



"PREVENTIVE supervision" is offered where families need help in recognising and dealing with their own problems

(continued from previous page)

The first call was to see a seven-year-old boy and his foster-mother. The boy had been badly treated by his natural parents, but in his new home had made excellent progress. The Division believes that if a child cannot be brought up by his own parents then the next best thing is to live in somebody else's home under reasonably natural conditions. Last year there were over 2000 State wards living in foster-homes.

"In a good foster-home the child soon adapts himself to his new family, becomes an accepted member of it, and within the daily security and warmth of normal family relationships is likely to develop naturally into a person with his own sense of worth in home, school and community. Institutional care, necessary as it is in some cases, cannot provide this intimate relationship," says the Division's Annual Report.

The qualities necessary to be a good foster-parent are those which, in the main, are found in all good parents. One of the important things is that "they should be able to accept a child for what he is and not expect him to reach perfection in a week or even in a lifetime." In the home we visited there was no doubt of the warmth of the greeting. The children, there was another child also in the home, heard the car coming, shouted "Here's the lady!" and in a flash had raced down to meet her. She was a familiar visitor to the home, where she is regarded as a family friend and shares the privileges of other friends such as sending birthday presents, and visiting in hospital when the child is sick. On a visit such as this she may arrange for the purchasing of new clothes, or for a visit to a doctor or to the speech clinic. The boy in his new home was lively and happy. "Mind you, we've had our difficulties," said his foster-mother, and to an experienced observer such as the Welfare Officer there were still signs of the experiences the child had been through. Children such as this, often remain in a foster-home for many years, and grow up as a member of the family. Eventually they may rejoin their natural parents, and although this will be felt as a loss

by the foster-parents, the years he has spent with them will help him for the rest of his life.

At the next home we visited the child was being boarded out. A situation such as this may arise when the parents are separated and the mother becomes ill. The child may go to live with friends who have to notify the Welfare Division of the new arrangements. The Officer then visits from time to time to see that everything is satisfactory. In this home, where there were several other children, the Officer had a vociferous welcome, and again there was no doubt of the happiness of the child.

The third visit was of a different kind, as the family were under what is

called "preventive supervision." "Families under 'preventive supervision' are folk who, through some lack, aren't as happily situated as everybody else," said the Officer. "It may be lack of money, lack of intelligence, or there may be marital problems or bad housing conditions. Legally we have no right to intervene in such a situation, and any help we are able to give depends wholly on the goodwill of the family." The chain of events starting a family coming under "preventive supervision" may be an accident to the husband at work. After a period off-work he starts drinking and the home conditions begin to deteriorate. The next-door neighbour may notice the children's raggedness and get in touch with the Child Welfare Department. Once things are going smoothly the visiting Officer can give all kinds of help, from arranging a suitable menu to providing for financial loans. Occasionally they will strike trouble, as an Officer who was threatened with being thrown over the banisters told us, but more usually after the initial suspicion has passed a great deal can be done. Sometimes cases of "preventive supervision" will land an Officer in a strange position. There was the time when an Officer had two cases in the same house, with both families using the same front door. "When I visited them I was never sure which family would answer the door, so I had to be prepared to deal with either," she told us. "It turned out later on that one of these families was the tenant and the other the landlord, and I was rather afraid that if the landlord discovered his tenant was also 'under the Welfare' he might evict him."

When children first come under the care of the Division they usually spend some time at a receiving home. This is often a settling down period while they are awaiting foster-homes or adoption. In Wellington this is at Miramar. An old wooden house, now modernised, its interior resembles a boarding school, with neat dormitories, play rooms, single

rooms for older children and a huge kitchen. The Welfare Officer discussed some new arrivals with the Matron, and we saw an older girl looking after a very young illegitimate baby, who was awaiting adoption.

The day ended with calls to a local headmaster and to the Child Health Clinic. Teachers are often the first to notice something amiss with a child, and many valuable leads come from them. At the Health Clinic a team of doctors and psychiatrists is on hand to help unravel the more complicated problems. On the whole, the children enjoy going, as it makes them feel rather important. Inside, the staff will make a fuss of them and try to dispel any exaggerated fears the children may have. A correct diagnosis and treatment may save endless suffering later.

And so this "relatively static" day ended. The next day may start, as one actually did, with a fortnight-old baby due for a feed in half an hour being left in the Child Welfare Office. "In Child Welfare work, no one would ever get bored by having to do the same work over again—there's no possibility of that," said Mr. Peek. The attitude of mind which lies behind the work of these Officers may be illustrated by a quotation from a book by an English specialist worker with maladjusted children, C. L. C. Burns. "The need for understanding, tolerance and tenderness is a desperate one in our days; we cannot afford, any of us, to have rigid, puritanical, or punitive ideas with regard to human relationships... there is danger in that kind of cold 'charity' which finds it necessary to force children to be good, to be obedient, to be religious: with no real understanding, no warmth, no sympathy." The issues at stake are not only the lives of individual children but the welfare of our society as a whole.

(In our next issue, a second article will deal with ways in which the Division tries to help children who have come into conflict with the law or who need more detailed remedial treatment.)

ZB SUNDAY SHOWCASE

Echoes of a Golden Age

THE amazing popularity of opera at the turn of the century is well known, but opportunities for hearing the voices of the foremost singers of the time are practically non-existent. Consequently, whatever form they take, such chances are milestones in the lives of opera lovers today.

In 1901-1903, Lionel Mapleson, librarian of the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, took cylinder recording equipment, presented to him by Thomas Edison, up to the flies high above the stage at the Met. and took recordings at actual performances. These cylindrical recordings have been re-recorded on to disc, and in *ZB Sunday Showcase* on September 30, excerpts from an LP recording, *Echoes of the Golden Age of Opera*, will be heard in a programme introduced by James Robertson.

"It must be admitted," says Mr. Robertson, "that the applause comes off best, and that the musical sounds vary enormously in strength and quality. But every now and then a flash of brilliance penetrates the gloom—a magnificent high note thrown off with head tilted backwards, perhaps, or a cascade of silvery sound." In fact, the surface

noise of the cylinders and a more or less powerful background roar sometimes almost obliterate the music. In this pro-



TYRONE POWER

gramme, the listener will be helped by Mr. Robertson's playing on the piano and picking out "what is important from the overall din and clatter."

Excerpts are from the second act of Donizetti's *Daughter of the Regiment*, *Faust*, and Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*, and the principal singers are Nellie Melba, Marcella Sembrich, Emma Calvé, Albert Alvarez, Giuseppe Campanari, Johanna Gadski and Edouard de Reszke.

The second half of this *Showcase* programme is taken up with a reading of the first Canto of Byron's epic satire, *Don Juan*, by Tyrone Power. *Don Juan*, which was published in 1819-1824, contains sixteen cantos: the first deals with young Juan's encounter with Donna Julia, the platonic purity of its beginnings and its development until Julia's husband raids her bedroom. With many lengthy protestations at this insult, Julia proclaims her innocence and her husband is contrite—until he stumbles over a pair of boots. They are Juan's, and it is the husband's turn to rave and protest, and finally to dismiss Julia to a convent. The satire is as enjoyable today as it was in the 19th century—perhaps even more so—and Power's treatment of it is pleasing. The rich tone and fluidity of his voice are particularly well suited to the ease and beauty of Byron's verse, and full justice is done to the nuances and cryptic asides which are sprinkled liberally throughout the piece.