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at Skidmore" The Saratogian, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.,
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SARATOGA SPRINGS

Social Chat

The Saratogian By Jean McGregor VI-73D-55

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SEPTEMBER 8, 1943.

Battle Hymn of China Author Visits Saratoga; Will Lecture at Skidmore

MISS Agnes Smedley, distinguished author and publicist, who has written many books on the Far East, is lauded for her latest publication, *Battle Hymn of China*, in many reviews in New York papers. Miss Smedley has been passing the summer at Yaddo where she is resting between her writings.

She came to this country last year after 12 harrowing years in China where she taught, lectured, nursed and lived as a member of the Red Cross in the front lines.

Her story is an amazing one for a woman; an epic of endurance and privation beyond belief and the strength of her convictions that made her one of the outstanding publicists in her field.

Battle Hymn of China, just published by Alfred A. Knopf, in Sunday's Book Review of the Herald Tribune is reviewed by Evans Fordyce Carlson, lieutenant colonel of the United States Marine Corps, and author of *Twin Stars of China*.

In part he writes:

"WE AMERICANS rather like to regard ourselves as rugged realists, and yet so accustomed have we become to the habit of putting a good face on things that often we are shocked when presented with brutal, unvarnished truth. The practice of looking at the world through tinted glasses is both a national vice and a vicious weakness. In the months and years before Pearl Harbor we refused to admit that the selling of war materials to Japan was providing the means for destroying our own flesh and blood; yet the evidence of Japan's plans was there for all who would to read.

"Because of addiction to sugar-coated literature there will be many who will not like Agnes Smedley's *Battle Hymn of China*, for Miss Smedley does not pull her punches, nor does she insult the spade by attempting to disguise it as a heart. In common with our soldiers at the front she has lived in close proximity to suffering and death, and like them she sees life in terms of black or white, good or bad. It is odd, extremely odd, what a power for good the presence of death can be. In its presence man returns to fundamental honesty and to truth.

"The story of China which Miss Smedley presents is not the story one sees in the public press or in magazine articles or in propaganda literature. It is the story of the real China, the China composed of more than four hundred millions of human beings who hope some day to govern themselves, and who strive mightily to evolve a pattern of life which will improve their economic well-being."

COL. CARLSON tells us he first met Miss Smedley at the headquarters of China's famous Eighth Route Army in the winter of 1937 where she was a war correspondent and he was observing guerilla operations for the Navy Department.

He calls her a "woman compassionate, courageous, utterly selfless in her devotion to others and indefatigable in her efforts to relieve suffering and to banish ignorance."

In 1938 when the Colonel left Hankow where Miss Smedley was working to expand China's medical relief agencies, she was preparing to join the medical corps of the New Fourth Army in the exposed areas along the lower Yangtze River. The colonel continues: "Nearly two years later a dispatch from Chungking announced her arrival in an emaciated condition. She had traveled with troops of the Chinese Communist and Kuomintang Armies on both sides of the Yangtze, the only foreigner to witness operations in Central China from 1936-'40."

The account of what she saw and did during this period forms a substantial part of *Battle Hymn of China*.

MISS SMEDLEY devoted 12 years in aiding the underprivileged in China. She wanted China to fight Japan when China's leaders were still hesitant. She met guerrillas and Red Army commanders and their often melodramatic stories dot the pages of her book.

In Sian when Chiang Kai Shek was kidnapped, she was also the subject of attack, her room looted and she was almost killed in the disturbance.

Col. Carlson's closing tribute is: "This book constitutes an important contribution to the material on current Chinese history. In it the blood and sweat and tears of the author merge with those of the people of whom she writes. We who read are her debtors, and theirs, for from the realism and courage and invincible determination portrayed here mirrored the reader draws fresh hope for the future of civilization.

SOMETIME the week of Sept. 29, Miss Smedley plans to be at

Brunner's Book Store to be present to autograph copies of her book.

Yaddo will also present Miss Smedley is a public lecture at Skidmore early this fall.

Among her other books are *Daughter of Earth*, *Chinese Destinies*, *China's Red Army Marches* and *China Fights Back*.