



## Frederic Manning: An Unfinished Life

Jonathan L. Marwil



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In January 1930 *Her Privates We* appeared in London, advertised as "a record of experience on the Somme and Ancre fronts in 1916" from the pen of "Private 10922, a well known man of letters, already distinguished in another kind of literature." Reviewers praised the novel as the most accurate and moving portrayal yet rendered of the common soldier, and the work quickly became a bestseller. Shortly thereafter the author was revealed as Frederic Manning, a reclusive and little-known author of narrative poetry, philosophical dialogues, and works on Epicurus. An early contributor to *Criterion*, Manning enjoyed considerable esteem among his peers—T. E. Lawrence, Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, among others. How did a classical and noncommercial author come to write a grittily realistic war novel? Manning fled from the attendant publicity, avoiding the limelight assiduously and successfully. Marwil's search for the answer to this riddle and for the details of his life (in some ways the search is as interesting and revealing as the results) and his account of Manning's life and work reveal a great deal of the intellectual and social world of Edwardian and Georgian England.

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