

recreational, and the rest. Provisions would comply with requirements of state departments of health, welfare and education.

In spite of its careful plans the committee, aware that children and foster parents are humans and therefore to a certain point unpredictable, is prepared for occasional "throwbacks" due to sponsors unable or unwilling to live up to their affidavits or displeased with the children assigned to them. So far not one such case has arisen concerning committee sponsored children. However, several instances have been brought to the attention of the committee wherein an independent sponsor who has signed an affidavit enabling a child or a child and its mother to come over on a consular visa, has grown weary of his responsibility of providing support. In the case of an unaccompanied child, the committee refers the problem to one of its designated child care agencies. In the case of a parent and child, the committee, which does not bring in adults or handle their problems, refers the persons concerned to an appropriate refugee or family agency.

THE STORY OF FINANCING THE EUROPEAN CHILDREN'S program is complex enough to be the subject of another article. The United States Committee is now working under funds supplied by "private individuals and foundations" and its special "angel," Marshall Field; the local committees are self-financed; the designated agencies are running on "good will" so far as committee work is concerned. However, a nationwide campaign for \$5,000,000 is now underway, focused in the local communities through local leaders. This money when, as, and if collected, will be apportioned by the central committee to itself and the local committees for operating expenses, to the designated child care agencies; and temporary shelters for services rendered, and in cases of emergency to the actual support of children. Transatlantic passage when it cannot be

paid by a child's parent will be furnished by the American Committee in London which is raising its own money. But the real hope of the program, the financing of the problematic "mercy ships," is shrouded with vague confidence. "O, somebody will charter them," is the answer at Fourth Avenue.

Last month when a British liner was torpedoed, killing and drowning seventy-seven children who were on their way to Canada (none of them committee sponsored children), the question of the wisdom of the whole evacuation program was raised in tragic terms. After the first paralysis of horror, many people came to the realization that what the children in England are facing is a choice between two dangers—a prolonged danger from bombing, bringing daily terror for an unknown length of time; an equally great danger from drowning, but lasting only a week or ten days and followed by peace and the chance to live a normal life. That the committee believed that many parents in Britain would choose the latter course for their children as the lesser of two evils is evidenced by the fact that it continued to function. Whether the recent announcement of the British government again postponing evacuation plans will affect the plans of the American committee in England is still uncertain.

The U. S. committee now has 1,600 affidavits on file—each representing a home waiting for a child or children. Inquiries have fallen off somewhat with the lull in arrivals, but information from local communities—many of which have not seen one child visitor—are that they would step up considerably with the appearance of a refugee child. More children will probably arrive, but in what numbers no one can predict. In the meantime, while waiting for the opportunity to demonstrate the full flower of their hospitality, the American people have experienced a lesson in organization for child protection not lacking in significance for their own defense program.

## On Becoming a Foster Parent

BY MARION D. GUTMAN

**D**OWN the gangplank they come with their flying hair, their eager politeness, their sporting little grins. And Americans, with misty-eyed accord, bid these children welcome and vow that they will find happiness as well as safety in this country. But to make a child happy requires more than determination. Determination to have life and substance must go hand in hand with the urgent desire to understand that child. For it is understanding alone that will enable us to reach the fears and doubts and loneliness that lie behind those high held chins and gallant smiles.

There is no way of forecasting just how much affection the child with ties across the sea can spare to his American foster parents. One child will skip with little ado into the family circle and by a surprise bunch of wild flowers, a present bought from his allowance, an unexpectedly violent hug, will tell his foster parents that he likes them, and that, if he had to leave his own home, he is glad they let him come to live with them. Another child will walk warily, giving no quarter until he has convinced himself that these strange people are his friends.

Still another never will venture beyond the outskirts of the family life, emphasizing by every gesture that he is very, very temporary. It is not easy for foster parents to find happiness with this type of child. It is especially hard if the people up the street have a child who came on the same boat, and who acts as though he had lived with them all his life.

These differences in children cannot be explained, at least by the knowledge that most of us have at hand. They depend on a child's whole life experience, what his parents mean to him, his capacity for change, how he was prepared for the new life, what fears and dreads and tortured loyalties have him in their clutch. The aloof child is the loneliest of all; he cannot ease his pain with new ties and new loves, he cannot be cajoled or reasoned or shamed out of his aloofness.

But the foster parent who will let the child set the pace of the relationship, who will be what the child wants him to be rather than what he himself hoped to be, who will be there when the child reaches for him and vanish when the child feels that he must go on alone, will earn

the one reward that foster parents want, "appreciation." Though the aloof child never will say, "They were like my own parents," some day he will remember the days of his exile with the grateful thought, "They understood me and that understanding pulled me over some pretty rough spots." Perhaps, this is the greatest tribute of all.

