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EDITOR'S CHOICE

BMJ

As our Obituary columns illustrate every week, many doctors had an extraordinary life during the war—Dr Roland Carr, subsequently a Kent general practitioner, for example, showed how some unexplained crashes in Hurricane fighters were caused by faulty connections in the oxygen masks (p 1192). Perhaps no time was more fraught for more people than during the retreat from France and the Battle of Britain, and among those who survived the Dunkirk evacuation was (Sir) Richard Doll. It is not too difficult to translate the handsome photograph heading the start of his series of diary extracts (p 1183) into the distinguished silver haired figure of today, yet perhaps it is less easy to predict from the rollicking souvenirs of military life the latterday preoccupation with statistical rigour and clinical epidemiology. Sir Richard was posted as regimental medical officer to the 1st Loyals, which formed part of the British Expeditionary Force

sent to France in September 1939. He wrote this account while recuperating from the events of the previous six weeks in Pontefract. "The account that follows is as I wrote it then, save only for the insertion of punctuation marks (for which I appear to have had little use), and writing out of military terms in full in place of the abbreviations that were then in daily use, the correction of one place name, and the omission of one clause that could have given personal offence."

Elsewhere in the journal don't miss the spring books feature (p 1205), which ranges from Swift through Dickens and Octavia Hill to Krishnamurti and Henry Rollin, with other goodies such as D J Enright's anthology of fevers and frets and an analysis of medicine in the USSR. And there's a moving account by a general practitioner of her operation for cataract—ending with the same words as used by Prospero's daughter as well as Aldous Huxley (p 1204).