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CLASSICS
UNABRIDGED

Sapper

THE THIRD ROUND

Read by **Roy McMillan**



A BULLDOG DRUMMOND ADVENTURE • 3

1	Chapter 1: In Which The Metropolitan Diamond Syndicate...	6:49
2	He replaced the receiver and stood for a moment...	6:18
3	The three men strolled into the balcony...	6:09
4	'As you probably know Mr Blackton...'	6:03
5	He beamed at us and then he commenced.	6:46
6	Mr Blackton said nothing. It was not his business...	4:02
7	'You heard?' he said, as he replaced the book.	7:13
8	Chapter 2: In Which Professor Goodman Realises...	6:13
9	'You know he made it,' said Algy quietly...	7:01
10	Hugh Drummond laid no claim to being brilliant.	6:18
11	The Professor leaned forward...	7:00
12	Hugh watched him cross the room...	8:13
13	Drummond watched the taxi swing round into King Street...	5:02
14	Chapter 3: In Which Strange Things Happen...	5:58
15	He started nervously as he heard the sound of voices...	6:53
16	He rose as if to leave...	5:07
17	He realised suddenly that he had reached his destination...	6:16
18	It was three-quarters of an hour before the door opened...	6:11
19	Which was a kindly thought on the part of the parlourmaid.	5:24
20	An hour later Edward Blackton was seated at his desk...	6:34

21	Chapter 4: In Which Mr William Robinson Arrives...	7:10
22	The whole thing had come with such startling suddenness...	6:01
23	He opened the door of his room, and Algy looked up...	6:24
24	Drummond swung round in time to see...	7:27
25	To be exact, he was just putting the last final touch...	4:43
26	'One moment Mr Blackton,' cried Sir Raymond...	4:58
27	Chapter 5: In Which Mr William Robinson Loses...	7:28
28	Professor Goodman's face went grey...	6:26
29	And it was a full minute before Mr Robinson...	7:06
30	Whatever may have been his thoughts...	6:40
31	Chapter 6: In Which Hugh Drummond Loses...	5:54
32	He rambled on while Drummond, having read the letter...	7:31
33	'Seems a bona-fide show, Algy,' he remarked...	4:08
34	And so it is unnecessary to emphasise the fact...	5:16
35	But Drummond wasn't even listening.	4:31
36	Completely exhausted she sank into a chair...	4:43
37	Which was where the error occurred.	5:41
38	With a wave of his hand he was gone...	7:29
39	And it was a very puzzled young man who finally returned...	2:38
40	Chapter 7: In Which Drummond Takes A Telephone Call...	6:07

41	He broke off and waited.	6:16
42	But it takes two people to terminate an interview...	4:05
43	On one point at any rate...	5:57
44	For a moment or two he stood staring at it.	6:13
45	But there was no darkness in the house as he searched...	6:04
46	Another thing occurred to Drummond also...	6:50
47	Chapter 8: In Which Drummond Plays A Little Game...	7:28
48	Freyder grinned as he watched Mr Robinson...	5:48
49	The heat in the room was stifling...	5:49
50	With a benevolent smile he walked over to the bell...	6:13
51	He gave a sigh of relief.	6:42
52	Chapter 9: In Which Professor Goodman Has a Trying Time	5:45
53	'Sit down, Professor,' he said gently...	7:41
54	Mr Robinson, having delivered himself...	6:56
55	For a moment or two Mr Robinson did not reply...	7:26
56	Already the sweat was running down both their faces...	5:48
57	For a moment or two Mr Robinson stood motionless...	6:07
58	Chapter 10: In Which Drummond Goes on Board...	6:18
59	Why were they torturing him?	4:25
60	And at that very moment the principal part...	7:55

61	It was one of his assets that he could do...	6:50
62	A sudden shuffling step in the passage outside...	5:25
63	The car had stopped; he could hear the driver talking...	5:14
64	Chapter 11: In Which Drummond Leaves the SS <i>Gadfly</i>	5:56
65	Drummond saw him focus a pair of field-glasses...	6:44
66	'Man overboard. Lower a boat...'	6:14
67	He nosed the motor-boat through the water...	5:33
68	The thing in the water was one of the large wooden lockers...	7:03
69	Chapter 12: In Which Drummond Samples...	5:04
70	The President of the Metropolitan Diamond Syndicate...	7:28
71	From a large cupboard occupying most of one wall...	6:19
72	He turned again to Drummond.	6:55
73	'It took a bit of thinking out,' admitted Drummond...	6:31
74	The seconds dragged by and Blackton stared...	6:30
75	Drummond pulled himself together...	5:35
76	Chapter 13: In Which Drummond Receives an Addition...	3:33

Total time: 7:47:15

Sapper

(1888–1937)

THE THIRD ROUND

There seems to be an inexhaustible demand for action heroes. From the earliest fictions to the current films, television series, novels and graphic novels, our appetite for the hero (and it does tend to be hero rather than heroine, Lara Croft notwithstanding) has maintained an astonishing vigour. After the previously unimaginable destruction of the First World War, it would have been understandable if the public had turned away from violence and decided to allow their imaginations to exercise in calmer fields of interest, or at least with heroes who would be less physical in their determination to uphold what is right. This was not the case. In both the United States and Britain, the glut of hard-talking, fast-shooting, morally certain sluggers poured out into the eager hands of a public who – if nothing else – clearly liked to know which side was the good

one, and to see it win comprehensively. In inter-War Britain the man who found the perfect action hero for his time was Herman Cyril McNeile, who wrote under the pseudonym ‘Sapper’ and created one of the genre’s most iconic characters: Bulldog Drummond.

