

## **Silent Sherlock** Sherlock Holmes and the Silent Film Era

by

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### Part Fifteen (1917 - 1918/19)

You may have read the comment from some researchers that from the "Valley of Fear" (1916) until the Eille Norwood, Stoll Pictures' series (1921 - 1923), there was a lull in the production of major Sherlock Holmes films. I have MANY films to list for this supposed 'lull' period, and although they might not be labeled 'major', and while a great deal of them came from Germany, I will leave it up to you to decide if this is a 'lull' period or not. I'm of the feeling that the entire silent film era was a golden age for the Sherlock Holmes film fans.

A series of feature films for Kowo-Gesellschaft für Filmfabrikation, Germany (unauthorized of course), were produced in the years (1917 - 1919). I'm not for certain how many were made, although I have come up with 14 titles. Three different actors played Sherlock Holmes, but all were directed by Karl Heinz Rolf.

**1917 - "Der Erdstrommotor" or, "The Earthquake Motor"** - Hugo Flink as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany).

**1917 - "Die Kasette" or, "The Mysterious Casket"** - Hugo Flink (1879 - 1947) as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany).



**Austrian Hugo Flink**

**1917 - "Der Schlangenring" or, "The Snake Ring"** - Hugo Flink as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany).

**1917 - "Die Indiesche" or, "The Indian Spider"** - Hugo Flink as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany).

**1918 - "Was Er im Spiegel Sah" or, "What He Saw In The Window"** - Ferdinand Bonn as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany).

**1918 - "Die Giftplombe" or, "The Poisoned Seal"** - Ferdinand Bonn (1861 - 1933) as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany).



**Ferdinand Bonn**

**1918 - "Das Schicksal der Renate Yongk" or, "The Fate of Renate Yongk"** - Ferdinand Bonn as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany).

**1918 - "Die Dose des Kardinals" or, "The Cardinal's Snuffbox"** - Ferdinand Bonn as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany).

**1918 - "Brockhaus, Band dreizehn" or, "Brockhous, Band Thirteen"** - Ferdinand Bonn as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany)

**1918 - "X Y Z"** - Ferdinand Bonn? as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany)

**1919 - "An den Herrn Ersten Staatsanwalt" or, "First to the Lord Prosecutor"** - Ferdinand Bonn as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany)

**1919 - "Echte Perlen" or, "Pearls"** - Ferdinand Bonn as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany)

**1919 - "John Barrens und seine Geliebte" or, "John Barrens and his Mistress"** - Kurt Brenkendorf (1886 - 19??) as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany)



**Kurt Brenkendorf**

**1919 - "Der Mord im Spenid Hotel" or, "Murder in the Hotel Splendid"** - Kurt Brenkendorf as Sherlock Holmes. Kowo-Films (Germany)

Familiar names we have seen before portraying Holmes would also pop-up in this period of years in assorted Holmes related German (plus one from Denmark) silent films.

**1917 - "Sherlock Holmes Nächtliche Begegnung" or, "Sherlock Holmes' Nocturnal Encounter"** - Alwin Neuss as Sherlock Holmes. Vitascope Films (Germany).

**1917 - "Die Memoiren des Satans, 1. Teil - Doktor Mors" or, "The Memoirs of Satan 1 Part - Doctor Mors"** - Kurt Brenkendorf as Sherlock Holmes. Luna Films (Germany). ("The Memoirs of Satan, Part 2 - Fanatics of Life" - "The Memoirs of Satan, Part 3 - The Curse Loaded")

**1918 - "Rotterdam - Amsterdam"** - Viggo Larsen as Sherlock Holmes. Messter-Film (Germany).

**1918 - "Den firbenede Sherlock Holmes" or, "Ras og Lux som Detektiver" or, "The Four-Legged Sherlock Holmes" or, "Ras and Lux as Detectives"** - Rasmus Christiansen (1885 - 1964) (as Nokke the private detective. Nordisk Films (Denmark)).



