

BOOKS

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time for beaver-trapping and wolf-skinning; the brief summer for the boats, piled high with furs, to be taken down river to Fort Yukon. Their life followed an implacable seasonal routine, with each year the girls taking over more of the real work.

The detail fascinates. But how, one wonders, did the girls really feel about such a life? Feelings hardly enter *Born on Snow-Shoes*. The author gives a page to an accident in which she lost the sight of one eye, and ends the incident with, "But I got along well enough with one eye. I still do." This same homespun terseness appears in the captions to the many illustrations: "Elsie with a grizzly"; "Evelyn with the wolves!" It

is obvious why the journalist Ernie Pyle urged Evelyn Berglund Shore to write this book. —C.

HAPPY RETURN

1. *FOR ONE . . .*, by Frank Sargeson; Caxton Press, 6s.

THE publication in book form of Sargeson's latest major work is very welcome. I remember the exhilaration I drew from reading it originally in 1952 in *Landfall*, which I tried to pass on then to readers of this journal. Re-reading it, I feel disposed to add to rather than to subtract from that praise. In addition to its maturity, its assurance, and its psychological insight, the story—it is that awkward length "long short" or "short long"—is intricately constructed, and to reach its final denouement, the ultimate disillusionment of an ageing woman, is like peeling an onion—even unto the involuntary tear.

To me this is the best work Sargeson has yet produced, and his many admirers will no doubt be delighted to be able to place it on their shelves at last.

In view of its quality it is all the more regrettable that the format of the book is so paltry: it is apparently an off-print from the original *Landfall* appearance, with a title page, elegant enough, bearing the unpropitious date 1954. We learn the price, not from its publishers, but from the book shops.

—David Hall

PLANES AND SAUCERS

THE MOUCHOTTE DIARIES, by Rene Mouchotte; Staples Press, English price 15s. *REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS*, by Edward J. Ruppelt; Victor Gollancz, English price 18s.

YAWNS may be politely stifled at the mention of yet another book of fighter-pilot memoirs. Has this Rene

Mouchotte really anything to add to the long tally of reminiscences—some agonisingly alive, some tongue-tied to trivialities? The book says nothing new, indeed. But it's a superbly unconscious self-portrait of a rare man. Mouchotte had no Gallic cynicism but a burning, single-minded passion for the freedom and the glory of France. Naked patriotism shocks us, the self-conscious British, but the Latins see no shame in it. Mouchotte wore no mask of flippancy or disillusionment. The measure of his skill and personality is that he was the first Allied airman chosen to command a purely British squadron, and he went on to command a purely French fighter wing, and to meet his death in 1943 leading it into action. This was the end he had foreseen, calmly and without dismay. I rank this book as equal to Richard Hillary's *The Last Enemy* as the best personal record of this aspect of the air war.

Mouchotte's grimness and glory are queer contrasts to the comic extravaganzas of America under the shadow of the Flying Saucer. From 1951-53 Mr. Ruppelt was Head of the American Air Force Organisation set up to investigate the Saucers, and the gist of his message is that about 20 per cent of the Saucer reports from trustworthy witnesses defied all the efforts of scientists and intelligence men to explain them by natural causes. But bitter attacks on the moguls of the Pentagon and on his predecessors in the investigation, coupled with a strident note of hysteria throughout the book, suggest that Mr. Ruppelt was a bad choice for the job. The book is shoddy reading, but it contains one point of interest and hope for the romantically-minded. A symposium of leading American scientists, after discussing the unexplainable reports, refused to say that visitations from outer space could be dismissed as "impossible." To those of us who cherish a wild belief in the little space-hobgoblins this is encouraging.

—G. C. A. Wall

THE BIRCHES

TRUDGING up to the hospital

My eyes must have been cast down,
Or veiled perhaps, with thinking.
Whatever the reason, it is certain
I did not see the birches.

But having found you in the tall bed,
Your cheeks flagged with colour
And your eyes focused on living,
I went back into the afternoon
And at once I saw them there.

I had no time
To stand and stare,
But these, but these . . .
I stood stock still,
Nor could I tell
Whether the birches
Or whether I
Sang soft hosannas
To the sky. —Elizabeth Spencer

POLITICIAN LOSES SPEECH

A most embarrassing situation—waiting audience—plenty to say—no voice! Remedy: Ayrton's Sore Throat Tablets. Eight active ingredients do marvels in relieving congestion, inflammation and soreness. Available at chemists. Handy bottles of 50 tablets, 3/-. Made by Ayrton Saunders & Co., Ltd., Liverpool, England.

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 31, 1956.



sweet sister Joe

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