

Silent Doyle

Non-Sherlockian Conan Doyle and the Silent Film Era

by

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Part Four (1925 - 1927)

By 1925 Spiritualism, being preached as gospel by Conan Doyle, was taking a heavy toll on Doyle's reputation. A Harry Houdini quote from the article "Houdini-Doyle Slander Suit" in "Variety" 1/25/1925 demonstrates this dilemma rather concisely. Houdini branded Sir Arthur, a one-time close friend, "a menace to mankind because the public thinks he is just as great a man in the spiritualistic field as he is in writing stories." Well putting all that spirit nonsense aside, let's finish up this essay on Non-Sherlockian silent film adaptations and appearances of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, with the years 1925 thru 1927.

(1925)

1925 - "How It Happened (Twisted Tales)" - "How It Happened", adaptation. Sydney Seaward (1884 - 19??) as The Motorist. Reciprocity Films (U.K.).



"How It Happened" - "The story is written in the first person; the narrator is a man who is met at the beginning of the story by his chauffeur, Perkins, at half-past

eleven at the 'little country station' while coming back from London. He wanted to try his new car, which had been delivered that day. He was warned that the gears were not of the same type he is used to but he insisted on driving. They "were just over the brow of Claystall Hill, 'one of the worst hills of England', when he lost all control on the speed of the car. He tried to bring the car back to his house "wheels whirring like a high wind" and did not jump even when advised to do so by Perkins. In the end, he managed to reach home but crashed into the park gate. The story ends with Perkins having injured his leg and the narrator meeting a dead friend, Stanley, implying that he himself died in the accident."¹

1925 - "The Lost World" - "The Lost World", adaptation. Wallace Beery (1885 - 1949) as Professor Challenger, Lewis Stone (1879 - 1953) as Sir John Roxton. First National Pictures.



"The Lost World" - "Explorer Professor Challenger is taking quite a beating in the London press thanks to his claim that living dinosaurs exist in the far reaches of the Amazon. Newspaper reporter Edward Malone learns that this claim originates from a diary given to him by fellow explorer Maple White's daughter, Paula. Malone's paper funds an expedition to rescue Maple White, who has been marooned at the top of a high plateau. Joined by renowned hunter John Roxton, and others, the group goes to South America, where they do indeed find a plateau inhabited by pre-historic creatures, one of which they even manage to bring back to London with them."²

NOTE: Arthur Conan Doyle appeared in the prologue, which is now missing from existing copies.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_It_Happened

² http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0016039/?ref_=nm_flmg_act_72 Ron Kerrigan

The original "Jurassic Park"



Watch the entire film, "The Lost World" at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UXqL0LTPX8>

A promotional film from 1925 of "The Lost World" can be viewed at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_fb2lWf7ok

Was "The Lost World" the first in-flight movie? Watch this two minute historical piece from 1925 showing Captain George Fredrick Lines MC loading the film and camera into the aircraft at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pz0La8f1IHU>

(1926)

1926 - "Sir A. Conan Doyle" - Arthur Conan Doyle as himself. Tropical Film Company (U.K.).

Newsreel - "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle lays the foundation stone of 'the first Spiritualistic Church'."³ (01/11/1926)

³ <http://bufvc.ac.uk/newsonscreen/search/index.php/story/130867>

(1927)

1927 - "The Fighting Eagle" - "The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard", adaptation. Rod La Roque (1898 - 1969) as Etienne Gerard, Max Barwyn (1884 - 1955) as Napoleon, Sam Degrasse (1875 - 1953) as Tallyrand. DeMille Pictures.



Once again, another version of the exploits of Brigadier Gerard who helps expose Foreign Minister Talleyrand as a traitor to Napoleon.

hits!

Rod La Roque
is in **THE FIGHTING EAGLE**

with **PHYLLIS HAVER**
Adaptation and Continuity by DOUGLAS LEBBY
From The Adventures of Captain Etienne Gerard
Supervised by DONALD CRISP
A DONALD CRISP PRODUCTION
Produced by DE MILLE PICTURES CORP.
DISTRIBUTED BY PATHE EXCHANGE, INC.

"'The Fighting Eagle' is a picture play of delightful heroics."
Joseph McElrath, N. Y. Mirror.

"A well-directed and pictorially lovely screen melodrama."
N. Y. Herald-Tribune.

"Donald Crisp has handled this chronicle with imagination and Rod La Roque enters into the spirit of the young hussar officer in a delightful fashion."
MORNING HILL, N. Y. Times.

"One of the most delightful pictures of the year. A notice to the trade of big and fine things to come. We cordially recommend this picture to all theatres."
ARTHUR JAMES, Motion Pictures Today.

"It is thrilling fare."
M. M. M., Detroit Evening Times.

"Donald Crisp's sense of spectacle is excellent. Duel scenes are well executed and court episodes are lavishly lovely."
BENE THORP, N. Y. Daily News.

"Rod La Roque goes through his role in a delightful fashion. Phyllis Haver does the best work of her career. Better keep your eye on this girl as greater things are in store for her. You will like 'The Fighting Eagle.' Dressed to a Queen's taste."
Detroit Free Press.

"A very fine picture, replete with stirring action."
"Hiss" CHURCHMAN, N. Y. Morning Telegraph.

"There is action, vigor, love interest—suspense."
H. C. B., Detroit Free Press.

Yes those Arthur Conan Doyle Non-Sherlockian adaptations would keep coming, but no longer as silent films, but as talkies. They will never even approach the number of Sherlockian adaptations, with the gap between their numbers growing daily. Doyle may have considered his Non-Sherlockian works more important, however the public, in films, just as with his written work, may beg to differ.

The End

Sincere thanks to Ray Wilcockson, Ross K. Foad, and Phil Bergem for their assistance in this essay. With added special thanks to Peter Blau, for suggesting the topic. I've enjoying writing it, and learned a lot doing so. I hope you enjoyed reading it, and learned from it too.