**Rasmus Christiansen**



**"Ras and Lux as Detectives"**

"A four-legged Holmes, a four-legged Holmes, he'll never let you down!"  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6SU-MvR8\\_M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6SU-MvR8_M)

**1919 - "Drei Tage Tot" or, "Three Days Dead"** - Viggo Larsen as Sherlock Holmes. Bioscop Konzern (Germany). (The Dying Detective?)

Isn't it fascinating that Germany continues making Holmes films oblivious of the World War.

Now back to the good old U.S.A.

**1917 - "A Modern Sherlock"** - Eddie Sutherland (1895 - 1973) as Sherlock Holmes. Triangle Films.

"A Modern Sherlock" - A parody of Sherlock Holmes with former Keystone Cop A. Edward Sutherland in the starring role. New Triangle Dramas - Manufacturer's Advanced Notes ... "His Busy Day" and "A Modern Sherlock"

will also be released on Oct. 21st as one-reel Triangle Komedies on the regular program."<sup>1</sup>



**Eddie Sutherland**

**1917 - "Jimmy Dale, Alias The Grey Seal"** - E. K. Lincoln (1884 - 1958) as Jimmy Dale. Monmouth Films.

"Jimmy Dale, Alias The Grey Seal" - (Monmouth) - 16 episodes - Describing Jimmy Dale it says "...In an attempt to right the wrongs of others he is often forced to commit what is generally considered a crime. In short, he is a combination of Sherlock Holmes, Arsene Lupin, and Robin Hood. ..."<sup>2</sup>



**E. K. Lincoln**

From Ray once again: "If Jimmy Dale is Sherlock Holmes is Robin Hood – that makes Dr Watson...Little John!"

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<sup>1</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 34 Oct. - Dec. 1917 pg. 554

<sup>2</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 30 Oct. - Dec. 1916 pg.1002

**1917 - "The Mirror of Fear"** - Robert Ellis (1892 - 1974) as a Master Mind, crippled in body but possessed of the cunning of a Sherlock Holmes. Kalem Films.

Kalem Companies Busy - Manufacturer's Advanced Notes - "Down in Jacksonville, Florida, Robert Ellis is planning to introduce a new character into "The Grant Police Reporter" series -- a Master Mind, crippled in body but possessed of the cunning of a Sherlock Holmes, although diverted to criminal channels. He will play the role himself as well as direct..."<sup>3</sup>

**1917 - "The Great Secret" - "Cupid's Puzzle - Chapter IX"** - Sherlock Holmes of N.Y. unknown. Metro Pictures.

"The Great Secret" - "Cupid's Puzzle - Chapter IX" - Comments on the Films - "...Detective Redman Sears, know as "The Sherlock Holmes of New York," calls on him and tells him that the chief of detectives, Ackerton, has been murdered. ...."<sup>4</sup>

**1917 - "The Great Secret" - "The Woman in the Game - Chapter X"** - Sherlock Holmes of N.Y. unknown. Metro Pictures.

"The Great Secret" - The Woman in the Game - Chapter X" - Reviews of Current Productions - "...In the meantime Sears, the detective that brought the papers to Strong, has been captured by the Secret Seven, but escapes them in a way that would do credit to Sherlock Holmes himself. ...."<sup>5</sup>

"The Great Secret" - "The leading romantic team of the 1910s, on as well as off the screen, Francis X. Bushman and Beverly Bayne experienced a major failure with this serial released in 18 chapters by Louis B. Mayer. The screenplay, by Fred de Gresac, was the already then hoary old story of a beautiful heiress who must fend off a series of usurpers before she can collect the reward and marry Prince Charming. Serial audiences, alas, didn't take to the Bushman/Bayne team, who was better equipped for stolid society dramas than rough-and-tumble chapter play shenanigans. The Great Secret, in fact, marked the beginning of a rapid decline for the couple, whose careers were soon in the doldrums."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 31 Jan. - Mar. 1917 pg. 1381

<sup>4</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 31 Jan. - Mar. 1917 pg. 1411

