” he stated, “there were, with few exceptions, only two categories of nurses: *Pflegerinnen* and *Krankenwärtinnen*.” The *Pflegerinnen* were the Catholic nuns and Protestant deaconesses. The other category belonged to the “that kind of wage attendants...who belong for the most part to the class of the lowest and most raw people, and, unfortunately, not always to the best elements of the same.” These wage attendants “do without, as everybody knows, not only the necessary technical education, but very often also the moral qualities which are the necessary condition of

⁸⁴*Stenographischer Bericht*, 88-89.

⁸⁵*Stenographischer Bericht*, 70. This is a point which Eigenbrodt also made in *Der Alice-Frauenverein*, 3-4. The 1872 edition was made available to the conference delegates.

good nursing.” Under these conditions, he noted, it was not surprising that people might be suspicious about the efficacy of secular nursing.⁸⁶

Eigenbrodt declared that nursing should be a female field of employment, but only under the condition that enough suitable women could be found for the job. This, he argued, would benefit the patients as much as the nurses themselves. How was this possible? Eigenbrodt stressed the importance of establishing good training schools for the nurses, a project which was already underway in Darmstadt. But the real question, Eigenbrodt maintained, was whether good training was enough. “To win competent forces for secular nursing,” he declared, “a respectable permanent position must be offered to the nurses.”⁸⁷

This position would require lifelong security in the form of an *Altersversorgungsfond*, in essence a pension that would cover a nurse’s disability or retirement. Eigenbrodt noted that these funds were “not unimportant.”⁸⁸ Indeed, when the *Alice Frauenverein* had experienced financial difficulties in 1867 and 1868, association reports bemoaned the fact that the “three oldest nurses” (Adelheid Becker, Bertha Grünewald, and Elise Butz), were paid only 300 florins per year rather than the 400 florins they had anticipated.⁸⁹ Fortunately, enough funds were recovered to allow for Bertha Grünewald’s disability payments which began in 1873.⁹⁰ Establishing the pension funds would allow “respectable” and “educated” women to take up nursing without the requirement of joining a religious sisterhood.⁹¹ The *Alice Frauenverein*

⁸⁶*Stenographischer Bericht*, 70-71.

⁸⁷*Stenographischer Bericht*, 73-75.

⁸⁸*Stenographischer Bericht*, 74.

⁸⁹*Protocoll* (1869), 43.

⁹⁰*Protocoll* (1874), 26.

⁹¹*Stenographischer Bericht*, 74.

hoped to offer its nurses the possibility of “earning enough to obtain an honorable and respectable position in life,” with a dignity appropriate to their social class.⁹²

In his concluding statements, Eigenbrodt cautioned that secular nursing associations should not blindly follow the models set by religious orders. Instead, he noted that the secular associations should “not lose sight” of their goal to train the nurses “bit by bit” to “greater independence.” Eigenbrodt also suggested that the nurses would eventually be able contribute to their own pensions and would form their own association of nurses. While this was “very much to be wished,” it must be done gradually in order to establish respect and recognition for secular nursing.⁹³

A small book written by Dr. Eigenbrodt about the *Alice Frauenverein*’s early history and organization was made available to the conference delegates. The members of the *Lette Verband* also formed a correspondence committee through which they could share ideas about the work of their organizations, and Princess Alice agreed to preside over this committee. After the 1872 Darmstadt conference, however, it is difficult to say how large a role either “Alice Society” took in the *Lette Verband*. Luise Büchner, Marie Hombergk zu Vach, and Minna Strecker traveled to Berlin for the 1876 general meeting as delegates from both associations, but the *Alice Frauenverein* left the *Lette Verband* four years later.⁹⁴ There is no documented reason for the departure, although it is likely that is part of what Kerstin Lutzer has described as a declining interest among members of the *Verband* during the 1880s.⁹⁵

⁹²*Protocoll* (1874), 6.

⁹³*Stenographischer Bericht*, 75.

⁹⁴Scharpf, *Luise Büchner*, 261. The three women also visited the crown princess, the *Lette Verein*, and other organizations that provided welfare services for women and children.

⁹⁵Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, 162-163.

In the same year that Darmstadt hosted the *Lette Verband*, the fourth edition of Luise Büchner's *Die Frauen und ihr Beruf* was published. For the first time, it contained a chapter about nursing, which reads like a recruiting pamphlet for middle-class nurses. For Büchner, leaders of the *Alice Frauenverein*, and other members of the women's movement, the promotion of nursing as a female profession provided at least one solution to the ongoing *Frauenfrage*.

The membership and activism of the *Alice Frauenverein* in the *Lette Verband* demonstrates that rather than simply acting as a "patriotic association" in wartime, the *Frauenverein* was involved in the organized women's movement that reemerged during the 1860s and 1870s. Although the ADF and the *Lette Verband* split over the issue of male involvement in these societies, both groups sought to solve the "woman question" by advocating the expansion of educational and employment opportunities for German women. The overlapping memberships of the *Alice Verein* and the *Alice Frauenverein* demonstrate the range of activities in which members engaged in pursuit of these goals.

Membership in the *Lette Verband* provided an avenue through which these ideas could be shared and discussed. Although secular nursing organizations like the *Alice Frauenverein* promoted nursing as a profession for women, they realized that recruitment of these nurses would require a promise of stability and respectability. Rather than directly competing with the nursing sisterhoods, these associations sought to find a way in which women who wanted or needed employment could achieve this without taking religious vows. In doing so, nursing leaders turned to the familiar model of the religious orders – that of lifelong security. The development of this model is seen through the Red Cross "motherhouses" which were built throughout Germany over the next two decades.

CHAPTER 4

A MODEL OF CARE: THE ALICE-HOSPITAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL FOR NURSES

At the meeting of the *Lette Verband* in 1872, Dr. Karl Eigenbrodt spoke about the ongoing public skepticism of nurses who were not “bound” to a religious order. Catholic nuns and Protestant deaconesses carried the mantle of discipline, efficiency, and respectability, while waged attendants did not. Supporters of “secular” nursing, as envisioned by the *Frauenvereine*, appreciated the discipline of the religious orders, but they did not want the confessional overtones that came with it. In a letter to Princess Alice in March 1872, Florence Nightingale equated religious nursing with blanket demands for unthinking obedience, while advocating for secular nurses “defined duties and responsibility, which is as necessary in a Nursing Corps to save life as it is in a Corps d’ Armee...”¹ As an indicator that the leaders of the Darmstadt association shared this view, Eigenbrodt included a large extract from Nightingale’s letter in a book he authored about the *Alice Frauenverein* – the same one that was offered to members of the *Lette Verband* at their meeting in Darmstadt.

Nightingale’s point was well-made: a successful nursing organization required hierarchy and discipline. The secular motherhouse, a system of organization adopted by the German Red Cross sisterhoods, would provide an efficient, trained staff which had good moral fiber without a confessional stamp. Yet, within three decades of the establishment of these motherhouses, the

¹Nightingale to Princess Alice, 27 March 1872, in Noel, *Princess Alice*, 250-253.

system itself came under fire from nursing reformers and women's advocates, who claimed that it oppressed nurses by restricting their freedom. This chapter argues that there were distinct similarities between the religious sisterhoods and the Red Cross motherhouses. Part of this was practical: the motherhouse system was seen as having the advantage of guaranteeing lifelong security for its members, though in this case its members took no explicit religious vows. Yet it was also clear to those involved in nursing that it should be presented not simply as a profession, but also a moral "calling," a term historically associated with clerical duties and one which required a particular sort of discipline and sacrifice. For many of these women, the advantages of the system apparently outweighed the disadvantages, which is shown through the expansion of the Alice-Hospital and its training school for nurses. At the same time, the association's leadership cultivated this appeal by placing the nurses on a moral pedestal by invoking their "high calling" to nurse.

The origins of the Red Cross motherhouses were clearly rooted in the systems established by Catholic and Protestant orders. As stated in an earlier chapter, the "motherhouse model" was established by the Daughters of Charity, the order founded in 1633 by St. Vincent de Paul. While providing protection and respectability for the nurses, as Sioban Nelson has commented, the "motherhouse structure meant that a community was organized like an army or corporation." Its system was "highly centralized" and in many respects autonomous. In many cases, Nelson states, this allowed the motherhouse to centrally determine local needs, and apply its nurses to those needs in an efficient manner.²

In the Catholic system, each "daughter" was trained by her motherhouse, and then sent out to nurse. When it required nursing services, the hospital contracted with the institution itself,

²Nelson, *Say Little, Do Much*, 53-54.

not an individual woman. The *Oberin* (Mother Superior) was responsible for the nurses' assignments. Nursing sisters (*Schwestern*) were expected to follow the doctor's orders, but in the matter of religious questions or general discipline, they were responsible only to the *Oberin* and the motherhouse. At all times, the nurse was to be treated by hospital management as the "daughter of the house," in a manner that allowed her to preserve the "dignity and authority" her position required.³ This included the lifelong security that Catholic orders provided their members, and which Eigenbrodt later perceived was so vital to "winning" middle-class women as secular nurses for the *Alice Frauenverein*.

Theodor Fliedner, too, sought to ensure this type of respectability for the Protestant deaconesses of Kaiserswerth. As in the Catholic model, nurse recruitment and training took place within the motherhouse, which served as a base of operations for the deaconesses. Other parallels lay in the fact that the deaconesses were also called *Schwestern* and the motherhouse was supervised by an *Oberin*.⁴ Initially filled by Fliedner's first wife, Friederike, this position had been offered to Amalie Sieveking, who rejected it largely because she disapproved of both Fliedner's supervision of the association and the motherhouse system it followed.⁵

In some ways, Fliedner tried to put some distance between the Protestant deaconesses and the Catholic motherhouse. Rather than wearing a black uniform, which might resemble a nun's habit, the nurses wore a simple blue dress, which was similar to outfits worn by Protestant widows. Another factor that separated the Kaiserswerth motherhouse from the Catholic model is that it was structured in the manner of a Protestant patriarchal family unit.⁶ In most other ways Kaiserswerth resembled a Catholic motherhouse: it provided a community in which unmarried

³Möller and Hesselbarth, *Die geschichtliche Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 53.

⁴In this case, a better translation is "superintendent" rather than "Mother Superior."

⁵Nelson, *Say Little, Do Much*, 136.

⁶Nelson, *Say Little, Do Much*, 138.

women could obtain lifelong security while at the same time practicing a vocation that encouraged them to demonstrate their religiosity.

Both Protestant and Catholic institutions had obvious parallels in the “secular” Red Cross motherhouses that were founded throughout Germany in the late nineteenth century. The first of these was formed by the *Badische Frauenverein*, which established its first training school in 1866.⁷ Like the Badenese association, the *Alice Frauenverein* had to wait a few years before establishing its own framework for training. Whether this would include a communal living space for the nurses was apparently a point for debate.

As Eigenbrodt wrote in 1872:

Ever since the Society was founded, the question has from time to time arisen, whether it was more advisable to assign the nurses a common dwelling in which they would possess a home under the superintendence of one of the nurses or a competent housekeeper or whether it should be left to each nurse to provide her own home according to her circumstances. On this point the principle has always been maintained of allowing the nurses who wished it to remain in the bosom of their families as long as they were not wanted for hospital service. But for other nurses standing alone in the world, it was soon felt to be necessary to provide a common home. This has been effected by making the superintendent also the matron of the home, an arrangement which has hitherto worked very well.⁸

Initially, the nurses’ home and training school was housed in the *Heilanstalt in der Mauerstrasse zu Darmstadt für Chirurgische und Augenkranke*. The “*Mauerspätälchen*,” as it was known to Darmstädters, was established in 1857 by nine physicians nicknamed the “*Neuntöter*.”⁹ Five of the doctors, including Eigenbrodt and Karl Weber (physician to Grand

⁷Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, Oberinnen-Vereinigung, *Der Ruf der Stunde: Schwestern unter dem Roten Kreuz* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1963), 193; and Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, 427-428.

⁸“The Alice Ladies’ Society,” 155-156.

⁹Drs. Hermann Balsler, Karl Eigenbrodt, Heinrich Orth, Gustav Simon, Oskar Verdier, and Karl Weber were joined in 1857 by three additional physicians, Drs. Hegar, Hohenschield, and Tenner. Dr. Balsler died in 1858, but of the remaining eight doctors, four (Eigenbrodt, Orth, Verdier and Weber) were either members of the central committee, lecturers, or both.

Duke Ludwig III) would later be involved with the *Alice Frauenverein*.¹⁰ During the Austro-Prussian war, Princess Alice had taken a special interest in the *Mauerspitälchen* and built a hospital in its garden. Another hospital, operated by the *Hilfsverein*, was established in the *Mauerspitälchen* during the Franco-German War.

When Charles Mayo and his staff left the Reserve Alice-Hospital, the military hospital which had been established in Darmstadt in 1871 through British donations, they left the remaining money as well as moveable property and materials jointly to the *Alice Frauenverein* and the doctors from the *Mauerspitälchen*. The intent was either to found an entirely new hospital, or to enlarge and improve the *Mauerspitälchen*. In addition, the money could be used to build a nurses' home and training school.¹¹ The funds were not large enough for new construction, so the decision was made to improve the existing buildings.¹² The contract between the *Alice Frauenverein* and the *Mauerspitälchen* doctors was signed in March 1872.

As they had for the Reserve Alice-Hospital and other facilities during the Franco-German War, the *Alice Frauenverein* handled the economic administration and nursing services of the newly restructured institution (usually called the *Mauerstrasse 17* or *Heilanstalt in der Mauerstrasse*).¹³ A special hospital sub-committee was formed from within the central committee to watch over the hospital, and to supervise the construction of a small building which could be utilized as a living space for the nurses. Work began in October 1872. Helene

¹⁰Alice-Schwesternschaft collection. Letter from Frau Dr. Hermann Balser to the *Alice Frauenverein*, 17 January 1902. An interesting example of mid-century nursing outside the religious orders is Frau Balser's comment that an "old retainer" served as the "administrator, cook, nurse, and house dragon (*Hausdrache*)" for the hospital. An experienced nurse, Frau Eberle, was employed following the war in 1866.

¹¹The amount was 2,500 Prussian thaler, approximately 4,385 florins.

¹²"Das Alice-Hospital," *Protocoll* (1872), 75.

¹³*Protocoll* (1874), 8.

Wirthwein officially took up her position as *Oberpflegerin* (head nurse), where she presided over the household's administration "with devotion and circumspection."¹⁴

This newly-established *Wohnung* (accommodation) for the nurses was viewed by the central committee as a very important development for the *Frauenverein*. In the hospital's general report for 1874-1875, Dr. Bennighof, chair of the hospital committee, emphasized that it was a *Mutterhaus* that provided a place where the nurse "could find her well-loved home."¹⁵ In a separate account, Eigenbrodt wrote that he hoped the nurses, under the leadership of a superintendent could "build a family there [in the motherhouse]."¹⁶ These comments are typical of those made by the leaders of other German Red Cross societies who built motherhouses throughout the country during the next two decades.¹⁷

At head of the *Mutterhaus* was the superintendent, or *Vorsteherin*, whose duties had been performed by members of the central committee, or as Eigenbrodt observed, "to a considerable extent left to the hands of the medical men."¹⁸ Prior to 1873, when the nurses' home was completed, most of the supervising responsibilities involved scheduling personnel for their various assignments. A motherhouse, however, would require a full-time matron.

The first *Vorsteherin*, Charlotte Helmsdörfer was born in 1835 to a local intellectual family. Her maternal grandfather, Karl Becker, was a well-known philologist and

¹⁴*Protocoll* (1874), 45. Wirthwein remained in the position of head nurse for the remainder of her career.

¹⁵Alice-Schwesternschaft collection. *Rechenschaftsbericht über die Verwaltung der Heilanstalt Mauerstrasse 17, zu Darmstadt, in den Jahren 1874 und 1875 erstattet durch den Vorsitzenden des Vorstandes Dr. med. Bennighof*, 3.

¹⁶Eigenbrodt, *Der Alice-Frauenverein*, 21.

¹⁷Within the Red Cross, the development of the motherhouse system and its communal living arrangements were unique to Germany, where motherhouses had been established in most of the country's major cities and towns by 1890. See Anna-Paula Kruse, *Die Krankenpflegeausbildung seit Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995), 46; and Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, Oberinnen-Vereinigung, *Der Ruf der Stunde*, 193.

¹⁸"The Alice Ladies' Society," 155.

natural scientist, and her father, Georg Helmsdörfer, had been the director of a *Realschule* in Offenbach.¹⁹ Her family's background – middle-class, educated, with connections to the court – was typical of nursing superintendents in the German *Frauenvereine*, as well as of members of the association. This was appropriate, as the *Vorsteherin* served as a member of the central committee.²⁰

One of the women from Darmstadt to be recognized by Kaiser Wilhelm I for her work during the Franco-German war, Helmsdörfer also had connections to the royal family and at least one member of the central committee, as well as Princess Alice.²¹ Her uncle, Theodor Becker, an active member of the *Hilfsverein*, was a *Hofrat* (privy councilor) and had once been employed as a teacher for princes Ludwig and Heinrich of Hesse.²² Becker's mother-in-law, Wilhelmine Maurer, was a member of the central committee, and probably knew Helmsdörfer on some level through this family connection.

Helmsdörfer's background could fit that of many Englishwomen who were trained by Florence Nightingale and employed as nursing superintendents and hospital matrons in Great Britain and throughout the British empire, where the introduction of "lady superintendents" in the 1860s served to emphasize the need for training in English hospitals. This emphasis can be

¹⁹Karl Ferdinand Becker (1779-1849) published several books on the subjects of speech and grammar. "Karl Becker," *Meyers Konversationslexikon, Vierte Auflage* (Leipzig: Verlag des Bibliographischen Instituts, 1885-1892), 589; and Lob, "Charlotte Helmsdörfer," *Vereinsblatt* (December 1918), 124.

²⁰There is very little information regarding the background of the Red Cross *Oberinnen*, but the job descriptions and middle-class membership in the *Frauenvereine* indicate that this would be the case. In some instances, the superintendent might come from a higher social class, as did Olga von Lützerode, the *Oberin* of the *Clementinenhaus* in Hannover. See Weber-Reich, "Wir sind die Pionierinnen," 111-115.

²¹She was awarded the Iron Cross (with white band) which recognized non-combatants. Helmsdörfer also received the German *Verdienstkreuz für Frauen und Jungfrauen*, and the Hessian *Sanitätsorden*. "Charlotte Helmsdörfer gest.," Alice-Schwesterschaft collection.

²²HStAD Best. S1 Nr. NACHWEIS, "Theodor Andreas Becker." Prince Ludwig and Prince Heinrich were Alice's husband and brother-in-law.

seen in British periodical literature, and in growing demands for trained matrons and nurses.²³ By 1865, the Nightingale School at St. Thomas's Hospital, founded just five years earlier, began sending Nightingale-trained nurses to serve as superintendents of other institutions.²⁴ Princess Alice was eager to have Helmsdörfer complete some of her training at St. Thomas's, and described her to Florence Nightingale as a "Lady who can be trained as you propose as a superintendent."²⁵ Alice informed Nightingale that Helmsdörfer's training had started with a "preparatory course" of two months' duration in the Darmstadt city hospital so that she could "convince herself whether she thinks she is fit to go to England and undertake so important a part as superintendent of a school for Nurses on her return."²⁶

In Germany, there was no formal training for the *Vorsteherin* beyond that given to a regular nurse, and it may have been for this reason that Princess Alice wanted Helmsdörfer to spend some time in England.²⁷ The correspondence between Princess Alice and Florence Nightingale from February 1872 to December 1873 is indicative of Nightingale's views of the training required for a superintendent. Initially, Alice wanted to send two nurses for training, but to the princess's request, Nightingale replied that twelve years at St. Thomas's had "confirmed me more & more every year in the conviction that only by training a Nursing Staff & their Superintendent together - & sending them together to undertake such Institution as they are

²³Ellen Jordan, *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1999), 140.

²⁴By 1875, "Nightingale nurses" were working as superintendents in various locations in Britain, as well as in Australia and Canada, with varying degrees of success. See Baly, *Florence Nightingale*, 137-149.

²⁵Princess Alice to Nightingale, 18 April 1872, Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fols. 71-74.

²⁶Princess Alice to Nightingale, 20 August 1872, in Noel, *Princess Alice*, 247-248.

