

## BOOK REVIEWS

### FLYING BY AMERICANS AND SOME OTHERS.\*

MR. GOLDSTROM has flown all the stages of the United States air mail from New York to San Francisco and he learnt a lot about that magnificent service. Apparently, he thought that this experience entitled him to write a history of flying; so he proceeded to do so. A history of flying, as seen through American eyes, might be made intensely interesting. One might expect to find much more full accounts given of the work and exploits of American inventors and pilots (the Wrights, Lindbergh, etc.) than of the deeds of foreigners, and one would not complain overmuch that it were so—even though the name of A. V. Roe is never mentioned in the whole of this book. It is not that aspect of this book which forbids us to praise it. The selection and arrangement of matter is quite extraordinary, and shows a lack of balance and judgment in the author. The fact is that he is not really *au fait* with his subject, though he has studied some features of it with great care and has reproduced the results of his studies at considerable length. For instance, the story of the first flight by the two brothers Wright has been compiled and reproduced once more with much detail. Then a fairly long chapter is devoted to the dispute of Orville Wright with the Smithsonian Institute. The author is evidently strongly pro-Wright, but the chapter throws no new light on the true place of Professor Langley in the history of aeronautics. The collection of stories of great flights, those by Americans being recounted at much greater length than those by foreigners, has some interest; but after all, there is nothing commercial in flying the Atlantic or round the world, and this fact does not seem to have been grasped by the author. The two chapters on "European Air Transport" and "Other Foreign Countries" must have been compiled from reference books of the nature of Whitaker's Almanac. The notice given of Canada is particularly inadequate, for it says not a word about the wonderful work of the Royal Canadian Air Force in forest fire patrols and surveying.

In fact, Mr. Goldstrom really justifies his authorship only when writing about the United States Air Mail. For his account of that, readers in Great Britain should be really grateful. The air mail is a wonderful piece of work, and Mr. Goldstrom describes it very well. If he had confined his whole book to this subject he would have done far better. The best thing in the book is the crash report of an air mail pilot, Dean Smith. It ran:—"Dead-sticked—flying low—only place available—on cow—killed cow—wrecked plane—scared me—Smith."

F. A. DE V. R.

\* *A Narrative History of Aviation.* By John Goldstrom (Macmillan). Obtainable from FLIGHT office. Price 17s. net.

### A HISTORY OF FLYING.\*

Books on flying are now coming out in a perfect stream, which shows that the publishers now recognise the importance and general interest of the subject. This is a very gratifying sign. Unfortunately, all the books do not possess a merit equal to the importance of the subject. A reviewer gets rather weary of scanning histories of the early investigations by Caley, Strongfellow, and the others. All honour to them! but repetition, even of the deeds of our worthies is apt to pall. Mr. Grahame-White tells this story twice, which is once too often. The first time he tells it very well. I admit that I did not read the second account very carefully. The story of early flights, Bleriot across the Channel, and the Paulhan-Grahame-White race from London to Manchester has also been told before, but probably it will be fresh to many readers of this book. The chapter on the war is very sketchy, and the succeeding one on the great flights just after the war (Alcock, Ross Smith, and others) seems either too short or too long. Mr. Grahame-White gets more interesting when he talks about the present and the future, but he is surely rather optimistic when he takes for granted all that Dr. Rumpler hopes that his projected large flying boat will do. We read that its estimated speed is 190 m.p.h., and that "even with 170 people on board, passengers and

crew, this great craft will be able to leave the water with sufficient to enable it to fly 3,750 miles without alighting. We only hope it will. But we may express doubts about the seaworthiness of any existing or projected flying boat when down on the Atlantic in a gale. What will happen to the wing-tip floats or the stabilisers? Or if the twin-kull plan be adopted, what experience have we of its seaworthiness? Mr. Grahame-White appears to have no doubt on the subject, but for our part we are not yet prepared to take shares in a company which intends to operate flying boats commercially across the Atlantic. This implies no lack of confidence in the flying-boat when properly used. It is sure to have a great future, but, as with other forms of aircraft, extravagant expectations may do it more harm than good. Finally, Mr. Grahame-White calls for a lavish expenditure of money by the Government in establishing air services. He mentions the figure of 10,000,000 per annum for 10 years. We prefer the idea of more gradual development, and so will most tax-payers.

F. A. DE V. R.

\* *Flying, an Epitome and a Forecast.* By Claude Grahame-White (Chatto and Windus). Obtainable from FLIGHT Office. Price 12s. 6d.

### A VERY READABLE BOOK\*

It is very seldom that I have agreed with a publisher's introductory effusion to any of the prolific crop of books on flying which have been published during the past few months. Mr. F. C. Chichester's book, "Solo to Sydney," is, however, a notable exception. In the introduction John Hamilton states that "Mr. Chichester has proved himself, although a novice in writing, to be an expert writer, for he carries his reader with him in his 'plane the whole course of the journey"—a sentiment with which I heartily agree. This book is undoubtedly one of the most readable and most worth reading which it has been my lot to review for a very long time. It is, obviously, true that Mr. Chichester has had no great experience in either flying or writing, but, whereas he appears to have conquered the majority of difficulties in flying by intense and persevering application to the job, in his book he has at his first attempt produced a record of his flight which it is extremely difficult to leave, once one has started reading it. His style is naive, but very pleasant: it is sincere and full-bodied without being superficial or flippant. He shows that he has a keen insight into all sides of human nature and that type of observation which makes life worth living. Throughout the book his comments upon people and things are full of interest, and while they cover a very wide range of things which affected him during his flight, they are never irrelevant. His style and construction certainly leave one with the impression that this is his first book, but whereas with many people this fault produces a somewhat annoyingly amateurish effort, it has in this case produced an extremely interesting and coherent account of the journey from what might have otherwise been a dry and uninteresting diary of the trip. I imagine that a large amount of the success of this book is due to careful editing, but the fact remains that it is one which will be read and re-read by all who are interested not only in flying, but in the ambitions of youth widely conceived and tenaciously carried through to the bitter end. As is usual, the Daily Press did their level best to nullify the effects of his achievement with their ludicrously inaccurate splash headlines—as, for example, referring to him as "a rich young man" and such-like things; and it still further enhances the value of his flight that he succeeded not only without their preliminary backing, but also in spite of their subsequent misstatements of his circumstances.

With regard to the printing, it seems incredible that in a publication of this class a proper sign for "degrees" was not used instead of a mutilated figure 8.

"DAEDALUS"

\* *Solo to Sydney*, by F. C. Chichester (John Hamilton, Ltd.). Obtainable from FLIGHT Office, 7s. 6d. net.

### Fine Service by De Havilland "Hercules" Aircraft

At the close of 1926 the de Havilland Aircraft Co., Ltd., built and supplied to the order of Imperial Airways, Ltd., five 14-seater, three-engined "Hercules" air liners for operation on their Middle East route. Interesting figures have just been received relating to the flying record of three

of these machines, which have been in constant commission since the service began early in 1927. The record shows very big mileages and remarkable consistency, as follows:—Hercules aircraft G-EBMW, 171,696 miles, 1,971½ hours; G-EBMX, 182,152 miles, 2,105½ hours; G-EBMY, 178,409 miles, 2,075½ hours.