<sup>5</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 31 Jan. - Mar. 1917 pg. 1757

<sup>6</sup> Hans J. Wollstein, Rovi

**1917 - "The Boob"** - Frederick Eckhart as Don Whipple. Selig Films.

"The Boob" - Manufacturer's Advanced Notes - "General Film Co. is calling special attention to the merits of "The Boob," the latest of the Selig multiple reel productions...."The Boob" is a comedy-drama.....The picture has to do with the consuming ambition of Don Whipple of Pleasant Valley, to become a Sherlock Holmes. His butter and egg money amounting to \$100 is cheerfully handed over to a gentleman stranger, who furnishes Don with a bright shield and diploma. Don works overtime at the detective business, and his industry is rewarded when he encounters a masked man robbing the post office. How the country youth, classified as a 'boob' effects the capture of the notorious crook, wins a thousand dollar reward and incidentally the love of a pretty country girl, combine to make this comedy-drama very entertaining...."<sup>7</sup>

**1917 - "The Wart on the Wire"** - William Franey (1889 - 1940) as Sherlock Holmes. Joker Films.

"The Wart on the Wire" - Comments on Films - A comic number, by Tom Gibson & C.B. Hoadley, featuring Gale Henry, William Franey, and Milburn Moranti. Gale appears as Polly Piffle, who has invented a wart-less pickle, and Franey as Sherlock Holmes detective. The action is laughable and nonsensical. This will amuse the average audience immensely."<sup>8</sup>



**William Franey**

**1917 - "The Grell Mystery"** - Earle Williams (1880 - 1927) as Heeldon Foyle, a detective of the Sherlock Holmes type. Vitagraph Films.

"The Grell Mystery"- Review of Current Productions - "...The mystery surrounds a murder that defies the right solution, until nearly all the characters have been accused of the crime. Heeldon Foyle, a detective of

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<sup>7</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 31 Jan. - Mar. 1917 pg. 2133

<sup>8</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 34 Oct. - Dec. 1917 pg. 253



**Earle Williams**

the Sherlock Holmes type, finally manages to lay hands on the guilty person, but only after circumstances point to the woman he loves as the one who wielded the dagger and he had made up his mind to put her under arrest....."<sup>9</sup>

**1917 - "Water on the Brain"** - William Franey (1889 - 1940) as Sherlock Holmes. Nestor Films.

"Water on the Brain" - Comments on Films - "A very funny murder, by Tom Gibson, featuring William Franey, Lillian Peacock, and Milburne Moranti. The former appears as a burlesque Sherlock Holmes and uses the "Smellograph" and other new inventions for detecting crime. This is extremely laughable and one of the best detective travesties yet shown."<sup>10</sup>

**1917 - "The Dream Doll"** - Rod La Rocque (1898 - 1969) and Marguerite Clayton, as the Dolls. George Kleine System.

"The Dream Doll" - (George Kleine System) - Dec. 10 - A film in which a dreaming person believes they are all dolls. "After the honeymoon trip they select the kennel of Sherlock, the watchdog, as their home."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 34 Oct. - Dec. 1917 pg. 1338

<sup>10</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 34 Oct. - Dec. 1917 pg. 1342

<sup>11</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 34 Oct. - Dec. 1917 pg. 1678



### **Marguerite Clayton and Rod La Rocque**

**1918 - "Torpedo Pirates"** - Walter Stevens (1889 - 1940) as Sherlock Holmes. L-Ko Kompany.

"Torpedo Pirates" - Film Stories - The cast: The Professor (Harry Lorraine); His Assistant (Hugie Mack); Prof's Daughter (Gladys Varden); Sherlock Holmes (Walter Stevens); The Vamp (Catherine Young). Directed by Noel Smith.

