

Silent Doyle

Non-Sherlockian Conan Doyle and the Silent Film Era

by

Howard Ostrom

Part One (1913)

Noted Sherlockian, Peter Blau, for whom I have the utmost respect, in commenting on my 'Silent Sherlock' essay series mentioned; "I won't expect instant action on my suggestion that you also consider exploring silent films of Conan Doyle's non-Sherlockian works . . . there are some . . . "House of Temperley" and "Brigadier Gerard" and "The Fighting Eagle" among them . . . and I'm sure there is much more to be discovered." Peter I will take your suggestion and give it the old college try. Let's take a look at the Non-Sherlockian Doyle films of the silent film era.

In the "Silent Sherlock" essays I had one hundred and fifteen Sherlock Holmes silent films listed prior to the year 1913. For the Non-Sherlockian Conan Doyle films I have zero prior to 1913, therefore, we will begin with 1913's "The House of Temperley".

1913 - "The House of Temperley" - An adaptation of "Rodney Stone" - Charles Maude (1882 - 1943) as Captain Jack Temperley. London Film Productions.

"Rodney Stone", adapted into the 1913 silent film "The House of Temperley", "is a Gothic mystery and boxing novel by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, first published in 1896. The eponymous narrator is a Sussex country boy who is taken to London by his uncle Sir Charles Tregellis, a highly respected gentleman and arbiter of fashion who is on familiar terms with the most important people of Great Britain. The novel interweaves Rodney's coming-of-age story with that of his friend Boy Jim's boxing endeavors, and a large portion of it deals with the famous bare-knuckle boxers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, such as Jem Belcher, John Jackson, Daniel Mendoza, Dutch Sam, and others. The book includes vignettes of a number of historical personages, notably the Prince Regent, Lord Nelson, Sir John Lade, Lord Cochrane and Beau Brummel."¹

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

THE HOUSE OF TEMPERLEY.

(RODNEY STONE).

By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

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CAST :

Sir Charles Temperley ...	BEN WEBSTER
Sir John Hawker ...	CHARLES ROCK
Captain Jack Temperley ...	CHARLES MAUDE
Ginger Stubbs ...	WYNDHAM GUISE
Tom Cribb ...	JOHN EAST
Jakes, bookmaker ...	EDWARD O'NEILL
Gloucester Dick ...	REGINALD DAVIS
Joe Berks ...	F. BINNINGTON
Gentleman Jackson ...	C. M. YORK
Shelton, trainer ...	HUBERT WILLIS
Lady Temperley ...	CLAIRE PAUNCEFORT
Lucy ...	YOLANDE MAY
Ethel ...	LILLIAN LOGAN

THE two sons of the House of Temperley were of widely different temperaments. Captain Jack Temperley, the younger son, was an active, energetic youngster, who, to satisfy his restless craving for excitement, had joined the army and served through the war in Spain. There he had received a serious wound, as result of which he had been invalided home. Now that he was convalescent, however, country life was beginning to weigh on him, and would have weighed on him a good deal more had it not been for his cousin Ethel.

Sir Charles Temperley, the elder son, had none of his younger brother's physical restlessness. He was an easy-going, kind-hearted man, perfectly content to pass his

days in the mild excitements which London offered to a man who was fond of cards and wine and horses. If anything, he was too good-natured, for it caused him to permit some men to enter the circle of his friends who had no right there.

Among these was Sir John Hawker. Sir John's reputation was far from speckless : he was a reckless gambler, and was not above taking advantage of a marked card when occasion favoured him. He was well-known in fighting circles as a good judge of a man and as being a very capable, formidable amateur with the gloves himself. He had lately been devoting himself to Sir Charles Temperley, and to such good effect that, partly by fair means and partly by foul, Sir Charles was already heavily in his debt. He took good care, however, that this fact should

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² Illustrated Films Monthly Sep. 1913 Vol. 1 Pgs. 129-136

not worry Sir Charles, which was, owing to Sir Charles' heedless good-nature, an easy matter to arrange.

As a matter of fact, Sir Charles was, without suspecting it, nearing the end of his resources. His many extravagancies, his

utter disaster to the fortunes of her house loomed ahead. She knew her son's gay, pleasure-loving disposition, and had little hope of awaking him to the perils of the situation until too late.

Living with Lady Temperley was her



[Photo, Elliott & Fry.]

Sir ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

generous gifts, and his gambling debts, had already run away with all his fortune, and Temperley Manor was beginning to be besieged by anxious creditors.

Much to her distress, Sir Charles' mother, Lady Temperley, was forced to realise that

ward, Ethel, a beautiful young girl, and a heiress in her own right. It was to this girl that Lady Temperley now turned in her extremity. If only Ethel could realise the lovable side of Sir Charles and consent to marry him, she might be able to arrest him

in his dissipation, and the fortunes of the House would be saved. Unfortunately for her, however, her niece's affections were centred on Jack Temperley, and she was daily hoping that Jack would declare himself. Jack, however, was proud. He loved Ethel, but the fear of being thought a fortune-hunter tied his mouth, and although he was several times on the point of an avowal, he restrained himself in time.

