



A 2 / 1524

Jagdschloss Volksgarten,

Darmstadt.

August 2nd 1888

Dear Miss Hill, I am greatly obliged to you for having so kindly written to me at once after receiving Miss Jackson's letter. It was the remembrance of the great regard & admiration my dear Mother had for you that encouraged me in thus troubling you with questions. Knowing how fully your time must be taken up, I feel some scruples in addressing you once more, my only excuse is, that I know of no one else in England who can give me the necessary information. Miss Jackson did not quite understand what it was I really wished to know, & I hope you will therefore pardon me, if I enter into fuller details. When my Mother died, the charitable institutions & society, which she had founded & over which she presided, continued their work under the patronage of my father, until I was grown up, when I took my Mother's place as president.

The society, which is called the "Alice Frauen-Verein", has two branches; one the primary & most important occupies itself with training nurses in the little hospital at Darmstadt which bears my mother's name, & in sending them out to the different towns & villages in Hesse, where such nurses are needed.

The other has the supervision of the so-called "Landes und Städtische Waisen." that is, orphans for whom the country or the town pays a yearly sum of money, & who are placed with foster parents.

My mother entirely agreed with your opinion of the superiority of home education, & there exists no large orphanage in Hesse. The ladies of the Alice Society see that the children are in the charge of respectable people & properly cared for.

In 1882 the State of Hesse passed a law, whereby illegitimate children placed out to nurse, are brought under the supervision of the police, from the day of their birth until they have attained their 6th year. Finding that many important items in the care of these children were beyond the comprehension or control of police officials, the State asked the Alice Society to assist in this work. A separate committee

was therefor formed at Darmstadt; the members of which visit these children, advise the police of any necessary change of foster parents, & exercise a sort of moral control over the latter. These children being mostly of the poorer classes & their mothers often not remaining in the town, the help of the police is invaluable to get the required information about them.

When the children attain their 6th year, the State ceases to occupy itself directly with them, they are obliged to go to school, & it is considered that the control of the school officials replaces the control of the police. This would be all very well, if these cases were as simple to deal with as those of orphans;

unfortunately this is not so. Where the children are paupers, the town takes charge of them & pays for their maintenance & they pass into the hands of the branch of the Alice Society, which supervises the town orphans. But in all those cases, where a pension is payed by the father or mother, this control does not exist. The children rarely remain long in the same family, unless related to it & the pensions are irregularly payed. These evils exist from the very beginning, but as long as the ~~pol~~ police knows about them, they are capable of being remedied to a large degree. From the day that the child attains

its 6th year, all this changes. The Society receives no further information of change of foster parents, etc. in- voluntarily loses sight of the child, & chance decides whether it be properly cared for or not. This is evidently all wrong & the Alice Society is therefore anxious to find some means of continuing to assist these children. The average Germans are poorer than the average English & in consequence the Societies also. We can spend but little money on our work, even were it right or advisable to do so.

The question presents great difficulties, & knowing how far in advance England is in most charitable branches I offered to try & get some information as to how this matter is treated there. I would therefore pray you, if it be not too much trouble, to let me know what is done in London by your Societies, for the nurturing & education of illegitimate children. Whether the State or Town exercises any control & for how long, & lastly what, with your varied experience among the lower classes of society, would be your advise upon the subject. If money & time is spent in keeping such children alive until their baby years are safely passed - surely it is but wise, if afterwards care is taken to bring them up decently. Otherwise the State has only saved the life of members, which sooner or later must become a burden to it, in the shape of paupers, vagabonds or criminals.

Hoping you will excuse this long letter, I remain
Yours truly

Victoria Battenberg

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