

under the heading 'The Charity Foster-Mother' a woman who takes a child in order to gain merit with the community; surely a misuse of the word 'charity'?

The statistical findings at the end are clear and not too elaborate and pose some interesting questions on which further research might well be done. One wonders why only one child appears to have been placed with relatives; did none come forward? Were they considered unsuitable? Were they overcrowded? Would not a relation, even if a not very satisfactory one, have been better than a period of care in an institution? A relative could at least have provided the security of the familiar and, tremendously important, would have been able to talk to the child about his parents and home. Secondly, one queries if any help is given to the 'failed' foster-parents or are they left insecure and unhappy, weighed down with a feeling of inadequacy to face their neighbours and explain that it was the fault of the Children's Department who should never have sent them such a child?

Throughout the whole of Mr Trasler's book we are kept very much aware that a foster relationship is not a normal one; like adoption it has many difficulties which the ordinary parent and child happily escapes. It is an extremely difficult undertaking to foster an unwanted child; those who do it deserve our support and admiration and those who fail need our sympathy.

HILARY HALPIN

BERENSON: A Biography. By Sylvia Sprigge. (Allen and Unwin; 35s.)

This is the first biography to be written about this very remarkable man, a man outstanding in the world of art history and of so strangely diverse a character that we may be long guessing what he was up to. The author, for all her close research and careful documentation, perhaps indeed because of these things, does not rekindle in living terms the vivacity and drive, the tenderness, loneliness and assurance of her hero; she is perpetually diverted into side-issues which no longer add colour to her central figure, however interesting they may be in themselves. It does not help the reader to know to whom Crowe, the associate of Cavalcaselle, was married, or that he was knighted; nor that Mrs Strong was given free lodging by the Italian Government in 1940; yet such information is on every page. It is more a book around Berenson than about him, and should be of value to future biographers.

Berenson's life is a unique case of an art historian of conventionally accepted cultured and refined tastes turning these gifts to the amassing of great wealth, while holding always to a vision of quiet retirement. In 1875 a Jewish boy of ten leaves the Pale of Settlement in Lithuania to migrate with his parents in extreme poverty to a slum in Boston. There, through his personal vision, he so educates himself that within thirty-two years he has become not only a highly cultured man and the leading expert in the field of Italian Renaissance art, but, too, commands a salary of £20,000 a year and perhaps as much again or more in commissions on the sale of pictures—holding this for thirty years while living an elegant personal life in his

large house near Florence, which he can eventually leave to the University of Harvard with an endowment of a million dollars.

No one else has turned art connoisseurship to such ends, and yet when he was fifty-five he could write: 'I see now how fruitless in interest is the history of art, and how worthless an undertaking is that of determining who painted or carved or built whatsoever it be. I see now how valueless all such matters are to the life of the spirit.' What a fascinating paradox! It wasn't until he was seventy-two that he broke his association with Sir Joseph Duveen and felt free to enjoy 'my long interrupted it-ness'.

Berenson was ninety-four when he died. One of his earliest art influences was Walter Pater and his book on the Renaissance, and later *Marius the Epicurean*, from which he learnt, in his own words, 'to extract from the chaotic succession of events in the common day what was wholesome and sweet', and from Walter Pater's that 'Life was not a means to some end, but . . . from dying hour to hour an end in itself'.

The book is attractively arranged and contains many excellent photographs.

H. S. EDE

NOTICES

IT IS PAUL WHO WRITES, by Ronald Knox and Ronald Cox (Burns and Oates; 18s.) is an arrangement of Mgr Knox's translation of the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St Paul, including Hebrews, to form a narrative of St Paul's life, enclosing and situating his writings; on the opposite page Fr Cox provides a genial commentary which, though it avoids difficulties of detail, ably exposes the broad outlines of St Paul's thought and circumstances.

THE TOKOLOSH, by Ronald Segal (Sheed and Ward; 6s.), might be described as the adventures of a little black god in search of justice. Its satire on the consequences of *apartheid* was underlined at the moment of publication by the events at Sharpeville, the author himself only just evading arrest by seeking asylum in Bechuanaland, but plainly it will not lose its sting for some time to come.

SAINTS OF RUSSIA, by Constantin de Grunwald (Hutchinson; 25s.), is a pleasant, if rather ingenuous, introduction to Russian holiness in its historical setting, from St Vladimir at the turn of the first millennium to the *startsy* of the Optima monastery during the nineteenth century. It will hardly convert Mr K., but it will attract western readers who want an introduction to these sometimes strange but always impressive figures.

POETRY AND POLITICS UNDER THE STUARTS, by C. V. Wedgwood (Cambridge University Press; 25s.), is one of those books so competently constructed and so readable that their erudition does not at once strike the reader. It appeals on both the levels of the title. The examples are seldom without interest as verse and gain a great deal from being set against the detailed historical background; the political struggles are illuminated and humanized by the personalities and styles of the poets involved.