²⁷The first training schools for superintendents, the *Oberinnenschule*, was founded in 1902 by Clementine von Wallemenich, *Oberin* of the Bavarian Red Cross in Munich. See Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, 439; Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 156; and Wolff, *Biographisches Lexikon zur Pflegegeschichte*, 215-216.

called upon, can this be properly grounded in traditions of good discipline & of training others.” Furthermore, Nightingale asserted, “...it is but small use to train a Nurse (or two or three Nurses) to go back to her parent Institution, unless she is invested with the requisite authority and & distinct charge as Superintendent to train others in the Hospital management and ways of knowledge & ways of management she may have acquired.” In other words, the *Alice Frauenverein* should send all of its nurses or “if this be impossible, then we train a Superintendent as well as we are able, & send her out to train and govern her staff as well as she can.”²⁸

A nurse could not learn much without a minimum of a year’s training, Nightingale contended. Her opinion of previous nursing training was that it “disqualified rather than qualifies a Nurse to acquire the habits of a New School,” but the training of a superintendent was another matter. She “cannot have had experience enough of different Training Schools, in order to enable her to take the best of each.” If Helmsdörfer was unable to stay in Britain for a full year, Nightingale commented, German doctors had shown a “higher & nobler spirit in aiding all they can the instruction of those who are hereafter to act as their aides” than had English doctors, which should be of some use in Darmstadt.²⁹ Nightingale’s convictions were reiterated in Eigenbrodt’s book, *Der Alice-Frauenverein für Krankenpflege, seine Entstehung und leitenden Grundsätzen, seine Leistungen und Ziele* (*The Alice Women’s Association for Nursing, its*

²⁸Nightingale to Princess Alice, 27 March 1872, in Noel, *Princess Alice*, 250-253. In the end, Charlotte Helmsdörfer was the only nurse from the *Alice Frauenverein* to be trained in England, though Alice inquired again on 18 April 1872 about another nurse, “a new nurse – full of promise, speaking English, who would likewise wish to learn in England as she has had no real training.” Alice’s attitude toward the superiority of British nursing here is not simply a prejudice for her native country; according to Catherine Winkworth, a fellow attendee at the *Lette-Verband* conference in Darmstadt, Marie Simon indicated in October 1872 that she felt nursing in England “is better than in any land in the world.” Winkworth, “A Ladies’ Congress in Germany,” 557.

²⁹Nightingale to Princess Alice, 27 March 1872, Noel, *Princess Alice*, 250-253.

Origins and Guiding Principles, its Achievements and Leading Objectives), first published in 1872. Eigenbrodt stated that “in the opinion of Miss Nightingale, the period of training should not last less than a year,” a policy which the *Frauenverein* followed except in times of war or another emergency.³⁰

In the case of the *Frauenverein* in Darmstadt, however, Nightingale also acknowledged that she believed the theoretical training to be so good that “there is little or nothing further to be learnt [by the *Alice Frauenverein* nurses]...at St. Thomas’s.”³¹ One on the other hand, the “practical [i.e., hands-on] training” Helmsdörfer would need as a superintendent could be found in “...a large London hospital where a system & machinery for imparting practical instruction to nurses has been working out for years.” Also, Helmsdörfer could observe the “secular hierarchy...from the Matron down thro’ Ward Sisters, Nurses, Assistant Nurses, to Ward maids & scrubbers...with the duties of discipline attached which has appeared to be so much wanted & till lately so little regarded in large Institutions at home and abroad.”³²

Further correspondence regarding the conditions and timing of Helmsdörfer’s training in England went on throughout 1872 and much of 1873, while she undertook additional training at

³⁰Eigenbrodt, *Der Alice-Frauenverein*, 14. A copy of Eigenbrodt’s book was probably the one sent to Nightingale from Darmstadt in May 1872, via Alice’s sister, Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg. Letter from Lady Susan Melville (Lady of the Bedchamber to Princess Christian) to Nightingale, British Library, Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fol. 89. It was also made available to members of the *Lette Verband* who attended the Darmstadt meeting in 1872.

³¹The committee of the Nightingale Fund concurred with Nightingale’s assessment of the situation. Henry Bonham Carter, the Fund’s secretary, wrote that “it seems probable that the advantages offered at St. Thomas’s are in no way greater perhaps less than may be obtained under the well considered scheme at Darmstadt and Carlsruhe.” Henry Bonham Carter, “Memo, respecting the admission of Probationers for the Darmstadt Hospital,” 23 March 1872, in Noel, *Princess Alice*, 254-255. The grand duchess of Baden had an extensive correspondence with Nightingale and had consulted her on a number of points concerning hospital organization and nurse training. See Grand Duchess Luise of Baden to Nightingale, Nightingale Papers, BL 45750, fols. 106-191.

³²Nightingale to Princess Alice, 27 March 1872, in Noel, *Princess Alice*, 250-253.

hospitals in Leipzig, Berlin, and Kiel, as well as “Mother” Marie Simon’s hospital in Dresden.³³ She was sent to England in the fall of 1873 and remained through the winter of 1874.³⁴ In England, Helmsdörfer hoped to learn more about district nursing, and for that purpose spent a month at the Royal Infirmary in Liverpool, where the nurses were supervised by Mary Merryweather, a Nightingale protégé. Helmsdörfer’s training in England also included observation in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and in London at St. Thomas’ Hospital and Highgate Workhouse Infirmary.³⁵

The *Hauptbericht* (main report) of the 1874 *Protocoll* informed the members of the *Alice Frauenverein* that Merryweather’s “flourishing” training school had nurses working in its hospital and in private nursing, but it put great emphasis on the school’s district nursing for the sick poor, an area in which the *Frauenverein* hoped to expand in Hesse.³⁶ Shortly after her arrival in Liverpool, Helmsdörfer wrote to Nightingale that she had become acquainted with the

³³This hospital was associated with the *Albertverein* in Saxony. Mother Simon’s training program for the nurses was “extremely thorough.” In 1883, the nurses of the *Albertverein* were “instructed for two years at an asylum; and they then spend a third year in Leipzig, attending lectures and practical demonstrations.” See William Gilman Thompson, *Training-Schools for Nurses, With Notes on Twenty-Two Schools* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1883), 3-4. Like Charlotte Helmsdörfer, Olga von Lützerode from the *Clementinenhaus* in Hanover also studied in Kiel with Professor Friedrich von Esmarch, the “father of first aid training,” Weber-Reich, “*Wir sind die Pionierinnen*,” 116. Two other *Alice Frauenverein* nurses were trained by Esmarch in 1872. Eigenbrodt, *Der Alice-Frauenverein*, 13. The fact that Esmarch was connected to Alice (in 1872 he married Princess Helena’s sister-in-law, Princess Caroline of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg) is not mentioned in connection with Helmsdörfer’s training in documents associated with the *Alice Frauenverein*.

³⁴*Protocoll* (1872), 10. Although the phrase “at the wish of the princess” is used in this and other association documents to describe Helmsdörfer’s Nightingale training, the context does not imply that the members of the committee were opposed to it. They were, however, anxious for Helmsdörfer’s training to be completed so that she could return to Darmstadt. An attack of sepsis had interrupted her course in Leipzig, so the timetable had been set back by a few weeks.

³⁵The training school and home for nurses established at the Royal Infirmary in Liverpool was founded by William Rathbone (1819-1902), philanthropist and liberal member of Parliament (1868-1900 and again from 1881-1895).

³⁶It did expand in this area, to some extent, although much of the association’s concentration was still on hospital nursing.

districts involved, and how the district nursing process was managed. She also noted the lack of a strong connection between the nurse's home and the hospital.³⁷

As seen from her correspondence with Nightingale during her stay in Britain, Helmsdörfer was confident about her ability to supervise the nurses in Darmstadt. The fact that she requested additional time in England (and was supported by Princess Alice in this request) shows, perhaps, that Helmsdörfer felt the training to be helpful for her, and that the committee acknowledged the benefits of training in the Nightingale system. The association's general report for 1877 devotes a page to a description of the superintendent's extensive training and indicates that, at the very least, the committee wanted to provide an explanation for the cost of the training, which was nearly one-fifth of the association's expenses for 1874.³⁸ That same description paid homage to Nightingale, whose opinions and reputation obviously carried weight with the committee.

How much of an impact Helmsdörfer's training in England had on the Alice-Hospital is difficult to analyze. Nightingale scholar and nurse historian Monica Baly asserts that although previous scholars "have been at pains to stress the missionary nature of the [Nightingale] Fund's

³⁷Helmsdörfer to Nightingale, 16 November 1873, Nightingale Papers, BL 45803, fols. 104-107. Unfortunately, much of Helmsdörfer's correspondence with Nightingale, which is found in BL 45803, fols. 94-140 passim, concerns scheduling arrangements for the remainder of her stay, rather than her own observations of nursing. In any case, given Helmsdörfer's position as a relatively amateur nurse compared with Nightingale, it is unlikely that she would have done anything more than praise or echo Nightingale's own observations.

Monica Baly has discussed the problems of the district nursing system in Liverpool, which was part of a larger discussion concerning district nursing and which Nightingale herself strongly criticized in 1874. See Baly, *Florence Nightingale*, 123-134.

³⁸*Alice-Frauenverein für die Krankenpflege im Grossherzogthum Hessen. Protocoll über die am 21. März 1877 dahier abgehaltene vierte Generalversammlung des Vereins nebst Rechenschaftsbericht über die gesammte Thätigkeit des Vereins in den Jahren 1874 bis 1876* (Darmstadt: H. Brill, 1877), 21. The sum was 1,194 florins, 33 kreuzers, which included the British training and expenses, as well as Helmsdörfer's time in Leipzig. The total amount of "ordinary" expenditures by the *Frauenverein* in 1874 was 5,490 florins, 34 kreuzers.

nurses and how the Nightingale system was successfully exported to Germany, Sweden, India, Canada, and Australia,” the system was transferred only to Canada and Australia, and even then there were difficulties.³⁹ “One nurse was sent from Germany and one from Sweden to observe at St. Thomas’s,” Baly states, “but neither in fact took back the system nor started a school on the Nightingale pattern.”⁴⁰ This statement is absolutely correct, for the “Nightingale system” involved the staffing of the hospital with lower-class women who were supervised by matrons or “Lady Superintendents,” who belonged to the upper classes, much like Nightingale herself. But the *Alice Frauenverein*, like many other nursing associations, recruited primarily from the “better classes,” meaning that from the start the two systems were predicated on different methods.

Nonetheless, Nightingale’s *Notes on Nursing* (1859) was widely distributed throughout Germany, and Christoph Schweikardt has suggested that this was just one of the ways that Nightingale’s method of nursing influenced the development of nursing in Prussia.⁴¹ *Notes on Nursing* is not specifically mentioned in associational literature or the princess’s own correspondence, but, given its wide distribution in Europe, Alice and other members of the *Frauenverein* had probably read it.⁴² In addition, there are references to other papers which Alice

³⁹Baly, *Florence Nightingale*, 137-149.

⁴⁰Baly, *Florence Nightingale*, 137. Here, Baly is referring only to the period from 1865-1875. She does not name the “one nurse,” but Charlotte Helmsdörfer was the only German nurse who trained at St. Thomas’s during that period. At least two German nurses were sent to Nightingale for training: Helmsdörfer; and a Fräulein Fuhrmann, sent by Alice’s sister Vicky sometime in the early 1880s. Fuhrmann became the superintendent of the *Victoria-Haus für Krankenpflege* in Berlin, which opened in 1881. It operated under a similar hierarchical system as the Nightingale School, and maintained some similar contractual obligations to the ones placed on the Nightingale probationers. Edward Tyas Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1913), 190 and 204.

⁴¹Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 71-76.

⁴²In any case, one edition of *Notes on Nursing* had been translated in 1860 by Franziska Helena Bunsen. See Wolff and Wolff, *Krankenpflege*, 168. Her parents, Prussian diplomat Baron Christian von Bunsen and his wife Frances (a Welsh native), were closely connected to Queen Victoria and her family.

may have received from Nightingale via the Prussian crown princess or other mutual friends, or when the two met in London. Alice did make a point of sharing with the nurses Nightingale's *Address to the Probationer Nurses in the "Nightingale Fund" School at St. Thomas's*, printed for private circulation in May 1872. She translated Nightingale's address into German, added a forward, and delivered it to her nurses later that year.⁴³

In the Nightingale system, control was taken out of the hands of medical men, and placed under the direction of a woman who was herself a trained nurse. This was already the case in Germany, where the nursing superintendents of the religious orders and the Red Cross motherhouses were virtually autonomous. According to the regulations of the motherhouse, the *Vorsteherin* of the Alice-Hospital served as the nurses' immediate supervisor, and was responsible to the central committee for the nurses' training as well as the "conscientious handling of all nursing services inside and outside the hospital." All work assignments were made by the superintendent and at her discretion.⁴⁴

The students (*Lehrpflegerinnen*) and other nurses residing within the motherhouse were required to treat the communal living arrangements as the household of a "large family," with "willing obedience" to the superintendent, and "mutual friendly accommodations" with each other. In the same way that a young woman's adherence to rules of behavior might be required within her own family, the nurse was instructed to follow the rules of the house. For example, if a nurse wished to go out, she could do so, but with the knowledge and agreement of the

⁴³This document is held in the Alice-Schwesternschaft collection.

⁴⁴*Mittheilungen über die Einrichtungen der Pflegerinnenschule des Alice-Frauen-Vereins zu Darmstadt* (Darmstadt: 1886), 5.

Vorsteherin. At meals, she had to be punctual or provide the superintendent with an explanation for her tardiness or absence.⁴⁵

Although she was not held accountable for the spiritual well-being of her charges, she was responsible for setting a “luminous example” for her nurses. The *Vorsteherin* was charged with providing “motherly” advice to the nurses in her care, and they were required to follow her instructions. In essence, she truly served as the spiritual “mother” of the *Mutterhaus*.⁴⁶ It is entirely possible that some of the nurses came to resent this type of solicitude, although others did not. Johanna Lob, a nurse who entered the *Frauenverein* in 1885, described the first superintendent, Charlotte Helmsdörfer, as a “solicitous mother.” Lob had entered the nursing program with what she described as “difficult personal conditions,” wondering whether her “strength would grow to the desired occupation.”⁴⁷ Helmsdörfer served as a mentor to the young woman, as she presumably did for many of her other nurses as well. Helmsdörfer’s own mother, Sophie, had died in 1872, and this may have influenced her decision to accept the position at that time.

Aside from Helmsdörfer, who were the women chosen to work as nurses for the *Alice Frauenverein*? Biographical information is limited, but some general observations can be made in this regard from what is available, and from the association’s regulations. It seems likely that many applicants were already familiar with the *Frauenverein*, and that much of the recruitment

⁴⁵*Pflegerinnenschule*, 5-6.

⁴⁶Johanna Lob, “Charlotte Helmsdörfer, die erste Vorsteherin des Alice-Hospitals: Eine Erinnerungsbild von einer ehemaligen Aliceschwester,” in *Vereinsblatt des Alice-Frauenvereins* 4, no. 12 (December 1918), 124. The *Badische Frauenverein* included these descriptions of the *Oberin* in its statutes, though the *Alice Frauenverein* did not. See Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, 439.

⁴⁷Lob, “Charlotte Helmsdörfer,” 124.

was via word of mouth.⁴⁸ It is quite possible that several of these women knew of the opportunity through friends or relations who were employed as nurses. Of the 162 nurses who entered the association prior to 1900, it is possible that at least twenty-two of them had at least one female relation in the group.⁴⁹ A trio of nurses, labeled in a photograph as “3 Schwestern Freund” (c. 1881), can be positively identified as sisters Elise Freund, Luise Freund, and Marie Claus, née Freund.⁵⁰

An interested woman, aged 20-35, could write to or speak with the superintendent, who had sole discretion in hiring. The applicant was given a copy of the association regulations as well as a questionnaire, which she would fill out and return to the *Vorsteherin*. Unfortunately, only three of the questionnaires completed by applicants to the *Alice Frauenverein* still exist, and the earliest is dated 1895. However, examples of earlier questionnaires are included in the general reports of 1877 and 1886. The questionnaires contained simple biographical questions, such as the applicant’s full name, age, the name and address of her doctor, and the name, address, and occupation of her father.⁵¹ Other questions asked for her health history, marital status, and whether she wished to be paid for her services. The only change in the questionnaire from 1877 to 1886 was the addition of questions asking the applicant’s place of birth, as well as

⁴⁸Concerts, lectures and bazaars held to benefit the *Frauenverein* were advertised in the local newspapers, but the advertisements did not include employment information. After 1900, occasional articles were published containing a description of nursing activities and application information.

⁴⁹Based on same last names and dates of entry within a four-year period.

⁵⁰*Alice-Frauen-Verein für die Krankenpflege im Grossherzogthum Hessen. Bericht über die am 8. December 1883 stattgefundene Einweihung des Alice-Hospitals und die hierauf abgehaltene siebente Generalversammlung des Vereins nebst Rechenschaftsberichten über die Thätigkeit des Vereins in den Jahren 1881 bis 1883* (Darmstadt: H. Brill, 1883), 16. The photograph is held in the Alice-Schwesternschaft collection.

⁵¹Asking for the name, address and occupation of the applicant’s father may indicate that as the association grew, an applicant’s family might not be known to the *Vorsteherin* or the executive committee. Also, it may have served as an indication of the woman’s social status.

religious confession.⁵² Whether these last questions were added as a way to profile an applicant is unknown, although it is certainly possible that this was the case.

The *Frauenverein*'s statutes allowed for the possibility that a nurse was married or widowed. During the Franco-German war, a few nurses, mostly those volunteering for the duration of the war, were clearly designated as *Frau* rather than *Fräulein*. After the war, the nurses were listed only by their first and last names, and after 1900, they were usually listed only by last name and first initial. From 1872 to 1900, only two women, Marie Claus and Adèle Leidholt, can be proven to have been married or widowed at the time of their entry into the *Alice Frauenverein*. This suggests that the nurses were predominantly single women when they entered the association.⁵³

According to Dr. Eigenbrodt, "considerable progress" was made in the nurses' training with Helmsdörfer's return to Darmstadt in May 1874 and her assumption of the duties of superintendent. Prior to Helmsdörfer's arrival, it had been absolutely necessary for the nurses to have previous experience, presumably during the wars but also by nursing a sick relative. Now, Eigenbrodt wrote, "it is possible to admit [women] from every level and every social class," because the training period was extended and "careful instruction" was provided to the nursing

⁵²Whether these were added as a result of the *Kulturkampf* is difficult to determine. As with Prussia, Baden, and Bavaria, the Hessian government waged its own war against the Catholic Church during the 1870s. In April 1875, a law was passed which restricted religious communities, but "nursing communities were given the freedom to establish new foundations." See Joachim Schmiedl, "The Social, Cultural, and Legal Foundations for Religious Orders and Congregations in Germany," in *Religious Institutes in Western Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Historiography, Research and Legal Position*, ed. Jan de Maeyer, Sofie Leplae and Joachim Schmiedl (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 260.

⁵³Like Marie Claus, "Adèle Leidholt geb. Eichberg" is listed in the *Bericht...Einweihung* (1883), 16. She left the *Frauenverein* prior to 1886. In other association documents (from 1881-1916), Marie Freund Claus is listed only as "Marie Claus."

students.⁵⁴ The doctor's comments show that the central committee was open to the possibility of accepting nurses from different social classes, but there is no clear evidence to show that this actually happened. Available information about the nurses, though limited, gives no indication of a significant change in social composition during the period covered by this study.

At the very least, middle-class women who wished to nurse could do so. That the nurses could enter the association until they reached the age of thirty-five indicates that the central committee assumed that many women would wait several years before taking up employment. For some, this likely meant the death of one or both parents, which may have created both a financial burden as well as the necessity for the woman to "stand alone" as Eigenbrodt had described it.

Marie Winter, who entered the association in 1879, may provide a good example of the typical *Alice Frauenverein* nurse. Born in Darmstadt in 1846, she was part of a family that, like the Helmsdörfers, was well-connected in Darmstädter society. Winter's life, however, had not been easy. Her father, Karl Winter, had "died early" in 1852, leaving his wife Henriette to raise their children and provide them with a "good education" which she did "despite many difficulties."⁵⁵ Although his widow apparently received financial support from the *Kaution* typically deposited by civil officials into the state treasury, the "many difficulties" mentioned in Marie Winter's obituary imply some financial hardship for the family, compared with other families of similar social standing. It may have been the reason that she, like so many of her fellow *Schwestern*, became a nurse. Her obituary indicates that she did so only several years

⁵⁴Eigenbrodt, *Der Alice-Frauenverein*, 15.

