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Probably that speaks for more weddings than the average participant would ever admit; and perhaps the years of happy married life which followed are equally common. Malachi Whitaker is luckier than others in being both happy and honest to the point of appearing odd. At all those points where the usual autobiography deviates into falseness, *And So Did I* strikes one as being exceptionally true. Later on in the book, when the above passage had been written, she notes:

My husband read the marriage chapter of this journal. Every now and then he said, "You shouldn't say this," or "You mustn't say this," or "You'll have to cut this out." So this is how truth is shorn of a fingernail, and then an eye, a nose, an ear, until presently you can't see the poor thing at all.

Her book gives the impression—an exceedingly rare one, let me say, in autobiography—that it is not difficult for her, in the least, to tell the truth. She is a vivid, ignorant, plain-spoken, shrewd, humorous, simple woman, with a talent as clear as spring water. I haven't read many of her stories, but putting together what I remember and the book before me, I get a remarkably clear picture of what she is like. She stares at one out of every paragraph. "Cow-eyed" was Homer's epithet for Hera, and it is the adjective for this queer, comfortable, and talented writer.

G. W. STONIER

ESKIMO

My Eskimo Life. By PAUL EMILE VICTOR. *Hamish Hamilton*. 12s. 6d.

It's All Adventure. By PETER FREUCHEN. *Heinemann*. 18s.

It will probably be better to treat these two books warp and weft fashion, rather than singly, *My Eskimo Life* being an intimate diary of its author's seven months wintering among a colony of twenty-six Eskimos on the coast of Greenland, Peter Freuchen's being a piece of nostalgic showmanship rather than any serious attempt to add to existing knowledge of Eskimo life, though it can be said to add a cubit or so to Freuchen's own already considerable stature. The difference between the two books is more than one of locale, the first dealing entirely with one small spot of Eskimo territory, the second hopping all over the place, from Denmark to Russia, Russia to Paris, Paris to New York and inevitably Hollywood, where Freuchen had the usual all-play-no-work experience; and much more than one of nationality and attitude in the two authors. If it weren't that Freuchen is already acknowledged from Copenhagen to Alaska as an indisputable expert on Arctic affairs I should take him lightly. Theatrical he certainly is, hardly ever missing a chance to dramatise a good story, such as his Russian adventure in a pit of dead babies which turned out to be dead cats, certainly never missing a chance to dramatise himself, and the book really should have been called *It's All Peter Freuchen*. Fortunately he not only specialises in self-dramatisation but has a by no means negligible sense of humour and will, I hope, forgive me if I call him a peg leg in a square hole. Freuchen, in some previous Arctic affair, suffered a severely frost-bitten leg, which went on paining him more and more acutely until finally, as he records in this book, there was nothing for it but to have it off. Hence the peg leg in a square hole, and hence Freuchen's own keenly dramatised nostalgia for Arctic life, which he realises pretty well for certain is finished as far as he is concerned. Thus, though this is a full-bodied book, with plenty of guts and fun in it, you get the impression of a man who, used to a diet of bear-steaks, eaten with the hands at that, must now be satisfied with the pancakes of civilisation, thin as cellophane and eaten with a silver fork. Freuchen had an Eskimo wife, and by her two children, but when this book opens she is dead and he is married to a Danish actress in Copenhagen, whose family is in margarine; under their influence Freuchen gets a job as editor of a magazine, hates it, lives a life of polite society, parties, lecture tours and more or less hates that too, then buys and tries to farm an island and isn't very successful, then loses his leg, and realises that, for all that matters, the Arctic days for which he itches are over. The trouble is that Freuchen is a big man. A diet of margarine and magazines is no good to him.

Contrast these five hundred pages of so-called adventure with Paul Emile Victor's seven-month stay in Greenland after the French Trans-Greenland Expedition of 1936 had returned to France, leaving him to winter with a self-contained colony of twenty-six Eskimos. *My Eskimo Life* was written on the spot, from day to day, generally very sketchily, sometimes a little more expansively, with people and not Victor himself always forming the axis of interest, so that it reads rather like the sketch book



