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Hymn of China by Agnes Smedley - New York Herald Tribune,
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BOOKS AND THINGS

By LEWIS GANNETT

MARY O'HARA'S, and Miss O'Hara's Ken McLaughlin's, and your and my friend, Flicka, reappears in Miss O'Hara's new story, "Thunderhead" (Lippincott, \$2.75), which is filled with the intense horse-and-boy emotion that made "My Friend Flicka" so memorably alive.

Successor to "My Friend Flicka"

Thunderhead is Flicka's white colt, a throwback to the outlaw strain of Albino, that "big ugly devil but a lotta horse" that no fence could hold and no rider tame. Thunderhead was born in a wild winter storm, and saved only because Ken was a-watch for his mare's foaling. The book is the story of Thunderhead's, and of Ken's, growing up and partial taming, and of Ken's mother's loneliness on the remote Wyoming ranch.

Here are the great snows of winter, the aching beauty of the returning *greengrass* (pronounced as one word in Wyoming), the wild beauty of summer in the Rockies, and autumn when the cottonwoods flame in pure yellow fire. Here again is Ken, a boy whose heart beats with his horse, who feels closer to his mare than to his mother, whose parents watch him silently, wondering whether the colt will break the boy's heart and life, or discipline the boy in learning discipline himself. Colt and boy both have in them something of the colt's wild grandsire, Albino, that mighty stallion who keeps his own string of mares high in the unexplored Buckhorn Hills.

It's good; it isn't, I think, as good as "My Friend Flicka." The conflict between Ken's father and mother interrupts rather than feeds the story of Ken and his colt; the keyhole passage into the extinct crater where Albino lords his wild world may be matched in the Rockies, but it reads like Rider Haggard; the pictures of Ken's adolescent ecstasies sometimes spill over into sentimentality. But it's Ken and it's Flicka, and Ken and Flicka will live in print without growing older for a long time.



Mary O'Hara

This Summer's Books

When this column appears I shall be cutting the winter's firewood on Cream Hill, leaving Stanley Walker to read and report on the rest of the October books.

No such comet as Wendell Willkie's "One World" has flamed across the book world since July 1, when I last summed up a season's books. John Marquand's "So Little Time" has leaped to the top of the list of best-selling novels, and deserves that place. It is full of satiric Marquand chuckles, consistently entertaining and civilized reading. Only a curmudgeon-critic will complain that it repeats the old Marquand pattern, and doesn't get anywhere. Betty Smith's sun-shot story of childhood in the slums, "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn," is near the top of the list; I liked it, too. I wish young Alexander Saxton's novel of youth in America on the eve of war, "Grand Crossing," were on the best-seller lists too; and I remember with affection Theodore Pratt's unassuming story of pre-boom days in Florida, "The Barefoot Mailman."

John Roy Carlson's exposure of near-fascism in America, "Under Cover," tops the non-fiction best-seller lists, which proves that Americans still have a soundly rebel spirit; it was the silly effort to suppress it which gave the book its start. War reports still dominate the non-fiction lists, but the best books do not come from the same regions as the biggest headlines. In the first half of the year Jack Belden's "Retreat With Stilwell" seemed to me tops, and the best war books of the third quarter also come from remote fronts. There was Captain Lawson's unforgettable "Thirty Seconds Over Tokio," his story of the Doolittle raid and its aftermath; Colonel Scott's rousing, if unfortunately titled, "God Is My Co-Pilot" told of the American pilots fighting overhead where Jack Belden was retreating with Stilwell; and there was Dr. Seagrave's memorable "Burma Surgeon." Agnes Smedley's "Battle Hymn of China" told of extraordinary experiences with the unknown soldiers of China—the so-called guerrilla armies. And one of the strangest and most revealing books about southeast Asia was Maurice Collis's "The Land of the Great Image," telling of the almost incredible adventures of the Friar Manrique on the Burma coast—in the sixteenth century! That is a book which will be remembered when most of the war stories have faded.

Meanwhile, I'm still chuckling at the memory of Sergeant St. George's "C/o Postmaster" and Charles Spalding and Otis Carney's "Love at First Flight."