⁵⁵Obituary for Marie Winter in *Vereinsblatt* 8, no. 4 (April 1922), 17-20, and HStAD G18, 200/11. According to the *Zivildienner-Witwenkasse-Kommission, Hofgerichtsadvokat Justizrät* Karl Winter was the *Syndikus* for the Lutheran Church in Darmstadt at the time of his death in 1852. They had at least three children, as Marie Winter is listed as the third.

after her mother's death, but there is no evidence that she tried another occupation before turning to nursing.⁵⁶

The death of a parent was also a common theme for the nurses who entered the association at the turn of the century. Of the few *Fragebogen* which have survived, those of Gertrud Wassermann, who entered the organization in 1895, and Anna Decher, who started in 1912, provide evidence to support this point. Wassermann, likely the sister of fellow *Schwester* Margarethe Wassermann, was a pastor's daughter. Decher's father was a post office official (*Postbeamter*). Both men had died before their daughters began their employment as nurses.⁵⁷

The process for applying for a position was relatively simple. Following receipt of the completed *Fragebogen*, the superintendent decided if the applicant could be admitted for a probationary period of three months. Applications were then submitted to the central committee, which determined the start date for the new student. At the end of the probation, if the nurse was found "not suitable" ("*nicht geeignet*") the committee ended her employment.⁵⁸ If the student was allowed to continue to the *Lehrzeit*, she was obligated to three years' of service with the *Frauenverein* after its completion. If the nurse chose to leave the association before the end of that period, she was required to pay a reimbursement fee to the central committee.⁵⁹ The *Vorsteherin* determined the length of the *Lehrzeit*, based on the nurse's previous experience.

⁵⁶HStAD G28, F 2790/12. For a discussion of the financial situations of middle-class German widows, see Eve Rosenhaft, "Did Women Invent Life Insurance? Widows and the Demand for Financial Services in Eighteenth-Century Germany," in *Family Welfare: Gender, Property, and Inheritance since the Seventeenth Century*, ed. David R. Green and Alastair Owens (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 163-194.

⁵⁷Alice-Schwesternschaft collection, *Fragebogen* for Gertrud Wassermann and Anna Decher.

⁵⁸*Pflegerinnenschule*, 3.

⁵⁹*Pflegerinnenschule*, 4.

The course for *Berufspflegerinnen*, which included technical and practical training, lasted approximately one year. Reserve nurses, who wanted to work only during wartime or other emergencies, took a three-month course.⁶⁰ State-regulated examinations were not instituted until 1907, so the only qualification for completion of the *Lehrzeit* was that the *Vorsteherin* was satisfied that the student could provide patient care. The skills required ran the gamut from binding wounds and providing first aid to changing bed linens and making the patient's meals and were quite similar to the duties listed for "Nightingale nurses" at St. Thomas's as well as for the women employed by other "secular" nursing societies.⁶¹ At the end of the course, the nurses appeared before the central committee to receive their diplomas, and each class was read the letter that Princess Alice wrote for the school's first class in 1872.

The charge was quite similar to the one given by Nightingale to her own students:

It is my pleasure to present you with the diploma, especially as I know that you are approved as conscientious and efficient nurses and have already relieved the hard lot of many patients. Take this so forth, and learn to strive further. It requires years of work, to reach even roughly the ideal of a nurse. Be self-sacrificing, compatible, and discreet in the highest degree, and always remember your highly difficult task, not yourself. Always be available for each other and do not forget the loyalty and obedience that you owe the Committee, which works and provides for you. If the Committee, with full hearts, wish to and always shall provide for you, then it counts on your confidence and your submissiveness to facilitate and enable it. We work together for the attainment of a humane goal and cannot manage without one another.⁶²

⁶⁰Eigenbrodt, *Der Alice-Frauenverein*, 14-16.

⁶¹The information is taken from the "Verzeichniss der Fertigkeiten, welche eine vollständig ausgebildete Pflegerin des Alice-Frauenvereins besitzen soll," ("List of the Skills which a Fully Trained Nurse of the Alice Frauenverein Should Have"), in *Protocoll* (1877), 33-34. It is reprinted, verbatim, in *Alice-Frauen-Verein für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogthum Hessen. Protocoll über die am 1. April 1886 abgehaltene achte Generalversammlung des Vereins nebst Rechenschaftsbericht über die gesammte Thätigkeit des Vereins in den Jahren 1883, 1884, und 1885* (Darmstadt: 1886), 9-10, and is similar to the knowledge and skills required by other secular nursing societies. For the duties of a Nightingale probationer, see Baly, *Florence Nightingale*, 43; and for German nursing, Kruse, *Krankenpflegeausbildung*, 49-50.

⁶²The letter, dated 8 May 1872 and written in German on Alice's personal stationery, is held in the Alice-Schwesternschaft collection.

Although in many ways they had more freedom than women in religious orders, with no vows or contracts that “bound” them to the *Frauenverein*, the nurses were clearly expected to give their all to the task for the duration of their employment. At the end of the student’s *Lehrzeit*, the superintendent applied to the central committee for the “firm employment” of the nurse. With this offer (*Anstellung*), the nurse was also required to sign a pledge (*Gelöbnis*):

I promise, so long as I am an active member of the *Verein*, to perform nursing duties according to the provisions of the statutes and the orders of the Central Committee, particularly a punctual compliance with medical instructions and orders. Also, I promise at all times to observe a steadfast silence in regards to all that I see or hear during the practice of care, no matter how insignificant, within the family of the patient.⁶³

At this time, the nurse was also given the badge of the association, a silver brooch with a red cross.⁶⁴

The essence of the pledge remained the same for more than a decade, although by 1886 the *Gelöbnis* was amended to include promises that the nurses made not to speak of anything they saw or heard within the *Frauenverein* or the Alice-Hospital, which suggested that they were to be silent not only about what they heard while performing patient care, but also what they heard within the association itself. They also promised to accept no gifts or money from patients – a regulation which had been in place since 1867. The reason for this change is not mentioned in the published reports or unpublished memoranda. The new *Gelöbnis* also ended with the phrase, “May God’s blessing rest on our work!” This is an interesting addition, as references to God were relatively rare and not invoked as often as seems to have been the case in other Red Cross associations, such as Hanover and Baden.

⁶³§1 of the “Organisations-Statut für die Krankenpflege der Berufspflegerinnen des Frauenvereins in Darmstadt” (the association’s organizational statutes), in *Protocoll* (1869), 39.

⁶⁴*Pflegerinnenschule*, 4.

The central committee's obligation to the nurse began with the offer of employment. Two years after making her pledge and receiving her brooch, if the nurse had "practiced her occupation with loyalty and absolute dedication," she became a full member of the *Alice Frauenverein*. At this point, she could leave the association at any time, and for any reason, without penalty.⁶⁵

Unlike nurses serving in religious orders, "secular" nurses were paid. During the *Lehrzeit*, nurses were provided a small wage of 55-75 marks, which increased each quarter. Following the *Anstellung*, nurses were entitled to earn yearly salaries of 340-540 marks, which grew in increments according to the nurse's *Altersdienst*, or years of service. In addition, the women were supplied with a quarterly laundry allowance.⁶⁶ This compensation was well within the range paid by other Red Cross associations in Germany, but does not fare as well when ranged against salaries earned by English nurses.⁶⁷ Teaching, one of the few "respectable" options for female employment in the 1870s, generally paid about twice as much as nursing. Female teachers could earn from 900 to 1,400 marks, yet teaching also had its price. Women in the teaching profession described the problem of job competition, frequent relocation, and loneliness.⁶⁸

⁶⁵*Pflegerinnenschule*, 4.

⁶⁶*Pflegerinnenschule*, 8. A nurse with no experience would reach the 540 mark maximum ten years after entering the *Frauenverein*.

⁶⁷In 1873, the range of salaries in the *Badische Frauenverein* was 105-175 marks. For a table of these salaries from 1865-1910, see Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, 444. English staff nurses earned 20-30 pounds each year, the equivalent of 400-600 marks. Nursing sisters, however, made 35-60 pounds, equal to about 700 to 1,200 marks. See Marcelline J. Hutton, *Russian and West European Women, 1860-1939: Dreams, Struggles and Nightmares* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 95. Adjustments to these figures, of course, would need to be made dependent upon circumstances such as the inclusion of room and board.

⁶⁸Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls*, 82.

Aside from a regular salary, nurses were compensated in other ways. As in religious orders and many other secular associations, they received a *freie Station* (room and board) in the hospital. If a nurse was employed in a non-local station, as was the case with Elise Butz, who was stationed in Offenbach, then she could be housed with other nurses in a “rented location.”⁶⁹ In addition to room and board, it was possible for nurses to receive monetary bonuses and other gifts through the association, as well as free medical care.⁷⁰ They were also allowed to take a four-week vacation each year, and the royal family often offered one of their properties for this purpose.⁷¹

From the founding of the *Frauenverein*, the issue of the nurses’ pensions, or *Altersversorgung*, was one that appeared frequently in association documents. Like the religious orders, the *Alice Frauenverein* and other secular societies provided security and care for the nurses in their old age.⁷² Those who were unable to continue working had a right to the organization’s *Pensionskasse* (pension fund) after five years of employment, as did Bertha Grünewald, one of the association’s “oldest” nurses, who was pensioned in 1873.⁷³ As Eigenbrodt explained, the *Fragebogen* could help determine whether an applicant could handle the physical tasks of nursing, but some were still forced, through bad health or serious illness, to give up the occupation. For that reason, Eigenbrodt argued, a pension was essential for the

⁶⁹Eigenbrodt, *Der Alice-Frauenverein*, 22.

⁷⁰For example, Offenbach’s 1873 report indicates that Elise Butz and another nurse, a Fräulein Schneider, received Christmas gifts from the *Zweigverein* of 50 florins each. *Protocoll* (1874), 13.

⁷¹*Pflegerinnenschule*, 4.

⁷²Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 193-194. Unlike the *Alice Frauenverein*, the *Badische Frauenverein* started its pension fund only in 1867, eight years after the association was founded. Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, 445.

⁷³*Protocoll* (1874), 26. The original statutes were amended to include the five-year minimum in 1872. See “Statuten des Alice-Frauen-Vereins,” *Protocoll* (1877), 24-30.

women who practiced this “beautiful but difficult” *Beruf*, which placed “a physical and psychological toll on its practitioners.”⁷⁴

Ironically, the association’s president was one of the first members to die in connection with her nursing duties. On 9 December 1878, the front page of the *Darmstädter Zeitung* announced that Princess Alice had contracted diphtheria. The thirty-five year-old princess was the victim of the “self-sacrificing care she gave to her sick husband and children,” whom she, along with several nurses from the *Alice Frauenverein*, had been nursing for weeks.⁷⁵ The article ended with the phrase, “*Gott schütze und erhalte uns Ihre Königliche Hoheit die Grossherzogin!*” (“God bless and preserve Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess!”)⁷⁶ Readers could track the disease’s progress with daily reports from Dr. Eigenbrodt.⁷⁷ Five days later, the grand duchess died, attended by Eigenbrodt and “her” nurses. At her funeral, the women of the association were seated in an area near the altar.⁷⁸

In Hesse, Alice was a well-known figure to many of the nurses and the members of the *Frauenverein*, since she often visited the hospital without announcement or attendants. The British dubbed her “The Royal Nurse.”⁷⁹ After her death, Alice was depicted as the self-

⁷⁴Eigenbrodt, *Der Alice-Frauenverein*, 11.

⁷⁵*Darmstädter Zeitung*, 9 December 1878. Princess Victoria, Alice’s eldest child and her successor as president of the *Alice Frauenverein*, was the first to develop symptoms, and the diphtheria spread to Alice’s husband Ludwig and all but one of the couple’s children (Princess Elisabeth). The youngest, four year-old Princess Marie (“May”), died on 19 November, and the story was widely reported that the exhausted Alice had gone in to break the news to her son (the future Grand Duke) Ernst Ludwig, kissing him on the forehead and so “caught” the disease herself.

⁷⁶Alice’s husband had succeeded his uncle as grand duke of Hesse in 1877.

⁷⁷Karl Eigenbrodt became the court’s physician in 1877, following the death of Karl Weber.

⁷⁸*Darmstädter Zeitung*, 18 December 1878.

⁷⁹“The Late Princess Alice,” *Times* (London), 20 December 1878. The “Royal Nurse” moniker stems from the nursing she performed for her father during his illness in December 1861, and for her brother, the Prince of Wales, who survived his bout with typhoid in 1871. In a

sacrificing royal mother-wife-nurse in both the Hessian and British press. Newspapers in Hesse described her as an “untiring improver [*Bildnerin*] of her sex” and a “model on the throne,” who would “live on in the hearts of the people and in the history of the country.”⁸⁰ *The Times* and other British papers printed similar stories. British periodicals, especially, lauded the princess and printed excerpts from her *Biographical Sketch and Letters* (1884).⁸¹ For the nurses and members of the *Alice Frauenverein*, Alice was held up not only as the “dear motherly friend we have lost,” as she was described by Helmsdörfer, but also as “*unsere hohen Stifterin*” (“our noble benefactor”) of the Alice-Hospital.⁸²

The cramped conditions of the growing “*Mauerstrasse 17*” had demonstrated the need for a larger facility, which included more space for the nurses’ training school. Alice’s death resulted in the creation of the “Alice Memorial Fund,” a joint project of Hessian and British

sad twist, Alice died on the seventeenth anniversary of her father’s death. For another instance in which Alice is called “the Royal Nurse,” see A.M. Hull, “In Memoriam: The Princess Alice,” in *The Large-Type Christian Cabinet: Containing Narratives, Hymns, and Gospel Gems*, 61-65 (Edinburgh: James Taylor, 1879).

⁸⁰*Darmstädter Zeitung*, 16 December 1878.

⁸¹The book, with a biographical sketch by court chaplain Karl Sell, was published in German as *Alice, Grossherzogin von Hesse und bei Rhein: Prinzessin von Grossbritannien und Irland. Mittheilungen aus ihrem Leben und aus ihren Briefen* (Darmstadt: A. Bergsträsser, 1883). An English edition, with a foreword by Alice’s sister Helena, was published in 1884 by J. Murray (London). Other books about Alice include J.F.B. Tinling, *Lessons from the Life and Death of the Princess Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse-Darmstadt* (London: S. Bagster, 1879); and K. Isabella Goode, *Foot-prints of a Life: In Memory of the Beloved Princess Alice, of Great Britain and Ireland, Grand Duchess of Hesse Darmstadt* (London: Hatchards, 1879). Several articles about Alice’s life and death were published from 1879 to 1884 in various British periodicals - particularly those geared toward women or religion.

⁸²Helmsdörfer to unknown recipient, 29 December 1878, Nightingale Papers, BL 45805, fol. 121. The letter was clearly not written to Nightingale herself, but to someone close to her, and also well-acquainted with Helmsdörfer during her training in England in 1873/1874. Helmsdörfer had just been summoned by Queen Victoria to “give the particulars” of Alice’s illness and death, and had requested an interview with Nightingale during her visit. That the visit was granted is indicated in a letter written by Nightingale to a relative, Louisa Smith, on 24 January 1879. See Lynn McDonald, ed. *Florence Nightingale on Women, Medicine, Midwifery, and Prostitution*, vol. 8 of *The Collected Works of Florence Nightingale* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2005), 858.

donors. The funds paid for the construction of the Alice-Hospital and Training School for Nurses, which was inaugurated in December 1883.⁸³ During the opening ceremonies, a number of speakers, not surprisingly, endowed the hospital with such titles as “temple of the pure” and “beautiful monument of helpful love.” Alice’s husband, the grand duke, formally handed the keys to the *Vorsteherin* and instructed her to “fulfill your difficult task in the spirit of my dear wife,” and the nurses were also charged to follow Alice’s example.⁸⁴

While occasionally overblown, these speeches also contained numerous references to the Red Cross, the hospital as a home for the nurses, and the ongoing connection of the royal family with the hospital, the *Frauenverein*, and the work of caring for the sick.⁸⁵ The ceremony concluded with remarks which expressed the hope that the “spirit of the noble princess would always prevail in this house, and that her model would always remain” and those who were called to nurse were “always zealous to fulfill their duties faithfully and more in the service of selfless charity.” Finally, a tablet which was written in English and placed on the hospital’s cornerstone extolled Alice’s “pure and loving character and her life of loving self sacrifice.” It ended with the phrase, “If you seek a memorial, look around.”⁸⁶

However, the opening ceremony for the new Alice-Hospital and Training School for Nurses was not simply a celebration of Alice’s legacy; contained in its rhetoric was a model of care that had been established by the association for its nurses. As shown by the *Alice*

⁸³The transcript of the ceremony was published in the general report of 1883, as well as the newspaper. See *Darmstädter Zeitung*, 11 December 1883; and *Bericht...Einweihung* (1883), 5-13.

⁸⁴*Bericht...Einweihung* (1883), 10.

⁸⁵*Bericht...Einweihung* (1883), 5-13. Elise Butz, the superintendent of the nurses’ station in Offenbach, had just died on 2 December and was briefly eulogized in the inaugural ceremony. See also “Todesanzeige,” *Darmstädter Zeitung*, 4 December 1883.

⁸⁶*Bericht...Einweihung* (1883), 13. The phrase was written in Latin (“*Si monumentum requiris circumspice*”).

Frauenverein, the secular motherhouse allowed women to work as paid nurses while also receiving protection, security and care throughout their lives. The *Vorsteherin* presided over the nurses, acting as their mother as well as their supervisor. In this manner, the nurses lived independent from their patriarchal households, yet in a setting that did not defy “respectable” models of behavior for middle-class women.

The nurses did not make religious vows, but the parallel to Catholic and Protestant motherhouses is clear. By modeling their institutions after established religious traditions, the Red Cross *Frauenvereine* formed a pattern of “secular” nursing that was based in a spiritual framework. By 1900, however, the issue of the *Mutterhaus* became a major point of tension within larger national debates about nursing professionalization.

CHAPTER 5

CHANGING OF THE GUARD? THE QUESTION OF “MODERNIZATION” AND NURSING REFORM

The two decades prior to World War I brought a number of changes for the *Alice Frauenverein* and its nurses. Since 1867, the hospital and training school for nurses had expanded into larger facilities, and the number of nurses had grown from six to sixty-six. By 1910, the number had more than doubled.¹ Expanded nursing stations throughout Hesse allowed nurses to obtain specialized training and experience, particularly in the areas of surgery, gynecology, obstetrics, and pediatrics. While keeping nurse training and recruitment as its focus, the association also branched out in other areas of social services which specifically focused on women, children, and the poor.

By the mid-1890s, the *Alice Frauenverein* had moved away from the organized women's movement and formed a stronger bond with the *Kassel Verband*, an association of Red Cross institutions. While some German nurses questioned the restrictions imposed on them by the *Mutterhaus* and sought to live and work independently, a number of others joined the Red Cross as *Berufspflegerinnen*. That they chose to do so is particularly relevant at a time when German women could enroll in universities or choose from the widening field of “female” employment.

¹Karl Friedrich Neidhart, *Der Alice-Frauen-Verein für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogtum Hessen und das Alice-Hospital in Darmstadt, Sonderdruck aus “Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz”* (Berlin: Boll and Pickardt, 1910), 30. In 1908, the *Frauenverein* had 139 nurses, including the independent branches of Mainz and Offenbach.

As this chapter will show, the “secular” nursing associations and religious orders were confronted with the “*Schwesternfrage*,” the turn-of-the-century debate which surrounded the question of the “secularization and professionalization” of nursing.² As they engaged in this discussion, leaders of the *Alice Frauenverein* emphasized the specialized training that their nurses received. Even more important, perhaps, was the security and protection which the nurses were offered through the motherhouse, and which the association used as a tool for recruitment.

Some natural changes occurred in the association’s leadership. Most central committee members left as a matter of course through ill health, family concerns, and death. Minna Strecker and Marie Merck both died in 1899, followed by Karl Eigenbrodt in 1900. Merck’s daughter, Marie Rothe, succeeded Strecker as vice president, and Eigenbrodt’s son-in-law, Friedrich Best, joined the central committee. In the *Zweigvereine*, as well, younger family members often succeeded the older generation to the local committees. The leadership of the Alice Hospital also remained within the motherhouse’s “family” of nurses. When Charlotte Helmsdörfer retired in 1891, she was succeeded by the hospital’s *Oberpflegerin* (Head Nurse), Marie Winter.³ The tenor of Winter’s administration, by all accounts, was similar to Helmsdörfer’s. Like her predecessor, Winter was also described as “motherly” and appears to have been well-respected.⁴ Significant change for the organization came not as a result of its transitioning leadership, then, but from the size and scope of its activity in nursing and in public health.

²Kerchner, *Beruf und Geschlecht*, 170.

³Winter, who joined the *Frauenverein* in 1879, remained in the position as superintendent until her death in 1922.

⁴Obituary for Marie Winter, in *Vereinsblatt* 8, no. 4 (April 1922), 17-20.