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of a novelist, of someone primarily and at times passionately interested in character. (Victor's original part in the Expedition was that of ethnographer, for which see the appendices, and leader.) The book, as it started, put me off; the diary extracts were interspersed with cryptic headlines from the news of the outer world, "Franco reaches Spain, Military Dictatorship in Greece, Olympic Games in Germany, Death of Louis Bleriot," which were not added until December, 1937; the text was interrupted by more foot-notes than a school history; and to me the recorded events seemed too sketchy to be of permanent importance. Gradually this antipathy, never really strong by the way, wore off and the charm of the whole arrangement, by which the brief news extracts of the outer world act as an ironic but never aggressively ironic marginal commentary on the deeply traditional pattern of Eskimo life, began to captivate me. The thumb-nail, off-hand sketches of Victor's Eskimo companions, against the background of their daily life and customs, will enchant in the way that albums of snapshots enchant: Doumidia, a girl of nineteen, perfectly charming; her mother, Kara; the various children, Kriwi, fifteen and flirtatious, Yosepi, Azak, Tipou. Their lives, so affectionately and vividly dotted down by Victor, very soon assume a larger importance than "Police disguised as a pair of lovers and a drunken man arrest a kidnapper; the *Queen Mary* beats the *Normandie* and wins the blue riband; furious resumption of the Battle of Irun"; the building of Victor's hut, 16 feet 6 inches by about 20 feet and in height only 5 feet 6 inches, in preparation for the winter, is an event meaning more than "500,000 Nazis at the Congress of Nuremberg"; and in October the death of the old woman Yoanna is something far larger than the press extracts of a month later: "Jim Mollison flies the Atlantic, Divorce Decree for Mrs. Simpson in London," more beautiful than the alleged beauty of "Miss Spain becomes Miss Europe 1936," beautiful though the irony of that extract is.

Over her breast they laid the jacket which had served her for a pillow, drawing down the hood to cover her face. Then they wrapped her in her two Kra, one of them an ancient sealskin, the other a reindeer skin, worn out and almost hairless, which Knut Rasmussen had given her in 1933. Tigayet took away one of the skins which was stretched beneath the roof for drying, and gave the thong to

Paoda; and with that thong which had been threaded through the holes that long ago had enabled the skin to be stretched for drying when it was new, they tied her up from head to foot.

"There, that's done," Paoda said.

Freuchen's book can offer nothing even remotely near the class to which this first-rate description belongs; all of Victor's book, on the other hand, rests securely in that class because it never aims to be in any class. It emerges naturally from experience; its temper and quality are dictated by the character of the man who wrote it and who, incidentally, without thought of giving any portrait of himself, has succeeded in depicting himself as vividly and surely as the hunter Kristian, the children, the gentle, gay, grieving Doumidia. During the Czechoslovakian crisis I remarked, all expletives then exhausted, that if ever I were to come on earth again, which God forbid, I would like to be an Eskimo, and it turned out that I wasn't the only one who thought of that. Now, reading Freuchen's book, the nostalgic, and Victor's, the glad, bright, little peep-show, there seems less reason than ever for a change of mind. I should add that both the photographs and the translation in Victor's case are excellent. H. E. BATES

LIVES IN MEDICINE

Doctors on Horseback. By JAMES T. FLEXNER. Heinemann. 16s.

The Doctor's View of War. Edited by H. JOULES. Allen & Unwin. 3s. 6d.

50 Years a Country Doctor. By WILLIAM N. MACARTNEY. Bles. 15s.

The first of these three books is the best reading. To start with it is very much better than its title, and it is every bit as enjoyable as Paul de Kruif's *Men Against Death*. Flexner is not a doctor himself, and so the book is remarkably free from medical verbiage and clichés; the horseback period covers from the War of Independence, when prospective medicos were qualified by apprenticeship to their local physician, accompanied him on his rounds and made up his prescriptions, up to the discovery of anaesthesia in the middle of the nineteenth century. The doctors of the embryo community were faced with a double problem, not only of discovering a new continent, but for the first time they were exploring the human body. The author has taken a scientific approach, entirely hidden by the excellence of his style, to re-create six characters, all lions in their day, and each with a niche in medical history. Firstly John Morgan, who founded the first medical college in America, fought with Washington, and was Director-General of Hospitals. How dull that sounds! Yet this John startled Philadelphia, when he was in his twenties, by promenading with a green parasol, in days when the bulkiest gamp was considered unmanly. His life was a struggle with the obstructionist politics of Washington, then giving prolonged birth to a constitution, and he was finally ruined by the professional jealousy of a rival, whose finger was at the pulsehead of Congress. There is Daniel Drake, who acquired a living working model with a hole in its side, and he was able for the first time to watch digestion in progress. Again there is more to it than that, for the doctor was fascinated by the experiments, but consumed with loathing for the subject. Another tale is the discovery of anaesthesia, with three claimants for the laurels, young doctors in every case who would go with the local beaux to "ether jags," where they were mildly dosed by a travelling colporteur. This is a three star book.

The Doctor's View of War falls into the category of the "valuable little book," for that is its purpose. It is written by several leading doctors, with an introduction by Professor Ryle, in which he states that if all doctors refused to go to the front, or to assist medical organisations, there could be no war: which I am inclined to doubt. But they do point out that the Franco-Prussian war was the only major conflict in which more men died from wounds than from disease, if you count the 1919 influenza epidemic as belonging to the last European war.

Medical internationalism is dying out, the urge to preserve human life is being replaced by the urge merely to preserve the lives of one's compatriots in order that they may the more effectively destroy; medical advances will be as closely guarded as armament secrets. Therefore these writers press, that if the Geneva Convention is to be ignored, as it already has been in Abyssinia, Spain and Canton, and doctors are no longer to hold the status of a non-combating third party, the doctor must have a say in his organisation. These people place their hope in the

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