

Good Reading

Whether It's a Thrilling Story That You Want
or a Book to Set You Thinking

MUFTI

MUFTI is an after the war book despite the fact that every bit of it, except the epilogue, takes place before the armistice. It has a perfect right to its title although the hero never once appears out of uniform. He faces his problem of after-the-war-what in the summer of 1918 when a wounded arm sends him back to England for hospital care and convalescence. Before the war he had been "what is generally described as a typical Englishman." Now he finds his standard of values completely changed. He wants something different but he doesn't in the least know what he wants. He tries to find out from all sorts of people, from a labor leader whom he meets at luncheon, from the ex-lodge keeper of a big country house where he used to week-end, from a country baronet, from the hardware nobleman to whose convalescent hospital he is sent, and especially from two girls. It is with the entrance of the second girl that the author gets more interested in his story than he does in his problem though he never altogether loses sight of that. Galsworthy once remarked that he wrote his novels by "rounding his characters up within the ring fence of an idea" and then letting them work out their own salvation, or words to that effect. That is the method which Cyril McNeille employs in Mufti and it is a good method. Cyril McNeille, by the way, is known to many people in America as well as in England through war stories which he wrote under the name of "Sapper".

When Chalmers Came Back presents the same problem from an American point of view. Chalmers enlisted, it is true, in the Canadian army and the story begins in England, but he is an American, he goes back to America and the changes he finds and the difficulties he tackles are American. There is more philosophizing and less story than in Mufti; there are fewer well drawn characters and considerably more bad writing but it is on the whole an interesting book and it presents a more definite solution of the difficulties than Mufti does, a solution whose general theory is correct enough even though the particular concrete form it takes will not appeal to the average mortal. Both books concern the problems with which most men and women are now struggling.

MUFTI, by Cyril McNeille. George H. Doran Co.

WHEN CHALMERS CAME BACK, by W. J. Dawson. John Lane Co.