Mr. P. Nutt invented a rather wonderful flying torpedo, which was worth millions when it flew, but his happiness was marred by his daughter's crush on his helping hand. The president of The Midnight Thieves' Association craved the torpedo, so he sent Vampa, a well set-up young women, to find a man who looked like Sherlock Holmes. They found him in a trash-can pulling a Hoover out of the garbage. When the inventor learned the eyes of the spies were upon him, he hastened to the detective agency and besought the trash-can dweller to take the case. Father returned - they always do - delighted at his date with Vampa. She arrived with a copyrighted scheme of her own to make the old duffer jealous. She winked her pretty eyes at the helping hand, who could not withstand the temptation. The scheme worked fine, the inventor became crazy jealous. 'You tub of lard - I could kill you - here!', shouted the frenzied P. Nutt, slapping him on the wrist. His rough words had an awful effect on Fatty, who resorted to tears. Suddenly a tremendous noise was heard, a storm came up - big ocean waves resounded their morbid chantings - the family was eating soup. Camouflaged by his tempestuous ordeal, the gang was making away with the torpedo, when Detective Snitch smelt trouble and dashing up into the private chamber he kicked the crooks in the hallway and flew out on the marvelous torpedo. He

was nearing France and the gas was giving way, when he was rescued by the inventor and the family."<sup>12</sup>

Ray on a roll: "Methinks Torpedo Pirates wins the 'Best Cocaine-Induced Sherlockian Phantasmagoria Award."

**1918 - "The Face in The Dark"** - Mae Marsh (1884 - 1968) as Jane Ridgeway, the captivating little Sherlock Holmes. Goldwyn Films.

"The Face in The Dark" "It is the tale of a young girl whose sweetheart is arrested for robbing a bank. She plays a detective and discovers that all trails lead to her father, which frees up her sweetheart. Then it turns out her



**Mae Marsh**

father is really a secret service man working undercover infiltrating the gang. Mae Marsh makes a captivating little Sherlock Holmes ..." <sup>13</sup>

**1918 - "Little Miss Sherlock"** - Zoe Rae (1910 - 2006) as Jane Ridgeway, the captivating little Sherlock Holmes. Universal Films.

"Little Miss Sherlock" - Upcoming Features - "Will be a Little Zoe Rae feature, directed by Rea Berger, who becomes this clever little girl's screen manager with this issue. Norris Shannon wrote the story and Francis F. Clark made the screen preparations. Claire Du Brey, Charles Hill Mailes, and William Carroll will have prominent supporting roles."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 35 Jan. - Mar. 1918 pg. 418

<sup>13</sup> "Motion Picture Magazine", Vol. 15.2-16 Mar - Jul. 1918 pg. 93

<sup>14</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 35 Jan. - Mar. 1918 Pg. 539



**Zoe Rae**

**1918 - "Sherlock Ambrose"** - Mack "Ambrose" Swain (1876 - 1935) as Sherlock Ambrose. Universal Films.

"Sherlock Ambrose" - Universal - "Another engagement that will interest exhibitors of L-Ko's calls for the appearance of Mack "Ambrose" Swain in a series of comedies directed by W.S. Fredericks. The first of the Ambrose pictures has been released, and "Sherlock Ambrose", a detective comedy, is now in the making."<sup>15</sup>

"Mack Swain will star in "Sherlock Ambrose", Feb. 27, offering a comedy detective story, with slapstick trimmings."<sup>16</sup>

"The L-Ko releases a Max Swain two-reel L-Ko Komedie entitled "Sherlock Ambrose." It is all about a hobo who is mistaken for a detective and plays the part even to the recovery of a stolen ring through no fault of his own."<sup>17</sup>

"Sherlock Ambrose" - "A two reel comic featuring Mack Swain as an immigrant who is mistaken as a detective by the president of a school for

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<sup>15</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 35 Jan. - Mar. 1918 Pg. 539

<sup>16</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 35 Jan. - Mar. 1918 Pg. 695

<sup>17</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 35 Jan. - Mar. 1918 Pg. 1846



**Mack "Ambrose" Swain**

girls. He finds a diamond ring lost by one of the girls and is duly rewarded. Some very funny spots crop up in this number, which is quite enjoyable."<sup>18</sup>

**1918 - "The Midnight Trail"** - William Russell (1884 - 1929) as Jack Woodford, a romantic Sherlock Holmes . American Film Co.

