

BOOK REVIEWS

Jenness, Diamond: Dawn in Arctic Alaska. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1957. Thomas Allen Ltd., 266 King St. West, Toronto.

Dr. Jenness presents here a narrative account of his first year in the Arctic, 1913-14, when he served as anthropologist on the Stefansson Arctic Expedition. He passed a hard and hungry winter living with Eskimos on the Beaufort Sea coast east of Barrow, Alaska. The writing is characteristically modest and intensely realistic so that one gets a faithful and perceptive picture of the area and the people at the dawn of their acculturation.

The realistic descriptions of country, climate, events, people, and feelings carry the reader to the verge of participation. The dreary, monotonous thud of the winter routine in isolated coastal huts, the gradual infection and affection of spring's arrival, the haphazard living in overcrowded huts, the personality of Eskimo companions are all impressed on the reader. All northern field researchers will find much of personal interest. For anyone interested in ethnological field work the book exposes a vein of learning usually ignored in university courses. The whole story is a rewarding retrospection for anyone interested in the modern Arctic so different since the dawn. One may hope that those concerned with administration of Arctic peoples will read this book and then reread Jenness' earlier but closely related "The People of the Twilight."

It is a handsomely bound book in which errors of any category are pleasingly rare. Another reviewer has pointed out that the author had been misinformed in stating that the modern Eskimo east of Barrow no longer hunt whales. A second possible error occurs in the suggestion (page 122)

that the earliest Eskimos hunted the mammoth. I will not argue that early people hunted mammoth but I doubt that such hunters were Eskimo, physically or culturally. Certainly present archaeological evidence suggests that the earliest sites that have any probability of being of Eskimo origin are younger than the time of the mammoth's extinction.

The book is free of the tin trappings of Arctic adventuring and the sordid drapes of pedantry. Rather, the content is fresh and pertinent; the style discrete, relaxed and personal. The result is pleasant and profitable for the reader, a book to be recommended to anyone with an interest in the Arctic.

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