The establishment and expansion of the Alice-Hospital and Training School for Nurses during the 1870s and 1880s is credited with widening the association's field of work.⁵ With the construction of a larger hospital, the *Frauenverein* had the space to serve more patients, which in turn required more nurses. From 1884 to 1900, the number of women attached to the Alice Hospital motherhouse rose from thirty to eighty-one. This included nurses sent into other hospitals, including the district hospital (*Kreiskrankenhaus*) in Alzey, the city hospital (*Stadtkrankenhaus*) in Offenbach, and two clinics affiliated with the university in Giessen.⁶ As Grand Duchess Eleonore of Hesse later described it, the work of the *Alice Frauenverein* "bloomed" during the 1880s and 1890s, "with professional nurses [*Berufspflegerinnen*] in the city- and district hospitals, outpatient nurses [*Spezialpflegerinnen*] for the university clinics...[and] district nurses [*Gemeindepflegerinnen*] for the rural communities...."⁷

The activities of the *Alice Frauenverein* in the town of Offenbach are a good example of the expansion of the association as well as the types of nursing performed by its nurses. The Offenbach *Zweigverein* had been active since 1869, and the association's 1872 report showed two nurses already employed by the local committee there.⁸ In 1886, the nursing station listed five women, and by 1887, the central committee in Darmstadt negotiated a separate

⁵Sigrid Schmidt-Meinecke, *Hundert Jahre Alice-Schwesterschaft vom Roten Kreuz Darmstadt, 1867-1967* (Darmstadt: Alice-Schwesterschaft vom Roten Kreuz), 33.

⁶One was a general medical clinic, the other a women's clinic (*Frauenklinik*).

⁷Grand Duchess Eleonore of Hesse, speech given for the seventieth anniversary of the *Alice Frauenverein* in 1937, quoted in Schmidt-Meinecke, *Hundert Jahre Alice-Schwesterschaft*, 34. Eleonore of Solms-Hohensolms-Lich (1871-1937) was the wife of Alice's son, Ernst Ludwig, who succeeded his father in 1892 as grand duke of Hesse. The couple married in 1905, and Eleonore served as president of the *Alice Frauenverein* from 1912 to 1937.

⁸*Protocoll* (1872), 33-34.

Geschäftsordnung (internal regulations and procedures) for the Offenbach nurses.⁹ The 1902 report stated that the local committee had added two more *Krankenpflegerinnen* to its staff.¹⁰ Offenbach's nursing station represented one of the offshoots of the Darmstadt motherhouse. Separated by physical distance from the Alice-Hospital, the nurses were supervised by an *Oberpflegerin* and established their own household in Offenbach. According to its agreement with the central committee, the *Zweigverein* subsidized the costs of the nurses' home (*Pflegerinnenheim*). The head nurse acted as a sort of liaison (she is described as a "Mitglied") from the central committee. Although she did have some authority, the *Oberpflegerin* was required to submit frequent reports to the *Vorsteherin* in Darmstadt, who also addressed larger questions of discipline and permanent personnel changes. If a nurse asked to leave her duties in Offenbach for another assignment with the *Alice Frauenverein*, she was required to make the request through the local committee as well as the *Vorsteherin*. Only if a nurse wanted to leave the association could she go directly to the superintendent.¹¹

Given the semi-autonomy exerted by the Offenbach *Zweigverein*, it is not surprising that an independent arm of the *Alice Frauenverein* was established there in 1904. Termed an "ausserordentliche *Zweigverein*" ("associated branch") of the organization, this new group was called the *Schwesterschaft des Stadtkrankenhauses Offenbach a.M.* (Sisterhood of the Offenbach City Hospital).¹² This meant that the *Frauenverein* nurses already employed there,

⁹*Protocoll* (1886), 12; and Alice-Schwesterschaft collection, "Geschäftsordnung für das Central-Comité des Alice-Frauen-Vereins und den Zweigverein Offenbach hinsichtlich der Krankenpflege-Station daselbst" (1887) and (1891).

¹⁰*Protocoll* (1886), 12; and *Protocoll* (1902), 12.

¹¹Alice-Schwesterschaft collection, "Geschäftsordnung...Offenbach."

¹²*Alice-Frauen-Verein für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogtum Hessen. Verhandlungen der siebzehnten ordentlichen Mitgliederversammlung zu Darmstadt am 19. Oktober 1905* (Darmstadt: L.C. Wittich'schen Hofbuchdruckerei, 1905), 63-64.

like Helene Hüser and Louise Muelenz, had a new motherhouse and training school. As superintendent (*Oberin*), Hüser supervised more than forty nurses and nurses' aides.¹³

While the Offenbach *Schwwesternschaft* expanded, the Mainz branch was not faring as well. This *Zweigverein* was founded in 1870 during the Franco-German War as an independent branch of the *Alice Frauenverein*. Although there was a brief period of growth from 1884 to 1890, it quickly leveled off. From 1890 to 1908, the number of nurses employed in Mainz hovered between eighteen and twenty-two. The specific reason for this lack of growth is not clear from association reports, but it is possible that the *Alice Frauenverein* branch in Mainz encountered more competition from Catholic nursing orders than was seen in Darmstadt. For example, of the Catholic nuns active in Hesse in 1908, 681 were members of Mainz-based orders; in contrast, only sixty-five nuns belonged to religious houses headquartered in Darmstadt.¹⁴

Like the Alice-Hospital, the *Schwwesternschaften* in Mainz and Offenbach joined the *Verband Deutscher Krankenpflegetanstalten vom Roten Kreuz* (Union of German Nursing Institutions of the Red Cross), also known as the *Kasseler Verband*. The organization was founded in 1882, though it really emerged as an active association of Red Cross societies only in 1894. Its statutes emphasized the union's three major tasks: holding an association meeting (*Verbandssitzung*) each year; working to secure the welfare of pensioned or disabled Red Cross sisters; and protecting the association's badge, the red cross.¹⁵

¹³Neidhardt, *Der Alice-Frauen-Verein*, 30.

¹⁴*Statistisches Handbuch*, 128.

¹⁵§3 of "Satzungen für deutscher Krankenpflege-Anstalten vom Rothen Kreuz," *Alice-Frauen-Verein für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogthum Hessen. Protokoll über die am 5. Oktober 1895 abgehaltene zwölfte Generalversammlung des Vereins nebst Rechenschaftsbericht über die gesammte Thätigkeit des Vereins in den Jahren 1893 und 1894* (Darmstadt: 1895), 30-31.

For smaller institutions, like those in Hesse, or the sisterhoods within the *Vaterländische Frauenverein* that concentrated on nursing and nurse training, joining the *Verband* made sense. The leaders of the *Alice Frauenverein* saw the association as a way to unite the common goals of these nursing institutions, and to provide a mutual support system for its members in wartime or other emergencies, such as the recent 1892 cholera epidemic in Hamburg. The *Frauenverein's* 1895 general report acknowledged that the recent crisis had played a major role in the revival of interest in the *Verband*. Other than those already stationed in Hamburg, few other Red Cross nurses were present in the city during the epidemic. Clearly, the leaders of the *Alice Frauenverein* wanted to ensure that Hesse would not be left in a similar position.¹⁶

Some groups, however, did not see membership in the *Verband* as a top priority. As the *Alice Frauenverein* stated in its 1895 report, the Badenese and Saxon nursing associations, “due to their numbers of nurses the largest in Germany,” had “not yet felt the need” for the connections that the *Verband* could provide.¹⁷ Leaders of the *Badische Frauenverein*, according to Kerstin Lutzer, were concerned that the union was focused only on institutional (e.g. hospital) nursing, and “virtually ignored” other areas such as *Landkrankenpflege* (rural or “district” nursing) and *Wochenpflege* (post-partum care for a new mother). The *Badische Frauenverein* was one of the last associations to enter the *Verband*, joining in 1913.¹⁸

As members of the *Verband*, the nurses of the *Alice Frauenverein* were now officially known as “Red Cross sisters.” The association’s insignia, the “red cross on white field,” was worn by the nurses on a brooch, which was part of their uniform. In the *Alice Frauenverein's* 1895 report, the red cross was described as a sign that, since 1867, had been “our symbol of the

¹⁶*Protokoll* (1895), 8.

¹⁷*Protokoll* (1895), 8.

¹⁸Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, 149-150.

purest altruism in the pursuit of nursing as a vocation without any secondary purpose and therefore without any confessional aspirations.”¹⁹ Furthermore, the report continued, “the societies that operate under this sign already have a not insignificant role in preserving the confessional peace, particularly in a highly confessionally-mixed population. This beneficial effect will have importance in the future, since the mixing and close cohabitation of the predominant denominations in the German Empire is well known to be continually on the rise.”²⁰ During the period from 1828 to 1905, the ratio of Protestants to Catholics in the grand duchy remained constant at 2:1, but the levels of confessional “mixing” did increase somewhat, particularly in Hesse’s larger cities where the *Alice Frauenverein* was most active, such as Darmstadt, Mainz, and Offenbach.²¹

According to Ute Daniel, these new efforts of the Red Cross *Frauenvereine* can be characterized as a “new pattern of inter-confessional conservative welfare that was subordinate to the interests of the state.”²² It is probably more accurate to say that the membership of the *Alice Frauenverein* shared the interests of the Hessian state and those of the *Reich*. Nurses were told by the central committee that they might feel “weak and faint” as individuals, but as part of

¹⁹*Protokoll* (1895), 8.

²⁰*Protokoll* (1895), 8. This statement is found in the *Hauptbericht*, or main report, which was written by Karl Eigenbrodt. A eulogy, written after Eigenbrodt’s death in 1900, describes him as playing a major role in the founding of the *Verband* and represented the *Alice Frauenverein* at its annual meetings. As they had “worked with him,” so the members of the association would continue to work “for the cause (*Sache*) of the Red Cross.” See *Protokoll* (1902), 6.

²¹*Statistisches Handbuch*, 122. The 1871 figures published by the Hessian central statistics office showed the following: Darmstadt, 84% Protestant, 13% Catholic; Mainz, 29% Protestant, 65% Catholic; and Offenbach, 60% Protestant, 31% Catholic. By 1905, the numbers had shifted somewhat: Darmstadt, 79% Protestant, 17% Catholic; Mainz, 37% Protestant, 59% Catholic; Offenbach, 57% Protestant, 31% to 36% Catholic.

²²Ute Daniel, “Die Vaterländischen Frauenvereine in Westfalen,” *Westfalen Forschungen* 39 (1989): 171, quoted in Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 88.

the larger Red Cross sisterhood they could play a “modest part” for the Fatherland.²³ This type of sentiment had been expressed in earlier association documents, particularly those that referenced the *Frauenverein*’s activities during the Franco-German War. During the 1890s, however, these statements were aimed not at war preparations, but rather at national movements surrounding concerns about public health and welfare. Quite clearly, the *Alice Frauenverein* and similar organizations now demonstrated a new orientation toward the *Kaiserreich* as a nation-state.

The newly-revived *Verband* of Red Cross institutions was part of a larger Red Cross movement which emphasized a motto of “Work in Charity, Service for the Fatherland” (“*Arbeit in der Nächstenliebe, der Dienst fürs Vaterland*”).²⁴ As Dieter Riesenberger has observed, Red Cross leaders saw this national association as “anchored in the people,” and operating with the support of state and local governments. The organization “assured the people” that it could support them in war and in peace “with all possible knowledge and strength.” Riesenberger correctly points out that not enough attention has been paid to the associations’ peacetime role in health and hygiene education (*Gesundheits- und Hygieneerziehung*), which had increased in its importance by the end of the nineteenth century.²⁵

In 1882, German bacteriologist Robert Koch discovered that tuberculosis was a contagious rather than a hereditary disease. German cities, which had rapidly expanded during the 1870s, had higher mortality rates than smaller towns or rural villages. As Paul Weindling has commented, given the fact that Berlin was not only the center of government but also a growing industrial city, “leading administrators and notables could not fail to be struck by how the growth

²³*Protokoll* (1895), 9.

²⁴Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 88.

²⁵Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 88.

of the urban proletariat was accompanied by social misery and political radicalism.”²⁶ Another concern was the cost of the disease. Disability claims resulting from tuberculosis were on the rise during the 1890s, as reported by the *Reichsversicherungsamt* (Imperial Insurance Office). Hesse accounted for about one-fifth of these claims.²⁷

Led by Empress Auguste Viktoria, the German Red Cross spearheaded a campaign to combat the spread of the disease. For women’s associations like the *Alice Frauenverein*, this meant that they participated in educating the public about methods of contagion, helped to identify patients in rural areas, and helped to place patients in sanatoria and other institutions designed for treatment. The “German model,” as it was described in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1911), employed the use of “life in the open air, independently of weather, in a healthy situation, rest and an abundance of food.”²⁸ The *Alice Frauenverein*, for example, supplied nurses for a *Walderhölungsstätte* (forest recreation place), where tubercular patients could go for open-air cures.²⁹

As Paul Weindling has commented, the effort to stop the spread of tuberculosis and the campaign against infant mortality made health “a nationalist rallying cry,” which meant that “nationalist values became fused with hygiene.”³⁰ Certainly, nationalism was one motive for these late nineteenth-century crusades. What should also be considered, however, is that this

²⁶Paul Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 13.

²⁷Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 83.

²⁸*Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information*, 11th ed., vol. 27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 359. Other industrialized countries, such as Britain and the United States, had similar tuberculosis prevention movements, which was well-documented in contemporary journals. See, for example, Homer M. Thomas, “Prevention of Tuberculosis,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 34 (January-June 1900): 714-724.

²⁹Alice-Schwesternschaft collection, “Dienstordnung für die Krankenschwestern der Walderholungstätten Darmstadt” (1906).

³⁰Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 181.

work was very similar to the kind of work women's associations had been involved in since the 1870s.

As the *Alice Frauenverein* started to grow, it kept its focus on the recruitment and training of nurses while also shifting some of its attention to the welfare of Hessian children. In 1872, for example, the Committee for the Supervision of Orphan Care (*Comité zur Überwachung der Waisenpflege*) took over the provision and education for Darmstadt's orphans. In coordination with the *Alice Verein*, girls who had reached confirmation age were given further training in needlework.³¹ During the 1880s, these activities were broadened to include the Alice-Association for the Supervision of Foster Children in Mainz (*Alice-Vereins zur Überwachung von Pflegekindern in Mainz*) and the Committee for the Supervision of Valuable Care Given Children in Darmstadt (*Comité für Überwachung der in entgeltliche Pflege gegeben Kinder in Darmstadt*).³²

In 1886, longtime central committee member Marie Merck funded the *Karl-und-Marie-Merck Stiftung* (Karl and Marie Merck Foundation), which provided a day nursery (known as the *Kinderkrippe*) at the Alice Hospital. The *Krippe* assisted working-class families by caring for their frail and physically retarded children during the day while their parents were working. As part of the Alice-Hospital, the nursery fell under the supervision of the *Vorsteherin*, and a nurse was assigned to care for the twelve children who could be accommodated there each day.

³¹*Protocoll* (1874), 41-42. The girls' education was apparently conducted through the *Alice-Schule* (later the *Alice-Eleonoren-Schule*).

³²For an example of similar work in Baden, see Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, especially 369-421.

During 1901 and 1902, Marie Winter reported that 109 children had visited the *Krippe* for a total of 7,083 days (*Pflegetagen*).³³

When Auguste Viktoria called in 1903 for German women's associations to provide welfare services for mothers and babies, this new activity for the *Alice Frauenverein* was an extension of work its members were already performing in conjunction with local governments. Like tuberculosis, the infant mortality rate was linked to urban growth and worsening social conditions, and remained high throughout the late nineteenth century.³⁴ In Berlin, as reported in 1904, more than twenty percent of all infants died before their first birthday.³⁵ Hesse's numbers were only slightly smaller: in 1905, infant deaths in the grand duchy's largest cities (Mainz, Darmstadt, Offenbach, and Worms) ranged between sixteen and eighteen percent.³⁶

The *Kaiserin Auguste Viktoria Haus*, which opened in Berlin in 1909, has been described by Weindling as a "model institution for infant care." The "product of developments in the sphere of welfare policy, and professional specialization in medicine and nursing," the KAVH

³³*Alice-Frauen-Verein für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogtum Hessen. Protokoll über die am 23. Oktober 1903 abgehaltene sechzehnte Generalversammlung des Vereins nebst Rechenschaftsbericht über die gesamte Tätigkeit des Vereins in den Jahren 1901 und 1902* (Darmstadt: 1904), 27. Karl Merck and his two brothers, Wilhelm and Georg, managed the family's rapidly-expanding chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturing company, known today as the Merck Corporation. According to a Merck brochure, in 1860 the corporation produced more than 800 products. This number had grown to more than 10,000 by 1900. See Merck KGaA, "Was der Mensch thun kann," Merck KGaA, <http://www.merck.de/en/company/publications/publications.html> (accessed 29 September 2009).

³⁴Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 13.

³⁵Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 203.

³⁶*Statistisches Handbuch*, 28. The statistics for these cities were only slightly higher than for other areas in the grand duchy and the infant mortality rate had dropped since the 1860s. The percentages represented here do not include stillbirths.

essentially directed the German campaign to combat infant mortality.³⁷ The grand duke and duchess of Hesse joined this movement the same year by establishing the Grand Ducal Center for Mother and Baby Welfare (*Grossherzogliche Zentrale für Mutter- und Säuglingsfürsorge*), which sent out nurses called “*Eleonorenschwestern*” to make home visits to mothers and their infants.³⁸ The *Alice Frauenverein* supported the *Zentrale* in these efforts, mainly through its district nursing stations. The 1911 report indicates that some members of the *Frauenverein* served as representatives (*Vertrauenspersonen*) of the association, and identified families who would benefit from the assistance of the *Zentrale*. The same report encouraged nurses to educate these families about hygiene and good nutrition, linking a “healthy people” to war preparation.³⁹

Public health campaigns, like those to combat tuberculosis and infant mortality, took place within the wider contexts of medical specialization and professionalization. As Claudia Huerkamp has described, the professionalization of medicine began in the late eighteenth century and continued into the nineteenth century, though it spread rapidly after 1850. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the “scientific transformation” of the study of medicine “promoted a professional self-consciousness among physicians.” One indication of this transformation is the expansion of clinical facilities and university medical faculties. There were seventy professors of medicine at German-speaking universities in 1820. By 1880, the number

³⁷Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 203. Stacey Freeman’s article on the KAVH emphasizes the connection between infant mortality, eugenic thinking, and the development of pediatrics and pediatric nursing. See Freeman, “Medicalizing the Nurse,” 424.

³⁸The *Eleonorenheim*, a hospital built in 1911 for babies and children, was annexed to the Alice Hospital in 1937.

³⁹*Verhandlungen* (1912), 14-15.

was close to 1,000, and each German medical school had nine medical fields, each represented by a professor.⁴⁰

At the same time, the late nineteenth century witnessed a growing demand for medical services, the expansion of hospitals, and increased physician specialization. The concentration on medical specialties rose during the 1880s, at a time when health insurance legislation had also increased the demand for physicians. By 1909, nearly one-fourth of German doctors were specialists. Of the represented fields, the largest was ophthalmology, followed by otolaryngology, gynecology, dermatology, and surgery.⁴¹

The activities of the *Alice Frauenverein* nurses reflected this transition in the medical field, which included the opportunities for nurses to receive specialized training. One discipline that had emerged by the early twentieth century was pediatrics, and with that came the development of pediatric nursing.⁴² Nurses who wanted to work exclusively in pediatrics were probably more likely to join the *Eleonorenschwestern*, but *Alice Frauenverein* nurses could also gain experience and training as pediatric nurses through the *Kinderkrippe*.⁴³

Nurses could also receive specialized training in surgery and gynecology. In 1883 and 1884, for example, seven nurses from the association were sent to work at the “*akademisch-chirurgischen Station*” (academic-surgical station) attached to the university in Bonn, where Charlotte Helmsdörfer reported that the nurses would find a larger field of work and more opportunities to gain surgical experience than they would have in Darmstadt.⁴⁴ Though the *Frauenverein* gave up its work in Bonn in 1890, it did so only to increase the number of nurses

⁴⁰Huerkamp, “The Making of the Modern Medical Profession,” 68.

⁴¹Huerkamp, “The Making of the Modern Medical Profession,” 70.

⁴²Freeman, “Medicalizing the Nurse,” 422.

⁴³Alice-Schwesternschaft collection, “Über der Grundung und Führung der Kinderkrippe des Alice-Hospital.”

⁴⁴*Protokoll* (1886), 26-27.

stationed in the university clinic in Giessen. Since the end of the Franco-German war, one or two nurses had been stationed there, but at the request of the grand duke, the number was increased to eight in 1890. Two of the nurses worked in the university women's clinic, or *Frauenklinik*, where they were sent at the "long-held wish" of the clinic's director. The nurses were able to assist in various gynecological and obstetrical procedures. According to the *Frauenverein*'s 1890 report, it was the "only real surgical clinic for our nurses and is very important for their training."⁴⁵ By 1914, seventeen nurses were employed in the clinic and some of these had received formal midwifery training.⁴⁶

Throughout the *Reich*, the number of nurses increased dramatically during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, although the definition of "nurse" changed during this time. When the German National Health Office had published its first nursing survey in 1876, it classified 8,681 "nurses" into four groups: Catholic orders, 5,763; Protestant deaconesses, 1,760; "free practicing nurses," 633; and those who belonged to "other societies and associations," ("*anderer Genossenschaften und Vereine*"), 525. The majority in this last category were Red Cross nurses.⁴⁷ By 1887, when the next survey was published, the number of nurses had grown to 12,791. The groups were classified in this manner: religious orders, 10,544 (Protestant, 3,456; Catholic, 7,088); free nurses, 962; and secular societies, 1,465.⁴⁸

⁴⁵*Protokoll* (1893), 38.