One morning the duns invaded Temperley

become a very skilful boxer, and more than once lately, had succeeded in beating the adept Ginger.

When the servant broke in with the news of the duns' rudeness, Ginger was for promptly ejecting them, but Jack restrained him and attempted to persuade them to postpone their demands. This they angrily refused to do, and they were in an angry altercation when Sir Charles unexpectedly arrived. Greeting his mother affectionately,



"The famous scene in Watiers' Club."

Manor and insisted upon a settlement of their accounts. They became so abusive that the servant at last went to fetch Captain Jack to speak to them. Captain Jack was discovered in a friendly bout with the gloves, his opponent being his own man-servant, Ginger Stubbs. Ginger had once been a promising candidate for prize-ring honours, but five years before had thrown up prize-fighting to follow Jack Temperley to the wars. Under his able tuition, Jack had

he entered the hall, and by his lazy good humour, his affability, and his obvious, careless honesty, succeeded in disarming the anger of the duns.

In vain Lady Temperley tried to impress Sir Charles with the gravity of the situation. He laughed gently at all her fears, and assured her there was nothing to worry about. Next day, in the hope of retrieving some of his bad luck, he gambled heavily at the races, but the only result was to plunge

him still deeper into debt.

During his absence from home, Sir John Hawker, who held an I.O.U. for £3,000 signed by Sir Charles, visited the manor. He told Jack, who interviewed him, that he had come to give Sir Charles his revenge at cards, and Jack, who suspected Hawker's honesty, told him angrily that Sir Charles was gambling too much. The two men had an angry scene, at the end of which Hawker stamped out of the house, nearly upsetting,

at the suggestion, and realised for the first time the extent to which he was involved. In a revulsion of feeling he solemnly promised Jack never to touch cards or dice again.

Before long, Lady Temperley's entreaties affected Ethel so much, that, to save her friend and guardian from further distress, she consented to marry Sir Charles. Lady Temperley, overjoyed, told Sir Charles of his good fortune, and the engagement was quickly concluded. In the meantime, Jack,



"Captain Jack and Ethel."

as he did so, Ginger Stubbs, who was with difficulty restrained by Jack from punching Hawker's head.

Later, Sir Charles returns from the races, very depressed over his losses. Jack seized the chance to try to pull Sir Charles up. He informed him that the lawyers had told Lady Temperley that Temperley Manor must be sold as a result of his gambling extravagancies. Sir Charles was horrified

his pride vanquished by his great love for Ethel, mustered the courage to propose to her, only to discover he was too late and that she had become engaged to his brother. Ethel was unable to hide the fact that if Jack had spoken earlier she would have preferred him, but the two accepted the situation honourably, and hid their feelings.

Tom Cribb, a retired champion of the prize ring, was running an inn and a boxing



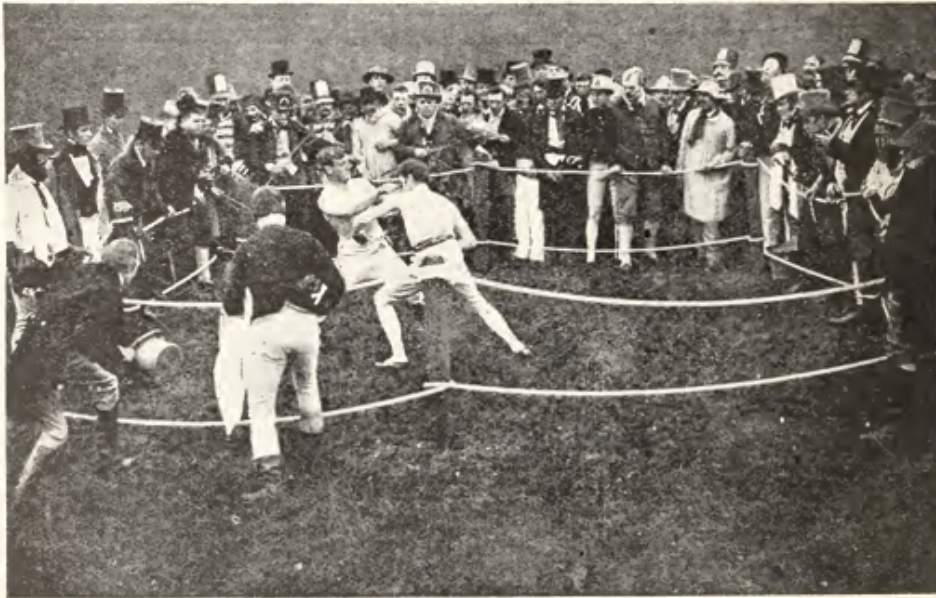
"Sir Charles interviewing the 'duns.'"



