

demonstration flying, and give a false impression of one whom many of us know as an admirable companion.—
E. COLSTON SHEPHERD.

THE BRABAZON STORY. *Lord Brabazon of Tara. Heinemann, London, 1956. 227 pp. Illustrated. Index. 25s.*

Purely from the aviation point of view this is in some ways a disappointing book. There is much of interest in it, but it is not the Brabazon story those in aeronautics would expect; it is Lord Brabazon "reminiscing" on his many interests, talking a little of his early life, his early motor racing days, of golf, sailing, politics, the Cresta run—talking delightfully and entertainingly as one would expect, with his great sense of enjoyment in all he did shining through and much of his philosophy of life. Perhaps it is the shock of finding that the air merits only two chapters out of 14, which leaves this reviewer, at least, disappointed. Those two chapters are "In the Air"—15 pp.—about ballooning, and "In the Air Again"—21 pp. (with, alas, one or two errors) which ends with the death of the Hon. C. S. Rolls in 1909—when Lord Brabazon's practical flying ceased. Later there is a little on his time as Minister of Aircraft Production but not a mention anywhere of the Brabazon Committee.

In all fairness Lord Brabazon himself calls his book "random reminiscences" and warns the reader in his foreword that "anyone with only one subject is a bore," but he also says "sometimes I think history devotes too much to events and neglects the atmosphere of the surroundings." There is so much in British aviation in which he has been so closely concerned, and which only he with his pithy comments could tell us. Someday someone may write the story of Lord Brabazon and aeronautics but they will not recapture for posterity the atmosphere which only "Brab," of "Fly one" fame, could do in his delightful way.—J.B.

THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS. *E. J. Ruppelt. Gollancz, London, 1956. 315 pp. 18s. 6d.*

FLYING SAUCERS COME FROM ANOTHER WORLD. *J. Guieu. Hutchinson, London, 1956. 248 pp. 12s. 6d.*

The curious thing about the Flying Saucer controversy is that the detractors can be almost as unscientific and hysterical as the proponents, and as much powered by wishful thinking. Thus one learned professor explains all the phenomena as resulting from temperature inversion—apart of course from mis-sightings and faking with dustbin lids—an explanation as ludicrous as that which sees them all as interplanetary vehicles manned by little rubbery men with antennae sticking out of their ears.

These two books represent the sober reporting of a man (Mr. Ruppelt) who was in charge of one of the official investigations, and the indiscriminate garnering (by Monsieur Guieu) of facts, fables and nonsense with no effort to sort one from the other. "Jimmy" Guieu offers us a well-told farrago of tales—without appraisal—and some bewildering photographs, one of which shows a saucer over Paris with the Eiffel Tower touched in by hand so clumsily that it would not convince a child. There is little to say about such a book except to recommend it as in-the-bath reading for those who are primarily interested in aeronautical folklore. There are many of the classic and important unsolved cases included too, but they are so tainted by being neighbours to credulity that even they themselves almost lose caste.

Mr. Ruppelt, on the other hand, never advances an explanation of what is inexplicable, and reveals the most interesting explanations of many stories which the United

States Government were handed by both the public and by highly respectable observers. If the reader of this review is not an hysterical anti-saucerer, and if he is really interested in facts as possibilities, he should read this book: for some of the "sightings" have defied every scientist and every reasonable explanation that can be offered.

I would also pray such a reader to bear in mind (a) that such eminent engineers as Hermann Oberth had said that some saucers may be interplanetary in origin; (b) that the science of electro-gravities is in its infancy—an infancy almost as shrouded by security as was the atom bomb—which may revolutionise our whole conception of propulsion and space-flight; (c) that space travel is almost on our own doorstep after only fifty-odd years of powered flying; (d) that all reputable astronomers estimate the number of probably inhabited worlds in the universe as thousands, if not millions; (e) that many of those worlds have probably tens of thousands of years of civilisation behind them; and (f) that our own world is a somewhat second-rate affair with a conceited but nonetheless infant history of some three or four thousand years alleged civilisation.—
C. H. GIBBS-SMITH.

NO MOON TONIGHT. *D. E. Charlwood. Angus and Watson. 1956. 221 pp. 12s. 6d.*

Charlwood was one of 20 men who sailed together from Australia to join the R.A.F. He was a Navigator who survived his tour of 30 raids—all with the same crew. Only four others of the 20 are alive at the end of the book, which is factual.

That is the barest outline of a book which, were I to give my enthusiasm full rein, I could go on reviewing for pages. The soft pedal is kept right down the whole time but rarely have I seen conveyed so well the misery of departed friends, the comradeship of shared and survived hazards, the beauty of a wartime love affair (why was it so hopeless?), the swineishness of one in authority. There is no unnecessary bad language for the sake of bad language, no sex for the sake of sex, no false heroics or emphasis on the dangers and rigours of each raid. Every now and again, when he is on leave, a choice little passage breathes the poetry of the English countryside with the skill of a Blunden or a Belloc.

Were I allowed one war book on my desert island, this would be it.—F.H.S.

THE PROVING FLIGHT. *David Beaty. Secker and Warburg, London, 1956. 282 pp. 14s.*

The proving flight of the new turbo-prop airliner Emperor was more eventful than we hope is usually the case. The machine is claimed to be the final answer to trans-Atlantic travel, capable of operating non-stop from London to New York even against the strongest headwinds. With a load of V.I.P.'s, which include the Chairman of Air Enterprises Ltd. and the Under-Secretary for Air, the aeroplane battles on against the weather, a mechanical failure and the conflicting temperaments of its passengers and crew. The book is well written, drawing from the author's first-hand operational experience, for he is an ex-B.O.A.C. trans-Atlantic pilot; it is exciting and very readable. (This, of course, is fiction!)

THE DARK HAVEN. *F. T. K. Bullmore. Jonathan Cape, London, 1956. 192 pp. 15s.*

An unconventional and entertainingly written book on a little-known branch of the Royal Air Force by a pilot of wide service and civil flying experience. A warrior who fought zealously to save lives, Wing Commander