Along with adaptations of his Non-Sherlockian works, I will also be mentioning silent films in which Doyle may have appeared, which could include newsreels or documentaries, and even fiction films. A few of these such films are found in the year 1914.

(1914)


“Universal Animated Weekly No. 117” - June 3rd 1914 - Arthur Conan Doyle’s arrival in America aboard the RMS Olympic was captured for a newsreel.¹

(Doyle family photo on RMS Olympic in 1923)


“Our Mutual Girl” was unique. Not quite a serial, not quite a newsreel and not strictly an advertisement, it combined elements of all three. In 52 weekly one-reel episodes, running from January 19, 1914 to January 11, 1915, the Mutual Girl outwitted villains, saw the sights of New York, met with theatrical and political celebrities (who frequently helped her out of trouble)... In episode 22, released June 15th 1914, Raffles sees the newspaper headline “Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Arrives Tomorrow”. “Creator of Sherlock Holmes, greatest of all detective story writers on visit to New York.

Aboard the Olympic... That same morning, Raffles went down the bay on a revenue cutter to meet the Olympic. He succeeded to gain access to A. Conan Doyle, and, as a result of their interview he telegraphed Mrs. Knickerbocker: 'I have news that will surely bring your niece back within the week.'

While filming “Our Mutual Girl”, Doyle, leading man Edward Brennan, and famous humorist Irvin S. Cobb got involved in heated discussion on the number of edible sausages there are!

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2 "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 20 Apr. - Jun. 1914 pg. 1598
“Our Mutual Girl, No. 22” - “Mrs. Knickerbocker meets Florence Reed, leading lady in ‘The Yellow Ticket’. Detective Burns and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle are consulted as regards the disappearance of Margaret, and next week she will reappear.”

“Our Mutual Girl, No. 22” - “British audiences should be particularly interested in the scenes in which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of “Sherlock Holmes”, and Lady Doyle are introduced. Sir Arthur is asked to assist in the discovery of ‘Our Mutual Girl’ who has been abducted, and confers with Mr. W. J. Burns, the famous American detective, as to the best means of finding her.”

1914 - “The $5,000,000 Counterfeiting Plot” - Arthur Conan Doyle as himself and William J. Burns (1861 - 1932) as himself. Dramascope Company.

"The $5,000,000 Counterfeiting Plot" - Feature Film Stories column - Six Parts - "A very long (and highly embellished) plot description of Wm. J. Burns most celebrated Secret Service case - the Philadelphia-Lancaster Counterfeiting Case - finishes with this line; "The final scene shows some specially posed pictures of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, with Mr. Burns."
In 1915 we would witness the adaptations of two of Doyle’s works, “Brigadier Gerard” and “The Firm of Girdlestone”. We would also see Conan Doyle turn down a $10,000 offer, from the Kalem Film Company, for the writing of a series of 20 detective stories.

In this tidbit above from “Variety” magazine (Oct. 1915) Conan Doyle claimed he refused the offer because he was too busy with Volunteer training corps near his home at Crowborough, Sussex. Makes one wonder, had the war not intervened and $10,000 for 20 stories been attractive (which I doubt!), one can only wonder what (Holmes?) adventures Doyle might have come up with.


“Brigadier Gerard” - British Notes - “The Barker Company, whose studios are at Ealing, have been fortunate enough to secure the first services of Lewis Waller, an international star of the "legitimate" stage, in a pictured version of a sparkling play entitled ‘Brigadier Gerard,’ from the pen of Sir A. Conan Doyle. The work is already in advanced stage and in addition to numerous presentations of minor celebrities of the footlights affords ample scope for the historic attainments of Miss Madge Titheradge.”

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6 “Moving Picture World” Vol. 25 Jul-Sep. 1915 - Pg. 1985
“Brigadier Gerard is the hero of a series of comic short stories. The hero, Etienne Gerard, is a Hussar in the French Army during the Napoleonic Wars. Gerard’s most notable attribute is his vanity – he is utterly convinced that he is the bravest soldier, greatest swordsman, most accomplished horseman and most gallant lover in all France. Gerard is not entirely wrong, since he displays notable bravery on many occasions, but his self-satisfaction undercuts this quite often. Obsessed with honor and glory, he is always ready with a stirring speech or a gallant remark to a lady.

Conan Doyle, in making his hero a vain, and often rather uncomprehending, Frenchman, was able to satirize both the stereotypical English view of the French and – by presenting them from Gerard’s baffled point of view – English manners and attitudes.”

Sadly for Louis Weller “Brigadier Gerard” would be his “…last appearance either in the flesh or on the screen. Upon Mr. Weller’s death about a month ago a carved wood bust of the actor as Brigadier Gerard, presented to Mr. Weller by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was sold... to an agent of the Universal in London.”


8 “Moving Picture World” April 8, 1916 - Pg. 267
“Brigadier Gerard” - “The star picture at Lenard's Picture Land... will be a dramatization of Conan Doyle's series of story, "The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard." In this the late Lewis Waller and Miss Madge Titheradge are featured. "Brigadier Gerard," in the novel and in the play, is a boaster and a braggart, but he achieves great things. The drama is to be screened on Thursday telling of how Napoleon, realizing that he is tottering to a fall, is anxious to secure certain papers he concealed some years previously in the Tuileries. A winged messenger is dispatched to the Countess de Rochequelaune, requesting her to obtain them. Meanwhile, Captain Eteinne Gerard, a dashing cavalry officer, arrives in camp with the remnant of his troops. Napoleon orders him And his men to attach themselves to the Hussars of Conflans. In the mess room Gerard tells of his wonderful exploits. Believing him to be nothing more or less than an idle braggart, the officers decide to score off nun. Gerard quickly observes that his listeners are scoffing at him. He resents this, and draws his sword, ready to take on all comers. Napoleon, requiring an absolutely trustworthy messenger to proceed, to the countess for the papers, has recommended Captain Gerard. General Coulaincourt decides, before entrusting him with the mission, to test his loyalty. He enters the mess room just as Gerald and Major Olivier are about to engage in combat. The general requests a word with Gerard in private. As a test of loyalty the general suggests that as Napoleon is near the end, Gerard should throw in his lot with Talleyrand. Gerard, who is one of Napoleon's most loyal followers, immediately draws his sword, and would slay the general, but the plot is disclosed to him. Taken before Napoleon, he is given his instructions, and proceeds, forthwith on his journey to Paris. Gerard experiences many adventures on his mission, but it appears that he has failed. Gerard enters the mess room and resumes his interrupted duel with Major Olivier. The Countess pleads with all a woman's skill with Napoleon. Seating himself, he throws Talleyrand's cloak on the ground, and in doing so the papers fall out of the pocket. In an instant his mood changes, and ha goes to find Gerard. Entering the mess room, Napoleon congratulates Gerard on the success he has met with in his mission, and creates him a brigadier. A love story runs through the drama”


"The Firm of Girdlestone" - An old merchant tries to save his firm by attempting to kill his ward. It is an adaptation of the 1890 novel “The Firm of Girdlestone” by Arthur Conan Doyle.


9
"The Firm of Girdlestone" - Reviews

“This is as poor an offering as I have had - drawn out, cheap melodrama and old stuff. This picture is nowhere near the Vitagraph standard of pictures. I am very much surprised to see Vitagraph permit a picture like this one leave their studio.”

“The most successful failure of the season. The direction is poor, and the work of the stars, Charles Rock and Edna Flugrath, is poor. The story is good, but not followed very well by the director.”

End Part Two

Part Three (1916 - 1923) Next

10 “Motography” Vol.16 Oct. - Dec. 1916 Pg. 1162