⁴⁶Alice-Schwesternschaft collection, memo from Grossherzogliche Direktion der Universitäts-Frauenklinik to Marie Winter, 2 January 1914.

⁴⁷Eva-Cornelia Hummel, *Krankenpflege in Umbruch (1876-1914): ein Beitrag zum Problem der Berufsfindung "Krankenpflege"* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Hans Ferdinand Schulz Verlag, 1986), 7. Linda L. Clark incorrectly describes the 525 nurses as Red Cross "volunteers." See Clark, *Women and Achievement in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 204.

⁴⁸Hummel, *Krankenpflege in Umbruch*, 33.

Although most of this growth was due to rising numbers of women who chose to nurse, the way that nurses were defined had also changed over time. In the 1876 survey, a “nurse” was categorized by training. Those women and men who were “trained” (*ausgebildet*) were included in the 1876 statistics. By 1887, however, the question of training was dropped, as the German government now acknowledged that there was no exact way to determine when a nurse’s “training” was completed. Not only the length of training, but the method and quality of training were not standardized, even among the religious houses or Red Cross sisterhoods. In fact, “training” was so clearly undefined that it would be impossible to use as a method of classification.⁴⁹ By the government’s new definition, “*berufsmässigen*” (“vocational/professional”), a wider range of people were defined as “nurses,” regardless of the amount of type of their training, and the state acknowledged that there was no exact way to determine when or even whether a nurse was “trained.”⁵⁰

The same classifications were used for a third survey in 1898. By then, the number of German nursing personnel had increased to 26,427. In eleven years, the numbers of secular nurses had more than doubled: 2,398 were listed as “free” nurses, and 3,613 as members of a secular association. The number of nurses belonging to religious orders had increased as well: 12,840 belonged to Catholic orders, and 7,576 were Protestant deaconesses. Considering that the German population rose from forty-three to fifty-two million during the periods covered by these surveys, the nursing population was clearly growing at a faster rate than the general German population.⁵¹

⁴⁹Hummel, *Krankenpflege in Umbruch*, 33.

⁵⁰Hummel, *Krankenpflege in Umbruch*, 33.

⁵¹Hummel, *Krankenpflege in Umbruch*, 33-35.

Table 5.1.
German Nurses, 1876-1909

	1876	1887	1898	1909 ⁵²
Catholic orders	5763	7088	12840	21552
Protestant orders	1760	3456	7576	12898
Secular associations	525	1465	3613	8986
“Free” nurses	633	962	2398	12416
TOTAL	8681	12971	26427	55937

Source: Hummel, *Krankenpflege in Umbruch*, 33-35.

As shown in Table 5.1, the number of nurses increased dramatically during the first decade of the twentieth century, and the ratio of female to male nurses remained consistently 4:1.⁵³ Catholic orders had decreased only slightly in their dominance of the field, which is evidence, as Relinde Meiwes has observed, of the persistence of the “*Frauenkongregationen*” (women’s congregations) and the “feminization of church personnel” during the late nineteenth century.⁵⁴ By 1909, the number of Protestant nurses included not only deaconesses, but also the members of the recently-established *Diakonieverein*, which had been founded for deaconesses as an alternative to the traditional motherhouse system.⁵⁵

As Jutta Schmidt has explained, a so-called “deaconess question” (“*Diakonissenfrage*”) emerged during the 1890s. During this period, the similarities of deaconesses to the Catholic

⁵²The 1909 numbers from the Imperial Health Office were divided into additional classifications, those nurses who were employed in home healthcare, and those employed in hospitals or other institutions.

⁵³See, for example, Claudia Bischoff, *Frauen in der Krankenpflege: zur Entwicklung von Frauenrolle und Frauenberufstätigkeit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1997), 103-104.

⁵⁴Meiwes, “*Arbeiterinnen des Herrn*,” 73ff.

⁵⁵Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 228ff.

nuns, the lack of deaconesses, and the relationship of the “*Mutterhausdiakonie*” (“motherhouse diaconate”) to the other vocational possibilities for women in the *Kaiserreich* were points of debate within the *Kaiserswerther Generalkonferenz*, the umbrella organization for the diaconates that had been founded as part of the Kaiserswerth system.⁵⁶ Critics of the system argued that the deaconesses had too little free time and not enough training. They also suggested that the system was too close to the practices of Catholic orders, in which the deaconesses, like Catholic nuns, were not allowed to earn money or to marry while they were a part of the motherhouse.⁵⁷

In collaboration with members of the recently-revived organized women’s movement, theologian Friedrich Zimmer founded the *Evangelische Diakonieverein* in 1894. The sisterhood offered Protestant women the opportunity to train and work as paid nurses.⁵⁸ They could remain connected to a religious organization, without binding themselves to a motherhouse. The new association, as Schmidt has observed, received a number of inquiries from former deaconesses as well as Red Cross nurses. Just a year after it was established, the *Diakonieverein* had more than three hundred members.⁵⁹ A Hessian branch, the *Hessischer Diakonieverein*, was founded in 1906 by Giessen professor and pastor Johannes Guyot.⁶⁰

If the *Alice Frauenverein* had to compete with the *Diakonieverein* for recruits, it was also challenged by the growth of “free nurses” during the first decade of the twentieth century. By 1909, the number of these nurses had surpassed the number of Red Cross nurses. Like the

⁵⁶Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 216-217.

⁵⁷Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 228-232.

⁵⁸It also served Zimmer’s goal to train women as nurses while also preparing them for marriage. As Schmidt relates, Zimmer once commented that “a pastor’s wife is a born district deaconess [*Gemeindediakonisse*].” See Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 235.

⁵⁹Schmidt, *Beruf: Schwester*, 235-236.

⁶⁰Trained *Diakonieschwestern* could earn 625 marks yearly. See *Erster Jahresbericht des Hessischen Diakonievereins, e.v., erstattet bei der Mitgliederversammlung 16 März 1908 von dem Vorsitzenden des Vereins, Pfarrer D. Guyot* (Heppenheim: Georg Allendorf’sche Buchdruckerei, 1908), 13.

Diakonissenfrage, ongoing concern about the working conditions of German nurses and a dislike of the motherhouse incited a years-long debate over the *Schwesternfrage*. An attempt to solve this question was supported by the organized women's movement.

As Richard J. Evans has described, the German women's movement of the 1860s and 1870s, led by the ADF and the *Lette Verband*, began to stagnate during the 1880s. Although more women's organizations and welfare societies were being founded throughout Germany, they were independent from the ADF and the *Lette Verband*. The state of the German women's movement in the 1880s, according to Evans, was "numerically weak, fragmented, timid and conservative."⁶¹ At the same time, expanding employment opportunities for middle-class women, the establishment of female professional associations, and an increasing number of women's charitable organizations led to the founding in 1894 of a large umbrella organization, the Federation of German Women's Associations, the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (BDF).⁶² The BDF, which included the ADF and some members of the *Lette Verband*, advocated the "professionalization" of nursing through its support of Agnes Karll, a former Red Cross nurse who emerged as a leader of the independent nursing movement.

Though the Red Cross-affiliated *Frauenvereine* had been largely successful in establishing a foothold for bourgeois women in the field of nursing and training them in a number of specialized fields, a large number of *Krankenwärter* or *Krankenwärterinnen* were employed outside the motherhouse in hospitals, clinics, and private homes.⁶³ By the turn of the

⁶¹Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany*, 29-30.

⁶²Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany*, 34-35.

⁶³It is important to remember that the use of the term *Krankenwärter* or *Krankenwärterinnen* can be complicated. In the early nineteenth century, the term described a paid attendant who was not bound to a religious order. Another term was *Lohnwärter*, and these terms could and were used interchangeably, depending on the institution. After the establishment of the Red Cross *Frauenvereine* in the late nineteenth century, *Krankenwärter* or

twentieth century, the subject of nursing received an increasing amount of public attention by doctors, nursing leaders, and politicians. As seen in the statistics from 1876, 1887, and 1898, the rise in the numbers of these independent nurses, the so-called “*wilde Schwestern*” (“wild nurses”) had grown significantly during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, as had the numbers of Red Cross nurses throughout Germany. In fact, some of these “*wilde Schwestern*,” like Karll, had been trained in the Red Cross motherhouses.⁶⁴

In 1887, nineteen year-old Karll had started her nursing career in the *Clementinenstift*, a Red Cross motherhouse in Hanover. Her father, a landowner, was a man of some means. However, the family encountered financial difficulties in the early 1890s, and this circumstance induced Karll to leave the sisterhood and work as a private duty nurse in Berlin. Karll’s story is similar to that of others who chose to leave the motherhouse system.⁶⁵ Some of the nurses complained of “*Oberinnendespotismus*,” a system in which the influence of superintendents allowed them to regulate the lives and recreation of the nurses in their charge. As Horst-Peter Wolff has described, the “apparently tyrannical regiment” employed in Hanover by *Oberin* Olga von Lützerode was one such situation, although it could also be applied to religious houses.⁶⁶

As explained in Chapter Four, the *Oberin* in a secular or a religious motherhouse had a great deal of power, and generally speaking, a good deal of autonomy in how she chose to wield it. This could certainly apply to the motherhouse and to the hospital. In many cases, the hospital

Krankenwärterinnen could describe anyone who was employed in nursing, but was not a member of a religious order or secular association like the *Alice Frauenverein*.

⁶⁴Geertje Boschma has observed that the designation of “free” or “wild” sister meant only that the nurse was not bound to either a religious or secular nursing association, and thus the term could incorporate women from various classes, “both untrained ward attendants and women who had separated themselves from a motherhouse and who now worked independently, usually as private duty nurses.” See Boschma, “Agnes Karll and the Creation of an Independent Nursing Association, 1900-1927,” *Nursing History Review* 4 (1996): 165n.

⁶⁵Wolff, *Biographisches Lexikon zur Pflegegeschichte*, 97.

⁶⁶Wolff, *Biographisches Lexikon zur Pflegegeschichte*, 97.

had no direct control over the discipline of the superintendent or of the nurses. The administration may not even have input into which nurses were sent to work there. The first obligation of the *Oberin*, of course, was to her motherhouse.⁶⁷ In the *Alice Frauenverein*, Charlotte Helmsdörfer and her successor, Marie Winter, dictated the duties and work locations for the nurses and in general, regulated their daily lives. Although some rules for the school and nurses' home were regulated by organizational guidelines laid out by the Central Committee, the *Vorsteherin* (later called the *Oberin*) was allowed a great deal of discretion. She was, of course, responsible to the central committee, and this demonstrates that the committee was satisfied with the motherhouse system and its regulations. If there were major complaints from patients, nurses or doctors, they were not widely reported.

Many doctors who worked with the nurses of the *Alice Frauenverein* were involved with the association in some fashion, and there are no indications that these men had anything less than a good working relationship with Charlotte Helmsdörfer and Marie Winter. In other cities, however, some doctors struggled with *Oberinnen*, and these battles were sometimes sensationalized in the local press. One of these involved a superintendent in Berlin, who charged a doctor with malpractice (*Kunstfehlerprozess*). As a result, she and twelve other nurses left the hospital.⁶⁸ In another example, the head of a private clinic in Bromberg complained that after a

⁶⁷Marianne Schmidbaur, *Vom "Lazaruskreuz" to "Pfleger aktuell": Professionalisierungsdiskurse in der deutschen Krankenpflege 1903-2000* (Königstein/Taunus: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 2002), 78-79. Schmidbaur states on page 78 that the *Oberin* "pooled the power of separate institutions and established a highly useful multi-sided form of professional autonomy."

⁶⁸Rübenstahl, "*Wilde Schwestern*," 66n.

quarrel with the *Oberin*, he ended up training (and apparently hiring) nurses himself, so that he would not have to “be dependent on the large *Verein*.”⁶⁹

Examples like these prompted Otto Antrick, a Social Democrat and member of the *Reichstag*, to remark: “It is a fact, that overall in the hospitals, where *Schwesternpflege* is exclusively introduced, the *Oberinnen* often exercise a dictatorship.” In these cases, Antrick stated, the doctors and the patients suffer.⁷⁰ Whether the system or the individual *Oberin* was most responsible for compelling a nurse to leave a motherhouse is a complicated question, and would necessitate further analysis of individual institutions. Certainly, the regulations of the *Alice Frauenverein* were comparable to other Red Cross motherhouses, but complaints about either Charlotte Helmsdörfer or Marie Winter were not evident in Darmstadt. While there were certainly other hospitals and training schools in which the living and working conditions of the nurses were acceptable to most, if not all, the point is that the question became a debate in the national discourse in Germany – in the press and in the *Reichstag*.⁷¹

Nurses in Germany’s rapidly growing cities may have left the sisterhood to get away from a restrictive motherhouse, but the motives of many of the “*wilde Schwestern*” were probably driven more by finances than anything else. Although the Red Cross *Frauenvereine* offered room and board, the money earned by the women was relatively low when compared to wages that were available to some independent nurses. Though the *Alice Frauenverein* experienced a relatively steady growth during the first decade of the twentieth century, the fact remains that some of the nurses may have left to seek better pay elsewhere. In Offenbach, where

⁶⁹Rübenstahl, “*Wilde Schwestern*,” 67. The comment references the *Vaterländische Frauenverein*.

⁷⁰Hummel, *Krankenpflege in Umbruch*, 68. Also quoted in Rübenstahl, “*Wilde Schwestern*,” 68.

⁷¹Rübenstahl, “*Wilde Schwestern*,” 66-72.

an independent branch of the *Alice Frauenverein* had been established in the city hospital, a 1911 report stated that while some “good, trained nurses” had left the association for personal reasons (usually to marry or to care for aging parents) other “young nurses” left to pursue better paid nursing opportunities.⁷²

For this reason, independent nursing was attractive for some women. The problem for many of these nurses, however, was that they traded increased independence for security.⁷³ That “freedom” usually exposed them to long hours, low pay, and tough working conditions. Nurses were not covered by the state’s social security laws, established during the 1880s, so they were especially vulnerable.⁷⁴ These difficult nursing conditions led Agnes Karll, whose own health was nearly broken by the time she reached her early thirties, to advocate for the establishment of an organization for these independent nurses. Her major concern was helping the “free” nurses acquire some type of private insurance.⁷⁵

By 1901, Karll had made the acquaintance of other like-minded nurses, including Elisabeth Storp and Marie Cauer, nurses who had trained in the *Victoria Haus für Krankenpflege* in Berlin. Cauer was the *Oberin* of the *Kaiser-Friedrich-Krankenhaus* in San Remo, also founded by Empress Friedrich. Storp was employed as a Red Cross nurse in Dresden.⁷⁶

⁷²*Verhandlungen* (1912), 59-62.

⁷³Boschma, “Agnes Karll,” 154.

⁷⁴Boschma, “Agnes Karll,” 154; and Bischoff, *Frauen in der Krankenpflege*, 94-103 and 108-109. Bischoff notes that the lack of legal protection and competition with the motherhouses, who could offer services for less money, led to the poor working conditions these nurses often experienced.

⁷⁵Karll was supported in this effort by the director of an insurance company, the *Deutsche Anker*. She became a representative for the company was the first nurse that it insured. See Boschma, “Agnes Karll,” 155.

⁷⁶Marie Cauer (1861-1950) was the stepdaughter of Minna Cauer, a well-known member of the women’s movement and editor of *Die Frauenbewegung*. There is little information available regarding the background of Elisabeth Storp (1864-1941).

Storp's *Die soziale Stellung der Krankenpflegerin* (1901) explains some of the issues vocalized by advocates of independent nursing. One problem was the lack of better nursing candidates, which had been lamented for years. Storp blamed this development partly on the fact that many girls went into the field with great idealism but with very little consideration for what the job actually offered.⁷⁷ After listing the deficiencies of the motherhouse system, Storp stated that it would be to the nurses' advantage to develop the profession as teachers had done – as “*vollständig frei*” (“completely independent”). A female teacher in a *Volksschule*, Storp noted, was paid a salary of at least 1,500 marks in the larger cities, which increased over time to approximately 3,000 marks. On a daily basis, teachers worked fewer hours than nurses, and they too received a pension. How did this contrast with the nurse's pension? “*Ziemlich traurig!*” Storp exclaimed.⁷⁸

Publications like *Die soziale Stellung der Krankenpflege* brought the BDF's attention to nurses' working conditions.⁷⁹ Support came also from Friedrich Zimmer, founder of the evangelical *Diakonieverein*. Zimmer, who thought of his movement “as the evangelical church's

⁷⁷This discussion was already present in the 1890s. Walther Francke, a German physician, authored *Die Krankenpflegerin: Forderungen, Leistungen, Aussichten in diesem Berufe* (Leipzig, 1899), a book for “*mögliche Berufseinsteigerinnen*” which explained the expectations, training, and other requirements for secular and religious nurses. Mathilde Weber, a leader in the women's movement, had written about the issue of female doctors in *Ärztinnen für Frauenkrankheiten eine ethische und sanitäre Notwendigkeit* (Berlin: L. Oehmigke, 1893). The next year, she published *Warum fehlt es an Diakonissen und Pflegerinnen?* (Berlin: L. Oehmigke, 1894), which discussed the conditions of private nurses.

⁷⁸Elisabeth Storp, “Die soziale Stellung der Krankenpflegerin, Dresden 1901,” in Birgit Panke-Kochinke, *Die Geschichte der Krankenpflege (1679-2000): ein Quellenbuch*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Mabuse Verlag, 2003), 103.

⁷⁹Ruth Elster, *Der Agnes-Karll Verband und sein Einfluss auf der Entwicklung der Krankenpflege in Deutschland: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Pflegeberufe und eines Berufsverbandes* (Frankfurt: Mabuse Verlag, 2000), 15.

contribution to the resolution of the woman question,” also supported state testing and registration for nurses, which were in line with Karll’s own goals.⁸⁰

In 1903, Karll, Storp, Cauer, and another colleague, Helene Meyer, organized a professional nursing organization, the Professional Organization of German Nurses (*Berufsorganisation der Krankenpflegerinnen Deutschlands sowie der Säuglings-und-Wohlfahrtspflegerinnen*, or BOKD), in 1903. The organization started with only thirty members, but grew by 1911 to a membership of 3,000.⁸¹ In 1904, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) invited Karll to speak at their meeting in Berlin, at which the BOKD was recognized as the national German nurses’ association.⁸²

Like the ICN, Karll advocated a three-year training program for nurses. When Zimmer was asked to report to the Prussian government on the subject of nursing organization, however, his outline of a year’s training followed by a state examination was the method adopted by the Prussian state government. As Christoph Schweikardt has argued, the government’s decision was also influenced by its negotiations with George Cardinal Kopp, the representative of the Prussian Catholic episcopate. While the Prussian Ministry of Culture wanted to implement the state examination for members of the religious orders and calls from physicians and priests to modernize the Catholic system of nursing had set the stage for this development, Kopp wanted to defend Catholic nursing against the tendency toward secularization. The state examination, after a one-year training program, was the Prussian government’s compromise with the Catholic and

⁸⁰Boschma, “Agnes Karll,” 156.

⁸¹Kruse, *Krankenpflegeausbildung*, 57.

⁸²Boschma, “Agnes Karll,” 160. The ICN was founded in 1899 by Lavinia L. Dock and Ethel Bedford Fenwick, the editor of the *Nursing Record* (later the *British Journal of Nursing*) and an activist for nurse registration and certification.

Protestant religious orders.⁸³ This model of state recognition of nursing was the one adopted by other German states, including Hesse.⁸⁴

The implementation of a state examination elicited little comment from the *Alice Frauenverein*. Eigenbrodt had expressed his opinion on the subject of testing at a meeting of the *Kasseler Verband* in 1895. He conditionally approved a test, or *Prüfung*, for the theoretical part of the nurse's training, but argued that it should be dropped if the *Oberin* managed the practical nursing and gave theoretical training alongside the doctor. "Under these conditions," he stated, "the *Oberin* knows the student so well, that she would not take the responsibility for explaining the completion of the *Lehrzeit* [to the Central Committee]...if she was not completely convinced. When the *Oberin* does not possess a sufficient knowledge of the student, then the *Prüfung* is required."⁸⁵ The state examination and training requirements were first mentioned in the *Protokoll* of 1907. After explaining the law just passed in Prussia, the general secretary noted that his report should not enter the discussion, lest it "prejudice the *Verein*."⁸⁶ He then added that the association already required at least a year's training, and more if necessary. In other words, the state was only recognizing what the *Alice Frauenverein* had done for years.⁸⁷

The *Frauenverein* did address another concern of nurses, the issue of money, stating its plan to reduce the length of service required to reach its highest salary level.⁸⁸ That these

⁸³Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 139-147.

