These our Children. By Arthur Collis and Vera E. Poole. Gollancz. 8s. 6d.

It will be remembered that the Curtis Committee drew attention to the fact that it was precluded from dealing with children suffering from neglect in their homes, and that subsequently this question was raised in Parliament.

No one is better equipped to deal with it—in so far as it is concerned with poverty and slum conditions—than members of Family Service Units whose former book, *Problem Families* presented such an unforgettable picture of the surroundings and lives of people written off in despair by other social agencies as unhelpable.

In this new publication, emanating from the same source, the problem is dealt with from the standpoint of the slum child—in relation to the home in which he lives, the streets in which he finds his diversion, the play centre, club and play ground which he frequents, and the school which seeks to educate him. A final chapter, "What of the Future?" discusses possible lines of action, stressing the following recommendations:

- (1) That the Government should institute an investigation to ascertain the extent of the problem and to provide a full-scale picture of its exact nature. Such a survey should include suggestions as to methods which might be adopted for the re-education of parents accused of neglect.
- (2) That a new Child and Family Welfare Service should be set up, empowered to deal with all children (whether of school age or under) and acting as a clearing centre for cases of ill-treatment, neglect, behaviour difficulties and delinquency. The Service should be staffed by specially trained and experienced field workers in direct contact with the parents and children concerned.

The number of children living at slum level in whose lives this book seeks to arouse interest, is happily small if expressed in terms of a percentage of the whole child population, but it presents a problem which has eluded all the lines of approach so far tried and which—despite the increasing number of social workers and Local Authority officials who are continually in and out of slum homes and who have a real desire to help, is still no nearer solution.

Only a resolute attack on a wide front can deal with it effectively, and it is urgent that such an attack should be planned soon. For as long as these conditions exist they involve:

"the stunting and thwarting of young lives, heartbreak and tragedy for many, and a denial to children of all that is best in life."

In the solution of the problem, the contribution of the psychiatrist the psychologist and the mental health social worker, is needed equally with that of trained personnel from other fields, and only by united action will a solution be found.

To the complacent optimist who—comparing the amenities of the welfare state with the horrors of child labour in the days of the industrial revolution—congratulates himself that such things can no longer happen here, this book may come as an unwelcome shock; to the social worker baffled by his inability to rescue children from physical, mental and spiritual squalor, it will come as a challenge and an incentive. By all responsible citizens it should be read and discussed, and if a stimulus to thought and action is needed, no more effective awakener of the social conscience can be prescribed.

A.L.H.

The Show of Violence. By Frederic Wertham, M.D. Gollancz. 15s.

The author has already attracted much attention in America by his book *Dark Legend*. This is another study of murder and in particular of the relations of the law and psychiatry in murder. Dr. Wertham's method is to take a number of cases—no doubt well known in America, but not so to most English readers—and criticize many of the opinions, psychiatric and legal, expressed about them.

One result is certainly convincing evidence of the confusion of thought on the subject and lack of consistence in procedure; and Dr. Wertham's account written in language which is by no means cold-blooded will hold the attention of any but the most hardened sensation-monger. What is less clear is his attempt to draw practical conclusions from these cases. His first chapter, "Psychiatry in the Courtroom" poses the questions and some of the points illustrated by his series of cases are surveyed in his last chapter—"Mathematics of Murder". Many readers will be disappointed that he has not put forward more constructive suggestions; nevertheless his obvious sincerity and burning desire to improve the state of the law, and the standard of psychiatric evidence stand out throughout the book, and provide a step to the education of public opinion on this most controversial subject.

R.F.T.

The World Next Door. By Fritz Peters. Gollancz. 12s. 6d.

The publication of the *Snake Pit* written by a woman, and the subsequent success of the film of the book, raised much feeling and great interest in the management of Mental Hospitals in the United States of America. Both the *Snake Pit* and this book, written by a man, are extremely sensitive and moving.

The World Next Door gives in a very penetrating picture of the symptoms of an acute schizophrenic illness. The writer's reaction to his treatment and to the influence of the visits of his family, indicate that even after discharge from hospital, the opinions of a former patient are somewhat inclined to prevent a fully objective attitude to the situation.