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of His Majesty's subjects contrive to live more or less contented lives.

In truth, this volume, for all its apparent, if limited, validity as a social document, tends to prove too much. It is not so much an impression of what has passed through the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Everyman since the war as a record of what a handful of weary sub-editors, night by night, thought would interest them. Politicians have every reason to know that newspapers are painfully untrustworthy indices of popular opinion, even when prejudices are dressed up to look like news at the instance of swollen-headed proprietors. And what is true of politics is even truer of more general interests. The newspaper-for-the-many is a mental relaxation, not a stimulus, to be skimmed by half-awake husbands on their way to work and dozed over by tired wives before going to bed. The sub-editor's eccentric hours of work render him peculiarly subject to "occupational parochialism." He is never in a position to tell what ordinary people are thinking, and one feels that his unhappy guesses are the main source of Messrs. Collier and Lang's material. Nevertheless, as stimulating commentary on the cheaper side of the human shop-window, *Just the Other Day* was well worth writing and has been written very well.

FARTHEST NORTH

Northern Lights: The Official Account of the British Arctic Air-Route Expedition, 1930-31. By F. SPENCER CHAPMAN. With an Introduction by the late H. G. WATKINS. Chatto and Windus. 18s.

There seems to be a charming modesty about men who penetrate to half-explored and uncharted spaces of earth; a modesty, at any rate, in the books they give us of their achievements. Wallace, making what must in 1848 have been an exciting passage to South America, thought so little of it that he could spare no more than forty words to describe it. Having crossed the Rhub al Khali, that torrid blank in the earth's surface, Mr. Bertram Thomas came almost to banality in telling us of it: "The Rhub al Khali," he stated simply, "had been crossed." In the winter of 1930-31 a young man chose to spend three months alone, without even the solitary mouse of the traditional prisoner for company, on the remote Ice Cap in the heart of Greenland; it was his plan to remain there, taking readings of wind and weather as long as he could and retiring eventually like a beaver to his double snow-bound tent with its underground communication tunnel, until his friends relieved him in March. He had enough food, paraffin oil, lemon-juice and cod-liver oil to last him comfortably until that time and a primus stove with which to cook his food and heat his house. If nothing catastrophic happened he would be secure and content. Nothing catastrophic did happen; but about Christmas he discovered that much paraffin oil had leaked away, so that he was forced to abandon his primus stove except for cooking and use only a little Aladdin lamp, which warmed his tent much as a glow-worm might illuminate a rabbit-hole. "This was very tiresome," he tells us now. Tiresome! March came, but no rescuers; and none came in April. "The food situation," he writes, "was also becoming interesting about this time." Interesting! On the principle of *carpe diem* he had eaten all his luxuries, so that he was reduced to a little oatmeal, warmed up, some uncooked pemmican, biscuits and margarine. He made a lamp of string in a tin, which "would last a few minutes if carefully tended." He confesses to an occasional uneasiness about the "safety factor," but for the most part he was happy, secure, and in good health, singing hymns and songs and reading books about a world he might never see again. It was not until May, two months after he had expected them, that his rescuers frightened him out of his skin by yelling his name down the air-pipe of his tent, invisible under snow.

Thus, not merely by his achievement but also by the modesty of his narrating it, Augustine Courtauld joins the great explorers. His little chapter, relating blandly, without melodrama or any whipped-up effects, the story of those five months of unique isolation, is by far the most amusing, and possibly the most important, in this book. It is important, as he himself points out, because he has proved that there is no reason why any normal person should not live in perfect peace of mind for an indefinite period under such conditions as he did; and many a future explorer may feel indebted to him for that. In his modesty he makes no other claims for himself.

The party of which he was one set out in Shackleton's old ship, the *Quest*, in the summer of 1930. H. G. Watkins was in command.

"Gino Watkins was destined to command. Short as his life was it was a destiny he fulfilled. It is a common saying that in order to command one must first learn to obey, but here was one who appeared to leap fully equipped from the levels of boyhood to the eminence of man's directive power. At first contact there was little to indicate this to the casual observer. Slight in figure, quiet, almost soft in voice, there was no prominent feature that called for striking recognition. Men who looked for some mark in his face or speech which would display the commanding personality, which after his first two expeditions they knew existed, were almost startled by his youthful appearance."

It was Watkins' idea to lead this expedition to Greenland and work over the east coast and the central ice plateau of that country, to map all unknown territory, to establish a station on the Greenland Ice Cap, to investigate weather conditions on the Ice Cap and to test the conditions for aeroplane flying throughout the year in East Greenland. Behind these purposes was a greater, which he never lived to see fulfilled: to establish an air route between England and Winnipeg. For his party Watkins chose, deliberately, amateur explorers, only himself, Courtauld and Scott having had any Arctic experience at all. This policy was supremely justified by the behaviour of these men under difficult conditions and the success of the undertaking.

As leader of the expedition he should have written this book. That he did not do this was due, not to his death, but to simple lack of time; he was absorbed in planning an expedition to the Antarctic, but those plans failed, and he resolved to return to Greenland instead for another year. It was on that expedition that he met his death, appropriately enough, while rolling a kayak.

Of how Watkins and the other members of the expedition learned to handle a kayak, Mr. Chapman gives a long and fascinating account. The kayak is a small canoe, very light and graceful, "about eighteen feet long, and consists of five laths of wood longitudinally, and fifteen or sixteen transverse ribs, making the kayak less than two feet wide in the middle"; over the wood are stretched the skins of seals which in turn are made waterproof by coat after coat of boiled seal oil. From the kayak the Eskimo in turn hunts the seal in summer; and since seal-hunting may often be dangerous and a kayak easily upset, the Eskimo has evolved a safety device, the device of rolling, by which he may turn himself and the canoe completely over in the water, as one body, and come up again. The trick is done with a paddle, but also, by the experienced, with only a hand. It was typical of Watkins that he was the first of the Englishmen to roll a kayak and the only one of them to master the rolling of it with the hand alone.

Watkins, indeed, must have been extraordinarily versatile; and one cannot help regretting that he did not write this book, for he might very well have turned out to be that rare bird, the great explorer who is also the great writer. This is not to detract from Mr. Chapman's account of the expedition, which is sober, honest and free from any purple humbug; but from the Arctic one expects, for some reason or other, something epic. Nevertheless, though the book is not great literature it is the record of some great travel; the pictures of the Eskimos, the accounts of the bitter winter journeys, the story of the open-boat journey, apart from Courtauld's modest adventure, all make the book valuable and fascinating. The only unhappy part of it is the loss to exploration of the man who was the very soul of the work it describes.

H. E. BATES.

MR. STRACHEY'S PROPHECY

The Coming Struggle for Power. By JOHN STRACHEY. Gollancz. 9s.

The thesis of this book is that "the conditions for the fulfilment of (Marx's) prognosis of the overthrow of capitalism by the working class are being fulfilled not in 1848 but in the first half of the twentieth century." Capitalism because of the contradictions inherent in its structure will, if undisturbed, lead to war. But it will not be undisturbed. It has its weak spots, for example, the relations of France and Germany, its inability to exploit colonies and undeveloped territories without provoking strong nationalist movements, its confrontation with the ever more formidable object lesson of Soviet Russia, and its necessity