

THE IDEAL PICTURE BOOK IS A HAPPY marriage of text and pictures: often the text comes first and the illustrator strives to catch the feeling and humour of the author's story in his drawings. But this season's most successful picture book began the other way round. Carol Barker went to Greece: inspired by the architecture, the seascapes, the villages, the people and above all by the birds, fish, and animals, she drew and painted a series of pictures which colourfully evoke the spirit not only of Greece—but of its donkeys. H. E. Bates, the famous novelist and short-story writer, has written a story round these pictures and the result is *Achilles the Donkey* (Dobson, 15s.).

Achilles was brought up, like his namesake, to be a fast runner and the story shows how taking to his heels helped Achilles to escape from a cruel master who was unable to understand his animal's resentment at being treated as a mere beast of burden. Carol Barker's fresco drawings are both gay and mellow, and H. E. Bates tells the story of Achilles slowly and surely in the way young children appreciate: most of them will hope for further tales about this personable donkey, and many will, I fear, regret that he is not reunited with his mother in the present volume.

*Gennarino* by Nicola Simbari (Oxford