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WILLIAM WOOD, M.D., M.R.C.P., D.P.H. Colonel, Narrabeen, State of New South Wales. For services in the interests of ex-Service men and women.

I.S.O.

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M.B.E. (Civil Division)

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The photograph of Sir Russell Brock was supplied by Walter Stoneman, those of Lieutenant-General Sir William Drew, K.C.B., and Sir Peter Medawar by Walter Bird, and those of Sir James Cameron and Sir Hector MacLennan by the *Glasgow Herald*.

Medicine To-day

It is a commonplace that actors dread the competition of children, especially babies, who are notorious for scene-stealing. (Wasn't it the late W. C. Fields who, when asked how he liked babies, replied "Fried!") In the B.B.C. 2 programme *Medicine To-day* on 10 June it was soon clear that the babies were at a disadvantage in being matched against two natural screen personalities, Dr. Mary D. Sheridan and Dr. D. F. Egan. To see a dedicated individual at work is always an invigorating experience, and when this is allied to a technique formidable enough to produce the impression of relaxed ease shown by these two delightful ladies, the pleasure is doubled.

Gone was the atmosphere of hurried urgency which marred some previous transmissions in this series. Instead the whole programme was devoted to one subject, allowing time for discussion and expansion of important points. The theme was the importance of early screening of babies in the detection of deviations from the norms of development, behaviour, and perception. The method, in the film we were shown, was to demonstrate, in infants of successive ages, the

practicability of simple tests of hearing, vision, and co-ordination. It was suggested that an "At risk" register should be compiled when births had been accompanied or preceded by such risks as prematurity, rubella, or toxæmia in pregnancy, or asphyxia. Early diagnosis was the vital factor in ensuring the best treatment. How easy it is for a busy general practitioner, faced with an anxious mother, to fall into the trap of saying, "We'll have to wait till he is older."

Working as a team, one to hold the infant's attention and the other to provide the stimulus of sound or movement which served as the test of normal responses, these two doctors showed that they were able to detect abnormalities at a very early age. I was reminded of some of the fascinating accounts of comparative development in humans and the higher apes, and the sudden leap forward of the human infant as it acquires the power of speech. For this reason, as Dr. Sheridan pointed out, basic tests before the age of 12 months are easier to formulate, since, at a later age, the child may learn trick methods of overcoming its deficiencies.

It is not uncommon, in my experience, for young mothers to think that sight-testing cannot be carried out until the child is able to read, or at least name letters. That this is far from the truth was pointed out by Dr. Peter Gardner, who showed a variety of techniques, such as matching tests, by means of which an accurate assessment of a child's visual capacity can be made long before these skills have been acquired. On the other hand, it is always well to heed the mother who says that her baby does not seem able to see, or hear, properly.

I could not help feeling that the young performers on this programme had been carefully selected for the demonstrations, so perfectly did they carry out all the tasks set them. This is, no doubt, a tribute to the experience of the doctors taking part, as well as skilful editing. Nevertheless, I found the programme stimulating and enjoyable, and will, I hope, view with a more detached and scientific eye the next infantile delinquent who wrecks my consulting-room.

MICHAEL STAUNTON.