

After Morphia



Bill Stern—"sixteen tortured years."

"The Taste of Ashes," by Bill Stern and Oscar Fraley (Holt, 218 pp. \$3.95), discloses a famous broadcaster's history of and victory over drug addiction. Co-author with Sara Harris of "Who Live in Shadow," John M. Murtagh is chief magistrate of the City of New York.

By John M. Murtagh

BENEATH the bustling surface of ordinary American life is the ominous, shadowy world of illegal narcotics, with its many thousands of helpless addicts, powerful and virtually invulnerable racketeers, and baffled law-enforcement officers. A great many of the addicts are unfortunates from our worst slums. They are pale-faced and emaciated, and seem always to look sick and strained. Others, not noticeably lethargic or stuporous, cannot so easily be recognized as addicts. They take drugs regularly but somehow are able to refrain from excessive dosages, and for years they function well at work and in society, while appearing to lead normal lives.

For sixteen tortured years Bill Stern was an addict, leading a life of seeming normality. He was driving himself ruthlessly to success and a \$200,000-a-year income. To the public his career was glamorous, swift moving, and highly successful. He was becoming known to every sports fan throughout the country. He was one of radio's brightest stars. Not one of his friends, no one in his vast listening audience was aware that he was becoming so accustomed to drugs—morphine, Demerol, and Dilaudid—that he had to have them. Finally, while broadcasting the Sugar Bowl Game in 1956, he collapsed at the microphone before millions.

His autobiography is an interesting story of a spectacular career in radio and television. It is also a dramatic and compelling account of a famous broadcaster's victory over drug addiction. Appropriately the book is dedicated to the one who did know his secret and did not desert him—his wife, "whose unwavering love and steadfast faith transformed the end into the beginning."

An inordinate pride was perhaps not the least of the weaknesses that made Stern a drug addict. He emerges from the pages of this book, however, as one who not only has conquered drug addiction, but as one who has acquired wisdom, maturity, and humility. For autobiography, his book is written with commendable objectivity.

Behind this story of addiction lies the amputation of a leg, (the result of an automobile accident in 1936), recurring and excruciating pains due to kidney stones, and the frustrations and rejections provoked by insatiable ambition. But the addiction appears to be attributable primarily to an unscrup-

ulous medical doctor, who made Bill Stern "ever more dependent on him for the relieving solace of the morphine needle—at staggering prices."

The medical origin of his addiction will perhaps be cited in support of the all-out attack of the Federal Government on doctors administering drugs in the course of therapy. But so long as we continue to terrorize the medical profession, so long as we continue a policy that discourages doctors from caring for addicts, we can never hope to solve or ameliorate the drug problem. It was Bill Stern's good fortune to be hospitalized at the Institute of Living in Hartford, Conn., and to be able to avail himself of the medical services of its dedicated staff. In large measure, because of the policy of the Federal Government, such medical care is not available to the great majority of addicts in this country.

Narcotics Commissioner Harry J. Anslinger refers to addicts as "vicious moral and social lepers." Mr. Stern's book is an eloquent refutation of the validity of this characterization.



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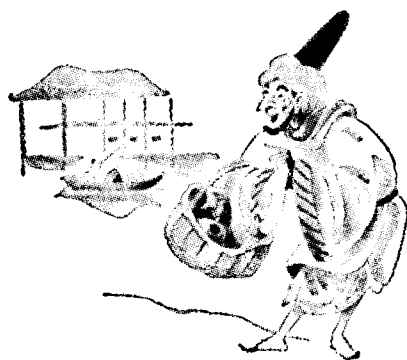
Especially for Christmas

By CLAUDIA LEWIS, *teacher of language arts and member of the Research Department, Bank Street College of Education, New York City.*

THE CHRISTMAS shopper hunting gifts for book-loving youngsters will find the science picture books among the most stunning that have appeared in the last few years. On their pages are breathtaking photographic enlargements of the moon, green vistas of undersea life, and arresting charts and drawings—as in both the lavishly illustrated *Wonderful World* series (Garden City, \$2.95) and the much less expensive small books in the Golden Library of Knowledge (Golden Press, 50¢). The wonder-arousing powers of books like these lift them out of the category of the merely informational, and in many of them the phenomena of science are exhibited with such beauty and fresh perspective that a comparison with poetry is inescapable. This is true of Herman and Nina Schneider's "You Among the Stars" (Scott, \$3) and Alice E. Goudey's "Houses from the Sea" (Scribners, \$2.95). Both may become small classics of their kind; certainly both have the plus qualities one looks for in a gift.