⁸⁴Boschma, "Agnes Karll," 160.

⁸⁵*Bericht der Jahressitzung 1895 des Verbandes deutscher Krankenpflegeanstalten vom Roten Kreuz*, quoted in Kruse, *Krankenpflegeausbildung*, 49.

⁸⁶The Hessian law was still under debate and was passed the next year.

⁸⁷*Alice-Frauen-Verein für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogtum Hessen. Verhandlungen der achtzehnten ordentlichen Mitgliedeversammlung zu Darmstadt am 8. Oktober 1907* (Darmstadt: L.C. Wittich'schen Hofbuchdruckerei, 1908), 12-13.

⁸⁸*Alice-Frauen-Verein für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogtum Hessen. Verhandlungen der neunzehnten ordentlichen Mitgliederversammlung zu Darmstadt am 25. Oktober 1909* (Darmstadt: L.C. Wittich'schen Hofbuchdruckerei, 1909), 12. This process began with the

changes addressed the concerns of independent nurses is evident, though the adjustments made to the pay scale in 1904 and 1909 were relatively minimal. Compared with the *Badische Frauenverein*, for example, the association already paid its nurses more than other associations.⁸⁹

Still, the *Alice Frauenverein* was probably affected by the establishment of the BOKD. Of the 2,500 BOKD nurses who were surveyed by Agnes Karll in 1909, 653 listed themselves as coming to the organization from a Red Cross motherhouse. This is compared with 383 members from the Protestant motherhouses, 207 from the *Diakonieverein*, 200 from the *Victoria Haus* and sixteen from the Catholic orders.⁹⁰ How many of these nurses may have been formerly employed with the *Alice Frauenverein* is unknown.

As had been the case since its founding in 1867, a few nurses left the association each year, usually due to life-altering events: marriage, sick parents, retirement, or death. Others left during their *Lehrzeit* because they were “not suitable for the vocation” (“*nicht zum Beruf eignete*”) or in other cases, just not physically strong enough for the job. Occasionally, a nurse left to take a position, usually as a matron or superintendent, in a private clinic or hospital.

A report from Offenbach, however, indicates another situation. Offenbach’s nursing school had a high turnover rate. Apparently, many students received their training and then left to find other employment. The 1911 report from Offenbach indicates that of fifty-five students who took the state examination, twenty chose not to remain with the association. Although some of these nurses left for family reasons, a number of “younger sisters” in Offenbach sought better-

Schwestern-Satzung of 1904, and indirectly addressed the complaint of some Red Cross nurses, that the relative lack of wages during the *Lehrzeit* was cost-prohibitive.

⁸⁹In 1909, after six years of service, the Alice nurse could earn 540 Marks. This is higher than in Baden, where in 1910 the nurse could earn 520 Marks. While the Hessian association had maintained this level of pay since the 1880s, the highest amount a *Luiseschwester* could earn in 1895 was 300 Marks. Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, 444.

⁹⁰Kruse, *Krankenpflegeausbildung*, 57.

paying positions as independent nurses.⁹¹ It is possible that some of the Offenbach nurses were employed in the city hospital and chose not take the pension offered by the *Frauenverein*, as is indicated in a 1914 report. Rather, these nurses were insured by the *Deutsche Anker*, the insurance company that Agnes Karll promoted to members of the BOKD. Under what conditions these nurses were employed is unclear from the report, but it does indicate that the Offenbach branch was willing to compromise with its nurses when it deemed necessary.⁹²

That the formation and growth of the BOKD prompted some nurses to seek independent employment is not in question. The fact that BOKD members were insured helped to alleviate the fears of many of the “*wilde Schwestern*.” Still, the motherhouse system was attractive for many women throughout the country, probably for the security that it offered. Though nursing in itself was difficult, working conditions for the nurses of the *Alice Frauenverein* may have been better than in other German Red Cross societies. While Agnes Karll and other nurses had complained of having to remain in their motherhouse for weeks on end, nurses in the *Alice Frauenverein* were encouraged to get fresh air and exercise on a daily basis. By association statute, the nurses received a four-week vacation each year, and the *Zweigverein* in the town of Bad-Nauheim offered a home when ill or invalid Red Cross nurses could go to rest or recuperation. This promise of protection and security was promoted through the literature of the *Alice Frauenverein*. A 1907 article published in two local newspapers, for example, explained

⁹¹*Verhandlungen* (1912), 59-60.

⁹²*Alice-Frauenverein für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogtum Hessen. Verhandlungen der 21. ordentlichen Mitgliederversammlung zu Darmstadt am 26. Mai 1914* (Darmstadt: L.C. Wittich'schen Hofbuchdruckerei, 1916), 84-85.

the benefits that the associations provided to “*Frauen und Jungfrauen*” who were looking for a “high and noble vocation.”⁹³

At the national level, the associations that reestablished the Red Cross *Verband* in 1895 worked together to resolve some of these issues raised by nursing reformers, which were highlighted by the debate over the *Schwesternfrage* as well as the founding of the *Diakonieverein* and the BOKD. Even the establishment of a school for superintendents in 1902 (the *Oberinnenschule*), indicates that the Red Cross was attempting to build its own standards for nursing. The motherhouse system, however, continued to be a main point of friction.

Although the *Alice Frauenverein* faced some recruitment challenges in the two decades prior to World War I, the numbers of nurses employed by the association continued to rise. This points to the fact that even though some women found the motherhouse to be restrictive, many of them still found the system to be acceptable and even attractive for their own needs. With the revival of the *Verband* and national efforts to prevent tuberculosis and infant mortality, the *Alice Frauenverein* also emphasized nursing as a way not only to employ women but also to aid the *Vaterland*. The establishment of the BOKD might have been presented as a “secular” alternative to the motherhouse, but as seen in the next chapter, the expansion of the BOKD was stalled during World War I, and the Red Cross nurse emerged as the new image of German *Krankenpflege*.

⁹³Published in the *Büdingen Allgemeiner Anzeiger*, 14 May 1907, and the *Heppenheimer Zeitung*, 9 April 1907.

CHAPTER 6

IMPRESSIONS OF CARE: THE *ALICE-SCHWESTERN*, WORLD WAR I, AND IMAGES OF THE RED CROSS NURSE

In May 1914, the *Alice Frauenverein*'s managing director, Hermann Kratz, appealed to members who had gathered for the association's biennial meeting. "Help us control the country's lack of nurses!" he exclaimed. "Support us in our efforts to enlarge our sisterhood," he begged. If they did not know the nurses and "the relationship in our *Schwesterschaft*," Kratz suggested that members should learn about it. When they had done this, they could "in good conscience," he added, recruit new nurses. "The time is earnest," Kratz said. "The *Fatherland*... needs our help."¹ Members of the *Frauenverein* prepared for war.

As Karen Hagemann has argued, the introduction of universal conscription made the support of Germany's civil society a vital arm of the war effort. A number of roles for women in war were incorporated into the model of the "valorous *Volk*" family. These efforts were initiated during the Wars of Liberation in 1813, were utilized during the Franco-German war, and yet again during World War I.²

¹*Verhandlungen* (1916), 8-9.

²Karen Hagemann, "Military, War and the Mainstreams," in *Gendering Modern German History: Rewriting Historiography*, ed. Karen Hagemann and Jean Quataert (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 69.

Now, however, the Red Cross could play a larger role as a national aid organization than it had in the past.³ That the nurses were vital to this operation is not in question.⁴ With the 1878 passage of a new law on military medical care, the *Kriegssanitätsordnung*, the Red Cross served as a wartime reserve force for the German army.⁵ Nursing associations that were affiliated with the Red Cross, like the *Alice Frauenverein*, were obligated to commit at least half of their nurses for war service.⁶

The image of the wartime nurse played a prominent role in the projection of German nationalism and in emphasizing the need for women to support the war effort through the care of sick and wounded soldiers. Nurses were usually hailed as war heroines, second only to the soldiers themselves. These images were clearly articulated through the *Frauenverein's* newspaper (the *Vereinsblatt*) and other associational literature, as well as published and unpublished documents authored by the nurses themselves.

As this chapter shows, there were two types of nurses working in this war – the career nurse and the volunteer – but only one dominated the propaganda. It was the image of the volunteer nurse that kept the Red Cross on the public stage at the end of the war. At the same time, *Berufspflegerinnen* were also shown to be trained, knowledgeable and competent employees who enjoyed a high level of prestige within the *Alice Frauenverein*, especially in

³Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 137.

⁴Jack McCallum, “Medicine in the War,” in *The Encyclopedia of World War One: A Political, Social, and Military History*, ed. Spencer C. Tucker and Priscilla Mary Roberts (San Francisco: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 773. One of the military medical improvements in World War I include the general use of trained nurses, in addition to the use of hypodermic syringes, retractors, forceps, rubber gloves, thermometers, sterile gauze, motor laboratories, diagnostic x-rays, vaccinations, and iodine solutions.

⁵Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 106.

⁶Neidhart, *Der Alice-Frauen-Verein*, 28. This half was provided to the “free disposal” of the government.

wartime.⁷ In this manner, the *Alice Frauenverein* adapted itself to wartime conditions by presenting itself to the outside world (and to itself) as both volunteer and professional, deploying different facets of nursing at different times depending on the context.

As they were portrayed in Red Cross propaganda at the national level, nurses were clearly shown in the context of “family”: they were mothers, sisters, daughters, and comrades to their patients, each other, the motherhouse, and the *Vaterland*. Not surprisingly, then, the nurses became what Herbert Grundhewer has described as “*Superhausfrauen*” (“super housewives”). They provided food, nursing, accommodation and fitting of hospitals, caring for the welfare of the doctors as well as the patients. Essentially, Grundhewer has observed, wartime nursing was an “organized motherhood” in which an “army spirit, religious hierarchy, and the inviolable mother motif” were the essential component of the professional image of the nurse. Grundhewer related the duties of a wartime nurse to those of a mother, which was the basis for many of the claims made by the bourgeois women’s movement to legitimize women’s social activism and employment.⁸ What John Hutchinson has described as the division of war labor between the military and the voluntary societies as a “militarization of charity,” then, might be deemed more appropriately as “the militarization of spiritual motherhood.”⁹

Other women’s organizations focused on war relief. The BDF, for example, worked closely with the German interior ministry, and established the *Nationaler Frauendienst* (National Women’s Service) on 31 July 1914. The *Frauendienst* coordinated nursing, food supplies, and

⁷Certainly, nationalism may have been a reason that some women chose to become professional nurses. However, the *Alice Frauenverein* sources indicate that the women who chose to enter the sisterhood as career nurses did not do so on the basis of nationalistic fervor alone.

⁸Grundhewer, “Die Kriegskrankenpflege,” 148.

⁹Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity*, 103.

other aid, particularly for soldiers' families and those who were unemployed as a result of the war. This organization of aid quickly expanded to include welfare for babies, new mothers, children and youth, and homeless relief. In addition to providing war nursing, the Red Cross associations also joined the BDF in providing relief services. As they had in the 1860s, they also focused on the collection of money and material for use in wartime.¹⁰

As more men were called up to fight, the *Frauendienst* helped to place women in their jobs for the war's duration. In addition to temporarily replacing men in war industry, some of the jobs performed by women during the war included nursing in psychiatric facilities.¹¹ Although other areas of nursing had been dominated by women since the late nineteenth century, psychiatric institutions had traditionally employed more male attendants, whose physical strength was often necessary for patient restraint. To the surprise of many hospital administrators, the move was a success.¹²

When the war started, however, none of the European armies had enough nurses.¹³ In 1913, Georg Körting, a military doctor and author of a popular nursing textbook, had advised that the German army would require at least 17,000.¹⁴ As the war continued, it was obvious that

¹⁰One of the more unique collections was women's combed-out hair, which was used for drive belts.

¹¹Bianca Schönberger, "Motherly Heroines and Adventurous Girls: Red Cross Nurses and Army Auxiliaries in the First World War," in *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 9-10. This work also included groups, such as socialist associations, which were not part of the BDF but advocated support for the war effort, that their actions would bring some concessions from the German government, including women's suffrage. For more on the *Frauendienst*, see also, for example, Greven-Aschoff, *Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung*, 150-158. For the moment, however, the 600,000 members of the BDF had been asked by their leaders to put aside these concerns temporarily while they focused on war work.

¹²Bronwyn Rebekah McFarland-Icke, *Nurses in Nazi Germany: Moral Choice in History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 23.

¹³McCallum, "Medicine in the War," 770-773.

¹⁴Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 138.

many more personnel were needed. The mobilization and recruitment of these forces, largely handled by the Red Cross, was a sizeable operation. Nearly 225,000 Germans were employed in some type of medical-military capacity. Of these, 92,000 were female nurses and nurse's aides (*Helperinnen*).¹⁵ Despite the fact that the largest Red Cross women's association, the *Vaterländische Frauenverein*, was composed of 3,000 branches and more than 800,000 members in 1914, the so-called "Kaiserin's Army" could supply only 6,000 fully-trained nurses (from fifty-two motherhouses) as well as 1,000 reserve nurses (*Hilfsschwestern*) and 7,000 *Helperinnen*.¹⁶ Even then, not all of these women could be immediately deployed or pulled away from their other duties.¹⁷

The imperial commissioner for voluntary nursing had direct access only to nurses from the *Ritterorden* (e.g., the *Johanniterorden*, a brotherhood whose members served as medical personnel on the front lines) and the Red Cross sisterhoods. Nurses from Catholic and Protestant orders were employed in war nursing as well, but under the Red Cross banner.¹⁸ Independent nurses were rejected. "[This] war is not for the purpose of employing unemployed nurses, and for the time being the authorities have no money for the nurses' pay..." read a governmental reply to one such application.¹⁹ Despite the need for additional trained nurses, the 3,200

¹⁵Dieter Riesenberger, *Für Humanität in Krieg und Frieden: Das Internationale Rote Kreuz 1861-1977* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 80-82. The remaining sixty percent, approximately 130,000 men, were stretcher-bearers, orderlies, and physicians.

¹⁶Hew Strachan, *To Arms*, vol. 1 of *The First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 109; and Regina Schulte, "The Sick Warrior's Sister: Nursing During the First World War," trans. Pamela Selwyn, in *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 124.

¹⁷Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 138-139.

¹⁸Schulte, "Sick Warrior's Sister," 122-123.

¹⁹Hilde Steppe, "Krankenpflege bis 1933," in *Krankenpflege im Nationalsozialismus*, edited by Hilde Steppe (Frankfurt: Mabuse-Verlag), 37, quoted in Prüfer, *Vom Liebesdienst zur Profession?* 34.

members of the BOKD and other “*wilde Schwestern*” were largely excluded from service, as Dieter Riesenberger has observed, because they were considered to be unreliable.²⁰

Only Red Cross associations and religious orders which operated on the *Mutterhausprinzip* (motherhouse principle) were included in official war nursing.²¹ There was likely more than one reason for this development. Christoph Schweikardt has stated that the Red Cross “continued its struggle” against the BOKD by refusing to allow independent nurses into wartime service.²² Riesenberger, however, has observed that the Red Cross defended its “exclusive use” of motherhouse nurses and noted the “socio-ethical motivations” shared by these women, which stood in contrast to the income-driven independent nurses.²³ The wartime literature of the *Alice Frauenverein* does not explicitly address either point.²⁴

Much as it had during the 1860s, the lack of Red Cross nurses led to a heightened attention to nursing recruitment, such as that exhibited by Kratz’s appeal to the *Alice Frauenverein* in 1914.²⁵ “Deeply depressing for us,” said Kratz, “is the thought that our sick and wounded sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers, who are pulled to the battlefield to defend the Fatherland and the *Volk* with their blood, would long require the gentle hand of a nurse and we could send none.” In justification of this request, Kratz reminded the *Alice Frauenverein* members that in peacetime the association had not been able to provide enough nurses to meet

²⁰Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 138-140. About 500 of the so-called “*unverlässige*” (“unreliable”) nurses worked with the Austrian military until April 1915.

This action served as such a break in the continuity of the BOKD’s history that it is left largely unmentioned in nursing histories, and may be one reason that historians of German nursing have also largely ignored World War I.

²¹Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 138.

²²Schweikardt, *Die Entwicklung der Krankenpflege*, 290.

²³Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 140.

²⁴In addition, Riesenberger’s main source on this subject is a book written by Oberin Marga von Stramberg, the first superintendent of the Catholic Red Cross motherhouse in Gelsenkirchen.

²⁵Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 138-139.

the need in Hesse, "...be it in district nursing or in the *Krankenanstalten*." In addition, he noted that "the enlargement of existing [institutions] and building of new ones naturally increased the need for nurses."²⁶

Appeals to the citizenry for aid were often emotional, like Kratz's speech to the *Frauenverein*, and evoked the imagery of a wounded soldier who was in desperate need. The family imagery appealed not only to the community as a whole, but also to the individual. The words of the *Frauenverein*'s director were no exception. In other words, the association had helped the Hessians, now it was time for the Hessians to support the fatherland. That the nurse was a central figure in this imagery is not surprising – the image of nursing and the nurse had been central to the literature of the association since its establishment in 1867.

The male counterpart in Hesse to the *Alice Frauenverein* was the *Landesverein vom Roten Kreuz*, which worked with the imperial and state governments to organize medical war volunteers. The *Landesverein* had already arranged for the supply of nurses for wartime service: twenty-five nurses for the rear-echelons (the *Etappengebiet*); ten for the *Heimatgebiet* (in this case, the reserve hospitals located in Hesse); and another twenty nurses for the Alice-Hospital, which served as a reserve hospital.²⁷ The nurses assigned to these areas were supported by two groups of women, the *Hilfsschwestern* and the *Helperinnen*.

The *Hilfsschwestern*, of course, had been part of the *Alice Frauenverein* since the association was founded. These were the nurses that were trained, but did not nurse professionally. Rather, they were available in case of emergency, such as an epidemic, flood, or war. *Helperinnen* were nursing aides whose training had been regulated by the Red Cross as early

²⁶*Verhandlungen* (1916), 8. The need for district nursing, Kratz stated, had grown along with the increasing population.

²⁷*Verhandlungen* (1916), 19.

as 1908. These women took at least ten weeks of theoretical training and a practical internship. Enrollment in this training was so great from 1911 to 1913 that the *Frauenverein* ran out of space in the Alice-Hospital and had to divide the aides into additional training groups. The city hospital offered assistance as a site for practical training.²⁸ Other cities throughout Germany experienced some of the same response, especially after the war started.²⁹

Very quickly, allowances were made to bypass much of the usual training. By 1915, *Helferinnen* with six months' war service could become *Hilfsschwestern* without any sort of special testing. *Hilfsschwestern* could then become *Schwestern* following a *Notprüfung* (an emergency test) given by a state commission.³⁰ Through this *Notprüfung*, women with very little training could receive state certification and recognition. Not surprisingly, this shortened course of training and the relative ease with which women could advance to become full-fledged nurses was strongly protested by Agnes Karll and the BOKD. Though effective for war nursing, the influx of "trained" nurses served to create a tighter nursing job market and left thousands of formerly independent nurses unemployed at the end of the war.³¹

Though members of Red Cross organization were actively involved in earlier wars, the *Kriegssanitätsordnung* gave the Red Cross nurses an official role as military nurses. In the initial phase of World War I, they worked in the rear-echelons.³² Male medical personnel supplied the immediate needs of the wounded at the front and took them on to the field hospitals. From there, the men were transported to military hospitals, which were set up in any available location, much as they had been in 1870. Non-surgical nurses tended the wounded on the home

²⁸*Verhandlungen* (1916), 19-20.

²⁹Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 138. Four hundred women in Breslau, for example, were trained within the first ten weeks of the war.

³⁰Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 138.

³¹Prüfer, *Vom Liebesdienst zur Profession?* 34.

