

B O O K S

EIN NEUES LICHT¹

by

KURT GIHRING

The sub-title of this book is "Grossherzogin Luise und das Rote Kreuz"; it sustains the reader's interest throughout and is based on authentic documents. The author gives a fascinating account of the life of the Grand Duchess Louise of Baden, born in 1838, daughter of the German Emperor William I and the Empress Augusta. The contribution she made to humanitarian work, in particular in the establishment of the Red Cross Society of the Grand Duchy of Baden, is well described. Like her mother, the Empress Augusta², she worked in her country to make the Geneva Convention effective. Her action in setting up the "Society of the Ladies of Baden" (Badischer Frauen Verein) had a decisive influence on the rapid extension and peace-time preparation of aid to the wounded and sick. She organized teams of lady-assistants ready to carry out any tasks necessary and fired with enthusiasm for the principles of the Red Cross. This was one of the first stirrings of the international movement which was to be engendered by the Committee of Five in Geneva. It was thanks to her efforts that, in 1866, during the Austro-Prussian War, her country had the first independent volunteer corps to go into action at the side of the army medical services.

"Ein Neues Licht" is well written and illustrated. The author's choice of documents is most judicious and he has given comments on the most significant phases of the Grand Duchess Louise's work and its remarkable expansion. As for the National Society, founded in Baden with the backing of the Grand Duke Ferdinand I, it

¹ Burda Druck und Verlag, Offenburg/Baden, 248 p.

² See *Revue internationale*, June and September 1960.

expanded and was an example and inspiration beyond its national frontiers, arousing great interest and zeal to imitate it.

The research work for this book has brought to light information hitherto unknown. In this historical study Louise of Baden stands out as one of the most fascinating and enterprising personalities of the nineteenth century. Like her mother, she fully understood the message in Dunant's "A Memory of Solferino". Her influence was decisive and on August 22, 1864, the Grand Duchy of Baden was among the signatories of the Geneva Convention. Although the establishment of National Societies proved sometimes to be laborious in other countries, it was sufficient that the Duke and Duchess displayed their constant interest in the bodies already active in the field of public welfare, for the latter to develop into valuable auxiliaries prepared to assist the army medical services in the field at times of trial. The author shows these events in their proper perspective and introduces the reader to those connected with Louise of Baden; those men and women sharing a common ideal who helped her with enthusiasm and self-denial to bring her many humanitarian schemes to fruition.

Kurt Gihring had the excellent idea of reproducing and demonstrating the importance of the most significant correspondence exchanged between the Court of Baden and the International Committee of the Red Cross and this book is a testimony to the close co-operation in those moments of decision which stood out in Red Cross development at a time when it was becoming universal.

The author concludes with a tribute to Louise of Baden for the fine personality that was hers: "By her example she proved to her contemporaries — and even to our own generation — that it is by helping one's neighbour and by serving humanity that our own character is wrought".

M. I.