Conflicting loyalties can pull relentlessly at the child who is living in two worlds, and wise foster parents will protect him from this extremity. Each child brings with him from his homeland his own creed and code, inculcated in him by parents who could not know that the day ever would come when the things they taught him would come under the scrutiny of other parents with other ways. Foster parents should not try to make over these children who are merely loaned to us. Such an attempt would be a breach of faith with the parents across the sea, and it would impose upon the child the strain of two allegiances.

NO CHILD CAN KNOW REAL PEACE WHO DOES NOT HAVE the assurance that the things he thinks are important and good are respected by the people in whose home he lives. He should not be asked to choose between parents and foster parents. And if he wants to talk about his house, his dog, his school, the beach where he spent his holidays, he should be allowed to do so. He cannot forget, with the speed of a ship's passing, all the things that for so long made up the terribly important business of his everyday life. He must be assured that the new life is a continuation, rather than a denial, of the old. The ease with which he takes on new customs and the zest with which he finds new interests will depend on the gentleness and respect with which the old ties are treated.

Homesickness would be a simple problem, if it could always be recognized. But it wears strange faces and appears at strange times. It may crop up when a child appears so happy and contented that the adults around him marvel at "how quickly a child forgets." Actually things about home have not lost their power to hurt him. A screaming headline may fill him with terror; there may be an awful moment in the midst of gaiety when he will be struck by the thought that perhaps never, never again . . . ; he may be tortured by a sudden stab of guilt that asks him how he can be enjoying himself when his parents are in danger.

If the child showed his nostalgia by looking wistful and far away or by huddling into a corner like a sick puppy, he would find arms aching to comfort him. Usually he shows it by singularly unlovable behavior. He may jump off the porch into the petunias although he has been told a hundred times to be careful; he may bully the baby and tease the cat; he may say "No" to all the things to which he should say "Yes." He is protesting against the unhappiness that has crept up on him, and he is all the lonelier and more miserable because he is in wrong with the entire household. The imaginative foster parent will understand. He will see that a child's indirectness is like that of the woman who is curt with her offspring because she lost too much at bridge, or like that of the man who is rude to his wife because business is bad.

In the job of taking care of other people's children, where blood ties, tradition, family custom do not furnish the answers, foster parents should not be asked to carry on alone. Years of transplanting children, whom some tragic circumstance has robbed of the security of their parents'

home, have given social workers experience in problems that are bound to arise. Their help and advice should be available for the foster parent who, for the moment, faces a problem a little too difficult or different for him to thrash out alone.

Perhaps social workers, because they have learned how much depends on the way the child is prepared for his new home, can render their most important service to foster parents during the preliminaries. Although the "guest child" has received some preparation before he leaves his own shores, much remains for the person to do who meets him at the boat and takes him through his first strange days. He will be full of the weeks of family deliberation before it was finally decided that he should come to America. Some of the family and friends said he'd be homesick, others that he would forget his people. He needs help if he is not to be caught between these two alternatives. Someone must be ready to answer his many anxious questions about the house he'll live in, the people who'll take care of him, the school he'll go to. He must be given as much detail as he asks for about the plans that have been made for him, so that the steps that lie ahead will lose some of their terrifying strangeness, and he will not feel that he is being propelled into the unknown by all-powerful adult forces. And if the person who is with him during these first hard days can earn his confidence, she will be able to give him confidence in the home to which she guides him.

THE MATCHING UP PROCESS IS A POINT AT WHICH SOCIAL agencies can be helpful; for placement, like marriage, is a matter of matching. The child who is accustomed to rugged economies should not be placed in a home where the yearly income is apparently inexhaustible. These children are merely loaned to us, and we must keep them ready to step back, after the duration, into the way of life in which they have been brought up. Tragedy can be brewed by giving children luxuries which their parents never can hope to duplicate.

In matching there is also that very important matter of intellectual compatibility with other children in the home. Some children take the school grades at a gallop; others are lucky if they make inch by inch progress. While it is true that a conscientious student may have an uplifting effect on him who does his homework between the first and second bells, still the matter of native endowment cannot be ignored. It would be unfortunate to house an intellectual starlet and a modestly endowed child under the same roof.

It is also important to take into account a child's place in his own family. Is he the only one, or are there more of his kind? Is he one of many or one of few? Is he first, last, or in-between? Two youngest might wage a right good battle over the place with few responsibilities and many privileges to which each is accustomed. Just so a sedate little only child might find it hard to get settled in a houseful of roaring children.

But what about the foster parents? What do they derive from this experience to which they must give so much of themselves? It is hard to talk in absolutes, because foster parents, like children, have their individual differences. But, one thing seems certain. The person who takes a strange child into his home and gives him understanding and a chance, will have something of imperishable value to keep him company the rest of his life.