³²Schönberger, "Motherly Heroines," 89.

front, or were employed in contagious disease hospitals and psychiatric wards, and surgical nurses were generally employed behind the lines.³³ After 1915, however, an increasing number of nurses were sent to the front, as male army nurses were called up to fight.³⁴

Despite the progress made in transitioning the vocation of nursing into a female profession, the image of the “ideal nurse” was almost an exact replica of what it had been during the Wars of Unification. In his *Unterrichtsbuch für die freiwillige weibliche Krankenpflege* (Textbook for Female Volunteer Nurses), which was published in 1913, Georg Körting described the nurse as exhibiting “docility, scrupulous cleanliness, and orderliness” which were her “whole way of life.” She remained “tirelessly and discreetly” at the patient’s bedside, nursing with “pure charity and patriotic purpose.” Thanks to her “gentle nature” and “delicate hands,” the woman was, quite literally, born to nurse.³⁵ Körting’s description is not surprising, and many bourgeois Germans embraced it for what it was, a reflection of the ideal middle-class woman of the *Kaiserreich*.³⁶ Many of these women internalized this ideal. According to Anna von Zimmermann, *Oberin* of the Red Cross sisterhood in Leipzig, nursing gave “women’s nature, the driving force behind women’s life, what it needs: to be able to care, love and give, hence creating true happiness, inner peace, and lasting satisfaction.”³⁷ This image of the ideal nurse was

³³Schulte, “Sick Warrior’s Sister,” 129.

³⁴Schulte, “Sick Warrior’s Sister,” 124.

³⁵Georg Körting, *Unterrichtsbuch für die weibliche freiwillige Krankenpflege* (Berlin: 1913), quoted in Herbert Grundhewer, “Die Kriegskrankenpflege,” 141.

³⁶Richard J. Evans provides an additional description. German women “could not perform the tasks for which the supposed masculine martial virtues of hardness, aggressiveness, toughness, boldness, devotion to duty, strict obedience to command, sense of honor, ability to think dispassionately...[which] were felt to be necessary.” See Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany*, 22.

³⁷Oberin Anna von Zimmermann, *Was heisst Schwester sein? Beiträge zur ethischen Berufserziehung*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1912), 15, quoted in Schönberger, “Motherly Heroines,” 89.

exhibited as a model for many German women who volunteered for military duty under the Red Cross.

Who were these women? With little statistical information available, it is hard to say with complete certainty, especially regarding the class of nurse volunteers, but it can be reasonably determined that most of them were middle- and upper-class women. This supposition is supported by the fact that nursing itself was viewed as an exclusive task that middle-class women could perform for the war effort.³⁸ Initially, volunteer nurses came from different social classes, but as the war continued and the availability of food decreased, many women could not afford to take a month-long nursing course without payment. As industrial work paid at least four times more than wartime nursing, lower middle-class and working-class women were often employed in these fields.³⁹

Working for the Red Cross was advertised as a mark of a citizen's loyalty and patriotism. The emblem of the red cross itself was idealized, and could serve as a powerful symbol for the German people.⁴⁰ In 1914, Kratz delivered a lengthy description to the *Alice Frauenverein* of the Red Cross as a sign of charity, humanity, Christian service, duty, and sacrifice.⁴¹ The Red Cross brooch, worn by nurses and volunteers, became very stylish, and numerous young women wore them proudly. They paraded them at theaters and concerts, making the symbol a part of their evening toilette.⁴² The fact that volunteers were even allowed to wear the Red Cross symbol is a sign that the importance of the symbol resonated with many Germans. Before the war, the only women allowed to wear the exclusive jewelry were members of the *Frauenvereine* and the

³⁸Grundhewer, "Die Kriegskrankenpflege," 144-145.

³⁹Schönberger, "Motherly Heroines," 89.

⁴⁰Schulte, "Sick Warrior's Sister," 131.

⁴¹*Verhandlungen* (1916), 7.

⁴²Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 139.

nurses themselves. After the war started, the literature of the association actively refers to the “large brooch” worn by the nurses, making a distinction between the two groups.

War propaganda may have influenced some women to volunteer for war work, including nursing. These images were distributed through the government and by the Red Cross and played an important role in the portrayal of wartime gender roles. Articles and pictures in soldiers’ newspapers depicted the women of the home front, patiently waiting for their men to return. Increasing industrialization during the war intensified the importance of civilian readiness to support this effort, which called for a “previously unknown degree of patriotic national mobilization among soldiers and civilians alike.” Although civilians were expected to perform war industry work, a task that was probably most important, they were also expected to support the war by sacrificing their material goods and volunteering as nurses.⁴³

Propaganda posters were created to illustrate the various roles of men, women, and even children in the war effort, and these included images of women as nurses. Nursing posters, according to Ruth Tudor, were one of the only areas in which a man could appear dependent on a woman and still maintain an aura of masculinity.⁴⁴ This might have been appealing for some German women, but others were likely attracted to the religious iconography shown in some of this propaganda. In what Bianca Schönberger has described as the “imperceptible pre-war propaganda” of the Red Cross, nurses were displayed with “idealized female characteristics and

⁴³Hagemann, “Military, War, and the Mainstreams,” 71.

⁴⁴And in many cases, posters depicted women who appeared feminine while at the same time employed in war industry work. By contrast, the German posters portraying female industrial workers shows the women as tired, dirty, and looking almost manly in their appearance. Ruth Tudor, “Images of Women, 1914-20: The Ideals and the Realities,” in *Crossroads of Europe: Multiple Outlooks on Five Key Moments in the History of Europe* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2006), 215.

the motif of the religious sisters.” The nurse was often exhibited as a nun, angel, or Madonna.⁴⁵ Enemy nurses were sometimes viewed as inhumane.⁴⁶

The symbol of the dynast, according to Jean Quataert, “reinforced the social memories of individual and collective sacrifice in war.”⁴⁷ Imagery of the *Landesmutter* as nurse was prominent during World War I, as it had during the Wars of Liberation and the Wars of Unification. In Hesse, the grand duke and duchess were often depicted in complementary images: Eleonore donned a nurses’ uniform and rode the hospital trains while Ernst-Ludwig served at the front.

Grand Duchess Eleonore nursed under the name “Sister Marie.” In this, she was not unique. Other noblewomen also nursed “quasi-incognito,” under assumed names. Schönberger suggests that the women’s “class status and costume unified into the ideal of nun-like serenity and motherly care...[and] suggested that in principle every sister could be a hidden lady,” but

⁴⁵Schönberger, “Motherly Heroines,” 92. The image of a noblewoman dressed as a Red Cross nurse added to this perception. That these images transcended international borders is obvious in an idealized image of care that can be seen from an American Red Cross poster entitled “The Greatest Mother in the World.” In a *Pieta*-like pose, a Red Cross nurse is seated, garbed in flowing robes. In her arms she cradles a wounded man, who rests on the cot, the victim of an obvious head wound. His hands are neatly folded across his chest, as she gazes, slightly heavenward, into the distance. The background advertised the “Christmas Roll Call” for 1918. Katrin Schultheiss notes that the French military nurse was “cast as a twentieth-century cross between the Virgin Mary and Joan of Arc.” See Schultheiss, *Bodies and Souls*, 145.

⁴⁶Use of the nurse in anti-German propaganda is one indication that the Red Cross was not viewed as a neutral body. The image of the German war nurse was also used in anti-German propaganda, especially after the war’s escalation in 1916. *Red Cross or Iron Cross?*, a British poster from 1917, depicts the image of a uniformed nurse pouring water on the ground, while an obviously wounded soldier is reaching, pleading for it, while the Kaiser looks on. The text reads, “Red Cross Or Iron Cross? Wounded And A Prisoner, Our Soldier Cries for Water. The German ‘Sister’ Pours It On The Ground Before His Eyes. There Is No Woman In Britain Who Would Do It. There Is No Woman In Britain Who Will Forget It.” In this poster, the nurse can be portrayed as inhumane, but only because she is on the opposite side of the war. See Tudor, “Images of Women,” 215.

Of course, there is also the story of Edith Cavell, the British nurse who was executed by the Germans in 1915.

⁴⁷Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy*, 222.

this, perhaps, is going a bit too far. Certainly, the image of Princess Alice as nurse had translated well in Hesse, but does the attention to Alice's nursing, or Eleonore's for that matter, show that that a nurse could be a "lady," or was it that a "lady" could be an experienced and competent nurse? There is no way of knowing based on the available resources, but it seems likely that this "hidden lady" concept would not have resonated with the volunteer nurses.⁴⁸ Still, Herbert Grundhewer has asserted that the nurses' uniforms also gave the nurse an authority of her own, which allowed her to be seen as "unreachable" to the common soldiers but at the same time, as a complementary image to them. He quotes one nurse who makes an interesting point: "No one knew who was concealed behind the nurse's uniform, whether she was a woman of high rank or a simple background. It was without import...the nurse was for the soldiers...only a person."⁴⁹

Whether they were volunteer or career nurses, these women performed "female" tasks as part of their war service, and in this light, many nurses saw themselves as the mothers, sisters, and comrades of the patients, performing the same tasks that women would do for a sick or wounded person in their own homes. The nurses were "anchors" to many of their patients, and the "motherliness" they displayed on the battlefield was embodied in their attitudes towards the soldiers, especially the boys.⁵⁰ According to Regina Schulte, the nurses wanted to be "sisters," and "not only in the sense of the community of the mother houses, sisters among sisters."⁵¹ To

⁴⁸Part of the problem with analyzing this propaganda is that there is no real way to distinguish between volunteers and professional nurses. It is true, however, that volunteer nurses made up the bulk of the Red Cross nursing personnel during the war, so the propaganda was aimed at them.

⁴⁹Elfriede von Pflugk-Harttung, *Frontschwester. Ein deutsches Ehrenbuch. Unter Mitarbeit von zahlreichen Frontschwester* (Berlin, 1936), quoted in Grundhewer, "Die Kriegskrankenpflege," 144.

⁵⁰Grundhewer, "Die Kriegskrankenpflege," 144.

⁵¹Schulte, "Sick Warrior's Sister," 131.

“march arm in arm” with the “orderlies and common soldiers,” was proof of their importance.”⁵² The images of the soldiers and nurses were complementary: he was the “masculine, battle-weary hero, and she was the loving, caring heroine of the wards.”⁵³ The very title of *Schwester* implied that the nurse *was* a sister of the sick or wounded soldier. Soldiers’ newspapers also emphasized that German women were loyal and true to their soldier-heroes. They were the soldiers’ female comrades (*Kameradinnen*).⁵⁴ With the war, the connotation of the term *Schwester* had shifted from its primary emphasis on female community to include spiritual marriage or motherhood between the volunteer nurse with the front-line soldier.

An example from an “Alice nurse” shows evidence of both meanings of the term. Pictures and postcards saved by Anna Koch, known as “Schwester Ännchen,” speak to the type of sisterly camaraderie that may have formed between nurses and patients, as well as nurses and their colleagues. Koch, who may have been a volunteer nurse, was stationed in a reserve hospital in Darmstadt.⁵⁵ Whether she was a professional nurse, or a volunteer, Koch’s collection provides several written and photographic images of the *Alice-Schwestern* during the war. They are usually pictured with patients, although sometimes doctors are included as well. Some are formally posed, with patients sitting up in and nurses clustered around them. Others are less

⁵²Schulte, “Sick Warrior’s Sister,” 131.

⁵³Grundhewer, “Die Kriegskrankenpflege,” 145.

⁵⁴Robert L. Nelson, “German Comrades – Slavic Whores: Gender Images in the German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War,” in *Home/Front: The Military, War, and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 76. Nelson makes the comment to describe the perception by German soldiers of women on the home front, but the remark is applicable to the nurses as well.

⁵⁵Koch is not listed in the *Vorsteherin*’s reports (printed in the *Verhandlungen*), but these reports applied only to those nurses who were student nurses working in the Alice Hospital, or in other areas associated with the Frauenverein in Darmstadt. Individual nurses in Mainz and Offenbach, both independent branches of the *Alice Frauenverein*, were rarely listed in the *Verhandlungen*. In addition, the fact that she was titled “*Schwester*” is not conclusive, given that nurses’ aides were called “*Schwester*” as well, even if they were volunteers.

formal, taken in a variety of locations. One group was arranged in what appears to be a parlor setting, complete with flower arrangements. In another photograph, a sign in the middle of the group reads, “*Zur Erinnerung, Res. Lazarett II Darmstadt*” (“In remembrance of the Reserve Hospital II Darmstadt”).

Koch also received notes and photographs from her patients. Several are inscribed with a note to thank her for her service. A postcard addressed to “Schwester Fräulein Anna” and another one, from Hans Herbers in Darmstadt, each expressed their “fond remembrance” of the hospital, which was located in Darmstadt’s *Hochschule*.⁵⁶ The fact that Koch kept these souvenirs is not surprising in itself, but as her collection also contains photographs of groups of nurses as well, it suggests that there was camaraderie among the nurses as well as between nurses and patients, perhaps even crossing some class barriers in the process.⁵⁷

Some nurses wrote about the friendships they formed with other nurses during the war. Margarete Slavos (then Margarete Stolle), who entered the *Frauenverein* as a student nurse in 1917, remembered the day she arrived in the Alice-Hospital. Tired and hungry, she was grateful for the attention shown her by the other nurses and for the friends she made during her time as a student nurse. One of these nurses was Luise Krauter, with whom Stolle kept in touch for years after she married. Another was the “nice Maria Herpel,” who entered the Alice-Hospital for

⁵⁶On the back of his photograph, showing him in civilian attire, Herbers listed the dates of his stay in the hospital (January – April 1916).

⁵⁷Anna Koch’s postcards and photographs are held by the *Alice-Schwesterschaft* at the Alice-Hospital in Darmstadt. According to an envelope in which some of the pictures were contained, the collection was sent to the *Schwesterschaft* by Anna’s niece, Anneliese Koch, in the spring of 1985.

training on the same day as Stolle. The two women remained “dear friends” until Herpel’s death.⁵⁸

Images of nurses on the front lines provide an interesting division between the front and the home front. Nurses were somewhere in the middle - they did not belong to the “heroic brotherhood of the trenches,” nor could they be placed completely within the image of the women’s home front of work and household. They were, it seemed, in a “no-man’s land.” This dichotomy led to an “almost salacious but apparently dominant image of the front-line nurses as the ‘angels in white’ or the angels of death in the male imagination.”⁵⁹

With the exception of nursing, women working near the front lines were negatively viewed by contemporaries.⁶⁰ In 1916, after the passage of the *Gesetz über den Vaterländischen Hilfsdienst*, women were employed as army auxiliaries.⁶¹ In the army auxiliaries, for example, women were able to provide for their families while their men were at war, which only added to

⁵⁸Alice-Schwesterschaft collection, Margarete Slavos to the *Alice-Schwesterschaft*, 1982.

⁵⁹Schulte, “Sick Warrior’s Sister” 122-123. While discussing the dearth of literature on the topic of the German nurse in World War I, Schulte also questions the differences between German writing about wartime nursing, which places the nurse as an “allegorical complement” to the soldier, and British historians such as Anne Summers and Sandra M. Gilbert, who have written about wartime nursing. Schulte notes that British work in this field lies in the context of the “English cult of Florence Nightingale” and “serves to de-mythologize” the lady nurses of the Nightingale era. She adds that the difference may lie in the “greater self-confidence of a less broken feminist and left-wing tradition, as well as the national context of a victor state,” while also stating that the Germany of 1914 had a bourgeois women’s movement whose leaders “formulated ideals...that seemed to be virtually personified in the figure of a front nurse.”

⁶⁰Schönberger, “Motherly Heroines,” 92-96. These auxiliaries for their families while their men were at war, which only added to this opinion. The War Office tried to recruit “educated ladies,” but only the translators (a small group) were from the *Bildungsbürgertum*.⁶⁰

⁶¹Schönberger, “Motherly Heroines,” 90. The law required all men aged 17-60 to work as orderlies or in war industry. The act exempted women, but Schönberger notes that the women in industry and orderly rooms on the home front soon outnumbered the men liable under the law. From the spring of 1917, women actively replaced soldiers in the rear-echelons.

this opinion. For many Germans, the auxiliaries represented the “New Woman,” whose financial independence was connected, in their minds, with society’s declining moral standards.⁶²

It is at this point that the ambiguity about the “working woman” on the front lines came out, demonstrating the easy slippage between the image of the mother/volunteer to the careerist/“New Woman.”⁶³ Concern about sexual contact between soldiers and the female auxiliaries meant that the women, most often of lower middle-class or working-class origin, lived in dormitories guarded by middle-class women. The fact that the behavior of the auxiliaries was also strongly criticized by BDF leaders as well as conservative newspapers is another indication of how much the Red Cross nurses were revered in comparison.⁶⁴ The War Office tried to recruit “educated ladies” as auxiliaries, but only the translators (a small group) were from the *Bildungsbürgertum*.⁶⁵

The female auxiliaries may have complained that the nurses were treated better by the soldiers than they were, but nurses, especially the volunteers, were also the objects of criticism. Some, mainly conservative critics, suggested that the nurses were there to find husband or lovers and others suggested that the insertion of nurses into the military disrupted the gender order. As Bianca Schönberger has stated, however, this criticism must be seen “in the context of increasingly virulent social conflict in the army and on the home front” during the war’s progression.⁶⁶ Some war diaries and memoirs indicate that the sexual desires of the soldiers (and

⁶²Schönberger, “Motherly Heroines,” 92-93

⁶³This may also help to explain concerns about using the *wilde Schwestern* as nurses.

⁶⁴Schönberger, “Motherly Heroines,” 99. Here, it is interesting to note the ambiguous image of the “spiritual mother” and “New Woman” on the front lines and the loose connection between the portrayal of women at the front and underlying social reality.

⁶⁵Schönberger, “Motherly Heroines,” 96.

⁶⁶Schönberger, “Motherly Heroines,” 93. Schönberger reminds us that nurses were part of this class conflict because they were usually of the same social class as the officers, and something as innocuous as riding in a vehicle with an officer was cause for gossip.

nurses) provided also “an element of danger” to the nurses’ reputation. Many of the ways the nurses were portrayed served to provide the nurse with a kind of inviolability. Of course, the middle- and upper-class status of the nurses acted as a “sexual rampart” of sorts between them and the soldiers. The fact that the nurse was upheld as a mother or sister to the soldiers may have added to the impression that the nurse was off-limits for them.⁶⁷

Letters and diaries of some German women show that some of them wanted to be at the front. Emmy von Rudgisch, a nurse with the *Badische Frauenverein*, wrote: “The impatience with which we [Red Cross nurses] await that great moment when we are called to the area behind the lines is indescribable.” Nurses in other belligerent nations had similar sentiments. Working at the front was portrayed as one of the highest forms of patriotism, but that was only one of the reasons that persuaded nurses to volunteer for duty at the front. For some British nurses, for example, the war was viewed as an opportunity to gain professional experience, to have adventure, to prove their patriotism, and to prove that women were valuable to the country.⁶⁸

Admittedly, the examination of nurses at the front does present some problems. How distinctive are the experiences of nurses, for example, on the western as opposed to the eastern fronts? There are certainly some differences in reporting during the course of the war. For example, some details concerning the operation of a field hospital were new and important at the

⁶⁷Grundhewer, “Die Kriegsrankenpflege,” 147.

⁶⁸Some British women had already seen imperial nursing as a way to express their individuality. According to one British nurse, “an English nurse... seeks her fortunes in South African hospitals, as her brother seeks it in the mines of Kimberley or in far-off Rhodesia.” Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 212. For German women, though it was not war nursing, the opportunity to nurse in the colonies was also a viable option for adventure. See Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 13-53.

beginning of the war, but were not regarded as very important for later reports. It is also possible in some cases that the reality of the situation was so horrible that the *Oberschwester* did not pass it on.⁶⁹

Two *Alice Frauenverein* nurses already had experience in war nursing. Their work during the first Balkan war was heralded by the association, as was their return from the front. Anna Knaf and Margarethe Haster, both employed at the medical clinic in Giessen, were sent to Greece during the first Balkan war in October 1912. Knaf, who entered the *Frauenverein* in 1898, had experience in internal illnesses, and Haster, who had nursed for the association since 1881, was the *Oberschwester* as well as experienced surgical nurse.⁷⁰ There, they worked with Princess Andreas of Greece (Princess Alice of Battenberg), daughter of Princess Victoria of Battenberg.⁷¹

Knaf's report is similar to World War I accounts of battlefield nursing. She described the difficult conditions in which the nurses worked, such as setting up hospitals in short notice and nursing hundreds of wounded with limited nursing assistance. Knaf's references to herself and Haster say something about her own self-image as a nurse. As she introduced Haster, Knaf used the typical title of "*Schwester*" Margarethe. However, in her next reference, she called the *Oberschwester* her colleague ("*meine Kollegin*") and later, her "war mother" ("*meine Kriegsmutter*"). These references indicate that Knaf viewed herself as part of the sisterhood, in

⁶⁹Birgit Panke-Kochinke and Monika Schaidhammer-Placke, *Frontschwester und Friedensengel: Kriegsrankenpflege im Ersten und Zweiten Weltkrieg: Ein Quellen- und Fotoband* (Frankfurt: Mabuse Verlag, 2002), 16-17. There is also some evidence of conflicts between doctors and nurses, especially experienced nurses, during the last two years of the war. In some cases, doctors were openly criticized by the nurses.