"The big fight arranged."

saloon not far from Temperley Manor, and here the Corinthians used to meet, to gamble, to drink, and to watch their favourite fighters. Tom Cribb had discovered a very promising prize-fighter in Gloucester Dick, and when Sir John Hawker visited the Inn and asked for news, he was told of Gloucester Dick. Curious to know Dick's capabilities, he took him into the saloon for a sparring match. Dick, however, was no mean antagonist, and Hawker received a thorough drubbing. Hawker was furious, but kept the matter private. A little later Sir Charles visited the inn, and was thoughtlessly about to engage in another game of cards when Jack entered. Under cover of Jack's entry,

a prize-fight, each party to nominate a man who had never been in the prize ring before, the stakes to be £3,000. Jack, to whom the proposed match was explained, suspected a trick, and arranged a counter-move. He so altered the terms of the match as to include any man who had not been in the prize-ring for five years and increased the stakes to £10,000. Both Hawker and Sir Charles were amazed at this unusual rashness in Jack, but Hawker, having Gloucester Dick in mind, thought himself safe. Jack's idea in altering the match was to have Ginger Stubbs fight for his brother. Ginger had not been in the ring for five years, and could be relied on to deal with



"The Fight on Crawley Downs."

Hawker marked the pack of cards before him, but in this manoeuvre he was observed by Jakes, a shrewd bookmaker, whose enmity Hawker had already aroused by his rough manners.

Greetings over, Jack noted with dismay the cards in front of Sir Charles and reminded him of his promise. Sir Charles admitted his mistake, told Hawker of the forgotten promise and declined to play with Hawker, either with cards or with dice. Hawker, seeing his victim getting out of his clutches, suddenly thought of another way of getting Sir Charles' money. He suggested

any ordinary opponent. The bet was therefore duly completed, the men shaking hands on it.

After the rest of the party had gone, Hawker secretly examined the pack of cards, found one of the marked cards to be missing. While he was searching for it, Jakes, who had quietly abstracted it, entered, and in a scene of tremendous power, threatened to expose Hawker as a card-sharper, if he did not consent to hand over one-half of his winnings on the fight to Jakes. Hawker had no alternative but to submit.

Ginger Stubbs' sweetheart, Lucy, made

some difficulty at first about Ginger again entering the prize-ring, but Sir Charles and Jack persuaded her to consent, and Ginger duly went into training. Before long rumours began to reach Sir John of Ginger Stubbs' condition. Jakes himself warned Hawker that the match would probably go against him, and the two then arranged to kidnap Stubbs on the eve of the fight. If Stubbs did not turn up at the ring side, the match would be awarded to his opponent, and

Jack had by now found his position with Ethel intolerable, and he told her that as soon as the fight was over he intended to go back to the wars to try to forget her. Ethel was greatly distressed, and at that moment the couple were surprised by Sir Charles. At first he suspected his brother of treachery, but they frankly told him the truth, and Sir Charles discovered for the first time that Jack loved Ethel.

At the ring side there was no sign of



"Ginger Stubbs arrives too late."

Hawker's money would be safe. Accordingly Jakes, with a couple of bullies, went down to Stubbs' training quarters. Sheldon, the trainer, was got out of the way by a ruse, and in his absence Stubbs was attacked, overcome, and carried away several miles over the downs in a cart. His absence was soon discovered, but they merely suspected him of going to say "Good-bye" to his sweetheart, Luey, and the whole party repaired to the ring side.

Ginger Stubbs, and Sir John Hawker congratulated himself on the success of his scheme. At the last moment, however, just as the referee was about to award the fight to Gloucester Dick, Captain Jack jumped into the ring and declared he would take Ginger's place. Sir John Hawker was furious, but as the terms of the match permitted any candidate to fight, his objections were overruled. A fierce battle followed. Prize-fights of those days were

of course, different from modern glove contests. The opponents wore no gloves, wrestling was not altogether prohibited, and a knock-down or a fall ended the round. After the round, if either of the men was unable to come to the "scratch"—a line drawn across the middle of the ring—after half-a-minute's rest, the fight was declared against him. At last Jack's superior strength and experience began to tell, and Gloucester Dick was ignominiously knocked out of the ring.

In the meantime, Ginger Stubbs had succeeded in cutting through his bonds on the edge of a stone, and, realising the seriousness of the position, set off at full speed for the scene of the fight. He arrived there utterly exhausted, only to discover that the match had already been won by Captain Jack.

Sir John Hawker, who had organised a futile attempt to break the ring at the last moment, was furious at his loss and his defeat. Sir Charles, seeing the fortunes of his house now safe, conceived a plan whereby Jack and Ethel might be brought together. He deliberately insulted the furious Hawker, and a duel was arranged for the next day. Everything fell out as he anticipated. Sir John Hawker, treacherous to the last, fired at Sir Charles before the handkerchief fell, mortally wounding him. Sir Charles, however, managed to hold himself erect long enough to return Hawker's shot and Hawker fell dying. Sir Charles was then carried home to Temperley Manor, and before he died was able to join the hands of Jack and Ethel, having now retrieved the fortunes of the House of Temperley.





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