



The Man in Ratcatcher and Other Stories: "Everything, François, except the whole infernal universe."

Herman Cyril MacNeile

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Herman Cyril McNeile, MC was born on September 28th, 1888 in Bodmin, Cornwall. His education was rounded off with military training and from there he was given a posting to Aldershot Garrison then Canterbury and then Malta. With the beginning of the War he was sent to France. It was from here that he 'out of sheer boredom' began to write and was soon publishing short stories in the Daily Mail. As a soldier McNeile saw action at the First and Second Battles of Ypres, he was gassed at the second, and the Battle of the Somme. In 1916 he was awarded the Military Cross and mentioned in dispatches. In November that year he was gazetted to acting major. During the course of the war, he had spent a total of 32 months in France. Even with the War in full sway about him his literary output from 1915 to 1918 was in the order of 80 stories. But his greatest success was about to be published and become a world wide phenomenon. "Demobilised officer ... finding peace incredibly tedious, would welcome diversion. Legitimate, if possible; but crime, if of a comparatively humorous description, no objection. Excitement essential." This was the advertisement placed in The Times by Drummond in Bulldog Drummond. It is a brilliant summing up of the man's quest for adrenaline. The book was published in 1920 and the eponymous hero became his best-known creation. Further Drummond books followed together with other works and these continued successes ensured that he was one of the most successful British authors of the inter-war period. In 1937 McNeile was working with Fairlie on the play Bulldog Drummond Hits Out and received a diagnosis from his doctor that he had terminal throat cancer. Herman Cyril McNeile aka Sapper died on 14 August 1937 at his home in West Chiltington, West Sussex.



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