

FLYING SAUCERS, by Donald H. Menzel. 319 pages, illustrations, 14 × 21 cm. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1953. Price, \$4.75.

Flying saucers have been with us for a long time—perhaps 3,000 years—but only today in this age of instantaneous communication can it really affect the entire population of a country.

In the late 18th Century flying saucers were seen by the French. In the mid-19th Century they were seen in England as the famous "Durham Lights." Today, as we pass the mid-point of the 20th Century, we, in the United States, see them. If we consult history a remarkable coincidence is uncovered. Every nation which was the leader in the world at that time was the nation subject to these apparitions. Psychologists might tell us that people who have most to lose are those most apt to see a burglar in the shadows. Could this refer to nations, too?

Now, in answer to these questions, there appears on the scene a book explaining the formation, appearance and behavior of these exciting objects. This book is no accident. It is the natural evolution of some magazine articles and stories written by the author which appeared during 1952.

In *Flying Saucers*, Dr. Donald H. Menzel, Acting Director of the Harvard College Observatory, and one of the world's ranking astrophysicists, describes in fascinating detail the formation of the ubiquitous saucers. He shows how these can appear as a result of atmospheric phenomena. He explains the role that mist, ice crystals and mirages play in the creation of these apparitions for these appear to be the prime source of flying saucer formations.

In detail he describes some of the more spectacular of the sightings. He recounts the experience of Captain Thomas F. Mantell who crashed to his death in a P-51 chasing a flying saucer in Kentucky and shows it could have been a "mock sun" caused by ice crystals in high cirrus clouds.

The "little men from Venus" are fully treated and this brings up a case in point. Dr. Menzel shows how the story originated at the University of Denver in a lecture class and how the story spread like wild fire across the front pages of this country. Yet, when J. P. Cohn of the *San Francisco Chronicle* cracked the story and proved it was a hoax and was to lay a groundwork for a future stock promotion scheme (the mysterious scientist X and Dr. Gee are under indictment for fraudulent stock practices) the newspapers of this country either buried this information on page 29 or omitted it as not being newsworthy.

During some lectures this reviewer has given on flying saucers by actual count about 40 per cent of the audience signified they heard of the "little men from Venus" yet less than 1 per cent actually knew the story which Dr. Menzel relates in his book.

The remarkable jousting of Lt. George F. Gorman with a flying saucer is vividly described and the explanation of this dogfight is given. Throughout the entire book are spread case histories of flying saucers seen from every conceivable position and under every conceivable circumstance.

Flying Saucers is welcome as the first sober volume in the growing literature on a subject which has confused even some educated persons. It will allay the anxieties and apprehensions to which many find themselves subject to those who insist on flying saucers being interplanetary in origin it will permit the adoption of a saner attitude. Dr. Menzel has succeeded with this book in placing himself at the head of flying saucer debunkers. He is to be congratulated on a magnificently written book which was sorely needed by a throng of troubled souls.

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