McNeile was born in Cornwall to a Naval man (at the time the governor of a Naval prison), and went from school to the military academy in Woolwich, London. From there he joined the Royal Engineers, whose underground tunnellers were known as ‘sappers’ (hence his later nickname). He was with them throughout the War and was awarded the Military Cross in the process; but he seems to have been writing before the outbreak of the War. It is not easy to be certain, since serving officers could not use their real names in articles or stories, which was why he needed a pseudonym in

the first place. By the end of the War he was already a successful and popular author and he resigned from the Army to write full-time, publishing the first of the Bulldog Drummond books in 1920. They continued to appear until his death, upon which Gerard Fairlie (McNeile's friend and one of the inspirations for Bulldog Drummond himself) continued the series into the '50s. Although many of McNeile's works were popular, it was his Bulldog Drummond stories that seemed to capture the public imagination most forcibly (and most often – there were scores of radio and film adaptations as well as books).

Drummond served as a perfect bridge between several worlds. McNeile recognised that the character was a new version of older sleuthing types such as Sherlock Holmes and Raffles, and thus linked pre-War Britain (or more particularly England) with the contemporary realities of the 1920s. What he could not have known was that his character would himself prove a model on which future writers would base their heroes. The creators of *The Saint* and *James Bond* readily acknowledged their debt to Sapper,

making him a development in the story of detective and adventure stories from the late 19th through to the 21st centuries. The obverse of this popularity was that some writers became so infuriated with the all-pervasive influence of Drummond-like characters that they either spoofed them or went out of their way to ensure that none of their protagonists' qualities were in any way like them.

This is understandable. The idea of Bulldog Drummond has become so familiar, entrenched almost, that it is difficult sometimes to discern the strength and originality of the character; and the less appealing elements can be magnified beyond their true stature precisely because the caricature is so much more immediate. What was really there was a figure who embodied a particular kind of Englishness. Bulldog Drummond was independently wealthy and thus free of the day-to-day concerns of earning a living. He had 'done his bit' in the War – no shirking of national or personal responsibility – and done it with skill and daring. He had no doubt about what was right and should therefore be protected,

and he had no qualms about doing so with his fists or a gun. But what he also possessed was a particular kind of ironic solidity: a strength without vanity, realistic yet self-mocking, and allied to a sense of delight and absurdity. Life's a game, and it had better be a good one; let's have a martini at the club, old fruit, before we tackle the international master-criminal. McNeile called those who possessed these qualities 'The Breed'.

All this is admirable, feeds the Englishman's sense of himself, and adds to the gaiety of nations (as well as making many readers wish they were possessed of similar *sang froid*). But lurking within this was another set of values which were largely universal in the readership of the time but which frankly rankle now. Drummond is privileged, monied and seemingly unaware of the inequity of this. He has no doubts, and is never presented with anything where the right course to adopt is questionable. He assumes that the values of the Empire are all good, and that pretty much all foreigners are not to be trusted, and can be dismissed with derogatory adjectival promptness.

Concerns about these shortcomings are valid, but they are not the core reason for the continuing appeal of the books and should not obscure what that appeal is. They are failings but they also reflect the attitudes of the time; and, most significantly of all, they are no more than minor interjections in the text rather than its essence.

Its essence is a pounding good adventure story; a thriller where the plot races with gusto, where the villain is able to adopt disguises that can fool the closest inspection, where bizarre and terrible characters can plot outlandish heists, where we can trust the hero and wonder how he will escape, enjoying his unruffled wit as he faces what must surely be a gruesome death. There is a rich canon of these adventure stories, one that continues to grow. Bulldog Drummond sits proudly at the head of it, charming, brave and undaunted.

Notes by Roy McMillan



Roy McMillan is a director, writer, actor and abridger. For Naxos AudioBooks he has read *The Body Snatcher and Other Stories*, *Bulldog Drummond*, *The French Revolution – In a Nutshell*, *Cathedrals – In a Nutshell* and the introductions to works by Nietzsche and the Ancient Greeks. He has directed readings of Hardy, Hopkins, Kipling, Milton and Blake; Austen, Murakami, Conrad and Bulgakov, among many others; and has written podcasts and sleevenotes, as well as biographies of Milton and Poe. He has also directed plays for BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4.

Credits

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When Professor Goodman discovers a method of creating flawless diamonds at almost no cost, it is much more than a scientific curiosity – especially to the members of the Metropolitan Diamond Syndicate, who determine to stop this threat to their healthy profits. But their plans backfire when the man they recruit to keep the Professor's discovery a secret turns out to be the world's greatest villain. Only one man can stop the ensuing intrigue, kidnappings, plotting and murder: Bulldog Drummond. Yet even he is pushed to the limit when he faces his nemesis in the waters off the south coast.

Gripping and thrilling, this is the third of Bulldog Drummond's contests with the master-criminal Carl Peterson. But is it the last?

Roy McMillan is a director, writer, actor and abridger. For Naxos AudioBooks he has directed many readings, written podcasts and sleevenotes, and read titles such as *The Body Snatcher and Other Stories*, *Bulldog Drummond* and *The Communist Manifesto*.



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