

# Fifteen Years an Eskimo

**ARCTIC ADVENTURE.** By Peter Freuchen. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1936. \$3.

**IVALU, THE ESKIMO WIFE.** The same. New York: Lee Furman. 1935. \$2.50.

Reviewed by MARIE AHNIGHTO PEARY

IT is difficult to restrain one's enthusiasm in reviewing a book like "Arctic Adventure." Peter Freuchen is not only possessed of an enormous fund of authentic information but he has the ability to present it vividly to the reader. Unfortunately, it is rare that a book can be found which combines entertainment with reliability.

Particularly is this true of books about the Arctic, for a reason not hard to discover. There are two distinct types of people who write about the far north. First, there is the casual traveller who spends perhaps a few months or at most a year in Greenland or Baffinland or Labrador, and is so constantly encountering new scenes, new ways, and new people, that he becomes bewildered and writes about them superficially, from first impressions, believing that what he has seen is all that there is to see, and that the Eskimos are as simple and child-like as they appear to strangers. The other type is the scientist or explorer, a man with a serious and definite objective in view, who has neither time nor inclination to observe or discuss anything which has no direct bearing on the subject uppermost in his mind. As a result, we have had books which were pleasant reading but a bit misleading, and others which were authentic but dull. It seems to me that in all the

wealth of Arctic literature, Peter Freuchen's book occupies a unique place.

Freuchen went North, not as a scientist or an explorer, although he was willing and capable enough to act in either capacity should the occasion demand it, but in his own words, because he wanted to "break with hospitals, study, and the ironies and irritations of life in Copenhagen." For fifteen years, with only slight interruptions, he lived in the Arctic. He turned his hand to whatever demanded

his attention. He lived with the Eskimos, really with them and not in the usual condescending and slightly superior manner of the white man. He became one of them in every respect, even marrying an Eskimo woman whom he describes as "one of the finest, sweetest people I have ever known." Through his natural sympathy with the natives, and more particularly through his wife, Freuchen grew to know the Eskimos as no one, with the possible exception of Knud Rasmussen, has ever been able to know them before. He writes about them with admiration and respect.

There is no doubting the sincerity of the book. Nothing is put down because it is "the proper thing to say." It is an intensely interesting account, full of heroic adventures, a complete, though non-technical study of the manners, customs, and traditions of the Thule Eskimos. It gives intimate glimpses of many contemporary explorers, with a character sketch of Knud Rasmussen which it will be difficult for any biographer to equal, much less to excel. And above all, from every page and between the lines, there rises a self portrait, unconsciously drawn, of one of the bravest and most understanding men who have ever gone into the Arctic.

"Ivalu, the Eskimo Wife," also by Peter Freuchen, is a slightly fictionalized account of his own experiences during his first years in Greenland, and his marriage there. After reading "Arctic Adventure," it is easy to identify the people and incidents in "Ivalu," even through the changes of names and localities. For those who prefer to learn history through novels

rather than through the reading of history itself, "Ivalu" will prove a fascinating and often exciting tale in which neither the people nor the background is misrepresented. It is written from the point of view of the Eskimo regarding the ways of the white man, rather than the reverse which is the more usual. It is unfortunate that a book so well planned and written should be marred by a somewhat careless translation and errors in printing which scarcely seem necessary.



ANTHONY BERTRAM

## Clever Young England

**LIKE THE PHOENIX.** By Anthony Bertram. New York: William Morrow & Co. 1936. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

SOLDIER, sailor, tinker, tailor, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief . . . young Mr. Bertram catches them all in their modern presentments in this dragnet cast over modern England: the radical son of a Baron, the Admiral who is for peace and war at one and the same time, the romantic motor bandit, the poet who saved rent by sleeping with his landlady, the unhappy married woman, the aristocratic degenerate—and those two invented demiurges of the book, Peter Fisherboy and the wildly caricatured mammoth, Gillespie of Ben Gillespie. These last-named start this peculiar novel by discussing novel-construction, and pop up again, ever and anon throughout the course of the narrative. There is critical talk, political talk, the talk of stuffed-shirt types, and the talk of harlots. We peer into an aquarium of queer fish by intermittent flashlight; and though Mr. Bertram sometimes strains for effect, he is also entertaining, and sometimes quite moving in his own peculiar way. He is a clever young man, and he has dished into this book just about everything he has read, heard, seen, or heard tell of to date.

But at the end we do not have, exactly, a neat parcel. We end with men and ghosts dividing into conservative and revolutionary forces; with a chorus of mingled voices raised in ironic hosannas; with the ship, upon which Fisherboy and Gillespie are sailing, drifting on rudderless, lights out, through an angry sea. That is, perhaps, the only way a "very modern" novel can end. But while granting Mr. Bertram much acuteness and restless intelligence, this reviewer has not found another "Point Counter Point" in his book. For one thing, it is too self-conscious. "Like the Phoenix" is neither Evelyn Waugh nor good red Huxley.



FREUCHEN AND HIS ESKIMO WIFE  
AT THULE. From "Arctic Adventure."

# Jefferson's Influence Today

*THE LIVING JEFFERSON.* By James Truslow Adams. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1936. \$3.