What about the more established classics? Do children still hope to find "Black Beauty," "Heidi," "Treasure Island," and the old fairy tales and myths under the Christmas tree? We know that they do. But we should not be blinded to the fact that these books no longer occupy their literary pedestals alone. There are many modern counter-

parts, by no means supplanting the old favorites, yet extending the scope of the great literature that is available. Children who love "Black Beauty" can read Marguerite Henry's "Justin Morgan Had a Horse" (Rand McNally, \$2.95) with much of the same kind of satisfaction. Children who are drawn to "Heidi" for the abounding freshness of its mountain setting will also greatly enjoy Kate Seredy's peerless story of Hungarian childhood, "The Good Master" (Viking, \$3.50), and Laura Ingalls Wilder's series about life in the wilderness country of early America—for example, "Little House in the Big Woods"



—From "Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp."

(Harper, \$2.95). "Treasure Island" maintains its appeal as a masterpiece of pure adventure, yet children today find Esther Forbes's dramatic piece of historical fiction, "Johnny Tremain" (Houghton Mifflin, \$3.50), equally exciting. And, though the traditional fairy tales hold their own, many modern fantasies have become deservedly popular, including E. B. White's "Charlotte's Web" (Harper, \$2.75) and Mary Norton's books about the miniature Borrower people (Harcourt, Brace, \$2.75).

When we come to the myths and hero tales, it is less easy to suggest modern equivalents. Older boys and girls, vitally concerned as they are with the formulation of values, read the classic myths with deep satisfaction. In a book such as Sally Benson's well-loved "Stories of the Gods and Heroes" (Dial, \$3) they find their own concerns symbolically stated; they meet gods and men who are caught in the basic emotional dilemmas of living; they witness the triumph of good over evil. A mod-



—From "The Christmas Mouse."

ern story offering some of the same appeal is Carolyn Treffinger's "Li Lun, Lad of Courage" (Abingdon, \$2.50). And, of course, in another vein entirely, there are the "hero tales" of our own West. For stories in this genre, Harold Felton's "New Tall Tales of Pecos Bill" (Prentice-Hall, \$3) is unsurpassed.

How is one to choose a suitable version of a classic? Must he stick to the old-faithful, unabridged editions, or should he welcome the new attempts to simplify? A mild controversy exists today on just this question.

Perhaps some books suffer less from abridgment than others. The prospective buyer needs to ask in each case, what does the book have to lose through simplification? Traditional folk tales—impersonal in style, shorn of extraneous material through centuries of telling—often stand up under abridgment better than stories bearing the mark of an individual author. There are currently available several adaptations of tales from the "Arabian Nights"—for example, "The Arabian Nights Picture Book," adapted by Nancy Dingman Watson (Garden City, \$2.95)—that do no serious injustice to the standard editions. Abridgment of tales by Hans Christian Andersen, however, is another matter. When "Thumbelina" is cut down to the bare bones for the sake of pre-school children, what is the result? All the flavor of Andersen is lost—the imaginative detail, the personal reflective touch. And, granted that the language of Howard Pyle's great classic, "Robin Hood" (Scribners, \$3.75), is not designed for easy reading at the second-grade level, the parent makes a mistake if he does not pick up the book and savor its style before he selects a less difficult version. In the long run he may decide that if his child is too young to enjoy the classic itself, "Robin Hood" had better wait a few years.

Meanwhile the books of classic stature especially appropriate for reading aloud to children of about seven should not be forgotten. Favorites are Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh stories (Dutton, \$2.50), Richard and Florence Atwater's "Mr. Popper's Penguins" (Little, Brown, \$3.50), and Taro Yashima's moving "Crow Boy" (Viking, \$2.75).

Many, of course, will feel that a vol-



—From "The World of Pooh."