"The forthcoming William Russell production was produced under the title of 'Detective Dan Cupid', and gives the capable young screen actor the role of a romantic Sherlock Holmes. It provides Mr. Russell plenty of opportunity to develop the particular type of humor which marked his most recent picture productions, every one which has been a distinct box office success."<sup>19</sup>

"The Midnight Trail" is the title of the forthcoming William Russell production, which will be released by Mutual Feb. 25. The picture was made by The American Film Co., Inc. and was directed by Edward Sloman. "Big Bill" as the big star is called by his host of admirers, is seen as a young man of virile and volatile temperament in who the spirit of adventure an romance is rampant. Inspired by the thrillers of his favorite author, Conan Doyle, he poses as an up-to-date Sherlock Holmes and sleuths on the trail of jewel thieves, in order to meet the daughter of a minister who has been robbed and get the inside track of the game of hearts. Russell's delineation of the pseudo Sherlock is in his best seriocomic vein which has been evident in his recent productions."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 35 Jan. - Mar. 1918 Pg. 1868

<sup>19</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 35 Jan. - Mar. 1918 Pg. 842

<sup>20</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 35 Jan. - Mar. 1918 pg. 1252

On the cover of the Swedish Theater Program, from 1918 pictured on the right above, you can clearly see that "The Midnight Trail" was marketed there as a Sherlock Holmes film.

"The Midnight Trail" - America Presents William Russell in a Five-Part Comedy Drama of an Amateur Detective, an Expert Thief and a Girl Worth-While.



### **William Russell**

Cast: Jack Woodford (William Russell); Alice Morehead (Francelia Billington); Rev. Robert Moreland (Sydney Deane); Harry Moreland (Jerome Sheler); Harvey Faxon (Carl Stockdale); Benjamin Thurston (Edward Jobson); Jasper Stride (Harvey Clark); W. H. Irons (Clarence Burton); Marie (Helen Howard); Jim Morton (Alfred Ferguson). Directed by Edward Sloman.

The Story: "Jack Woodford, a young millionaire, knows the Sherlock Holmes stories backward. When he sees Alice Moreland at his lawyer's office and learns that she seeks some jewels stolen from her father, Jack gets the card of a real detective and introduces himself into the Moreland home. He is startled to find that Alice, herself, takes valuables from the safe and returns them to the rector. The latter's secretary denounces him as an imposter and a real detective is called in, but before he goes Jack solves the mystery and takes a heavy fee."

Advertising Aides for Busy Managers - Stunt Suggestions - Get your book stores to show the Conan Doyle stories and get a card and a still, the card to read: "Jack Woodford studied to be a detective with Conan Doyle, and you will see in The Midnight Trail at (house and date) that he made it pay. Buy some books and start studying today. Perhaps YOU can win a rich reward."

For street work have a well dressed young man go down the street passing out cards reading: "W.H. Irons, Private Detective. See all about me at (house and date.)"<sup>21</sup> ...

RW: "Love the advertising aides for The Midnight Trail – directing patrons to read the Canon!"

**1918 - "Coragáo Creanga" - Actors unknown. Gloria Films (Italy)**

"It debuted, too, with little success, "Sherlock Holmes," police film, based on the work of Conan Doyle. The film "Coragáo Creanga," as was once displayed in the halls Trin-ity and High-Life. Eden Theater - Just finished ...n'este Hall debut was in the film 9 episodes "Cora-gao Creanga," film Italian Film Gloria's house. It debuted, too, with little success, "Sherlock Holmes," police film, based on the work of Conan Doyle."<sup>22</sup> (Translated from Portuguese)

End of Part Fifteen  
(1918/19) Continues - (1920) Begins in Part Sixteen

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<sup>21</sup> "The Moving Picture World" magazine Vol. 35 Jan. - Mar. 1918 Pg. 1415

<sup>22</sup> "Cine-Mundial" Nov. 1918 Pg. 731