# A Tribute to Maud Ballington Booth

By JAMES V. BENNETT

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NO one who is familiar with the problems of the prison can gloss over the startling fact that 56 percent of the 180,000 men and women in prisons and reformatories today have previously been in some kind of a correctional institution. Why do so many return to prison? Partially it is because our prisons are handicapped by overcrowding, inadequate staff, and failure to meet the economic and emotional needs of the prisoner. But the more important reason why so many men return to prison is because society itself forces the ex-prisoner to return to crime by making it impossible for him to earn an honest living or associate with honest people. The ex-prisoner is shunned on every hand, discriminated against, and exploited by those seeking cheap labor. One of the prisoners who recently came back into one of our institutions explained it this way: "Sure, I was free. Free to be a bum, free to walk the streets cold and hungry and to sleep in alleyways, free to go from one employment office to another, free—indeed—but in a cruel, friendless world. *You should ask why I'm back.*"

I am confident that at least 85 percent of the men leaving the prison gates do so with the firm determination not to come back, and yet over half of them do return to prison within five years and sacrifice the freedom they have longed for through many bitter days and sleepless nights spent behind the prison bars. What these men need is kind, intelligent help and guidance in the community.

FORTY-FIVE YEARS AGO OCCURRED AN event which was destined to have great influence on the prison program of the world. In that year the prison officials of the California prison at San Quentin invited Maud Ballington Booth to visit the prison. From that time she dedicated her life to prison work. In May 1896, the warden of Sing Sing Prison also invited Mrs. Booth to speak to the assembled prisoners in the chapel. This was the beginning of the Volunteer Prison League, a division of the Volunteers of America.

The progress which grew up around the Volunteer Prison League brought together all those essentials which the early Quakers, and Dwight, Wines, Mullins, and Butler had urged but for which it always has been difficult to secure official recognition.

First came the prison visiting and the moral instruction. Groups of devoted



Globe Press Photo Service

Mrs. Booth's seventy-fifth birthday was marked by many warm tributes to her years of service, this among them.

men and women were sent into the jails and prisons of America by Mrs. Booth with the message that somebody cared what happened to the prisoners. They brought the gospel of repentance and forgiveness, of rebirth and new life to men who had abandoned all hope of a future. They sought out the families of prisoners who were in need and helped them tide over the difficulties inevitable when the breadwinner is removed. Realizing that one of the greatest needs of social outcasts is to belong to somebody or to something with a social meaning, they drew them into the league to which even the most desperate character could belong and find a helping hand. Later, recognizing that the first need of a discharged prisoner is shelter, food, and a job, Mrs. Booth set up her great experiment in "Hope Halls," the first of which was opened in New York City. Before the days when parole supervision helped prisoners find homes and jobs, thousands of ex-prisoners found sanctuary in these halls—rest, food, shelter, and helpful advice while seeking a job and a more permanent place to live. To many a man these simple aids, given without question to anyone who asked, meant the difference between a return to crime as a way of life and a chance to make good. In other words, Mrs. Booth and her workers carried on the very fundamentals of good prison service when public officials could give little more than custodial care.

Nor has this work ceased with the organization of effective state parole pro-

grams. Today the Volunteer Prison League carries on its work in such important centers as Los Angeles, Kansas City, Columbus, and elsewhere. It is estimated that 200,000 ex-prisoners and half a million relatives of the imprisoned have been helped by these efforts and as many as a thousand prisoners have been paroled to the league at one time.

For nearly a half century Maud Ballington Booth not only has directed and organized a many-sided program for the improvement of the American prison system but has herself gone into the jails and prisons of America ceaselessly preaching the word of hope, talking with individual prisoners, strengthening the weak, and encouraging both inmates and officials who are attempting to promote a better understanding between the prisoner and society. Mrs. Booth has always done this with the utmost tact and good feeling. Never has she insisted upon her right to enter a public institution where she was not invited. She has, indeed, been the more welcome because we have come to realize that her sincerity and practical understanding can help make over the emotional life of those with whom the warden must deal. As at San Quentin and Sing Sing, so later she was invited to aid in the work at Joliet and Leavenworth. Governors and legislatures have sought her advice. Said my friend Warden Johnston of Alcatraz, "She is the one woman who is admitted without question into every prison in the United States."

WE ALL KNOW THAT REFORMATION TO BE lasting and to be effective must come from within. True reformation is essentially a change of mental and emotional processes, a realization and strengthening of the intangibles of the mind and soul. Mrs. Booth has stimulated the thought and feeling of more prisoners toward sincere reformation than any other single individual who has been engaged in prison work during the last half century. She has been able to do this because she speaks more than the language of the criminologist. She speaks not only of classification of prisoners, of psychiatry, of legal rights, but also the more vibrant words of essential justice.

Recognition of her great work has come to Mrs. Booth from the humble and the great. But more precious to her, I know, than all the commendation from those in high places is the knowledge that thousands of unfortunates have come to her for help and never in vain.