Reviewed by GILBERT CHINARD

THIS is more than an occasional book. Timely as it is, it was thought over during many years, undertaken in America, continued and revalued in the light of European observation, and only recently brought to completion by an author who may well be estimated as one of the most original historians of our generation. Writing with the present situation always in mind, and mindful to show the unbroken continuity of three centuries of American democratic tradition, Mr. Adams had no intention of offering a more complete and more comprehensive biography of Jefferson than his numerous predecessors. He has done something different and probably something much more valuable and permanent. From the early days of Reverend Thomas Hooker of Newtown to the eve of the coming presidential election, he has traced the fortunes and vicissitudes of the set of principles and tendencies which may be termed the doctrine of Americanism. It has an epic and dramatic quality resulting from the succession of what the author calls the pulse beats of democracy, recurring with various strength at almost regular intervals from the foundation of the Plymouth colony until, with the defeat of Bryan at the polls, "something went wrong with the rhythm of American life," and confusion began.

If Jefferson occupies the center of the stage, if he is still living, and much more so than any of the founders, he owes this unique distinction to the fact that more than any of his contemporaries, more perhaps than any of his successors with the possible exception of Lincoln, he stands for a doctrine the antecedents of which are very remote, but which owing to fortunate conditions could develop only in this country. Such a doctrine, so felicitously and so simply worded that its expression if not its interpretation is final, is contained in two documents which came from the pen of Jefferson: the Declaration of Independence and his first inaugural address. Both documents, as Mr. Adams aptly remarks, can easily be analyzed critically and some of their logic can be shattered. "Americanism, how-

ever, is real if it be not logical and these two documents are the earliest literary sources from which Americans drew long draughts of the pure American doctrine." In other words, Americanism is a state of mind or an ideal, a faith more than a system or a theory. This appeared very clearly in the conflict between Hamilton and Jefferson, too often pictured as a conflict between two personalities or simply two political or economic theories. According to Mr. Adams, this tragic period of American history represents essentially the clash between two different conceptions of life, and this rather new explanation projects a vivid light on this crucial episode of American history and gives a meaning to the further development of the nation.

The first of these philosophies, the main if not the first exponent of which in America was Alexander Hamilton, decidedly is, as Mr. Adams points out, of European origin. It is both traditional and pessimistic and rests on the assumption that man is fundamentally bad and incapable of long, intelligent, and sustained effort. It embodies the conclusions of peoples who have suffered the calamities of war, famine, oppression, and bad government, are unable to trust their neighbors and sometimes to trust themselves,

and in the words of Gouverneur Morris "feel that they want something to protect them against themselves." Even if such people have democratic aspirations and yearnings, they can only superimpose democracy upon a structure which in spite of all reforms remains essentially oligarchic or aristocratic. If this be granted, the function of government will be to supervise, regulate, restrain, and direct the activities of the citizens or subjects, and it should remain in the

hands of a few selected and wise administrators. To some extent this is still the conception of government which prevails in continental Europe where whatever modicum of democracy has been obtained is tempered with a strong bureaucratic system.

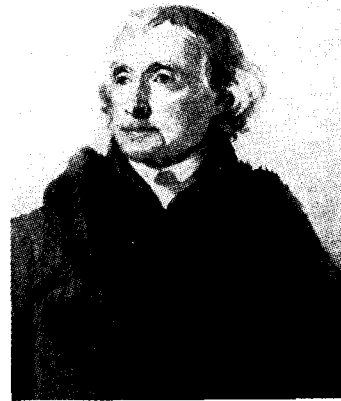
Thus in the early days of the Republic the issue was joined between "those who trusted the sense, honesty, and capacity of the people in the last resort, and those who did not; between those who believed the people could rule and those who believed that they must be ruled." Jefferson had travelled too much and was too good a student of history to believe that all peoples are equally fit and ready for self-government, but he had retained enough idealism and optimism to hold that his fellow-countrymen had already developed certain traditions and habits of mind that would enable

them to experiment without disaster to the nation. Much more of a liberal than of a democrat in the loose sense of the word, he never thought that the common man ought to be trusted under all circumstances to exercise all functions of government, but he simply believed that there was enough sense among the voters to enable them to select wise delegates and to defeat at the polls those who had not fulfilled their mandates honestly and properly.

To him the Constitution itself was no sacred document, and he even proposed that it should be resubmitted to the people at regular intervals and by them amended in order to fit new conditions; but he firmly believed that it rested on a few permanent and inalienable principles or rights which he had enunciated himself in the Declaration.

It would be idle to speculate whether Jefferson today would favor any of the existing parties, and Mr. Adams is too good a historian and too penetrating an observer to make any such claim in the pitiless dissection of the Roosevelt administration which constitutes his last chapter. The "Revolution of 1800," however, has not settled the issue between Jefferson and Hamilton, and both of them are "living" today. When reduced to the fundamentals their doctrines express two states of mind, two attitudes towards life and man which can be easily recognized throughout the historical development of the nation. To whichever side they belong those who believe that there is an American tradition and that the country's destiny is not solely determined by an economic fatality will not fail to realize from this lucid and fervent presentation of the Jeffersonian doctrine that the principles involved in the present crisis of democracy transcend the interests of the moment and of party politics.

Gilbert Chinard, who is a member of the faculty of Johns Hopkins University, is the author of "Jefferson, Apostle of Americanism."



THOMAS JEFFERSON  
From the portrait by Sully.



JAMES TRUSLOW ADAMS  
Photographed by Disraeli.