⁷⁰Princess Andreas also made a specific reference to Haster as "the surgical nurse" in a letter to her mother. See Hugo Vickers, *Alice, Princess Andrew of Greece* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 94.

⁷¹Princess Victoria of Battenberg was the daughter of Princess Alice of Hesse and the second president of the *Alice Frauenverein* (1883-1912).

which Haster, as the *Oberschwester* or, in this case, *Kriegsmutter*, was the “mother,” as she was in Giessen to the nurses stationed there. However, Haster was also a colleague, with whom Knaf shared the professional responsibilities of patient care. In turn, they nursed each other during their own illnesses. When the two women returned to Darmstadt in May 1913, they were “heartily welcomed by our *Verein*, and above all by our *Landesmutter*. In other words, they were welcomed home by their extended nursing family.⁷²

Two years later, when eleven *Alice-Schwestern* were sent to Constantinople and Baghdad, Anna Knaf, now an *Oberschwester* herself, reported back to the *Frauenverein* on the progress of their work. In the German military hospitals there, the Hessian women worked with other Red Cross nurses from Bavaria and Saxe-Coburg.⁷³ Like her letters from Greece, Knaf’s correspondence was professional, noting details regarding the hospital, patient care, and duties of individual nurses. At the same time, she also wrote about the sights the nurses saw during their travels. In example from May 1916, Knaf composed her letter while traveling down the Euphrates. In this letter, she described a meeting with a Bedouin sheik, who “greeted the chief [doctor] with a kiss, us with a look....often, when we landed near them, the Bedouins brought us their sick, many of them with eye diseases. The doctors examined, and we nurses prepared medicine in the background. It was like a Bible picture!” In the same correspondence, Knaf

⁷²Anna Knaf’s report was published as “Bericht der Schwester Anna Knaf über der Tätigkeit im griechisch-türkischen Krieg 1912/13” in *Verhandlungen* (1916), 90-98. Dieter Riesenberger has stated that the fact that nurses had more freedom in the field than they did in the motherhouse may have been cause for concern, and that one way to influence them was through correspondence, but there is nothing here to say whether that was the case. See Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 148.

⁷³Knaf’s letters were published in the associational newspaper in several installments. See *Vereinsblatt des Alice-Frauenvereins* 2, no. 8 (August 1916), 113-116; *Vereinsblatt* 2, no. 9 (September 1916), 130-133; *Vereinsblatt* 2, no. 10 (October 1916), 154-156; and *Vereinsblatt* 2 no. 11, 171-174. Excerpts from these reports were also published in *Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, Oberinnen-Vereinigung, Der Ruf der Stunde*, 94-97.

recounts that the German soldiers were both happy and astonished to see the nurses on their arrival in Baghdad. According to Knaf, officers and enlisted men alike exclaimed, “Now come what will, we have our *Schwestern*.” Yes, she added, “we are richly rewarded by our soldiers.”⁷⁴

Knaf’s reports were published in the *Vereinsblatt*, the official organ of the *Alice Frauenverein*. Published monthly since 1915, it remained in print through 1922. The association had experienced a period of great growth from 1911 to 1913, and with so many members, a newspaper was a good way to disseminate information to the membership. Like the *Vereinsblatt* of the *Badische Frauenverein*, which was first published in 1876, the paper was geared toward its female readers and included reports from the branches of the association.⁷⁵ Each issue of the Hessian *Vereinsblatt* covered a wide range of activities in which its members participated. Poems, usually authored by men, offered up images of the Red Cross, soldiers, the *Frauenverein*, and individuals such as Grand Duchess Eleonore, Paul von Hindenburg, and harkening back to the Napoleonic wars, Johanna Stegen, the “heroine of Lüneberg.” In addition, there were several articles of varying content. One, entitled “*Das Schönste Recht der Frau*” (“The Most Beautiful Right of Woman”) reminded female members that they were the “self-evident natural *Geschäftsträgerin* of the Red Cross.”⁷⁶

According to Riesenberger, the division of the nurses into “*Kriegsschwestern*” and “*Heimatschwestern*” endangered the cohesion of the nurses with each other as well as to the

⁷⁴*Vereinsblatt* (October 1916), 156.

⁷⁵Baden’s paper, however, at least when it was first published, also included articles in areas such as foreign and domestic politics, female employment, and gardening tips. See Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein*, 95-100.

⁷⁶*Vereinsblatt* 2, no. 6 (June 1916), 82-84. Literally, the term is defined as “chargé d’affaires.”

Oberin and the motherhouse.⁷⁷ The experiences of nurses in reserve hospitals and other stations were different than that of nurses at the front, and it may be for this reason that the cover of each issue of the *Vereinsblatt* featured two simple drawings: on the left, a district nurse visiting a mother and children in their home; on the right, a nurse caring for an obviously wounded soldier in the hospital. The pictures were connected by the Red Cross emblem. That the district nurse's job was just as important as that of the hospital nurse was indicated by the picture of a uniformed soldier on a dresser. The district nurse, while not in a hospital or at the front, still made an important contribution to the war effort.

Also published in the *Vereinsblatt* were obituaries for fallen comrades - the nurses of the *Frauenverein* as well as leaders of the various local branches.⁷⁸ These articles provide an image of those nurses who died while working for the *Frauenverein*, like Frau Henriette Riso, a volunteer war nurse and former *Berufspflegerin*. Riso was a section leader of the reserve hospital in Bad-Nauheim, and her death in 1916 (from erysipelas) was described as a "sacrifice in the true fulfillment of duty to the *Vaterland*."⁷⁹ The obituaries written for Margarete Bruenig and Julie Gerhardt, however, do not mention the "fatherland" at all.⁸⁰ Bruenig, known as "Schwester Gretchen," who died in 1915, had entered the *Frauenverein* in March 1892, trained in the Alice Hospital, and worked in Giessen, Offenbach, and Langen before becoming an

⁷⁷Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 148. In some areas, he states, existing motherhouses were generally not enlarged, but new ones were founded, so that the connection to the motherhouse could be deepened. Additional branches of the *Alice Frauenverein* were added during the war, but these were mainly to collect money and materials for the war effort, as opposed to adding additional nurses.

⁷⁸Obituaries were typically published, and continued to be published, in the *Frauenverein's* general report.

⁷⁹*Vereinsblatt* 2, no. 12 (December 1916), 176.

⁸⁰The fact that Henriette Riso's obituary was deemed a "sacrifice" for the fatherland and the other two did not may be nothing more than the fact that the obituaries were likely written by different people, though all three were issued by the *Hauptvorstand*.

Oberschwester in the Alice-Hospital in 1903. She was described as having acquired a “rich treasure of practical knowledge in nursing” and was recognized by the doctors with their “absolute confidence” in her.⁸¹ Gerhardt, who died in 1918 at age 25, was born in Laupheim in Württemberg and had worked as a *Hilfswchwester* there before entering the Alice-Hospital as a student nurse in 1915. She took the state nursing examination in 1916, and worked in Giessen, a children’s recreation facility, and on an ambulance prior to working in the Alice-Hospital. After dying from pneumonia, Gerhardt was described, among other things, as the “personification of practical Christianity.” Her obituary ended with a verse of Scripture: “I know your works, your love, your patience, and your faith.”⁸² All three of these women, in their deaths, embodied the image, both real and idealized, of the *Alice Schwester*. Granted, nurses’ obituaries published by the *Alice Frauenverein* were often written in similar language, even in peacetime. Still, the lives of these nurses were displayed as a clear model for other nurses to follow.

In many respects, this is also true of the work of Grand Duchess Eleonore of Hesse. Prior to assuming the presidency of the *Alice Frauenverein* in 1912, Eleonore was known for patronage and activism for causes that helped mothers and children. When the war began, she continued that work, much of it done directly or in cooperation with the *Frauenverein*. The grand duchess took the course for *Hilfsschwestern*, worked on the ambulance trains, in which she was sometimes accompanied by the grand duke.⁸³ Eleonore’s image also appeared on her

⁸¹*Vereinsblatt* 1, no. 10 (December 1915), 77-78.

⁸²*Vereinsblatt* 4, no. 12 (December 1918), 119. The scripture is Rev. 2:19.

⁸³She was sometimes accompanied on these trips by her husband, Ernst Ludwig. The grand duke, who was known as the “Red Grand Duke of Hesse” because he treated the Hessian Social Democrats with cordiality, opposed the war in 1914 and put great effort into attempts at diplomacy. He also strongly supported hospitals and care of the wounded, and contributed to their physical rehabilitation. Ernst Ludwig continued these efforts following the end of the war. See Noel, *Princess Alice*, 199; Duff, *Hessian Tapestry*, 348-349; and for relations between Kaiser Wilhelm II and the grand duke, see Roderick R. McLean, “Kaiser Wilhelm II and his

birthday, and in written appeals that she made to the women of Hesse on several occasions. Her picture also appeared next to the grand duke's on the cover of the June/July 1917 double issue printed for the *Frauenverein*'s fiftieth anniversary. The couple was portrayed in their dual roles: the *Landesmutter* as president of the association, and the *Landesvater* as its patron and protector (*Schutzherr*).

In the last two years of the war, the nurses in the field and in the hospitals were definitely overworked.⁸⁴ The fiftieth anniversary celebration served as an occasion to rejuvenate the association's energy by recounting the *Frauenverein*'s history and celebrating the work of the nurses, to whom the members had given first priority since 1867. It was also an opportunity to recognize the nurses. Ernst Ludwig gave the nursing superintendents a new medal, the *Oberinnenkreuz*, and the *Alice-Schwestern* received the right to wear brooches which now carried the names of the royal couple. The grand duke also gave the association a new name – the *Alice Frauenverein für Krankenpflege im Grossherzogtum Hessen* was now the *Alice-Frauenverein, Hessischer Frauenverein vom Roten Kreuz* – a name which recognized the association's heritage as well as its legacy of medical service in war and in peace.

At the closing of the anniversary celebration, those in attendance were reminded of Princess Alice's 1872 letter which she addressed to the *Frauenverein*'s first diploma recipients. The last sentence of Alice's letter is a powerful one: "We work together in the attainment of a humane goal and cannot do it without each other."⁸⁵ The same sentiment was echoed in a memorandum from the association's leadership to its membership at the end of the war. Dated December 1918, the statement acknowledged the fact that women now had the right to vote, and

Hessian Cousins: Intra-state Relations in the German Empire and International Dynastic Politics, 1890-1918," *German History* 19, no. 1 (2001): 28-53.

⁸⁴Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz*, 147.

⁸⁵*Vereinsblatt* 3, no. 6 and 7 (June/July 1917), 105-127.

so members were encouraged to “consider that women compose half the electorate” and to involve themselves in the process. At the same time, “to avoid any misunderstanding,” members of the *Alice Frauenverein* were assured that “no matter what political party they devote themselves to,” they remained “loyal and diligent staff” of the *Frauenverein*. “For the implementation of the association’s tasks,” the letter concluded, “we just need...the infinite involvement of many women of all ranks who have a heart full of love and understanding for the sufferings and hardships of fellow countrymen.”⁸⁶ Grand Duchess Eleonore, wife of the recently deposed grand duke, remained at the helm of the organization until her own death nearly two decades later.

The images of wartime nursing which were presented to the members of the *Alice Frauenverein* and to the German public are revealing as idealized images of nursing. Female nurses were presented as mothers, sisters, and comrades of the German soldiers. Nursing was presented as an occupation that merited high acclaim, and Red Cross nursing at the front lines was seen as the greatest war work that a woman, or at least a middle- or upper-class woman, might perform.

This chapter demonstrates that career nurses also internalized these roles, even though propaganda was largely directed toward the volunteer nurse. It is also evident, that *Berufspflegerinnen* like Knaf saw themselves as trained professionals as well as German patriots. Knaf was employed in the position in which she had worked for the past two decades, yet her reports showed that she was also a daughter and sister within the Red Cross motherhouse. By emphasizing these multiple facets of nursing, the *Alice Frauenverein* responded to the changing needs of the war environment, while at the same time holding on to its traditional legacy of care.

⁸⁶HStAD G15 Bensheim, G135, Hauptvorstand des Alice-Frauenvereins (Hessisches Landes-Frauenvereins vom Roten Kreuz) to Zweigverein Bensheim, December 1918.

CONCLUSION

In 1918, twenty-eight year-old Luise Krauter submitted an application to become an *Alice-Schwester*. According to her *Lebenslauf*, or autobiographical essay, Krauter was the daughter of a master tanner (*Rotgerbermeister*). At age sixteen, just after her father's death, she was employed by a pastor's wife in Stuttgart, where she learned to make linens. Krauter does not explain why she switched employers, but four years later, she worked for a Frau Gastrell, also in Stuttgart. For two years, she gained what she described as "some knowledge of nursing" during her employer's long illness and eventual death. The experience Krauter obtained while working in Stuttgart may have led to her decision to become a nurse. After about five years at home "to help my dear mother," Krauter spent three months learning *Wochenbettpflege* in Frankfurt, and then another six months working in the infectious diseases wing of the city hospital's children's clinic. In August 1918, she volunteered for service in a reserve hospital, which closed four months later. "I would like very much," Krauter ended her *Lebenslauf*, "to have more training in nursing and to make it my *Lebensberuf*."¹

How did Krauter define "*Lebensberuf*"? Was it her "life's calling," in the religious sense, or was it simply a "lifelong profession"? Likely, it was a bit of both given that nursing, since the mid-nineteenth century, had been associated with both senses of the term "vocation." We know very little about Krauter, except that she passed the state nursing examination in 1921 and

¹Alice-Schwesternschaft collection, Luise Krauter, "Lebenslauf."

received an award for fifteen years of service with the association (now the *Alice-Schwesterschaft*) in 1934.² The same report that announced this recognition also announced the retirement of Anna Knaf, the nurse from Giessen whose letters from campaigns in the Balkans and the Middle East were published in association literature, as well as that of other nurses who had chosen to enter the *Alice Frauenverein* at the turn of the century.³

By this time, the decision to join a Red Cross motherhouse was strictly a choice, rather than a matter of seizing on the only available opportunity to work. Since 1867, when the *Alice Frauenverein* was founded, a small but growing range of employment had become available to middle-class women. Aside from teaching and nursing, they could take white-collar positions as office clerks and saleswomen.⁴ After 1908, university education was open to those who wanted to pursue it. That same year, Alice Salomon, who had a Ph.D. in economics, opened the first German school of social work, a field which was rapidly becoming known as a “female” profession.⁵ As Young Song Hong has commented, social work was marketed as a profession for the “ ‘new woman’ who combined the natural feminine intuition of motherhood with intellect...who also had a strong desire to develop fully her natural endowment through public work.”⁶

In many respects, discussions about the emerging profession of social work were not so different from those that had centered on nursing in the 1860s and 1870s. Then, bourgeois feminists, like the members of the *Lette Verband*, had promoted nursing as a *Frauenberuf*, a

²The award was a book titled *Grossherzogin Alice*.

³*Deutsches Rotes Kreuz. Der Hessische Alice-Frauenverein im Jahre 1934. Bericht über das 69. Vereinsjahr und die 1. Jahrestagung des Landesrats am 29. Juni 1935* (Darmstadt: 1935), 51-52.

⁴Carole Elizabeth Adams, *Women Clerks in Wilhelmine Germany: Issues of Class and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁵Hong, “Femininity as a Vocation,” 232-252.

⁶Hong, “Femininity as a Vocation,” 237.

“female calling” that was based not only in the duties women would normally perform in the private sphere of home and family, but also in the religious sense of vocation. Then, too, nursing was also advertised as a *Frauenberuf* in the sense of a “female profession,” in which unmarried middle-class women were paid for their employment.

The Wars of Liberation and a call by German royal women for female associations that would provide nursing and other aid for the troops set a precedent for the female philanthropic associations, that emerged in the nineteenth century and especially for the *Frauenvereine* that were formed during the 1860s, in yet another period of war. The *Landesmutter* and other elite women and men led these organizations, and this involvement ensured both a close connection to the state and the benefits of royal patronage. As seen in the case of the *Alice Frauenverein*, the *Landesmutter* and other members of the women’s nursing associations were not motivated solely by dynastic or patriotic obligations. They were also influenced by what Rebekka Habermas has described as a “formation of female identity through religion.”⁷ This feminization of religion paralleled the development of specific bourgeois gender roles. Unless they were members of a religious sisterhood, most middle-class German women only “worked” in public through voluntary associations.

As this study has shown, the nineteenth century proved to be a crucial period for the development of nursing and its transition from menial position/religious vocation to professional and “secular” vocation. “Nurses” themselves were classified as women and men who were attached to Catholic orders and those who were employed as paid attendants. These distinctions were maintained through the emergence of Protestant nursing orders, the Red Cross sisterhoods,

⁷Rebekka Habermas, “Weibliche Religiosität – oder: von der Fragilität bürgerliche Identitäten,” in *Wege zur Geschichte des Bürgertums: vierzehn Beiträge*, ed. Klaus Tenfelde and Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 139.

and even the BOKD. The insistence on using the term “*Schwester*,” for example, reflected a sense of religiosity as well as a need to define nursing as a “respectable” form of employment for middle-class women. For Princess Alice of Hesse, Luise Büchner, and other members of the *Alice Frauenverein*, liberal Protestant theology also played a role in the establishment of the women’s association as a nonsectarian union of women and men who were focused on “practical” job training rather than religious orthodoxy.

In addition to royal patronage, the rise during the 1840s of an interconfessional women’s movement, closely connected to German-Catholicism, whose members sought both reforms in religion, education, and employment and also women’s political rights, was also central to the development of nursing as a paid vocation. While these groups were forced to curtail their activities during the reactionary period of the 1850s, the women’s movement reemerged in a more moderate form in the 1860s, having largely silenced its call for female suffrage in favor of an emphasis on what was known as the *Frauenfrage*. In the view of bourgeois female activists like Luise Büchner, the large numbers of unmarried middle-class women necessitated reforms in order to improve and expand female education and employment.

At the same time, Florence Nightingale’s work in the Crimean War and her subsequent efforts to establish a model of secular nursing training during the 1860s and 1870s brought international attention to the potential use of middle-class women as nurses in war and in peacetime. As Nightingale engaged in building a system that trained “Lady Superintendents” for hospitals in Britain and other locations worldwide, some German royal women, including Princess Alice, sought her advice about the construction and administration of hospitals.

Although the *Alice Frauenverein* sent its first superintendent to Britain for training, it and other German Red Cross sisterhoods followed the motherhouse system – a model popularized by the Catholic orders and later modified for the Protestant deaconesses.

Although some of the Red Cross associations, including the *Alice Frauenverein*, were active in the “reform feminism” movement of the mid-nineteenth century, by the 1890s they had largely disengaged from this involvement to focus on membership in the German Red Cross. Through the revival of the Red Cross *Verband*, the Hessian association became closely linked to other nursing sisterhoods, and this connection may have led to a broader sense of German nationalism among its membership. While this can already be seen in association literature published in the first decade of the twentieth century, it came to the forefront during World War I, a time in which independent nurses, the “professional” nurses, were shut out in favor of women trained by the Red Cross. During the Weimar Republic, however, independent nursing reemerged and existed alongside the religious orders and secular sisterhoods that were “bound” to the motherhouse.

The Red Cross sisterhoods represented a transition in nursing, but a transition to *what*, exactly? Clearly, these associations were viewed by nineteenth-century contemporaries as secular (*weltliche*) organizations.⁸ As such, they separated themselves from traditional religious orders whose members took binding vows. This separation, however, did not signify a complete break with the religious model. In addition, even as the number of Red Cross and other secular nurses expanded during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the numbers of nurses attached to confessional orders did not significantly decline. Indeed, by 1914, the field of nursing also included large groups such as the Protestant *Diakonievereine*.

⁸See, for example, Eigenbrodt’s comments in *Stenographischer Bericht*, 70.

Through this examination of the *Alice Frauenverein*, then, we see some of the paradoxes of secular nursing. It rejected a “confessional” model, yet maintained a kind of liberal religiosity, with an emphasis on calling, morality, and charity. While rejecting the convent model, Red Cross nursing associations maintained the *Mutterhaus* system, including the communal living of women. It also rejected the idea of unpaid, monastic life. The nurses were paid – yet they were asked to live fairly modestly. The tradeoff was lifelong security in the form of a pension, healthcare, a place to live in retirement, and even a burial plot if necessary. A certain idea of vocation, with explicit religious overtones - or indeed embodying a specific liberal Protestant religiosity - was useful and necessary in this transitional phase of women's employment. For middle-class women, it was especially helpful to earn a living and at the same time live a respectable life. By exploring these paradoxes as they were explored by the *Alice Frauenverein*, I have highlighted the ongoing significance of religious models for nursing, called into question teleological ideas about the rise of secular or professional nursing, and shown the connection of these associations with the *Frauenfrage* of the mid- to late nineteenth century.

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